

Karen fowler's view of individuality, as described in her book, we are all comple...



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In her novel *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, Karen Fowler compares and contrasts humans and chimpanzees to suggest that being human is more importantly about an internal state of being and less about being a homo sapien. Fowler depicts the life of Rosemary Cooke, a girl who was raised along-side a Chimpanzee named Fern as part of an experiment testing the ability of Chimpanzees to communicate with Humans. However, Rosemary suspects that the experiment did not only test, “ how well Fern could communicate” (Fowler, 99), but rather, “ can Rosemary learn to speak to chimpanzees” (Fowler, 99). By comparing and contrasting humans and chimpanzees Fowler suggests that being human is not simply a matter of species, but rather a state of mental consciousness.

Fowler advocates that the mental aspect of being human is more important than the physical aspect through Fern's belief that she is human. Having been raised alongside humans her entire life, “ Fern believed she was human” (Fowler, 101). Rosemary states, “ that the neural system of a young brain develops partly by mirroring the brain around it” (Fowler, 101). This mimicry drives Rosemary to feel that the Fern's most important traits are not her appearance, but rather her personality. Rosemary comments that, “ much, much important, [she] wanted [the reader] to see how it really was” (Fowler, 75). Fern's mental similarities to Rosemary resulted in Rosemary believing that she was more human than chimpanzee.

Though Fowler suggests that Fern is more human than chimpanzee, she does not ignore that common human behaviors differentiated from Fern's behavioral patterns. While chimps were capable of understanding deceit, they “ don't seem capable of understanding the state of false belief” (Fowler, <https://assignbuster.com/karen-fowlers-view-of-individuality-as-described-in-her-book-we-are-all-completely-beside-ourselves/>

188). This knowledge was one of many that reminded the Cooke family that Fern was not entirely human from a mental perspective. Regardless of the similarities observed between Fern and Rosemary, there were still quirks that acted as a constant reminder of Fern's species.

As a result of Rosemary and Fern's relationship, Rosemary comes to believe that being human is much more than being of the same species. " In the phrase human being, the word being is much more important than the word human" (Fowler, 158). Rosemary developed a relationship with Fern that was so strong that Rosemary no longer viewed Fern as a chimpanzee, but rather purely as her sister. Though Fern could not carry out all human behaviors, she was able to communicate with Rosemary on a level that Rosemary failed to achieve with other humans. This is evident when Rosemary is in university and comments, " I still wasn't fitting in. I still had no friends. Maybe I just didn't know how" (Fowler, 132).

Through comparing and contrasting humans and chimpanzees, Fowler acknowledges the difference between the two species, but suggests that the most important thing that makes a person human is internal. Rosemary built a relationship with Fern that was closer than any relationship she had formed with human. The connection she felt to Fern was stronger than any other and it is through this the Fowler suggests that, " the word being is much more important than the word human" (Fowler, 158).