Sample translation:

A Little Like Us

By

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Translation: Lucy Moffatt 2020

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Eating like a Pig

Why not start with ourselves.

By the time Charles Darwin published *The Descent of Man* in 1871, scientists were already finding proof of his theory of evolution, as originally presented in *The Origin of the Species* in 1859. The new element in the 1871 book was that Darwin didn't just apply his theory to the animal kingdom. Now humans were included in the model as well – having evolved from the apes through 'sexual selection'. What came as a shock and an insult to many met with ecstatic enthusiasm from others. And at the same time, it sparked a new wet dream for many a scientist: to become first to find the missing link between apes and humans?

Darwin was firmly convinced that humans had originated in Africa. But when the Dutch natural scientist Eugène Dubois left Europe in 1886, he had Asia in his sights – Indonesia to be precise. After several years of excavations on the islands of Sumatra and Java, parts of a skull and a tooth were unearthed in what became the first attempt to prove that Darwin was right. The find was dubbed *Java man* and is now known as *Homo erectus*. Deeply controversial, even in scientific circles, it nonetheless attracted a great deal of attention, and for many people, Java man created the sense that science was really onto something.

The excavations continued and in 1907, a lower jaw with teeth was found in Heidelberg, Germany. This turned out to belong to an even closer relative of us humans than Java man. *Homo heidelbergensis* was duly placed on the timeline of human evolution. Later, in 1912, bone fragments of a prehistoric human primate, dubbed *Piltdown man,* were found in Sussex, England. Forty years later, the find was unmasked as a hoax, but at the time, it was grist to the mill of the evolutionists. Finally, during a dig near Beijing in 1921, led by Swedish archaeologist Johan Gunnar Andersson, traces of what would later be known as *Peking man* appeared. Proof of human evolution could apparently be found anywhere these days.

Against this backdrop, it isn't hard to imagine the elation of the celebrated director of the American Museum of Natural History, Henry Fairfield Osborn, when, one day in March 1922, he slit open an envelope in his office and an apparently human tooth fell into his

palm. The tooth – a molar – had been found during an excavation in the state of Nebraska and had been sent to Osborn personally, since few people had greater expertise and authority in the field than him (among other feats, Osborn was famous for having described and named the iconic dinosaur, *Tyrannosaurus rex*).

It must have struck Osborn at once: a molar, not unlike his own, shaped to chew a variety of food. Could it really be true? A prehistoric human species in North America? For Osborn, it wasn't just a matter of seeing his own name inscribed even more decisively in the annals of science. The molar had been found on a continent so lacking in traces of humanity's assumed origins that this had the potential to become one of the most staggering paleontological finds ever made. What's more, the timing couldn't have been better. Osborn was in the midst of an intense debate with the creationist William Jennings Bryan. The dispute was about the theory of evolution and whether it deserved a place on American schoolchildren's curriculum. What if this dealt a death blow to Bryan? Or better yet – marked the triumph of science over literalist biblical doctrine?

Osborn wasted no time. Within a month, he had published his finding in *Nature*. *Hesperopithecus haroldcooki*, North America's first anthropoid ape, was a reality. Nebraska man instantly became global sensation and *The New York Times* was quick to claim Osborn's tooth showed that 'Mr Bryan is wrong and Darwin is right.' The newspaper even devoted column space to its own illustration of how the American ape-man might have looked: a Neanderthal-like cave-dweller, club in hand.

Osborn didn't just enjoy the resulting personal fame; the polemical power of the sensational discovery left him puffed up with courage, and in a fit of hubris, he took a swing at Bryan. To make the humiliation complete, he told Bryan to take out the Bible he interpreted so literally and consult a certain passage in the Book of Job: 'Speak to the earth and it shall teach thee.'

But as always – pride came before a fall.

In his euphoria and haste, Osborn had made a fateful misjudgement that would not just tarnish his name ever after. He also ended up handing the enemy enough ammunition to ensure that it would be able to maintain its opposition to the theory of evolution right up until the present day. On closer inspection, an article in *Science* journal revealed, the tooth turned out not to belong to a human ape. It didn't even belong to a lower primate. It belonged – yes, you've guessed it – to a pig.

Translation: Lucy Moffatt 2020

It was an irretrievable blunder. *Nebraska man* rapidly underwent a name change to the far less flattering *Pig man*, and ever since, creationists have rarely passed up a chance to bring up Osborn's error of judgement in their mockery of science. 'I believe this is a case in which a scientist made a man out of a pig and the pig made a monkey out of the scientist,' Duane Gish gleefully declared to the Institute for Creation Research half a century later.

The improbability of Osborn mistaking a pig for a human has led many to assume that this was simply an attempt to fake the research to serve the theory of evolution. But there is little to suggest that this is true. So how could a successful scientist like Osborn get it so emphatically wrong? His blunder revealed an important truth: pigs and humans are often astonishingly alike.

The tooth from which Osborn drew his over-hasty conclusions belonged to a foremother of the American peccary. Osborn's problem was that the tooth was pretty worn after spending several million years in the sandy Nebraska soil. And once the enamel on a pig's tooth is gone, there is, practically speaking, nothing to distinguish it from that of a human.

Teeth may be a natural starting point in a tale of pigs and humans. Like humans, pigs have a dental system adapted to the task of tearing meat from bones as well as chewing and grinding plants, nuts, roots and tissue. The pig is, in other words, omnivorous – just like us. It is a primitive trait, one might say. Because the omnivore is a representative of a prehistoric creature whose mould was cast in an era when mammals had not yet specialised their food intake and digestive systems for a narrow niche. Cows and sheep chew grass and plants, while cats and dogs prefer to wolf down animal protein. The primitive mammal developed a taste for *everything*. So if we really want to understand the expression 'eating like a pig', we need to take a trip back in time. A long way back – 65 million years. We are on the threshold of the Paloecene Epoch.

We know the story from science class: a comet hit our planet with an impact as powerful as millions of nuclear bombs. Ash, dust and smoke whirled up into the atmosphere and spread across the globe like a dark blanket. The layer of dust blocked out the sunlight and photosynthesis came to a halt. When the plants withered, the herbivores struggled and so, ultimately, did the carnivores. The giant lizards' 150-million-year dominion of earth may have ended in one short year.

Translation: Lucy Moffatt 2020

As the dinosaurs expired, the world opened up for a creature that had, until then, played a merely supporting role in Earth's great symbiosis – the mammal. Mammals weren't much bigger than rats when the dinosaurs vanished. For millions of years, their evolution had been held in check by a competitor they were never capable of challenging in the battle for food. Instead, these little creatures found their niche high up in the trees, in holes in the ground or on the forest floor, where they lived off a varied diet of insects, plants and other organic material overlooked by the dinosaurs.

There are two reasons why mammals were able to avoid extinction when the meteor struck: as they hid in their underground holes, they were protected from the extreme temperatures that scorched the face of the earth. Then afterwards, when they peered out over the post-apocalyptic landscape, what they saw was food. Without any conception of what had happened or how blessed they were by fate, they scurried across the dusty steppes and found food in most of what they stumbled across.

These primitive mammals comprised three main groups of species: those that laid eggs (there are just four such obscure species today, all native to Oceania), marsupials (which have developed into kangaroos, koalas and a few others) and animals with uteruses (which are the origin of the majority of mammals today, including the pig and us humans). The idea that everything from mice and whales to pigs and humans has descended from these rat-like little creatures may appear so abstract to some of us that one almost sympathises with the creationists' claim that the whole business is 'too stupid to be true'. But only almost.

While Osborn and his peers may have had difficulty pointing to enough proof that Darwin was right, the situation is entirely different today. We have an abundance of proof, which gives a clear and spectacular picture of what happened. In the first (millions of) years after the meteor strike, mammals underwent an evolutionary explosion, competing ruthlessly with one another for dominance and rank on the food ladder. By the beginning of the Miocene Epoch, 23 million years ago, all the main groups of mammals living today were in place. In a (relatively) few years some of them had grown into mighty mastodons while others never escaped their role as small, insignificant creatures. Some had specialised in eating plants and herbs and evolved into ruminants, while others had become carnivores. In addition, a few species retained the original tradition of eating *everything*.

Translation: Lucy Moffatt 2020

Pigs eat everything – and humans eat everything too. This is the primitive tradition we still share with the pig and take with us to our dinner table every single day. Next time you sink your teeth into a double-decker burger and relish the way bread, vegetables and meat get mashed up into a nutritionally complex mush, consider the fact that the same meal would be equally appealing to a pig, and that our common, rat-like foremothers' indispensable capacity to digest such varied combinations of food is the very reason why we mammals still exist at all in the 21st century.

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The road I am driving on winds along the foot of the hills that rise to the east. Up here is where most of the pigs live. Whereas the lowland plain is dominated by vegetable production, the highland is the domain of livestock. Rugland farm lies at the top of a ridge with a view of the sharply defined coastline that borders the ocean to the west. That's where the name Jæren has its origin. It comes from the old Norse word *jaðarr*, meaning 'edge' or 'rim'.

The gravel crunches beneath my tyres as I drive into the farmyard, in among the three, four, five, six, seven buildings (*eight* counting a garage). In front of the barn is a boulder with a black-lettered inscription: 'Rugland'. On top of it is a gilded bronze pig – in case anybody is in any doubt about what is hidden here. Outside one of the buildings stands a solitary figure. He is erect and good-natured, and dressed roughly the way one might expect: overalls and rubber boots. This must be Eirik Rugland. He can't be far off my own age, in his mid-30s. But although he is, strictly speaking, the farmer at Rugland, I'm actually here to meet somebody else.

Just as I am greeting Eirik, a door opens in the building behind him. The man who emerges is older and shorter. This must be his father, Leiv. I get the impression that he is scowling at me behind his son's back. His sun-bronzed face beneath a head of silver-grey hair gives his sky-blue eyes a sharp clarity. He comes around and holds out a rugged hand.

'Leiv Rugland,' he says, from deep in his chest, as he shakes my hand. He reminds me of an old athlete whose body still retains the residue of his former strength. He's actually retired but he still has energy enough to tend the pigs on the farm.

Translation: Lucy Moffatt 2020

I quickly get a feeling that all is not well. Eirik and Leiv exchange brief glances as if they are communicating something they are both privy to. The farmers here are famed for their taciturn disposition but this is something else. Something is bothering them. On the telephone, everything seemed so straightforward, but something has changed. Leiv sees no reason to leave anything unsaid.

'We're sceptical about this.'

I hasten to fish out the sheet of paper with the result of my MRSA test.

'I expect you want to see the test result,' I say, holding it out to them.

Leiv barely glances at the paper. 'Oh, yes – that. I'm sure it's fine,' he says, waving it aside. They have taken their own precautions anyway. Eirik hands me a face mask, plastic gloves and an anti-contamination suit wrapped in plastic.

'You can just leave your boots in the car. You'll get special footwear from us,' Leiv said.

For an instant I was afraid they might turn me away, so it's initially a relief to be given the gear they want me to dress up in. But I soon an edge of doubt creeps in. Protective gear? What was point of putting me through the test? Why are they walking around in ordinary clothing themselves? Is all this a subtle demonstration of power directed at a person they don't really trust? It's all starting to pile up now. First there was the Farmers' Union being unable to give out information about pig breeders because of 'data protection'. Then there was my own fumbling and failed attempt to visit a pig farm. Next came a painful MRSA test. Followed by three weeks' quarantine before the test result – and now anti-contamination gear. All this just so that I, a simple carnivore, can catch a glimpse of the animal I love to eat.

'Is this really necessary?' I ask as I unwrap the suit and stick my foot into the first trouser leg.'

'That's just the way it is. It's all about contagion,' Leiv says.

This is no time to quibble. I pull up the zip, coax the plastic gloves over my fingers, place the mask in front of my mouth and draw the hood over my head. My reflection in the car window looks like a health worker about to enter an Ebola zone. Or perhaps a criminal investigator would be more fitting, since they clearly suspect there's something I want to look into, something I want to reveal. Leiv stops on the threshold.

'We don't know what kind of a bloke you are,' he says.

'We talked about this on the phone, though,' I say, words muffled by the face mask.

‘Well, yes. But it isn’t so easy to tell who you’re dealing with nowadays.’

I’m genuinely starting to become uncertain myself. I just wanted to see a pig. How difficult can it be?

It isn’t hard to see things from Leiv’s point of view. He and Eirik are in the midst of what they perceive as an escalating cultural conflict. It’s actually the age-old story about the relationship between the urban and the rural, the centre and the periphery. But in the past decade, the pivot of this conflict has increasingly shifted from the people to the animals – and in few areas is it more heated than in pig farming. According to Leiv and Eirik, the profession is under attack and they believe their opponents are playing dirty.

‘So you’re wondering if I have a hidden agenda?’ I ask.

Leiv ponders this for a while. ‘It is a bit suspicious – you turning up here saying you want to meet the pigs. It isn’t what you’d call an ordinary request. But you said you were open, that you listen to both sides, so I’ll just have to take your word for it.’

It seems as if Leiv has guessed my intentions. Although I wolf down industrial pork in one form or another pretty much every day, my worldview has long been driven by forces that work *against* this lifestyle. For years I have met the arguments of the animal welfare movement with an assenting nod. From a moral philosophy point of view, they have been pretty much unassailable, as I have seen it – from my position as a person remote from any form of animal husbandry. After all, why should we eat food from animals we doubt have lived good lives when we can simply stop doing so? Resorting to ‘tradition’ and ‘because it tastes nice’ just isn’t good enough. It’s too reminiscent of the sort of self-justification that left women and vulnerable ethnic groups without fundamental human rights in times gone by. Nor is the fact that we are carnivores by nature a good enough argument to justify the neglectful treatment of animals: it fails to take into account the fact that humans are an omnivorous species with a capacity for critical reflection. The problem is that I have an essential flaw, which I would say is also profoundly human: I am lazy and struggle to practice what I preach. In order to avoid living my life as a hypocrite, I wish – among other things – to get some help from the person who knows the industrial pig best. But now I sense some unease.

‘The animal welfare movement completely dominates the media these days. It’s as if they think we shouldn’t be here at all.’

Translation: Lucy Moffatt 2020

What is this? Am I hearing the Norwegian pig-farmer's swansong? An elegy to industrial livestock – a last grunt from the farmyard before everything crumbles to dust?

According to UK newspaper *The Guardian*, 2018 was the year that vegetarianism and veganism became mainstream in the West. It is plain to see that the same is true of Norway. In our bookshops, vegetarian and vegan cookery books now account for a significant share of the flora. In 2018, *The Vegetable Cookery Book* even won the annual prize for best publication in its category. The big Christmas buzz in 2019 was meat-free Christmas meals and Norwegian broadcaster, NRK, made TV programmes about how even Christmas Eve dinner could be delicate and refined without Norway's yuletide staples of pork rib, smoked lamb chops and Christmas cod. But how many nut roasts actually materialised?

'It's odd how there's been so much talk about this,' Leiv says. 'After all, what do most people eat?' Of course he wants me to yell 'industrial meat'. And there's no reason why I shouldn't accommodate him. Even though the environmental and animal welfare organisations have seen considerable growth in their membership numbers in the past couple of years, there are still no reliable numbers for how many people have cut out meat entirely. Based on how many pigs have been slaughtered in the past few years, there don't appear to have been all that many. 1.7 million pigs were sent to slaughter in Norway in 2018. That's more than ever before. True, a full 7,000 tonnes of the resulting meat was exported but real-term Norwegian consumption of industrial pork has remained more or less stable over the whole of the past decade.

If animal welfare is as important as it can often appear to be in the media portrayals, it might seem fair to assume that ecological farming of happy free-range pigs is the future. But there is little to indicate that this is the case: in recent years, the ecological share of the pork market has fallen in real terms. Indeed, there is no other meat whose ecological variant is less eaten than pork: ecological beef, lamb and chicken all have far higher shares of their respective markets. At the same time, the biggest ecological meat business of all – lamb production – accounts for barely three per cent of the total market for lamb meat. In other words, the trend appears to be that ethically aware consumers leapfrog over ecological animal husbandry entirely and head straight for the plants. It has become a matter of either/or: eat or don't eat, kill or don't kill. So Leiv has a point when he says:

'What's the alternative for Eirik, now he's taken over the farm? There's a limit to how many ecological farmers we can have in this country.'

Translation: Lucy Moffatt 2020

He goes quiet for a moment. We stand there, taking in the panoramic view across the sea. The light, falling in columns through the perforated cloud cover, is reminiscent of organ pipes – as if the insane grey-blue canvas of sky and sea could blast out a crescendo any second now.

Then he adds:

'I honestly don't know how it's possible to farm ecologically. I have no interest in it and given how mucky pigs get and how they root around in the soil, I don't think it looks especially appetising either.'

It's ironic that this is what Leiv chooses to say right before we go in – because the second we step over the threshold of his piggery, I feel like throwing up myself.

Fortunately, it isn't the sight that sets off my retching reflex; we're still only standing in the entranceway. It's the smell. The intense, penetrating stench of ammonia and acetone, which scorches my mucous membranes and is worse than almost anything I've ever experienced. I must have said something because Leiv's face is a picture of puzzlement.

'Do you think it smells?' His question turns out to be absolutely genuine.

'Can't you smell it?'

'Not enough to think about it at any rate.'

Leiv has been in the piggery almost every day of his 66-year life. It must have done something to his receptors, I think. At the same time, I have a feeling he thinks the complete opposite. 'Here's a sensitive city nose that's come to the countryside and discovered what smell is for the first time.'

Once the olfactory shock has died down, I can at last take in what I came for. Because here they are – sows, in this case. We are standing in a large room with four enormous pigpens, each containing roughly ten fully grown sows. The naked mounds of flesh lie together in great clusters, partly on top of one another – not unlike a colony of walruses. The association is further strengthened whenever any of these long-bodied, short-legged, 300kg biological paradoxes of a beast heave themselves up onto their cloven hooves. It is a helpless struggle against the laws of nature – some of them barely manage to get up. It's hard to grasp that once, far back in prehistory, these animals would have been neat, spritely wild boars.

Translation: Lucy Moffatt 2020

I reach over the edge of the pigsty and scratch one of them behind the ear. She seems to like it; when I withdraw my hand, she oinks and tosses her head as if she's asking for more.

The piggery is divided into four sections: one for breeding sows, one for young sows waiting to reach sexual maturity and two sections for slaughter pigs. In addition, there is a separate slaughter pig section in the neighbouring building. In all, 52 sows produce more than a thousand slaughter pigs per year. That is a significant-sized business by Norwegian standards, but would barely rank as a smallholding compared to businesses in other countries. In China, the largest complexes are several storeys high. They can house up to 30,000 sows, which produce around 850,000 slaughter pigs per year.

'You've timed it nicely,' Leiv says once we're inside the next section. He leans into one of the pigsties and pulls the umbilical cord off a naked little new-born who's lying there, crawling around in the woodchip by the sow's backside.

It turns out I've arrived in the middle of the farrowing. There are 20 smaller pigsties in this section, each housing a sow that is either farrowing or waiting for something to happen. We stand there beside pigsty number 13, where the sow is in the middle of this process. She lies on her side, groaning and snorting, as her new-born piglets butt against her udders with unsteady movements. It isn't easy to spot, but a power struggle is now going on between the piglets. They are battling for ownership of the teats and to establish a hierarchy that will last for the whole of their short lives.

As Leiv and Eirik explain the cycle here – insemination, birth, growth and slaughter – I become aware of a low, muffled whine. Who is squealing? I look round but can't work out where it's coming from. Can it be from a piglet that's on its way out? I look at Leiv and Eirik. They also seem a bit puzzled.

'One of them has probably ended up underneath,' Leiv says, going in and slapping the sow on her backside. But she doesn't stir. Another slap, two slaps. She has no intention of moving. The thin wail continues and now Eirik joins in too. They rock the enormous body and eventually manage to winkle out an exhausted little fellow from beneath the mound of flesh. Leiv inspects the little creature. Unbelievably enough, there is no sign of injury. So he slings it nonchalantly over to the rest of its siblings who are crawling around by the teats.

Translation: Lucy Moffatt 2020

The fact that sows can crush their young to death is an unfortunate by-product of recent animal welfare legislation. Previously sows were kept immobile during birth by being placed in a farrowing crate that prevented them from moving to the sides. For days, the sow was deprived of all movement while her young escaped having their mother roll over on them. The ban on immobilising breeding sows has obviously been beneficial for the sows but has undoubtedly caused painful deaths for some of their young – and greater wastage for the farmer.

So far, 12 piglets are out, but there are probably still some more to come. Litters of piglets usually number between 10 and 15, although it is unusual for there to be more than 20. This can easily become a problem because sows normally only have 14 teats and, since the piglets establish a fixed hierarchy, there will generally be some that don't get enough food. So it is also a fight for survival and the piglets come into the world equipped with razor-sharp fangs. However, survival of the fittest isn't the only rule that applies here: the pigs are also subject to a first-come-first-served principle. Studies have shown that the last piglets to arrive are twice as likely to die as those that get to the food early. Nonetheless, there is hope for the latecomers: since piglets are hairless, sows don't lick their young. As a result, the bond between mother and offspring is not as strong as in many other animals. That makes it easy to sneak some of the piglets into a different pigsty with better access to teats.

The face mask is taut and is cutting into the top of my nose. After adjusting it a few times to relieve the pressure, I end up pulling it down under my chin. At first it feels like a liberation but I soon find I am dry-mouthed and my throat starts to prickle. I swallow, clear my throat and growl. Steam from the urine and faeces has mingled with particles of woodchip, scurf and mites – and now it coats my mucous membranes.

Previously, it wasn't unusual for pigs to suffer from this too. Many developed chronic respiratory problems as a result of the poor air quality in the piggeries. But following the introduction of new, stricter rules on ventilation, there are few signs that pigs suffer such problems today. I'm not so lucky. In an effort to achieve some respiratory relief, I breathe in through my nose for the first time. It immediately proves to be just as bad an idea as it was when we came in.

Translation: Lucy Moffatt 2020

The afterbirth oozes out into the woodchip. After piglet number 12, the sow in pigsty number 13 is done. The fact that pigs have so many young is a taxonomic aberration. Animals with cloven hooves rarely give birth to more than two per litter. In this respect, pigs are more like dogs and cats. But unlike the offspring of predators, piglets are quick to get to their feet, like most herbivores. This is a typical trait in prey animals that have to move as fast as they can to avoid danger.

Whereas cows and sheep generally need a bit of assistance from the farmer during birth, pigs usually get by on their own. Consequently, Leiv doesn't need to spend the night in the piggery and be present when it's happening. But one thing is important. He must always inspect the pigsties for afterbirth. Because if the piglets have arrived and there is no afterbirth, there are probably still some left inside the sow. That means he'll have to stick his arm in and pull them out.

Leiv picks up the last arrival and wipes it clean with a handful of hay. Then he sticks his fingers in the piglet's mouth and forces its jaws apart.

'Feel this.'

I stick a finger in cautiously. The canines feel like needles. Leiv pulls out a little gadget that looks like an electric shaver. He pushes the jaw fully open and places the device inside the mouth. It only takes a couple of seconds for the first tooth to be ground down. Leiv tells me the piglets feel no pain and he could have used a nail-clipper instead.

'Do you want to hold it?'

I arrange the piglet with its head resting in the crook of my elbow and its belly against my lower arm – roughly the way I might hold a new-born baby. It doesn't make a sound but is clearly frightened. Its body trembles and its heart hammers beneath its ribs. I stroke its back gently and feel the bumps of its vertebrae through its naked skin. It is no more than a week since I was at the hospital taking my own son into my arms. This probably accounts for the nagging sense of concern I suddenly feel for the new-born, human-like creature. I try to shake it off, mentally saying to myself 'I'll eat you,' but somehow I can't force the sentence out – not even in my thoughts.

Like Alice in Wonderland, I am suddenly finding it difficult to see any great difference between a baby and a pig – although admittedly Alice experiences it the opposite way around. During a visit to the Duchess's kitchen, Alice is asked to look after a baby. She takes

it in her arms and decides to go for a little stroll with it. The minute she gets outside, she hears some small grunts from the child. Alice inspects its face and sees to her surprise that it is gradually taking on the features of a pig: 'This time there could be *no* mistake about it: it was neither more nor less than a pig, and she felt that it would be quite absurd for her to carry it further. So she set the little creature down, and felt quite relieved to see it trot away quietly into the wood.' I'm finding it less easy to let go.

'It looks as if you want to take him home with you,' Leiv says with a grin. His comment makes me think of something I read about Papua New Guinea. Nowhere in the world is the pig held in higher esteem than there. All its offspring must be taken care of, including piglets that aren't really strong enough to survive. If there's a breast-feeding woman in the village, it will be placed on the woman's breast and raised like a human child.

'My wife's breast-feeding. Maybe it'd be possible?'

We laugh and there's no longer any sign of that tense atmosphere between us.

'The question is what you'll do in six months,' Leiv answers. And he obviously has a point. At birth, a piglet weighs just a third as much as a human baby. After 16 weeks, the human child weighs around seven kilograms. By that time, the pig weighs in at 70. This growth rate is something Canadian couple Steve Jenkins and Derek Walter experienced close up when they adopted what they thought was a six-month old – and fully grown – micro pig. That rapidly proved to be a lie. After a year, the sow was well on her way to 200 kilograms. But the couple liked their pig Esther so much that they didn't want to give her up. Nowadays, they live with a 285-kilogram sow in their living room.

I ask Eirik and Leiv if they've ever thought of taking a piglet into the house with them, just to cuddle and play with it.

'Pigs are industrial animals. We don't cuddle them,' is the abrupt response to my question. Suddenly, the cosy atmosphere has evaporated. *Industrial animal*? What *is* the distinction between an industrial or production animal and a pet? Of course, it's all just a matter of language and social constructs. But Leiv's comment highlights a key point: how we *use* our animals determines how we *classify* them; and how we *classify* them determines how we *treat* them. A single word allows us to shut pigs away in factory-like units, to stop interacting with them and, ultimately, to eat them.

As I put the piglet down, I catch sight of one of its siblings. It is trembling helplessly in the corner of the pigsty and is just half the size of the others.

Translation: Lucy Moffatt 2020

‘That one probably won’t amount to anything,’ Leiv says with the faintest trace of empathy in his voice.

It’s a long way from Papua New Guinea to Jæren.

In the car on the way home, I cough and clear my throat over the steering wheel. It feels as if I’m *breathing* pig. I turn into a petrol station and buy a bottle of water. When I go to pay, I get the impression that the girl behind the counter is shrinking away from me. I really don’t blame her, because there is no doubt about it: I stink. I open the bottle on my way out of the sliding doors and chug it down between the petrol pumps. It feels better but I still haven’t got rid of the tickle in my throat, and the taste of caged pigs persists – a disturbing element at the back of my gullet. I feel the need to be outside, to breathe in the sea breeze and air my body.

When I left the farm, we agreed that I would spend a lot of time in the piggery in the time ahead, so I could get to know the pig and learn how to be a pig-tender. I use the breathing space to travel back to a time when both pigs and humans lived beneath the open sky. Because if there has ever been a trace of equality between us, it was then. It is only a short drive north on the plain.

Translation: Lucy Moffatt 2020

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Is Anybody Home?

She still doesn't have a name. I call her number 13, after the pigsty she was assigned to the first time I was at the piggery. Her new piglets are well-fed, it seems; they lie intertwined in a pink bundle beneath a flap in the corner of the pigsty. She herself lies on her side because it is hard for her to hold those 300 kilos of hers above the ground for long. I sit on my haunches and stroke her neck. Suddenly she lifts her head and looks me in the eye. Not in that vague way a sheep or a cow tends to, where the mental presence of the animal never seems quite real. It's different with number 13: she looks me in the eye as a human would. Or at least that's the impression I get. Perhaps I'm projecting my own imaginings onto her. At the same time there's something about this gaze that makes such imaginings seem inevitable because I have never seen animal eyes that remind me more of my own. Encased in naked folds of skin, with long pale eyelashes, her eyes have white eyeballs, clear, defined irises and within them, distinct black pupils. The concentric circles of her eyes seem to draw me to her; to something that lies behind them – to a sense of… *soul*?

The eye contact doesn't last more than a few seconds before her gaze wanders off to the side and she lets her head fall back onto the concrete. Soul or not – judging by her body language, she is utterly consumed by apathy. But who am I to judge the body language of a pig? It would be so much easier if she could talk.

Perhaps it's ridiculous to imagine something like this. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein was the one who said that 'if a lion could speak, we would not understand him'. He did not mean by this that the lion would probably speak a different language from us. Wittgenstein's point was that the language itself – regardless of how close it was to our own mother tongue – would not have much meaning for us humans. The mental world of animals is too starkly different from our own for it ever to be possible to establish a shared conceptual apparatus to convey the different experiences and world views we possess as human and animal, respectively. There is a hopelessness to Wittgenstein that can be difficult to take for anybody wishing to understand an animal. But we're not much better off listening to another philosopher – Thomas Nagel – who, in a 1974 essay, posed the

question: ‘What is it like to be a bat?’. We can never know, he concluded. First of all, bats move by flying. Secondly, bats are blind and navigate using echolocation. And as if this weren’t difficult enough to imagine in itself, things are complicated even further by the need to simultaneously take into account the unique way bats process or perceive their sensory impressions. No. The inner life of animals will always be beyond human understanding, Nagel writes.

Still, the fact that philosophers find it difficult to get inside the mental world of animals has never stopped humans from longing to do precisely that. Few have expressed this more clearly than Stephen Jay Gould, who wrote the following lines towards the end of his long career: ‘Give me one minute – just one minute – inside the skin of this creature. Hook me for just sixty seconds to the perceptual and conceptual apparatus of this other being – and then I will know what natural historians have sought through the ages.’

For Gould, it did not go beyond yearning, but British philosopher and lawyer Charles Foster didn’t give up until he had gone the whole hog. In his book *Being a Beast*, Foster tells us of his attempts to live like various animals, including a badger on a hillside in Wales, with all that this entailed: living in a set, crawling around on all fours, and eating insects, worms and carrion. I inspect the floor of the pigsty: woodchip, urine, faeces. It isn’t very tempting to follow Foster’s example. And perhaps that’s just as well, because even he had to accept in the end that the experiment had failed. We can all play make believe but it is hardly likely that we will ever be capable of comprehending bats’ echolocation, elephants’ ultrasonic hearing, insects’ capacity to perceive flowers’ ultraviolet light or certain species’ ability to sense the Earth’s geomagnetism. As a friend says to Foster, ‘It’s like trying to live in a fifth dimension. You can describe it mathematically, but you can’t give any account of what it would be like to live in it.’

The notion that it is possible to adopt the perspective of animals is probably as old as the human mind itself. And perhaps this was part of what inspired Homer, when he wrote his epic poem about the warrior king Odysseus in around 720 BCE. The work, which depicts Odysseus’ journey home to the island of Ithaca after the Trojan war, is today regarded as the classic of classics in the Western literary canon. Few, if any, literary works have been subjected to such penetrating analyses and interpretations. But there is something striking about the Odyssey that is rarely pointed out: it contains a lot of pigs.

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Pigs and wild boars turn up in several passages of the work but it all comes to a head when Odysseus and his crew pay a visit to the goddess of sorcery, Circe, who has prepared a welcome drink the men will wish they had never allowed to pass their lips. When they've downed the witch's brew, they undergo a metamorphosis that ends up transforming the entire crew into a grunting herd of swine. Then, with a slap of the backside, they are driven into the pigsty.

If there is one thing Homer's depiction of the bewitched crew can teach us about what it is like to be a pig, it is that this is an unhappy life: the crew, now in the guise of 'nine-year-old hogs', weep in their pigsty but cannot speak. When at last Odysseus rescues his men from the enchantment by going to bed with Circe, their sobs of joy are so piteous that even the goddess is moved.

Not all thinkers of antiquity shared the view that a pig's life is as dismal as Homer would have us believe. The Greek historian Plutarch, who lived in the first century CE, saw things differently. Based on the same scene from the Odyssey, Plutarch composed a dialogue between Odysseus and the pig Gryllus, in which it is unclear who is worse off – man or pig. In Plutarch's version, Odysseus sleeping with Circe is not enough to make her release his crew from the enchantment. Instead she asks him how he can be so sure that his crew truly want to become men again. Odysseus answers that of course he cannot prove it, since pigs cannot talk. But it seems self-evident to him that his crew would wish to escape their 'piteous and shameful' existence as swine. Circe parries by giving one of the pigs the power of speech and it becomes clear to Odysseus at once that he was wrong. Gryllus, as the pig calls himself, does not want to return. After just a few hours as a pig, human life strikes him as objectionable and immoral. Odysseus tries to convince him of the contrary but in the discussion that takes place between them, the pig always has the upper hand. In the end, Gryllus comes out of the dialogue as having both greater eloquence and higher moral standing than Odysseus can display. And that's saying a lot.

If Gryllus doesn't tell us all that much about what life as a pig is like in itself, Plutarch's dialogue nonetheless demonstrates a long-held view: pigs are intelligent. So it's hardly an accident that pigs were assigned the role of strategists, ideologues and teachers in George Orwell's allegorical fable, *Animal Farm*. As Orwell writes, 'The work of teaching and organising the others fell naturally upon the pigs, who were generally recognised as being the cleverest of the animals.' The farm in the story represents Tsarist Russia, which is shaken

by a popular revolt, represented by the animals. The power that falls into the hands of the revolutionary leaders – represented by the pigs – gradually corrupts them, and the farm that was supposed to abandon the neglectful management of humans in favour of a system controlled by and for animals, ultimately ends in a piggy dictatorship as ruthless as that of the farmers. 'The creatures […] looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.'

In the piggery at Jæren, where sow number 13 lies heavily slumped upon the concrete floor, there is little to indicate any grassroots rebellion or other conspiratorial intent on the animals' part. In the eyes of number 13, apathy still reigns. Or is it perhaps resignation? My human capacity for projection also enables me to conjure up a trapped 'Help!' inside there. But why should she say that? Number 13 knows no other life. She has never seen the sky, or birds or any other animals for that matter. She has never set foot outside the door of the piggery either, and nor will she. Only when her duty as a breeding pig is done and she is herded across the ramp that leads into the slaughter truck will she catch a glimpse of a world other than this. For me, her life throws up associations with Plato's allegory of the cave or *The Matrix*. But I guess epistemology isn't for pigs either.

Is there really anyone at home there behind those seemingly human eyes of hers?

When biologists started to study animal behaviour in the 1800s, the inner life of animals was an irrelevance. In a world where knowledge of nature was limited, biology continued to pursue the old tradition of gaining an overview of nature's diversity and dividing it into categories. This task, first seriously set in motion by Aristotle in the 4th century BCE, was more or less completed in the mid-1700s by the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus in his towering work, *Systema Naturae*. Here, Linnaeus classified all known plant and animal species, simultaneously assigning them Latin names.

As the biologists of the 1800s continued to gather species into Linnaeus's taxonomic system, a new branch of biology emerged, which had a similar mania for collecting: zoology. The zoologists' niche was to collect behaviours, so-called species-specific behaviours: 'dogs do this', 'pigs do this' – and that's that. If the pig grunts and roots in the soil with its snout, it does so simply because it represents the species *Sus scrofa domesticus*, for which this is a species-specific trait. The factors underlying the behaviour and the circumstances in which it

arose still lay outside the scientists' field of interest. There was no room for the notion that animals – just like humans – were individuals with a flexible range of behaviour patterns, depending on the situation in which they found themselves. In this way, science became an expression for what is known as *biological determinism* – the perception that the patterns of behaviour and destinies of different individuals are completely fixed by the biological mechanisms in their bodies.

At the same time as the zoologists were going to the forest and lying behind rocks and anthills to note how the animals behaved, something else started happening in a much larger segment of the population. And this would stand in stark contrast to the work of the zoologists. In ever-increasing numbers, ordinary people started taking animals into their homes to coddle and pamper them. And for ordinary people, of course, the animals that waltzed into their parlours and made themselves at home on rugs and sofas were not taxonomic categories. They were autonomous, named individuals – even family members. More importantly, the owners did not perceive their pets as fixed biological machines; they were creatures with feelings, intelligence and complex personalities. Since those days, there has always been an awkward conflict between popular wisdom and scientific theory, because scientists have always had trouble demonstrating that very thing.

One of the most difficult barriers to overcome for those wishing to defend animals' mental powers to science is a fundamental philosophical premise that we find again in Wittgenstein and Nagel, among others. It's about language and the way we categorise our inner life. All experiences, feelings, states of mind and sensory perceptions have been assigned terms and labels based on a mental register that originates from us. Consequently, any attempt to attach the same labels to other species will simply demonstrate that we see animals through the prism of humanity and ascribe qualities to them that we cannot be certain they possess. If, for example, you perceive your dog as being happy when you come home after a long day at work, you will be unable to document this in a satisfactory fashion. The only thing you have to offer is that it appears to be happy, since it does things you associate with the concept of 'happiness'. The trouble is that you cannot know whether what you associate with happiness is what the dog is actually experiencing, or indeed whether the dog has the psychological equipment necessary to experience this feeling. If you choose to overlook these objections – as most ordinary people do when it comes to their pets – and persist in

thinking that your dog is happy, you are engaging in what is known as *anthropomorphism*, or the humanisation of animals.

For a long time, this concept has been big taboo in all animal research because it fails to satisfy science's requirement that a phenomenon must be objectively observable. That is why it is something of a paradox that one of the greatest scientific authorities of all, Charles Darwin, considered it perfectly natural to attribute feelings and frames of mind that we know from our own emotional lives to animals. The reason was simple: Darwin was a dog person.

For Darwin, it wasn't just natural to perceive his own dog in this way. He went so far as to use this assumption as a building block of his evolutionary theory. In his book *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* from 1872, he expanded his evolutionary theory to include brain function as well. According to his theory, all physical functions in mammals had key similarities as a result of their shared evolutionary origin. Darwin saw no reason why this should not apply to the brain as well. A comparison between the human brain and that of another mammal showed only degrees of difference between us, not essential differences, according to Darwin. Based on the time spent with his dogs, Darwin argued that animals have many of the same senses as humans: they can remember and learn, and they can experience emotional states such as pleasure, fright, joy or despondency. In short, his views appear to coincide nicely with traditional folk wisdom but not with later science.

Through the 1900s, Darwin's *Origin of the Species* and *The Descent of Man* were almost bibles for biologists, whereas his book on brain function remained virtually unread. The reasons for this are complicated but if we are to place the blame on any individuals, there are two prime candidates.

The first is Darwin's assistant and successor, George Romanes, who swallowed his master's ideas a little too greedily. For Romanes, it was the most self-evident thing in the world that animals had a mental life akin to that of humans. He got so hung up on this that he eventually went completely off the rails, attributing highly advanced states of consciousness to animals and even going so far as to claim that they had consciences and high morals. On one occasion, he described how a monkey that was shot by a hunter smeared its hand with blood from its wound and held it up in front of the hunter to make him feel guilty. Today, even the most fervent advocate of animals' mental capabilities would think that such a description was taking things too far.

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The other culprit is the biologist and psychologist C. Lloyd Morgan, who reacted strongly to what he perceived as Romanes' fabrications. In an apparently sensible response, Morgan proposed to tone down the humanisation of animals. He ended up formulating a principle which stated that one should never interpret animals' behaviour as a product of higher mental powers if the behaviour can just as easily be interpreted as a product of primitive forces or instinct. 'Morgan's canon', as the principle was called, rapidly became a mantra for almost all studies of animals and still holds sway to this day.

The results have been significant. As Morgan's idea caught on, it sparked a profound scepticism about animals' mental traits. And the sceptics would become virtually unassailable. After all, how are we to deal with the sceptic who considers it suspect to assume that a dog is expressing the joy of reunion when it comes, tail wagging, to meet its owner after a lengthy absence? For a doubter, the behaviour could just as easily express the fact that the dog is simply hungry. Or what about the dairy cow whose calf has been taken away, which stops eating and moos for days on end without stopping. Could this be an expression of grief or loss? Not as long as there is a possibility that it is merely a primitive expression of confusion without any connection whatsoever to an emotional register.

Faced with a scientific hegemony in which instinct always trumps mental powers, the motivation to demonstrate anything at all about animals' inner life swiftly dissipated. Instead, two towering – and often competing – fields of behavioural science emerged in the 1930s, each of which, on its own side of the Atlantic, achieved the feat of revealing complex aspects of animal behaviour without attributing any higher mental powers at all to those same animals. One emerged from the field of psychology In the US and was known as *behaviourism*. The other grew out of biology in Germany and was called *ethology*.

At the same time as animals' inner life was being swept aside by science, something else was happening: the industrialisation and intensification of agriculture. Smallholdings were replaced by industrial farms and domestic animals were transferred from open fields to cramped sheds and stalls, where they were subjected to extensive breeding programmes that drastically altered their physiologies. If the scientific hegemony surrounding the understanding of animals' inner life of the 1900s was not a direct cause of the intensification of animal husbandry that took off in the 1960s, it nonetheless created a climate that helped legitimise the new organisation of animal farming, since there was little

scientific documentation of emotions and mental powers in animals. As long as the agricultural industry – backed up by science – has been able to choose between interpreting a pig's howl from its concrete stall as an expression of pain and desperation on the one hand or a need to create sound without any particular intent on the other, the choice has been rather simple. After all, who wants to suffer pangs of conscience when they can just as easily avoid it? As unionist, politician and former pig farmer Bjarne Undheim says: 'Today I'd hesitate to say that piglets didn't feel pain when we castrated them without anaesthetic; on the other hand, they do squeal if you so much as lay a finger on them, so it hasn't always been easy to tell what's what.'

The practical result of the scientific view of the 20th century has proved suspiciously similar to René Descartes' view of animals as machines in the 17th century, where the heartrending screams of animals on the dissection table were never a cause for any concern. It is still common to meet sceptics who call animals' emotional lives and cognitive powers into question by arguing that, after all, we never know. But thanks to breakthroughs in neurology, psychology and biological behavioural research over the past two decades, overwhelming numbers of scientists have come to the fairly unsurprising realisation that traditional folk wisdom and Darwin's ideas had some merit all along.

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