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Davor Slamnig

A Tale of Two Pigs

Basna o dva prasca

In a pigsty there lived two pigs: Pointy and Snubby. They were named by the shape of their snouts: Pointy had a pointed one, and Snubby's was turned-up. One day Snubby pulled his characteristic snout out of the trough full of slops and said:

»We live in a pigsty.«

After that they spent a while contemplatively sipping the swill, and then Pointy said, »But therefore we get free slops. If we were frisking freely through the forest, no one would give them to us.«

Snubby leaned very close to his face.

»Pointy, are you conscious of the fact that they give us these slops to fatten us up? When we reach a specific weight, they'll slaughter us. We've sold our souls to the enemy. We've agreed to pay for a cushy life with our own bodies, our own bacon and chops.«

»You're falling into a contradiction. First you say we've sold our souls, then in the end it turns out that we've sold our bodies. Don't strain your brains over it, Snubby. Enjoy the present moment, don't think about what was yesterday and what will be tomorrow. Eat a little swill, today it's excellent.«

»I don't have any appetite,« said Snubby listlessly. »You're aware of your own hopeless situation, and what do you do? You gobble like a pig.«

Pointy slurped up a good gulp of slops in protest, wiped his pointed snout on the rim of the trough and looked Snubby right in the eyes (one brown, and the other blue): »Imagine, my dear piglet, that you're living in the woods. That you live on a meager diet of acorns, that you sleep beneath the stars and that at any moment a lion might eat you. Would you really like that better?«

»In these woods there aren't any lions. It just shows how far you've gotten from nature, from the world in global perspective. Your associates are pigs, your life-style is a trough, and the universe is a pigsty to you. However, let me answer your question. Yes, I'd prefer it if the moment of my death were unforeseeable, if I could cherish in

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myself the hidden hope of immortality. But this way I can measure the duration of my life by my own weight.«

»Hogwash,« said Pointy nervously.

»They'll slaughter us when we get to 400 lbs. I'm already 290, which means I have only 110 pounds of life left. How heavy are you?«

»None of your business,« snapped Pointy.

Snubby continued, »Slops, our swinish nectar and ambrosia, are liquid death. With each ecstatic gulp we shorten our own lives.«

»But life's shortened just the same way with cigarettes, alcohol, drugs... And I still like slops better than all that. A matter of taste.«

»It's *not* the same, Pointy. How much old age you could have lived to see — a person only finds out when he dies, and by then it's already all the same to him. But I know exactly how much the date of my death moves if I deny myself a single meal of swill.«

That night they slept poorly. Pointy grunted and squealed in his sleep. He frequently woke up and pigged out, as if he wanted to drown his sorrows in slops. Snubby lay pensively on his back and looked at the moon through a crack in the pigsty.

In the morning fresh swill came. Pointy immediately threw himself upon it, praising it with all the epithets of a gourmet. Snubby took only two gulps and then lay down again.

»You aren't eating,« asked Pointy.

»No,« answered Snubby. »I'm conserving my time. I want to think through my life, become *porcus porcinus*, a pig enswined. I have to organize my escape, plan out my further existence — and for that I must have time, I need at least twenty pounds more than I have left. My first step in the porcization of myself shall be voluntary fasting.«

After a few days Ida said to Elmer: »Our Snubby's eating poorly. Maybe he's ailing.«

»He should be slaughtered right away,« answered Elmer.

MORAL: If they're already fattening you for lard, don't be in a hurry to turn into sausage.

Mommy Knows Best

Mama najbolje zna

I am a little boy. My name is Darko. I ride my light blue tricycle. Mother holds a banana and every few minutes shoves it into my mouth. The banana is big and I have to open my mouth wide to bite off a piece. Then I still have to chew it up some, because I can't swallow it whole. All this interferes with my riding. The important thing for me is that I ride, and to Mommy that I eat the banana. But if I refuse to take a bite, then Mommy stops and asks me why I don't want it. So there again I can't ride. Then Mommy says, »Come on, Darko, eat just a bite of banana, then ride some more.« I can't resist that suggestion.

After all, even if I try to get away — even with the help of the tricycle — Mommy is faster. So I've reconciled myself somewhat to the fact that my morning tricycle ride is a compromise between my desires and Mommy's. It's good that I'm in the fresh air a little. At least that's what Mommy says.

The ones who are littler than me have it even worse. They get pushed around in strollers. On the tricycle I have at least some control over the way I ride. I can weave a little, make noises as if I have an engine, turn left and right. Mommy tolerates all that if I eat the banana. But the poor kids in the strollers ride along like sacks of potatoes. With respect to the direction and speed of travel they're left to the mercy of their Mommies. But, if things get too intense, I can race ahead a little, frantically turning the pedals of the tricycle. I can speed off head-long towards sun-drenched freedom, while the air streams past my ears, and the front wheel bounces over the pebbles on the infinite asphalt. I rarely get spanked for that. My Mommy is good.

The banana again. My concentration is weak, I'm still little. After a bite I can't remember what I was thinking about before the bite. My name is Darko. They bought me a light blue tricycle. It was about time they bought it.

Oh, how wonderful I felt when I first got the tricycle. Mommy, Daddy and the other grown-ups stood in a circle, and I rode around in that circle

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as I never have since. Only then I didn't know yet how to ride as well as now. Still, Mommy was really proud. Everyone was giving her all kinds of compliments on my account. Well, I was proud too at that moment, even though they were saying the compliments to Mommy. Because, after all, I was the one who had coaxed them with my brave display on a vehicle that still wasn't familiar enough.

However, my tricycle freedom was soon limited to the morning rides with Mommy and the banana. And then only if it's good weather. Grown-ups get fed up fast.

»Come on, Darko, take just a bite of banana, then ride some more,« says Mommy and forces the banana on me. It's not that I hate bananas. But my train of thought and my riding are broken up by that banana into insignificant, overly short pieces. Nothing gets around to happening. I can't get to where I achieve anything. One time I firmly decide to eat the whole banana right away. However, once I chew up and swallow one mouthful, Mommy says, »There, now you can ride a little, Darko.« And then I forget all my decisions and ride off hysterically and don't know whether I'm running away from the next bite or hurrying into its jaws. I'm still little. My memory is short. Another bite. They're getting to be more and more frequent. Mommy's in a hurry to get home. How can I explain to her that I'd rather ride a bit more uninterrupted by the banana and then finish it at home? If I make a scene, I'll get smacked and we'll go home right away. I have to eat obediently, or else she won't take me out to ride. While I'm eating I can't think. »Don't think while you're eating,« says Mommy and shoves the last piece of banana at my mouth and nose. I'm going to suffocate. I move the pedals backwards in a panic, but my little legs are still too weak. »Don't ride while you're eating,« shouts Mommy. Mommy knows best what's good for me.

There's no more banana. She shoves the peel into my mouth, but the peel is nasty, sour and bitter. »Eat up the peel too, then you can ride some

more,« she says gently, the way only my Mommy knows how to talk. Who wouldn't obey? But it's hard to eat the peel, however much I love Mommy and the tricycle riding. »Aren't you hungry?« Mommy asks and leans close to my face. »We'll call the doctor, he'll give you a shot!« I eat fast. I don't like shots. Mommy pulls a syringe out of her purse. I'm eating frantically. »Now little Darko is going to get a shot,« Mommy says sweetly. I try to get away on the tricycle. I can't see anything through my tears, I feel sick from the banana peel. I hear Mommy running after me. However, she doesn't say anything. »Don't, Mommy,« I wail and run my tricycle as fast as I can. She's closer and closer. There's no point running away, I think and stop. She stops running and comes toward me with slow steps. I put my head down, I see the asphalt and her shadow getting larger. She's standing behind my back. I feel the prick of the shot, but it hardly even hurts. She gives it to me gently, maternally.