

IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS

1.

“Four legs good, two legs bad.”

This phrase, which occurs in Chapter III, constitutes Snowball’s condensation of the Seven Commandments of Animalism, which themselves serve as abridgments of Old Major’s stirring speech on the need for animal unity in the face of human oppression. The phrase instances one of the novel’s many moments of propagandizing, which Orwell portrays as one example of how the elite class abuses language to control the lower classes. Although the slogan seems to help the animals achieve their goal at first, enabling them to clarify in their minds the principles that they support, it soon becomes a meaningless sound bleated by the sheep (“two legs baa-d”), serving no purpose other than to drown out dissenting opinion. By the end of the novel, as the propagandistic needs of the leadership change, the pigs alter the chant to the similar-sounding but completely antithetical “Four legs good, two legs better.”

2.

*Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland,
Beasts of every land and clime,
Hearken to my joyful tiding
Of the golden future time.*

These lines from Chapter I constitute the first verse of the song that Old Major hears in his dream and which he teaches to the rest of the animals during the fateful meeting in the barn. Like the communist anthem “Internationale,” on which it is based, “Beasts of England” stirs the emotions of the animals and fires their revolutionary idealism. As it spreads rapidly across the region, the song gives the beasts both courage and solace on many occasions. The lofty optimism of the words “golden future

time,” which appear in the last verse as well, serves to keep the animals focused on the Rebellion’s goals so that they will ignore the suffering along the way.

Later, however, once Napoleon has cemented his control over the farm, the song’s revolutionary nature becomes a liability. Squealer chastises the animals for singing it, noting that the song was the song of the Rebellion. Now that the Rebellion is over and a new regime has gained power, Squealer fears the power of such idealistic, future-directed lyrics. Wanting to discourage the animals’ capacities for hope and vision, he orders Minimus to write a replacement for “Beasts of England” that praises Napoleon and emphasizes loyalty to the state over the purity of Animalist ideology.

3.

At this there was a terrible baying sound outside, and nine enormous dogs wearing brass-studded collars came bounding into the barn. They dashed straight for Snowball, who only sprang from his place just in time to escape their snapping jaws.

These words from Chapter V describe Napoleon’s violent expulsion of Snowball from Animal Farm, which parallels the falling-out between Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky. Napoleon, who is clearly losing the contest for the hearts and minds of the lower animals to his rival Snowball, turns to his private police force of dogs to enforce his supremacy. As Stalin did, Napoleon prefers to work behind the scenes to build his power by secrecy and deception, while Snowball, as Trotsky did, devotes himself to winning popular support through his ideas and his eloquence. Napoleon’s use of the attack dogs in this passage provides a blatant example of his differences with Snowball and points beyond the story to criticize real leaders for their use of such authoritarian tactics.

More generally, this episode is the first of many in which the political positioning of the Rebellion's early days gives way to overt violence, openly subverting the democratic principles of Animal Farm. It signals the deterioration of Animal Farm from a society based on equal rights to a society in which those who are powerful determine who gets what rights.

4.

All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.

The ultimate example of the pigs' systematic abuse of logic and language to control their underlings, this final reduction of the Seven Commandments, which appears in Chapter X, clothes utterly senseless content in a seemingly plausible linguistic form. Although the first clause implies that all animals are equal to one another, it does not state this claim overtly. Thus, it is possible to misread the word "equal" as a relative term rather than an absolute one, meaning that there can be different degrees of "equal"-ness, just as there can be different degrees of colorfulness, for example (more colorful, less colorful). Once such a misreading has taken place, it becomes no more absurd to say "more equal" than to say "more colorful." By small, almost imperceptible steps like these, the core ideals of Animal Farm—and any human nation—gradually become corrupted.

The revision of the original phrase also points to the specific form of corruption on Animal Farm. The initial, unmodified phrase makes reference to all animals, its message extending to the entire world of animals without distinction. Similarly, Old Major expresses ideals that posit the dignity of all, the comradeship of all, the inclusion of all in voting and decision-making, so that no one group or individual will oppress another. The revised phrase, however, mentions an "all," but only in order to differentiate a "some" from that "all," to specify the uniqueness, the elite nature, and the chosen status of that "some." The pigs clearly envision themselves as this privileged "some"; under their totalitarian regime, the working animals exist only to

serve the larger glory of the leadership, to provide the rulers with food and comfort, and to support their luxurious and exclusive lifestyle.

5.

“If you have your lower animals to contend with,” he said, “we have our lower classes!”

This quip, delivered by Mr. Pilkington to Napoleon and his cabinet during their well-catered retreat inside the farmhouse in Chapter X, makes fully explicit the process of ideological corruption that has been taking place throughout the novella. Old Major’s notion of the absolute division of interests between animals and humans here gives way to a division between two classes, even cutting across species lines. Pigs and farmers share a need to keep down their laboring classes. Mr. Pilkington’s witticism lays bare the ugly but common equation of laborers with animals.

Moreover, the quote serves to emphasize directly the significance of *Animal Farm* as a social commentary, cementing the conceptual link between the downtrodden animals and the working classes of the world. Orwell explodes his “fairy story,” as he termed it, by bringing it into the realm of human consequence, thereby making its terrors all the more frightening to his readership.