

## Thirteenth Lecture

### ♣ The Seven Commandments

1. Whatever goes on two legs is an enemy.
2. Whatever goes on four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
3. No animal shall wear clothes.
4. No animal shall sleep in a bed.
5. No animal shall drink alcohol.
6. No animal shall kill any other animal.
7. All animals are equal.

### ♣ How the Seven Commandments are Broken

Almost immediately after the Commandments are written the cows have to be milked. The milk they produce is taken by the pigs exclusively so the seventh Commandment seems to be undermined from the very beginning. When the pigs also start claiming the windfall apples, Squealer explains that they are not taking them as privilege but because science has shown that milk and apples are necessary for the pigs' "brain work". This at least satisfies the animals that they are equal to the pigs but it does not fool the reader.

The first two Commandments are subtly broken in the first years of Animal Farm but there is no attempt to rewrite them. Snowball, the hero of the Battle of the Cowshed, becomes an enemy of the farm after his expulsion by Napoleon, while the resumption of trade via Mr Whymper causes some discussion but, as Squealer points out, trade was not banned in writing and Mr Whymper is not treated as a friend.

The first alteration to the Commandments comes after the pigs move back into the farmhouse. The ban on sleeping in beds is changed in Napoleon's favour by the addition of the words "with sheets". At this point in the history of the farm the pigs do not quite have enough power to do what they like and Squealer is forced to change the Commandments to fit new circumstances. But sleeping in beds is a minor matter compared to murder, and the next alteration to the Commandments is far more shocking. After the failures of the winter and the collapse of the first windmill, the pigs use Snowball as scapegoat. This leads to the 'show trials' in which animals 'confess' to crimes inspired by Snowball. The horrific executions that follow are in direct contradiction of the original sixth Commandment but when this is checked the words "without cause" have been added.

Napoleon's selfish behaviour is the cause of the alteration to the fifth Commandment. When he and the other pigs get drunk, Napoleon's hangover is a cause for alarm but all that eventually happens is that the words "to excess" are added to the Commandment. It is at this point that Squealer's part in the changes to the Commandments is revealed to the reader as he falls off the ladder he was using to reach the barn wall. After this incident, more and more of the farm's resources are diverted to the provision of alcohol for the pigs. The sale of Boxer's body to the knackers results in the delivery of a crate of fine food and alcohol.

No minor alteration is ever made to the third Commandment about wearing clothes. This is because by the time the pigs adopt clothes they are so powerful, and the other animals are so fearful, that it is unnecessary. Instead, all pretence of "unalterable laws" is abandoned and the Commandments are replaced by the meaningless slogan:

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

Orwell's use of the Seven Commandments provides a kind of checklist of betrayal. The original Commandments express the ideals of animalism and the hopes for a new life by the animals on

the farm. It is significant that the betrayal of these ideals begins almost immediately, as this is an important part of Orwell's message about revolutions - that all power corrupts. The Commandments make it easy for the reader to trace the progress of Napoleon and the other pigs' corruption and, as each one is broken, the original ideals are brought to mind.

Relationship between them and the plot

The Seven Commandments are a successful way of tracing the decline of the rebellion because they show how the pigs alter the rules on the farm to suit themselves. The other animals trust in writing and it is the pigs' control of writing that gives them a great deal of their power. The alterations to the Commandments are sometimes funny, like the one about alcohol, and sometimes shocking, like the one about killing. In the end, the slogan "All animals are equal" sums up the sad decline of the fortunes of the idealistic animals of the farm.

#### Chapter Seven

Since the collapse of the windmill, the animals are starving. But they try to convince the outside world otherwise. Again, public relations and image control. The hens are told their eggs will be taken. They rebel, but are starved as a consequence (via control of the teeth-baring dogs) and nine die. Again, heavy irony ensues. More scapegoating at Snowball's expense. Boxer seems, amazingly, to remember history the way that it occurred, but Squealer quickly convinces him otherwise. At a meeting, several animals confess (while in the presence of the teeth-baring dogs) to having been in league with Snowball, or with Jones, or both. They are subsequently killed upon Napoleon's orders.

#### ♣ Chapter Seven

Due to Boxer's doubt regarding the new and rewritten history, Napoleon tries to have him killed by the dogs. However, when Boxer's brute strength becomes apparent, Napoleon seems to change his mind. There's a lot of subtlety here – none of the animals, and especially not Boxer, think for a moment that there was an attempt on Boxer's life. On the surface, it simply appears as though the dogs went rogue and attacked him. There's this great, contemplative moment when Clover looks over the farm and thinks to herself that these scenes of bloody terror are certainly not what the animals have worked so hard for. Such emotion, such poignancy – read your book. The song which we have all come to know and love ("Beasts of England") is abolished.

#### ♣ Chapter Eight

After the executions, Clover is again uneasy that one of the seven commandments has been broken. She asks Muriel to read her the sixth commandment again from the gable wall. The commandment reads, "No animal shall kill another animal without cause." Clover did not seem to remember having read the last two words before, but she thought no more of it.

The animals spend the following year working harder than ever. Squealer exhorts them to greater efforts, telling them that productivity on the farm has improved enormously since the rebellion, though many of the animals secretly feel hungry.

Napoleon, who is now known as "Our Leader, Comrade Napoleon," and several other flattering titles, is seen in public rarely, and now employs a cockerel as a herald, as well as being accompanied at all times by his dogs.

Relations between the neighbouring farms, Frederick of Pinchfield and Pilkington of Foxwood, remain complex. Napoleon, through the middleman, has been trying to sell off a pile of timber to one of the other neighbours. At this time, rumours abound that Frederick is about to attack the farm. A plot to murder Napoleon is uncovered. Three hens confess that Snowball, said to be living on Pinchfield, put them up to it. The hens are executed. Napoleon announces shortly

afterwards that the wood is to be sold to Pilkington of Foxwood. When, later in the year, the wheat crop is found to be full of weeds, Snowball, and by implication Frederick, are blamed. The whole farm seethes with anger and resentment against Frederick, who is now the sworn enemy of Animal farm.

The windmill is completed by autumn. The animals forget their worries temporarily to celebrate this magnificent achievement. The animals are all congratulated by Napoleon. Two days later, he calls them to a meeting and announces that the wood is to be sold to Frederick. The animals are astonished, but Squealer easily explains this away as part of Napoleon's strategy, to appear friendly with one neighbour while secretly courting the other. The sale goes ahead, and the solicitor organises the transport of the wood off the farm, and the delivery of the banknotes to Napoleon.

Three days later, the notes are discovered to be forgeries. Napoleon assembles the animals again and pronounces the death sentence on Frederick. At the same time, he warns them that Frederick and his men may be about to attack the farm.

The attack comes the next morning. Fifteen men, six with guns, approach the farm, and the battle is joined.

Messengers are sent to Foxwood requesting assistance, but Pilkington sends back a curt rejection. The animals are driven back to the farm buildings. While they are trapped there, the men plant dynamite around the windmill. In the ensuing explosion, the windmill is obliterated. The animals react to this by forgetting all about the guns and charging headlong at the men, who after a brief struggle, run for their lives.

The animals are dejected at the loss of the windmill, but the pigs quickly set about the task of rebuilding morale by reminding them of the magnificent victory they have won.

The day will be forever commemorated as the Battle of the Windmill. In the ensuing celebrations, the forged banknotes are forgotten.

The pigs then discover a cask of whisky in the farmhouse. That night, loud celebrations are heard in the farmhouse, to the amazement of the other animals. Soon afterwards, it is announced that a small field near the orchard, originally set aside for retired animals who could work no more, was to be ploughed up and sown with barley. Muriel is troubled by this development, and she consults the fifth commandment. Again, she realises she has remembered it incorrectly, for it says, "No animal shall drink alcohol to excess."

Napoleon gets a new name, as "Napoleon" is not majestic enough. Now it is "Our Leader, Comrade Napoleon." He's also becoming a total snob about the amount and consistency of the foam on his cappuccinos.