

SBA Corner

About the book

- Print fiction
- **Print non-fiction**
- Non-print fiction
- Non-print non-fiction

Genre: philosophy
Author: Julian Baginni
Number of pages: 256
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Book discussion

If a faulty bank ATM gives you too much money, should you keep it even though it is technically stealing?

Presentation

Which experiments from the book have come from popular science fiction?



Food for thought

Have you ever wondered if it is right to eat an animal that wants to be eaten or thought about the consequences of life as a brain with no body? These questions and more are explored in *The Pig That Wants to Be Eaten: 100 Experiments for the Armchair Philosopher*

THE world's greatest thinkers have shaped our politics, laws and religions. But have they really helped in answering the questions that have kept friends arguing long into the night? For example, if we went through a *Star Trek* transporter would we be the same person on the other side? Is it right to do something wrong if nobody gets hurt? And is it right to use torture? In *The Pig That Wants to Be Eaten: 100 Experiments for the Armchair Philosopher*, 100 imaginative scenarios are set up, and followed by debates between the world's best thinkers in the hope of settling these arguments.

Eat me

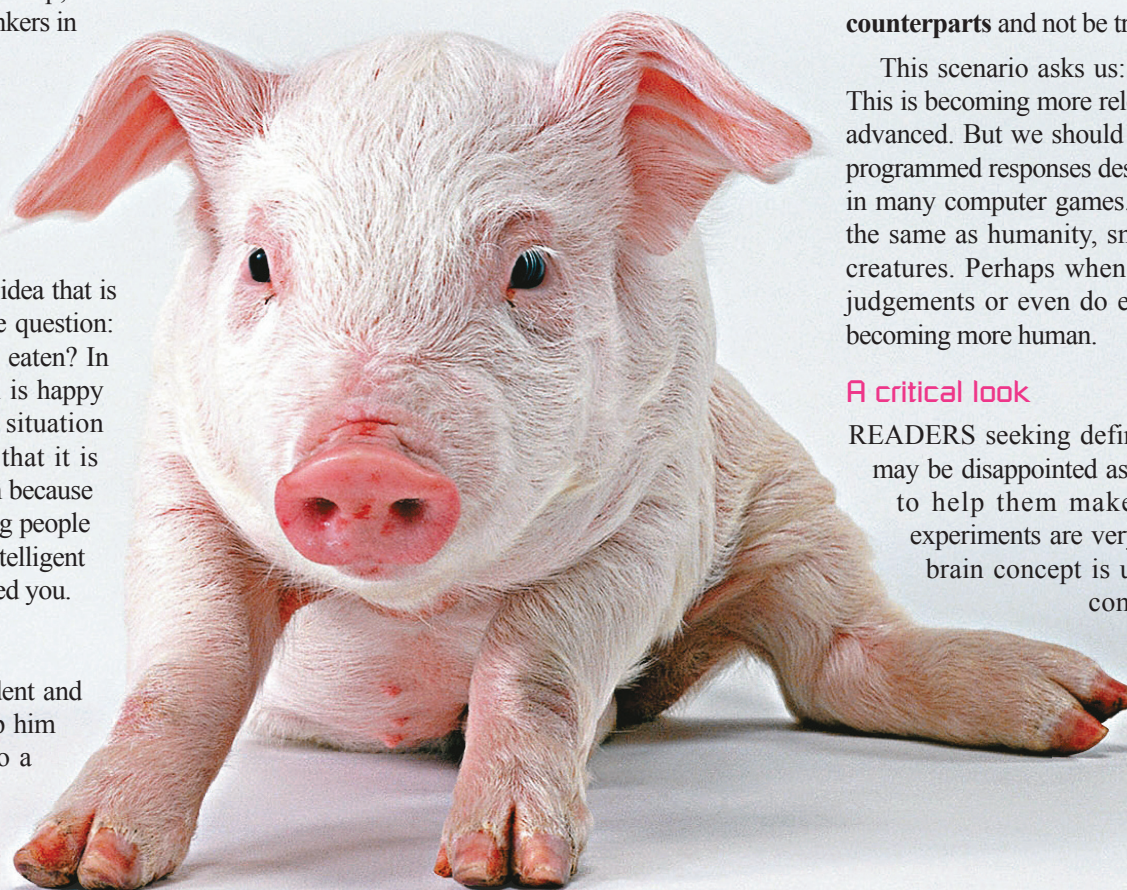
THE title of the book is based on the humorous science fiction book *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*, in which a specially bred pig is happy to be eaten and lets diners know this. Although this is clearly a **fantastical** idea that is unlikely to happen, it can help us to answer the question: is it right to eat animals that do not want to be eaten? In the novel, diners are appalled when the animal is happy to kill himself to end up on their plate. This situation demonstrates the flimsiness of the argument that it is wrong to eat animals that do not want to be eaten because when the situation is reversed, most right-thinking people would be appalled at the thought of eating an intelligent creature that has committed suicide in order to feed you.

Out of body experience

IMAGINE a man is involved in a terrible accident and the only thing that survives is his brain. To keep him alive his brain is kept in a jar and wired up to a

supercomputer that simulates the world and fools him into thinking that he is a perfectly healthy person. Is he really living, and how real is his world compared to ours?

This concept was used in the Matrix **trilogy** of films where aliens imprison humans in cocoons and hook them up to a computer network that simulates a virtual world for them to 'live' in. The idea that the universe is virtual is actually not that wild. There is no way of disproving it



completely and it could help to explain the miracle of life on Earth when the whole universe seems lifeless, while a flooding could be the result of someone spilling water in the laboratory which is keeping us alive.

Robot laws

SIMONE is a highly intelligent robot who works hard for her master. One day she goes to the highest court in the land and demands that she have equal rights like her human **counterparts** and not be treated like a slave. Is she right?

This scenario asks us: how human can a machine be? This is becoming more relevant as computers become more advanced. But we should not confuse self-awareness with programmed responses designed to **mimic** a human, as seen in many computer games. And if intelligence is treated as the same as humanity, smartphones could be considered creatures. Perhaps when computers start making moral judgements or even do evil things, we can say they are becoming more human.

A critical look

READERS seeking definite answers to life's big issues may be disappointed as the book only offers viewpoints to help them make up their own minds. Some experiments are very similar too – the **disembodied** brain concept is used several times. Also highly complex philosophical arguments have been greatly simplified. But this entertaining book is a good introduction to philosophy and will provide fresh perspectives. 💖