Twitter Thread by biche



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I spoke to some youths today.

I was shadowing at a farm incubator. An animal ethics class from the college had come to do a tour, and it became clear about 10 minutes in that they didn't want to talk about composting, no-till, or cover crops.

They wanted to talk about death.

To be clear, this is not a productive farm.

It's a market garden/commons. It's a place where city folks learn how to build raised beds.

So when a freshman philosophy student raised her hand and asked how much pigs suffer when they're killed, no one could answer but me.

"Most of the time they do, but not always."

I was nervous. It was the first time I'd been in a position to share what I'd learned, in person, to a willing and attentive group.

They wanted to know every detail of husbandry, dispatch and butchery, so I shared.

They were keenly interested in the exact moment of death-

How does it look?

How does it sound?

What was it like, the first time I saw it happen?

And, truthfully, I was scared at first, but it really is no big deal.

At the urging of the professor, the conversation quickly turned metaphysical.

“What would you say,” he asked, “to the idea that it is wrong for animals to die for us, even if they live a happy life and die a painless death?”

“I would ask if you think it’s wrong to die.”

To many, mortality is a thing to be feared. It is a cursed thing. It is not spoken of.

I have felt the pain of grief, and this was all I knew of the pain of death- a child’s understanding of an ancient, awesome mystery.

There was so much I couldn’t share.

How in the moment I saw the life leave a pig, I knew there was a soul.

That I knew it departed (though I’m not sure where) and this soothed the wound of my brother’s death like nothing ever had.

It was - and is to this day - the most potent medicine I’ve ever received.

So I announced to a class of college freshman that I, myself, aspire to live a happy, fulfilling life.

I pray for a painless death, with dignity, at the hands of benevolent forces beyond my control.

I told them I am comforted by the fact I will be eaten, whether it be by predators in the wilderness or invertebrates in the grave.

“But if you see death as innately negative thing, there’s not much I can say to change your mind.”