

Secret Agent

Few people realise that psychologists also take a vow, promising that at some point in their professional lives they will publish a book, a chapter or at least an article that contains the sentence: 'The human being is the only animal that...' ... it is with good reason that most psychologists put off completing The Sentence for as long as they can, hoping that if they wait long enough, they might just die in time to avoid being publicly humiliated by a monkey.

— Daniel Gilbert, *Stumbling on Happiness*

NON AGNI SED ALPACAE

For I will consider my alpaca Otto.
For he is the master of his own agency duly and daily serving it up.

For his name in his own language
is not a word
it's a face.



For Otto likes to tease people:
alpacas, cows, you know: *people*.
It doesn't do him any good, any more than it does me
any good
To think my own thoughts, wish my own wishes
act my own actions, regret them
and then do them again.

For Otto is very clever.
For he is a geek.
For he gets picked on.
He *hates* that.

For when he was little, Otto used to tease his boss. Yes,
here is Otto's boss's name
in alpaca language:



For when he was little, Otto used to bite his boss's ankles
and then
and then
and then whip round
and lie on his back.

Nobody's going to retaliate
while you're being submissive.

All his boss could say was
"What the fuck?"

Humans instinctively misunderstand
pretty much
everything.

ABSTRACT

In an ethological study
of male *Vicugna pacos* it was discovered
that juvenile alpacas of low dominance status
tend to bite the ankles of their most
dominant herdmate

And then turn submissive to avoid reprisals, although
the study included only one alpaca
who exhibited this behavior.

No, that's not right. Let me try again.

Random events in a juvenile alpaca's development
may cause its play to take the form of biting ankles before
turning
submissive, a behavior
for which we have coined the term ...

No, that's not right.

Alpacas display idiosyncratic behavior in certain
circumstances.
This behavior, however, is well understood scientifically and
has been proven to be nothing more than

Instinct.
That's it.
Instinct.