

The Duck and the Kangaroo

Tekst:

Edward Lear

Filosofiske spørsmål:

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The Duck and the Kangaroo is a famous poem by Edward Lear (1812-1888), the English landscape painter more widely known as the writer of an original kind of nonsense verse and as the popularizer of the limerick. In this poem a duck wants to be able to jump around in the world like a kangaroo. So he asks a kangaroo to take him on its back.

I

Said the Duck to the Kangaroo,
'Good gracious! how you hop!
Over the fields and the water too,
As if you never would stop!
My life is a bore in this nasty pond,
And I long to go out in the world beyond!
I wish I could hop like you!'
Said the duck to the Kangaroo.

II

'Please give me a ride on your back!'
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.
'I would sit quite still, and say nothing but "Quack,"
The whole of the long day through!
And we'd go to the Dee, and the Jelly Bo Lee,
Over the land and over the sea;—
Please take me a ride! O do!'
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.

III

Said the Kangaroo to the Duck,
'This requires some little reflection;
Perhaps on the whole it might bring me luck,
And there seems but one objection,
Which is, if you'll let me speak so bold,
Your feet are unpleasantly wet and cold,
And would probably give me the roo-
Matiz!' said the Kangaroo.

IV

Said the Duck, 'As I sat on the rocks,
I have thought over that completely,
And I bought four pairs of worsted socks
Which fit my web-feet neatly.
And to keep out the cold I've bought a cloak,
And every day a cigar I'll smoke,
All to follow my own dear true
Love of a Kangaroo!'

V

Said the Kangaroo, 'I'm ready!
All in the moonlight pale;
But to balance me well, dear Duck, sit steady!
And quite at the end of my tail!
So away they went with a hop and a bound,
And they hopped the whole world three times round;
And who so happy,—O who,
As the duck and the Kangaroo?

Suggested topics for philosophical discussion

1. The duck said he wanted to get out of his "nasty pond" because it was boring. Do you think ducks really feel that way about the ponds they live in? Do you think they also get bored sometimes, just like people?
2. In real life, ducks can actually see more of the world than kangaroos, because they can fly. And they certainly do not wear socks or smoke cigars! But in this poem, the animals do not behave like the "real" animals we know about. Does all this matter to you when you read the poem? Even though a lot of what the poet writes about is not "real", does it mean that he is telling lies? If not, what is the poet doing when he writes a poem like this?
3. The duck wished it could hop like the kangaroo. Do you sometimes wish you could do something like someone else? Or like a certain animal? Which one, and why? Why do we sometimes dream of being something or someone else? Do you think it's because we think it would make us happier?
4. When the duck and the kangaroo talk to each other, do you really think they spoke English? Or some special language which only animals understand? Do you think animals can communicate with each other? How? By using their voices, or parts of their bodies?
5. If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go, and why? Do you think that going there would make you a happier person?
6. In the poem the duck addresses the kangaroo as "my own dear true Love of a Kangaroo". What do you think the duck means by these words? What kinds of feelings are involved here? Is it possible for a duck to love a kangaroo? Is it possible for one animal to love another animal? Is it possible for an animal to love a human being?
7. At first the kangaroo would not carry the duck because of its wet and cold feet. Was that a selfish thing to do? Do you think the kangaroo would have cared about the wet feet if it had considered the duck a very good friend? Or if it had been in love with the duck?

Do you think it would be possible for a duck and a kangaroo to become friends in real life? Can you make friends with everyone you meet? Also with animals? What about trees, or stones, or mountains?