

# Resurrected pigs?

by Richard Fowler

**D**id you see the news (ironically issued three years ago at Easter, the time when Christians remember the resurrection of Jesus), that brains from dead pigs have been partially revived!<sup>1</sup>

Forget flying pigs, this is life after death. It raises questions about one of the greatest mysteries: the difference between life and death. So what gives us life?

This question of what gives us life is closely related to consciousness. So what gives us consciousness and awareness?

This is one of the most exciting areas of scientific research. But, at the moment, no one knows what gives us consciousness. Modern science leans towards attributing the brain itself as creating the sense of a separate “I”. But many differ, including the late René Descartes, known as the father of modern philosophy. He said that consciousness was caused by something that was immaterial, not physical. Life and consciousness were just too mysterious.

The evolution of brain function and

consciousness is also too hard to trace. This is something Professor Alice Roberts expressed at the New Scientist Live convention.<sup>2</sup> In sharing her thoughts about the inability of evolutionary biologists to capture how sentient beings developed their cognitive capacity, she explained: “We are a long way away from understanding what happens on an individual neuron level”.

So is there any way of knowing?

Well, if Descartes is correct, we may have a clue in another observation by a very wise king who wrote it down in the Bible. King Solomon believed there was something else to man and beast when it came to what might give us consciousness. He shares with us: “For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as

one dies, so dies the other...All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?”<sup>3</sup>

If you have ever seen the stark difference between someone who is alive and then dead, it is sobering. It almost seems incomprehensible. Something is irreversibly missing—it’s like they’ve gone. For me, the idea that there is a spiritual element to both people and creatures makes the most sense.

Maybe Descartes was correct after all.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-47960874> .

<sup>2</sup> <https://live.newscientist.com/2019-show-highlights> .

<sup>3</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:19–21.

