

Brontosaurus **By David Silver**

“Life” said the new clergyman to his congregation. “I’d like to talk to you about life. I would like to present to you a great revelation”.

A ripple of irritation ran through the assembled faithful who were used to their previous minister’s boring and predictable ramblings about how they should and shouldn’t lead their lives. Living in a small remote village, there wasn’t much else to do on the Sabbath; going to their place of worship was a form of entertainment and relief from the daily tedium.

“I am reminded about that Monty Python sketch featuring an actor named John Cleese playing the role of a woman named Anne Elk who was seeking her fifteen minutes of fame by presenting her theory about brontosaurus. What do I mean by ‘fifteen minutes of fame’? Well, that was a phrase coined by Andy Warhol in the 1960s. Who was Andy Warhol? Rest assured that I’ll talk to you about him next time when I shall address wants versus needs versus the desire to be famous. Anyway, for those of you too young to have seen the sketch, or to even know what Monty Python was (and I assure you that I am by no means too young to know what it was, hence the many years of accumulated wisdom that enables me to stand here humbly but knowledgeably before you, ha ha) I shall explain in a way that I am sure you will find humorous and entertaining”. There was the sound of intentionally barely suppressed and exaggeratedly resigned sighs from the congregation.

“Anyway, Anne Elk was clearly bogus and employed much dissembling, interruption, coughing and fidgeting with the intention of achieving her fifteen minutes before an audience. Prompted increasingly irritably by the interviewer, played by another actor named Graham Chapman, she eventually announced that her theory, such as it was, was that all brontosaurus were thin at one end, much, much thicker in the middle, and thin again at the other end”.

“That’s blooming obvious” came a voice from the back of the congregation.

“Quite so my son, and that is the point of what I am leading up to, my great revelation. You see, we are born small. Very, very small. Not just in stature, but our minds too are tiny, almost non-existent. However, ahead of us lies the body of that creature we call Life, gradually thickening out before shrinking down to a point at the far end. Along the way it extrudes various protrusions and creates many deposits as signs of its passing”.

A little boy’s voice piped up. “Please sir, are we born at the head end or the bottom end?” The laughter from the audience barely covered the sound of the clip round the ear from the boy’s embarrassed mother.

“Please, please, the boy has a point. Do we begin with the attractive end of life and progress toward the less savoury end? Or is it the other way round? Do we have a choice? Is it pre-ordained?”

“My mother-in-law ended her life lying in a pool of her own piss so I know which end she finished up with” came a man’s voice cynically.

“Quite so and isn’t that a commentary on the state of our society, how we fail to care for our elderly either within the family or within our institutions?”

“We start small. As our awareness builds so does our acquisitiveness and greed. We build our physical beings. We grow limbs. We ingest knowledge. We become what we eat, what we consume. We leave in our wake the damage our careless lumbering causes to the environment and to others. We drop our ordure without caring for the effect its foulness brings to others.

“At the height of our powers our girth has increased to bursting point. The bigger we get the more we acquire. The more we acquire the more we wish to acquire”.

“There’s not much to acquire in this God-forsaken hole” came a stage whisper from the pews. Our clergyman chose to not hear it.

“But, as we age, our appetites diminish. Our size diminishes. We physically shrink but our minds retain our accumulated wisdom and are the last things to go at the very end. The head of the creature is there to the last.

“So we are born at the arse end then” piped up the first boy’s older brother. There was more commotion and the sound of thumps.

“Not necessarily. Some are born into privilege and wisdom, not necessarily the privilege of wealth but an environment of kindness and culture. Sadly some will squander it and die in squalor and penury.

“So, Reverend, what is this great revelation you promised us?”

“My dear flock, it is simple”. He paused for effect. “Life is like a brontosaurus”.

There certainly was an effect. Huge intakes of breath from the congregation in fact. Then a stunned silence. Almost audible thoughts of ‘the last one was a bore but this one is off his bleedin’ rocker’.

At this point dear reader, we leave our little community reeling. We also leave our little community, reeling.

Life is like a brontosaurus. Oh yes.

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