JUST MY TAKE ON IT...
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Trying to find a handle on the world in which we live.

"Breakfast Links"

* By Tony Harriman

Living here in a world apparently designed to teach us about its Maker, I've never been able to find a happy place in my reckoning for the Food Chain. "That's just the way it is," we explain to ourselves, "It's always been like this." I don't honestly believe for a moment that the food chain was in the original plan for the universe. I think the food chain is a symptom of something that's gone horribly wrong with the design.

With the exception of plants (which feed mostly on inanimate material) every organism on the planet feeds on some other organism -- from the very small to the very large. The very small being the microscopic life which eats other microscopic life. And the very large being, say, a whale. In between these two extremes are many creatures which rely on the death of others to keep themselves alive. Not all animals take the life of others; some are vegetarians whose systems are not suited to the consumption of animal flesh. Some animals are totally carnivorous, such as lions and tigers (not bears -- necessarily), dogs and cats, and many water-dwelling creatures; these creatures must
survive by consuming the flesh of other creatures. You've probably seen what happens when a dog or a cat eats grass. Some creatures in the animal kingdom are omnivores, most notably those of the primates on the planet. Human beings dwell in this realm; we can survive on zucchini or zebras -- the choice is ours.

"As a young man in my mid-twenties I was introduced to a much bigger picture of this thing we call life"

Those of the miniature variety, like flies and roaches, usually feed on the filth and rottenness left over from the meals of larger critters. In turn these flies and roaches are eaten by bigger critters which are also eaten by bigger bodies, until they eventually reach the dining table of the average couch potato anywhere in the world. Chickens and waterfowl, especially, have diets that are fully laden with bugs of every kind; those of us who've spent time around chickens will have noticed what they eat -- yuck!

I'm going to leave out lots of paragraphs right here -- the reading of which would only turn our stomachs -- and jump right into a spiritual explanation that I think I can see hanging from a low-lying branch. I'm still desperately trying to work this out, so here goes:

Most of the people I know who will read this are personal acquaintances; some of you have known me most of my life. Many of you remember me as a bratty teenager who had not a care for the world in which he lived, and not much more of a care for the rest of the people in that world. As a young man in my mid-twenties I was introduced to a much bigger picture of this thing we call life. I was introduced to a Creator who I believe actually knows my name and GPS coordinates. I became acquainted with the Christian concept of a sacrifice being made on my behalf so that I might enjoy eternal life. And here I am still struggling to get my reasonable thoughts together, because many spiritual things still don't make sense to me, even though I've taken a lot of time to learn many of the reflex-reaction Scripture verses.

In a simple statement (which I'm trying to keep a grip on) is that perhaps the picture -- horrible though it is -- being painted by the food chain, is that many of us creatures owe our physical survival to the taking of life of something else. Most of us realize that we will die if we don't eat something that has a little bit of life in it. But that's just physical. The other half of us, the spiritual side, does not owe its existence to meat and three veg. In the Christian arena, the sacrifice of the life of Christ gives the possibility to many others a chance at life -- eternal life -- beyond a physical existence. And though the Sacrifice was made for all, not everyone will take advantage of it. How does that work? How does a person remove his or her self from the nourishment of the sacrifice? How does a person consume the life of Christ so that they may live? You might remember the crowd going home when Jesus spoke to them of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Strange thing to say. Still trying to work that out. What's that? His words are spirit and life? Yes, I get that; but He said "flesh and blood." I don't want to sound pedantic; just trying to figure it out.

"The grand cycles of life on the planet appear to me to be offering a peek behind the drapes"

Well, right up front I'm going to tell you I don't currently believe you have to eat something physical in order to live forever spiritually. I'm not sure the food chain is intended to illustrate for us a ladder to Heaven. What I do believe is that there's nothing going on down here that isn't illustrating something that has a much bigger counterpart, a counterpart that we don't have eyes for, a counterpart that is only comprehended once
we've installed in our minds the software designed to awaken our spiritual microscopes -- and, dare I say, telescopes. The grand cycles of life on the planet appear to me to be offering a peek behind the drapes that are filtering out the marvelous intellectual and spiritual light reaching our minds.

I read somewhere once that the botanist and biologist may have a profound appreciation for the workings of the natural world on the planet, but that it is the person who sees the fingerprints and handwriting of the Creator of the natural world who receives the greater blessing. I think this observation still has a lot of mileage left.

Hold on, though. Let's back up to that part about installing the software designed to awaken our spiritual microscopes. How does that happen? My belief on that point is found in the teachings of Jesus, and His continual use of the workings of the natural world to illustrate the parallel workings of the unseen Kingdom of Heaven. Had there been access to microscopes and telescopes two thousand years ago, I dare say the teachings of Jesus would have been even broader and deeper than they already were; but we'll have to speculate on that for now. If, when we make an observation in the natural world, we allow our minds to think of a larger, spiritual reality, then I think we will have begun the process of installing the right software that will make our minds work properly.

"It would seem that all of us are going to have to be changed"

So what about that food chain? Do I think it's going to work this same way on the other side, throughout eternity? No, I really don't. My belief is that, on the other side, when the birds stop to feed, they won't have to worry about predators. The squirrels won't be continually looking over their shoulders as they forage. The baby seals won't be concerned about the killer whales. And on and on and on. What place will there be for the carnivore? I really don't know, because the dog cannot currently feed on the same food as the rabbit. The dog would have to have most of its digestive system replaced, as would the lion and the rest of the big cats. Right now the digestive system of, dare I say, ALL the creatures on the planet, is sadly inefficient; so it would seem that all of us are going to have to be changed, right? Some of the buzzards and bacteria that feed on dead bodies are going to be out of a job, just like the doctor, the fireman, the police officer and the preacher -- oh, and the attorney (thank heaven).

And that's just my take on it ....

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