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Butterflies

Spring is upon us. Our Earth comes back to life and with it all the amazing flying animals who make life possible. Rudolf Steiner spoke at length about bees and their vital role. But let us consider the role of the butterfly.

It is not by happenstance that there are many colored butterflies. This is a reflection of the great diversity of interests in the Divine. He has given the little ones such fantastic colors to delight and amuse the inhabitants of the Earth, mankind. These little insects are there to delight even the most hard-bitten individuals. They are, in many ways, the smile of the Divine Butterfly. They flit and fly from flower to flower. They move rapidly up and down, side to side, in circles - all around. They are ever there. They represent life and the passing on to life after death.

That the butterfly is in the third and final stage of metamorphosis is important. But let us begin at the beginning. Butterflies grow from eggs, the product of the coupling of two butterflies. At first, they grow as caterpillars, then go to the pupae stage and the chrysalis, then pupate into beautiful and ornate butterflies. As they grow, they mirror the metamorphosis of the Creator who thought, then created then thought again then created again then called them "home".

The egg stage represents the unfolding of the chaos that represents the coming together of two organisms to create the body of a third. Out of this incomplete stage comes the first signs of completeness or the realization that something can be manifested into the material world. Isn't it funny that it takes three beings to create life on the earthly plane - a male and a female and Spirit. All combine, once again, over and over, to make one. The egg stage changes to the worm or caterpillar stage. The caterpillar changes to the butterfly.

Why is it important to consider these stages of development? It is important because the butterfly imparts much into the world that the pupae or caterpillar cannot. It is important to consider that at all three stages, there are very important developments that mirror changes in the Earth and changes in the Creative Process of the Divine.

In the first or egg stage, the egg represents the "coming into life" of an organism. It is different in a butterfly than in a plant or higher animals. The butterfly relies on its own Self for the astral energy. Not the Nature Spirits. But that does not adequately describe what happens. The astral is provided by the Deva and certain beings we shall call the Butterfly Spirits. They help with the astral energy, the astral body but do not provide it as do the Nature Spirits with the plants. These Entities provide the guidance for the astral but do not become directly involved as do Nature Spirits. In some ways, they act as do catalysts. They are part of the plan but not in the plan itself. These Butterfly Spirits help guide the astral to the insects. This applies to all insects and lower life forms similar to them such as tadpoles and frogs. While the insects and amphibians have embryonic astral bodies, they do not have the ability to bring it to themselves. Thus we see a stage in the evolutionary development of the life forms on the Earth.

The importance of this is that as each soul experiences life by breaking itself apart and experiencing these different life forms, they grow in experience with the astral and the physical planes. The astral is the



most difficult to accept since it is the transitional plane from the Causal or Etheric to the physical. A sentient mind is capable of loving and emotions which are the hallmarks of the astral plane. The ideational or etheric plane is dictated and carefully kept by the Deva "in charge" of the thought. He/She is the keeper of the idea. Since the idea exists whether or not a physical body exists, it is impossible for the butterfly or other insects to exist without a conscious etheric body. The same holds true for the plants so dear to our hearts. But without the astral shield, it is impossible to bring life to the physical. Since these are undeveloped entities, they are, as yet, unable to bring this astral to their consciousness.

As a butterfly goes from the egg stage to the worm or caterpillar stage, it brings with it the beginning of the astral energy (love) and the almost fully developed etheric energy (ideational) in a partially developed body. This then sets the stage for the metamorphosis to an entirely different being - the butterfly.

The butterfly is of the air and light. The caterpillar is of the land and the plants and of the trees. It is not in the air, it is on the ground or on a leaf. This applies to all animals that pupate, even maggots which change into flies. At this stage they are "grounded". They are unable to fly to the light, to the air. They eat voraciously and they change matter into other forms of matter. In the case of flies, they change living things now dead into new and useful forms much like the fungi. In the case of butterflies which typically eat plants in this stage (so too with moths) we have the changing of a plant into something more highly developed, the caterpillar. Though they cannot think, they nevertheless are guided by spiritual instinct.

The role of the caterpillar is to provide the plant with other methods of growing higher in the spiritual plane. It is, then to help the plant achieve what it cannot achieve without being eaten, digested, discharged and spiritualized. The plant, then is imbued with some of the Intelligent Astral Energy of the butterfly and slowly evolves this energy to a higher level. The next stage of development for the plant soul fragment may then be a butterfly or an insect experience.

Then something extraordinary happens. The worm or caterpillar stops eating. It weaves a chrysalis, goes into a state of semi-hibernation, focuses all of its creative and regenerational energy within, no longer without, and recreates itself as a flying animal, an insect, capable of moving in any direction, capable of moving on the earth or in the air and carrying with it the intense recreative or regenerative energy necessary to help the plants recreate themselves. They carry with them the ideational (etheric) and the emotional (love) necessary to pass this on to the plant for procreation and recreation. Thus we see in the metamorphosed worm, the true reproductive energy necessary to create the seed that will carry on the physical form of the plant.

To be sure, the butterfly carries with it the fire element and the air element, but coming from the earth and water, it carries that with it as well. It is a fully rounded individual. But its main role or state is that of reproduction or recreation. It carries with it the intense creative energy needed to recreate a life form into a new generation.

So we have an animal, an insect, a beautiful insect that is a glory to the eye of the Divine and at the same time plays the role of passing on the regenerative etheric energy to the plant so that it too can reproduce. When its role is complete and its etheric regenerative energy exhausted, it dies after it has brought the remaining reproductive energy to recreate itself. Thus, like salmon returning from many years at sea, the butterfly copulates, lays its eggs and dies, the recreative or regenerative energy exhausted. It has served its role perfectly.

A few other comments. It is important that the butterfly live in the air and in the heat since that is the element of the flower and the seed. To do its work, it must live in the same realms as the flower and the seed. Some butterflies do not eat, some do. Those that do not have enough energy stored to perform their task by simply flying by the flower. Others find that their role can only be adequately performed if they ingest the nectar of the flower. Thus they perform the second task of bringing the sperm to the ovum from



plant to plant. Again, if the butterfly did not have this creative energy stored within, it could not perform this task.

So, it is fair to say that butterflies take the stored etheric, astral and physical energy of the plant, change it and refocus it to the regenerative or recreative energy and then, living within the air and fire elements but bringing with them the earth and water elements, provide the plant with emotional or astral and ideational or etheric energy needed and necessary to reproduce. The Creator made these beautiful creatures to provide happiness to us all.

Their role is to provide visual happiness and reproductive energy to the flowers that carry on the life forms known as plants. Without this reproductive or recreative energy, the plants cannot survive. They do not have the necessary storehouse of etheric, astral or physical energy to do it.

Now, consider what happens if a person intervenes and artificially pollinates a flower. What happens? Why does the plant go to seed?

The plant follows the physical laws and reproduces. The plant though will not grow true to form unless the individual pollinating the flowers has in his mind the Ultimate Goal of the Creator. Only in that way can the plant be once again stabilized. The pollinator person can, to be sure, pass on some recreative energy. Observe what Luther Burbank was able to do. But he always kept in mind the wishes of the Divine Creator Of All Things. He never brought a plant into the physical reality without first seeking guidance. That is why, in part, he was able to succeed so spectacularly where others failed. We must do this for the benefit of mankind, for the benefit of the Earth and the Universe which is God. Only in that way can the harmony be maintained.

These deficiencies will show up in coming generations. Some show up immediately, some later. It is not like humans in that we can say definitely that "three generations hence" something will show the results of a deficiency now. Plants respond more quickly. They are simpler beings. Deficiencies always show up if they are there. All souls must go through the evolution process of ridding itself of those unwanted and unneeded tendencies which separate us from the Divine. Even plants and butterflies.

Bees are somewhat different. Bees too, since they are the female, bring the necessary regenerative forces to the plants but do it differently. It is the nurturing energy that they possess that acts on the flowers and seeds. They also bring the organizational ability to the seed. Bees serve a somewhat different purpose than butterflies.

If trees and plants could talk (and who among us can say that they do not), they would say that they count on the butterflies to provide the recreative energies necessary to achieve longevity and reproduction. Without them, it is impossible. It will be a sad day indeed if the butterflies are all killed off by pollution and mankind's ignorance. We do not believe that that will happen. But it is a warning to all who read this that this is what is happening.

Without the little friends bringing their warmth and light to our flowers, they cannot grow. We might also add that the many colors, patterns and shapes of the flowers mirror and complement the many colors, patterns and shapes of the butterflies. Why is this so? It is because, aside from delighting those who live on the Earth plane, the two are so much alike. Both live in the light and the air. Both bring the strong regenerative and astral or love element to life. Both have the same role to play - the continuation of the species. Not all insects involved in the reproductive process have the beauty and warmth of the butterfly. It is the Creator's choice that they have this honor to delight and please. A garden without butterflies is very dead in deed, indeed.

As a footnote, others may be wondering how I define ether, etheric and astral. The ether is the "physical body" of the etheric thought. They are one and the same.

The astral is the love or emotion that sustains life. The etheric is the idea as thought.



Dr. Steiner speaks of the flying insects that move about the astrality. This is true. It does not negate their role as carriers of reproductive and regenerative energy. When Dr. Steiner says that they bring the astrality to the plant, he means that they bring the emotion or love to the plant necessary for its reproduction. He mentions balance between the fields and forests. This is true. There must be a balance for all life forms to grow and prosper and mature. But the fields do no more represent astral energy than do the forests reveal the etheric energy. Both have both and both work in concert with each other. As flying animals move, they distribute both the astral and the etheric energy, not just the astral. But as humans move, so too they distribute the energies, as do dogs and deer and fish. All move about moving and redistributing the various energies. The specific role of the butterfly is to provide the regenerative energy necessary for plants to reproduce. Birds serve a different role.