



Butterflies and the Peace Propagation Process (an Autoethnographic Exploration)

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 *“Because of its metamorphic life cycle, the butterfly is an archetypal symbol of transformation, mystical rebirth and the transcendent soul.”* 

(O’Connell et al., 2007, p. 197)

Abstract

In this short paper, presented as an autoethnography, I use my individual journey of spiritual and mental transformation towards inner peace to generate general insights into the Individual Peace Propagation Process (IPPP). Employing the metaphor of a butterfly’s life-cycle, I identify key stages within this process, providing the contours of a qualitative Individual Peace Propagation Process model. I then explore various scenarios under the model created, interesting homomorphisms with different yet potentially related processes, possible insights from chaos theory, and relevancy to existing mathematical models of Peace Propagation. The exploration may contribute to the understanding of the individual and interpersonal spreading of peace and its flowering into social harmony, as well as of the ontological and phenomenological dimensions of peace and its propagation.

Keywords: Peace Propagation, Individual Peace Propagation Process, autoethnography, butterfly, metamorphosis, chaos theory.

Introduction

Apart from its beauty, colorfulness and lightness, the butterfly is featured in two important scientific concepts that were adopted by and incorporated into popular thinking. The first is *metamorphosis*, a process of abrupt transformation in an organism’s physiology, biochemistry and behaviour (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024b). The second is the *Butterfly Effect*, the principle from chaos theory concerning apparent randomness and unpredictability in deterministic non-linear systems, illustrated by the idea of a butterfly flapping its wings somewhere causing

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major weather changes somewhere else (Gleick, 1998; The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024a).

In this short paper, presented as an autoethnography (Ellis & Adams, 2020), I use these two colorful concepts to illustrate aspects of my inner journey of spiritual and mental transformation and growth, in the context of a wider discussion on inner peace, social harmony and the process of planetary peace propagation.

In the next section I employ, metaphorically, the concept of metamorphosis and the key stages in the life-cycle of a butterfly to identify and gain insights into the various stages of my inner journey, providing the contours of a potential qualitative Individual Peace Propagation Process (IPPP) model. I then explore various scenarios under the model created and identify what I believe to be the two most common ones. I note interesting homomorphisms between this process and two different yet potentially related processes from ancient spiritual wisdom and the field of brain dynamics and consciousness. I explore possible insights from chaos theory and, finally, the relevancy to an existing mathematical model of Peace Propagation.

The insights offered in this paper may contribute towards the understanding – spiritual, social and scientific – of the process of attaining inner peace, its propagation between individuals and its flowering into social harmony. This may include using the various stages of spiritual and mental growth and the butterfly metamorphosis metaphor as a conceptual framework and qualitative model for further investigation, research and elaboration within the Science of Peace and the Peace Propagation Process (Besant, 2010; Davis & Schübeler, 2019; Starke, 1968). Finally, this and other such autoethnographic accounts may assist in realizing the importance and shaping the understanding of the ontological and phenomenological dimensions of inner peace and its propagation.

My Journey and its Key Stages

The journey of attaining and propagating inner peace may, like the life-cycle of a butterfly, have various stages that appear quite different and distinct in their nature, purpose and effects. In this section I portray my journey in five key stages mapped to key stages in the life-cycle of a butterfly, which will help to construct the contours of a potential qualitative model of the Individual Peace Propagation Process.

Stage 1: Incubation – egg (my childhood)

In the “incubation stage” the zygote, protected by the egg, develops into an embryo and finally a hatchling (a caterpillar in the case of butterflies). This stage parallels my childhood, a time characterized by purity and innocence, which protected me from most of the distortions and negativities of the adult world and enabled my physical and mental development from a baby to a child and a boy, towards becoming a teenager (effectively, a young adult). I was nurtured by a loving family, growing up in Jerusalem and then moving to a Kibbutz in the southern parts of the country of Israel where, in addition to my immediate family, I was also surrounded and nurtured by a warm and caring community.

Stage 2: Chaotic exploration – larva/caterpillar (my teenage and early adult years)

A typical butterfly's larva (a caterpillar) undergoes a heightened growth process: eating continuously, splitting and shedding its skin 4–5 times, and growing even 100 times its size (*Butterfly Life Cycle*, 2020). This stage parallels my teenage and early adult years and in the Individual Peace Propagation Process is called “chaotic exploration.” I have borrowed this name from the title of one of the stages in the “cycle of creation of knowledge and meaning” in brain dynamics and consciousness (Davis et al., 2013, 2015, 2024; Davis, 2018), hinting that there are some interesting parallels to be explored between the two stages and the two cycles in general. During this period of time, I got exposed to the “adult's world” with its complexities and distortions. Alongside great curiosity and absorption of knowledge came great confusion and perplexities. My perspective of life shifted almost on a regular basis and I explored my identity in different ways, even adopting and trying different personas. A form of a turning point – a dramatic *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* (Aristotle, 1984) – took place during my compulsory military service and my participation as a soldier in an armed conflict. It deeply disturbed my inner being and led me to go on an intensive quest to find peace, truth and the answer to the question of how come there are wars in the world. This quest expressed itself quite chaotically at times, until I came to Freedom Farms (which became host of The Embassy of Peace) in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

Stage 3: Transformation/metamorphosis – pupa/chrysalis (time at Freedom Farms/The Embassy of Peace)

The metamorphosis stage is when the caterpillar (now called a pupa or a chrysalis), protected by a cocoon, undergoes a complete physical transformation into an adult butterfly. From the outside it may appear as if nothing is happening, yet a profound biochemical change is going on inside, including special cells that were present in the caterpillar growing to become the parts of the butterfly (*Butterfly Life Cycle*, 2020). In my journey, this stage parallels the period of about five years in which I remained at Freedom Farms and The Embassy of Peace. During this time I spent hours a day inwardly (e.g. meditation and prayer), found and learned how to sustain a state of inner peace, intently connected to and enabled spiritual values to enlighten my inner being, and developed a personal and direct relationship with The Creator. This was accompanied by associated psychophysiological changes, which also expressed in my outside appearance. I also underwent mental growth through intellectual learning. Side by side with this process, I developed an altruistic orientation in my being, consciousness and actions.

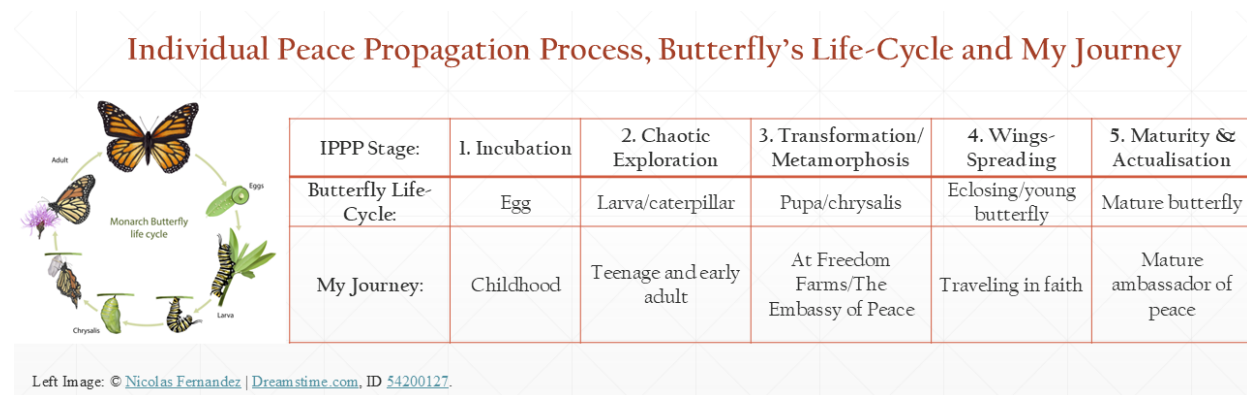
Stage 4: Wings-spreading – eclosing/young butterfly (traveling in faith)

When the metamorphosis is complete, the butterfly emerges out of the cocoon (eclosing), hangs to it and slowly expands its wings. I call this process, together with the first flights of the young butterfly, “wings-spreading.” In my journey, this stage parallels my departure from Freedom Farms and Aotearoa-New Zealand and my three years of travelling as a growing ambassador of peace in Australia, Papua New Guinea and Hawaii. I learned how to embody and apply the inner being I developed during the transformation stage outside of the “cocoon” (Freedom Farms) and in various different situations and environments. I experienced living in faith and relying only on divine providence and the goodness of people's hearts, while growing in my capacities and

capabilities in bringing values and peace to the people I met. While doing all of this, I continued to deeply contemplate on my highest call as an ambassador of peace.

Stage 5: Maturity and actualization – mature butterfly (work as an ambassador of peace in Papua New Guinea, and beyond)

The main role of a mature butterfly is to reproduce, yet it also helps the reproduction of plants by carrying and spreading their pollen. It is in this stage that it actualizes its full potential. This stage parallels my years of work as an ambassador of peace in Papua New Guinea and other countries (ongoing). During this time, I have touched the lives of a considerable amount of people, supported them to find and establish inner peace, facilitated the establishment of a basis for the work of The Embassy of Peace in Papua New Guinea, and embarked upon the articulation of the lawful and legal considerations associated with people who devote themselves to benevolence and altruism. In this stage, it can be said, the actualization of the full potential of my agency of peace has begun. To conclude, the following diagram depicts the five stages in the life-cycle of a butterfly, in my journey and in the Individual Peace Propagation Process.



Discussions and Analysis

Two IPPP models (holometabolous and hemimetabolous)

The Individual Peace Propagation Process can be understood in various ways and has multiple expressions. In my journey, a dramatic and deeply disturbing experience catalyzed a relentless search for meaning, value and peace, ultimately leading to what can be described as a complete “inner metamorphosis,” namely, a total, relatively rapid, “biochemical transformation” of my inner spiritual and mental world, resulting in an impartial embracement and actualization of my higher call. I will call this type of process the *holometabolous IPPP model* (holometabolous means complete metamorphosis). The stories of figures such as Abraham, Moses, Paul of Tarsus and Sri Aurobindo, to give just a few examples, can be explored in reference to such a model.

An alternative model might exist in which perhaps less dramatic events and a less dramatic quest for spiritual answers lead to a slower and possibly only partial transformation towards inner peace, yet with the individual concerned still adding value and playing important part within the Peace

Propagation Process. I will call this the *hemimetabolous IPPP model* (hemimetabolous means partial metamorphosis).

There are, of course, other possible models as well as variations and permutations of the above two. Although further investigation and much deeper research need to be made, I propose that: (1) the holometabolous and hemimetabolous models presented above are the most common expressions of the Individual Peace Propagation Process, and (2) they are complementary to one another and work hand in hand in the greater Peace Propagation scheme.

Some questions that might be asked in exploring these models are: What are the factors that ignite the IPPP process in general and determine which model will be followed in particular? How could the process within each of the models be optimized? What environments are most conducive for a successful inner metamorphosis? What is the relationship between the two models and how could they best complement and support one other? What alternative models might exist? Could there be a variation of the holometabolous IPPP model where the transformation is facilitated by non-tragic/traumatic factors? Furthermore, assuming that every individual has an innate propensity towards peace in a manner akin to how every caterpillar has the propensity towards becoming a butterfly, why is it that some individuals (caterpillars) “make it,” while others seem to “get lost” on the way? Is it due to varying degrees of the innate propensity, environmental factors and “natural selection,” a combination of the two, or other factors?

Potential homomorphisms with the Adamic journey (ancient Hebrew wisdom) and the cycle of creation of knowledge and meaning (brain dynamics and consciousness)

The Individual Peace Propagation Process may have some interesting homomorphisms with two different yet potentially related processes. The first is the metahistorical account of the ancient Hebrews on the origin, journey and destiny of humanity. Here, the Garden of Eden represents an incubation stage of innocence and purity, which ends with an uncomfortable and dramatic exposure to knowledge about the world and experience of its harsh realities, setting the protagonists – now human beings outside of the Garden – on a prolonged “chaotic exploration” stage. One branch of that humanity – the Israelites – then undergoes a transformation towards peace and holiness through a 40-year period of isolation in the desert, ideally to become “ambassadors of peace” who facilitate the Peace Propagation Process for humanity. The metamorphosis of the Israelites, however, was incomplete, leading to various delays in the process, yet with a prophetic promise for its future completion.

The second homomorphisms is with the cycle of creation of knowledge and meaning in brain dynamics and consciousness (Davis et al., 2013, 2015, 2024; Davis, 2018). Here, a baseline state of the brain is interrupted with the introduction of a sensory input, which sets the brain into a stage of chaotic exploration to make sense of the phenomenon. At some point, a realization takes place (“Aha moment”), leading to a “chaotic integration” of the input and a return to baseline, yet with new meaning that has been created and assimilated. Every cycle of creation of knowledge and meaning, therefore, can be viewed in terms of a “disturbance” of an initial state of “peace” of the brain and the restoration of “peace” through integration, assimilation and internationalization of new meaning. Could it be that the Individual Peace Propagation Process, in its various stages, involves multiple sequences of such cycles which, overtime, lead to the development of new

cognitive maps to accommodate and support the Process (Davis et al., 2015)? Davis, perhaps hinting towards the answer, highlights an “almost one to one relation” that exists between the cycle of creation of knowledge and meaning and Panikkar’s work about spiritual experiences, their internalization and their articulation, expression and integration in language and culture (Davis, 2018, p. 120; Panikkar, 2006).

All three processes (the cycle of creation of knowledge and meaning, IPPP and the Adamic journey) contain an orderly original state that is interrupted with an exposure to new information. The subject then undergoes a period of chaotic exploration of the phenomena, with some form of realization or other meaningful event setting the subject unto a process of internalization, integration and transformation, inaugurating a new meaningful phase in the subject’s life-cycle. These homomorphisms, together with Panikkar’s work as interpreted by Davis, are depicted in the table below.

Homomorphisms with Different (Related?) Processes

IPPP Stage:	1. Incubation	2. Chaotic Exploration	3. Transformation/ Metamorphosis	4. Wings-Spreading	5. Maturity & Actualisation
Brain (Cycle of Creation of Knowledge and Meaning):	Background activity	Awe + chaotic exploration	'Aha' + chaotic integration + assimilation of new meaning		
Cognitive and Cultural Integration (Panikkar/Davis):	'Normal/basic' existence	Pure spiritual experience + retrieval & interpretation		Linguistic and cultural articulation, expression and integration	
Humanity (Adamic Journey):	Garden of Eden	Exposure to 'Tree of Knowledge' and Journey	Israelites in Desert	Entering the Promised Land	Prophecies of Peace

The insights that these homomorphisms provide in terms of the individual as well as the collective Peace Propagation Process, as well as what they tell us about life and the universe at large, require further investigation.

The Butterfly Effect (chaos theory)

Though perhaps better considered with reference to the theory of complex adaptive systems (Davis, 2016; Davis & Schübeler, 2018), aspects of the Peace Propagation Process may also be explored with reference to chaos theory (Gleick, 1998). At the micro level, for instance, there may be certain apparent random and unimportant factors within the chaotic exploration stage creating ripple effects that elucidate “order out of chaos” and facilitate the transformation stage. At the macro level, the ripples created by one person who undergoes a complete metamorphosis under the Individual Peace Propagation Process may spread to produce transformative processes for other people within his or her network, for a whole nation, or even planetary.

Another interesting investigation is with respect to the various potential attractors at both the micro and the macro levels of the Peace Propagation Process. In fact, the whole Peace Propagation Process can be thought of in terms of the delicate balance between “order and complete disorder,” where peace represents order and the process itself is a form of a strange attractor.

In all examples, the chaotic phenomena or system under investigation is metaphysical, yet it may also have very real and observable physical expressions.

Relations to existing Peace Propagation Process models

In their 100-year horizon of a planetary peace propagation model, Davis and Schübeler prescribe a scenario where each ambassador of peace facilitates and blesses ten committed people to be transformed in ten (10) years to become ambassadors of peace themselves (2018, p. 135). In this heuristic, starting from one ambassador of peace, in about 100 years most of the projected population of the world would have been peacefully transformed into holiness.

In the case of my journey, the process of meeting ambassadors of peace, transforming to become an ambassador of peace and facilitating the transformation of other ambassadors of peace (estimated to be three at the moment with a few more potential ones), has taken about 13 years. Changing the relevant parameters in Davis and Schübeler's model in accordance with this data (with insufficient statistical significance, of course) and applying the same algorithm, the time to reach a peaceful and holy humanity becomes about 273 years – still a very optimistic scenario!

Conclusion and Further Research

Autoethnographic accounts of the individual and collective Peace Propagation Process provide important ontological and phenomenological insights into the process, as well as data that can be quantified and used for mathematical modelling and analysis. The butterfly metaphor and the holometabolous and hemimetabolous IPPP models can be a useful starting point for further investigation into the Peace Propagation Process, both metaphysically, cognitively and mentally, as well as with respect to its biochemical and psychophysiological expressions. Finally, the theory of complex adaptive systems and chaos theory may be applied with respect to the Peace Propagation Process in order to deepen the understanding of the individual and collective propagation of peace.

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