

CLIMATE CHANGE CHRONICLE 38

The Climate Change Chrysalis Experience

I've been looking for a story to describe the climate change transitions between where we are now, where we are going and how we are going to get there. I think I have found one—the chrysalis experience. It is an analogy. It shows the transitions that occur between the caterpillar and the butterfly in the cocoon. I'm using it to help illustrate the three stages in the climate change challenge.

The Chrysalis Experience In Nature

Stage One: The Cocoon Stage. The caterpillar gorges itself on leaves that surround it and consumes hundreds of times its own weight. Eventually it slows down and begins to spin the cocoon.

Stage Two: The New Vision. A struggle occurs when a different kind of cell begins to emerge in the body of the caterpillar. Scientists call them “imaginal cells” because they contain the image of the future butterfly. At first the caterpillar's immune system tries to destroy these intruders. But eventually the number of imaginal cells increases and they destroy the caterpillar cells. The caterpillar dissolves into a liquefied mass.

Stage Three: Emergence of New Life. As more and more imaginal cells emerge they link together in a sort of community. They recycle the liquefied mass into a new entity that then emerges from the cocoon...the butterfly.

Here is how all this applies to our climate changing world. *It is important to notice the transitions between the stages and how they come about.*

The Climate Change Chrysalis

Stage One: The Cocoon. In our climate changing world we have introduced systems that are gorging on the resources of Earth. They create a chrysalis based upon a neo-liberalism that demands continual profits. They are often supported by governments that benefit from their existence. Together they create a cocoon in part through laws and policies that are designed to protect their ability to exploit the resources of Earth and ward off outside influences.

Stage Two: The New Vision. Much to the surprise of the power brokers the imaginal cells begin to emerge. These are groups of earthlings who see the need to develop a mutually enhancing world between the human species and Earth. Their priority is to stop the plundering that threatens their existence. They are attacked by the power brokers who own the existing systems. But they are strengthened and motivated by

what they see happening to their Earth-home: destruction of species, poisoning of land, rising waters, warming of oceans, carbonizing of the atmosphere—all the known impacts of climate change.

Stage Three: The Emergence of New Life. Out of the struggle emerge individuals and groups that are committed to a better world. They increase in number, create networks and work together. They recycle the resources of the damaging systems and use them to create new living systems that can thrive within a living body. Then they break out of the cocoon.

The Analysis

An analogy is a comparison between two things for the purpose of explanation or clarification. We have a tendency to think of analogies as unreal or as just some kind of literary device. But just because something is analogous does not mean it is not real. Examples: “He is like a fish out of water”. The “he”, “fish” and “water” are real. Another example. “Finding a solution to this problem is like finding a needle in a haystack.” The problem, the needle and the hay stack are all real.

In our analogy above, the various elements are all real. The power brokers, the systems they control and the laws designed to create a protective cocoon are all real. Those who are working for a better and different world (the imaginal cells) are all real. The connections between the various elements are all real. The only thing that is not real is the device—the analogy. It is a mental construct that links the various elements together for the purpose of explanation.

But how do the real elements become really real in our climate changing world? As we’ve noted in previous chronicles it depends upon the ability of individuals and groups to incorporate within themselves some kind of energy force—a force that will strengthen them, motivate them to action and develop within them the resilience to bounce back from failure. In our present stage of the struggle it is a real David and Goliath conflict.

In our next two chronicles we will use the same chrysalis analogy twice more.

First we will discuss the struggle and stages on an individual level—incorporating within ourselves psychic/spiritual awareness.

Then we will see how this analogy and these insights can be developed to create a community climate change culture for ourselves and for the generations that will come after us.

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