

*From Hope Beneath Our Feet: Restoring Our Place in the Natural World, edited by Martin Keogh, © North Atlantic Press 2010.*

# ***The Ultimate Miracle Worker***

*Jalaja Bonheim*

How shall we live in these times? How shall we respond to the awareness of what is happening in our world?

Perhaps the first step is to acknowledge honestly: *we don't know*. We may have our guidelines, our intentions, our beliefs about what is helpful and what is not. But do any of us see a clear path from the mess we've created on our planet to a peaceful sustainable world? No, we don't.

We don't, because we *can't*. The process we're involved in today is not one that the human intellect is capable of penetrating. Like the dance of subatomic particles, it's multidimensional, mysterious, and impossible for our minds to grasp.

Once we come to grips with this fact, we can let go of the crippling assumption that we *should* know what to do—or that, at the very least, *someone* should know. Since nobody does, this can leave us feeling panicky and overwhelmed.

I believe that solutions *do* exist to our problems. But will we find them? That's another question. As Einstein said, problems can never be resolved at the level at which they were created. The environmental crisis was caused by the human mind—or more accurately, by the ways in which we habitually use it. But problems created by the mind cannot be resolved by the mind.

We are used to turning to the mind for guidance, and when it can't make out the path, we tend to feel hopeless. Yet if we can make peace with the fact that our mind is not in control of this journey, then we can open to the possibility of what some might call a miracle. We usually think of miracles as events that contradict the laws of nature, as when Jesus turned water into wine. But the kind of miracle I'm talking about here does not contradict nature. Rather, *it's* guided by the intelligence of nature herself, who is the ultimate miracle worker.

Of course, life is a continuous miracle, in the face of which we can't help but bow down in gratitude and awe. Yet among all the feats of natural magic, one of the most extraordinary is surely the transformation of caterpillars into butterflies. You probably already know that when a caterpillar is ready to shape-shift, it forms a cocoon. But did you know that within that cocoon, it quite literally liquefies? It dies, and dissolves into a mass of separate cells.

Then, however, something truly amazing happens. Within that cellular goo, some of the old caterpillar cells begin to mutate into what biology calls *imaginal* cells—imaginal, because they carry within them the image of the butterfly-to-be. Nobody can predict which cells are going to transform, nor do we know what triggers the process.

Yet no sooner do the imaginal cells begin to appear than they come under attack from the old caterpillar cells. It's not hard to sympathize with the old cells—presumably, they feel they've been invaded by aliens. And so, they go on the offensive.

Interestingly, the imaginal cells don't even bother fighting back— they're far too busy working on their crazy butterfly project. Nonetheless, in the end, they emerge victorious. Some die, but most survive, and continue on their way, driven by their overwhelming desire to experience life in a butterfly body.

Do they know how to go about accomplishing this? Absolutely not. They don't have a clue. But they *do* know how to attune themselves to nature's intelligence, and let themselves be guided by her. And fortunately, nature knows exactly how to make butterflies. She's been doing it for a long, long time, and she's got it down to a T. However, the great work cannot begin until the imaginal cells connect. Isolated and alone as they initially are, they can achieve nothing. And so, they begin to reach out tendrils.

"I'm feeling lonely," we might imagine them saying. "Is there anyone else out there?"

And to their immense relief, there is. In fact, by the time they reach out, there are millions of other imaginal cells out there. And so, they connect, and together, they begin to weave the *matrix* out of which one day a butterfly will emerge—a gossamer speck of beauty dancing on the breeze.

We too are imaginal cells, weavers of a new world. Listening to the news, the idea of creating a peaceful, sustainable human civilization might seem like a mad fantasy. There are far too many challenges, all of them serious and potentially devastating. Like the World Trade Center, old structures are crumbling all around us.

Yet like the imaginal cells, we too are many—far more than most of us realize. And in recent years, we too have been connecting, and have begun to weave the matrix of a new world.

Indeed, the creation of this book, this interweaving of our collective wisdom, is a perfect example of how imaginal cells operate. No one person could have created it. Nobody could have predicted what insights, ideas, images and stories it would contain. Yet here we are, holding it in our hands.

Imaginal cells aren't given an instruction manual. Nobody tells them what to do. Rather, they are guided from within. We too, can only attune ourselves to the vast consciousness that created our cosmos by quieting ourselves, turning inwards, and listening.

I am not referring to meditation, although meditation certainly is a powerful tool for detaching from the mind. Rather, I am speaking, quite simply, of *listening*. Let us turn to the source of guidance within, ask our questions, from the most mundane to the cosmic, and listen to the responses that rise up. I have witnessed thousands of people as they did this and discovered, sometimes to their great surprise, that insofar as they were truly willing to listen, they were gifted with insights and guidance that their conscious mind had no access to.

Can we, like the imaginal cells, make ourselves available to serve as agents of nature's infinite wisdom? If so, we may yet enable a planetary transformation no less miraculous than that of a caterpillar into a butterfly.