



# Talking Leaves: Volume 6, Issue 3

Autumn Equinox 2017

## Welcome to Yggdrasil

Yggdrasil is a collaborative venture of a small circle of co-creative friends - the culmination of our life experiences; our work as healers, teachers and writers; our soul journeys; our dreams and our quests in nature. We envision Yggdrasil to be a mystery school for visionary contrarians and a forest retreat for souls seeking to reinvent themselves, one day to be housed within a self-sustaining eco-village community. We are now in the formative stages of this project, working together to refine and elaborate our vision, and root it in fertile soil.

This newsletter is one way for us to stay in touch with our extended family of friends and supporters. Please feel free to share this issue of **Talking Leaves** with anyone who feel might be interested in what we are doing. You can also learn more about Yggdrasil through our website at [yggdrasilretreat.com](http://yggdrasilretreat.com), and/or keep track of us on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/yggdrasilretreat](http://www.facebook.com/yggdrasilretreat).



## Contents

The Impossible Journey from Caterpillar to Butterfly  
Tracking the Soul 2017: A Convergence of Imaginal Cells  
Yggdrasil's Mentorship Program - Encouragement for the Imaginal Cell  
The Inner Spiritual Guidance Workshop  
Our Standing Invitation to You

# The Impossible Journey from Caterpillar to Butterfly

Excerpted from *Waking the Global Heart* by Anodea Judith



"When a caterpillar nears its transformation time, it begins to eat ravenously, consuming everything in sight . . . The caterpillar body then becomes heavy, outgrowing its own skin many times, until it is too bloated to move. Attaching to a branch (upside down, where everything is turned on its head) it forms a chrysalis - an enclosing shell that limits the caterpillar's freedom for the duration of the transformation.

Within the chrysalis a miracle occurs. Tiny cells, that biologists actually call "imaginal cells," begin to appear. These cells are wholly different from caterpillar cells, carrying different information, vibrating to a different frequency - the frequency of the emerging butterfly. At first, the caterpillar's immune system perceives these new cells as enemies, and attacks them, much as new ideas in science, medicine, politics, and social behavior are viciously denounced by the powers now considered mainstream. But the imaginal cells are not deterred. They continue to appear, in even greater numbers, recognizing each other, bonding together, until the new cells are numerous enough to organize into clumps. When enough cells have formed to make structures along the new organizational lines, the caterpillar's immune system is overwhelmed. The caterpillar body then becomes a nutritious soup for the growth of the butterfly.

When the butterfly is ready to hatch, the chrysalis becomes transparent. The need for restriction has been outgrown. Yet the struggle toward freedom has an organic timing.

And is connected to the breath. A children's book that I read stated that the butterfly 'pops' its chrysalis by taking a deep, full breath. As the butterfly emerges, it's upside down. It immediately turns right side up and it proceeds to hold its chrysalis with such reverence, I can 'hear' it saying 'thank you' to where it came from. When we've been through troubles of trauma, it can be difficult to find the gratitude for where we came from. It may be empowering to pause in this

reading and give thanks to your self and to all the sentient beings who supported you through the times of loss.

With loss there can be a loss of innocence. And the paradox is that in losing innocence a newfound wisdom is gained. In this new wisdom there is even greater inner connection to innocence, allowing the possibility for wholeness.”

## Tracking the Soul 2017: A Convergence of Imaginal Cells

*My most luminous insight  
was to experience viscerally the divine connection that we all share.  
It made me feel huge, expanded and radiant.  
Hearing the stories, holding the space together, connecting with nature  
brought it home once again.*



Our 4<sup>th</sup> annual [Tracking the Soul](#) workshop took place from August 17-21 at [Spirit Matters](#) (near Almonte, Ontario, Canada).

At the workshop, the metaphor of “imaginal cells” was evoked by co-facilitator [Julie Yeaman](#) at the end of our time together to provide a context for the work we had done. Each of us had come with a personal story to share about some aspect of our soul’s journey that we have found troublesome, confusing, seemingly impervious to change – patterns familiar, in some ways even

comfortable, and yet driven by a restless urge toward change. The first day and a half of the workshop we held a space for each other to share these stories, and together formed the chrysalis in which change became possible.

The chrysalis was heavy with all of the angst we brought with us, now hanging in the air we shared, and yet something else was also beginning to happen. Within our stories were many common threads - an opening of the heart followed by loss; the residual shame of a childhood filled with judgment; the price to be paid for standing in truth; the sense of alienation from a culture gone awry; the feeling of having to do more to prove ourselves worthy; or serve others to justify our existence; or take on their burdens as our own; or say no to others in order to be true to ourselves; or stop trying to fix what can't be fixed; or leave our successes behind to heed the call of the unknown; or step into a deeper truth that can't yet be named. Remind me again: which of these issues are yours, and which are mine? Or does that line exist? Or matter?

In a sense through the sharing of our stories - which are at once both intimately personal and universal to the human experience - we were adding to the mush on which our transformation would feed. In Mahayana Buddhism, the concept of karma - commonly understood within Eastern religions as the consequences of action - is not entirely personal, but rather a conditioning of our collective experience through the cumulative actions of individuals over time. What we call consensus reality is, in fact, the sum synergistic total of what we have all put into it. If this is so, then it also follows that the work that each of us does to heal our wounds, to transmute our pain and suffering into something creative that we can then contribute to the wellbeing of the Whole. Certainly, within the context of the Tracking the Soul workshop - where our shared intention was to do this work, this is what in fact we experienced. The mush of intermingling stories - spiced by pain and suffering, sparked to new life by a shared appreciation for our common predicament - fed the imaginal cells within us waiting for permission to emerge.

*I now understand that the sacred ground we covered  
is going to change the way I walk through the world  
and that is going to change the world!  
I don't know how else to look at it.*

In the rest of the workshop, we designed a series of exercises meant to move the energy that was stirring within the mush and feed the imaginal cells groping toward new life. The people attending this workshop were not newbies. Many had already lived very rich and full lives, actualizing their creative potentials, making meaningful contributions to the world, making a difference. Many were teachers, healers, accomplished beings. But as those who were at this workshop the second (or third time around) - 6 of the 11 - realized, there are layers and layers of subtle conditioning to be released, so that ever-increasing refinements of Self can radiate forth.

The butterfly that is formed around the imaginal cells that each of carry has many incarnations - even within this one life. One woman who had spent her life teaching and guiding others, orchestrating clinics and groups of healing practitioners, felt compelled to make more space to



explore her connections to the more-than-human world of the forest, so that her teaching and her being could emanate from that deeper place of connection. Another, who had spent her career as a sports administrator was inspired in her retirement to create a different, more enlightened kind of program for young people that embodied the wisdom she had gathered. Another, who had spent her career as a social worker, was feeling her way more deeply into Buddhist and other teachings that could root her innate sense of compassion and caring in more deeply spiritual soil – a process that not only greatly facilitated her own healing, but also made possible a deeper gift to the world.

At the workshop, we talked a lot about how the hero's journey – for both women and men, a metaphor for the soul's evolution – demanded not just personal healing, but also a contribution to the wellbeing of the Whole. In his seminal book, *The Hero of a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell talks about how the return – bringing back the gifts one has gathered in the journey, and what has learned through facing all the challenges along the way – is the most difficult part of the journey. The temptation is to just keep it all for oneself: "I've paid my dues, and now it is time to reap the reward." There is nothing wrong with reaping a reward, but the higher calling – which was shared by everyone at this workshop – was giving something back, in many cases, reaching for a level of giving that comes from a deeper, more authentic place inside.

We live in a time when each of us is called to do this, a time when resting upon our laurels is not an option for anyone awake enough to realize that to live in a suffering world means doing what we can to address and alleviate that suffering. This is essentially what the Buddha realized after he attained enlightenment sitting under the Bodhi Tree. The deeper truth is that there is no such thing as individual enlightenment. No one really makes it home, until we all do.

What truly excites me about the Tracking the Soul workshop is that we seem to start with this understanding as a given, and then go from there. Everyone brings a piece of healing that they feel the need to address – a pattern to be shifted, an issue to be resolved, a question begging for an answer. But everyone also brings the imaginal cell at the core of their being to the mix. In the emerging vitality of this cell, longing to shake free of yet another veil of subtle limitation, gradually emerges a vitality that feeds us all. This is not just another feel-good experience, but a true remembering of who we are at the core of our beings, and an exercise of wings.

*This second workshop was just as illuminating as the first one...  
I am grateful to have worked on shifting my pattern, but came away with much more.*

Our 2018 workshop will be held in mid August, again at [Spirit Matters](#) near Almonte, Ontario, Canada. Since the workshop requires a bit of preparation, early registration is encouraged. You can sign up directly on [our website](#), using Paypal to pay. The absolute final deadline for signing up will be May 1, but since we actually already have a waiting list of people who are interested, it is not too early to reserve your place.



## Yggdrasil's Mentorship Program – Encouragement for the Imaginal Cell



At Yggdrasil, the model for personal growth that we are developing involves a combination of one-on-one mentoring with a group experience. This is not a model unique to us, but it is one that seems to support our goal of assisting souls who are ready to re-imagine their lives around the emergence of the imaginal cell within. Workshops like [Tracking the Soul](#) create a chrysalis for imaginal cells to come together, but it is through our [Mentorship Program](#) that the imaginal cell within each participant is called more consciously to the surface of a life in mid-stride. At Yggdrasil, we envision this process to revolve around four primary soul tasks:

- 1) *Tending the sacred wound, reaching toward healing and wholeness.*
- 2) *Cultivating a deeper sense of visionary calling, making a contribution.*
- 3) *Communicating clearly with others.*
- 4) *Courting the mythopoetic realm of Spirit.*

### Tending the Sacred Wound

Each of us is born into this world traumatized by our separation from the Oneness of Spirit, which is ultimately the Source of All That Is – including the imaginal cell: the unique note within the symphony of Wholeness that we are meant to sound. This catastrophic experience of separation from the Source is also a profound matter of forgetting Who We Are. This is the initial wounding of every soul born into a body within this embodied world.

For most of us, the trauma of birth is compounded by the harsh hospital lights, the alien greeting by serious beings in surgical masks wielding odd instruments of torture, and the general

sense of mayhem that makes most birthing environments a frenetic, chaotic wildly out of control semblance of artificial order. But the trauma goes deeper than that: each imaginal cell is now swaddled in these non-functional caterpillar bodies, bound by time and space and gravity, and suddenly having to function in a world where everything is foreign and forbidding.

Strangers in a strange land, we eventually leave the hospital landing pad, and go home to parents who do their best to love us, but inevitably fail as their own limitations and the challenges of parenting stretch them past their breaking point; a school system that fails to recognize that we are anything more than malleable lumps of clay, ready to be shaped, manipulated, lied to about the true nature of the human experience, while filled with useless bits of undigested or distorted knowledge; and a culture that just wants us to consume, pay our taxes, and live lives of quiet desperation without questioning the system that exploits us.

Through all of this, we also inevitably bump up against our own limitations, those places where we are woundable and inevitably become wounded by the insensitivities of others and the world at large; all those places where we do not believe ourselves to be enough, are seemingly unlovable and unworthy of the deepest longing of our souls; or just those places where we have something to learn, and are being challenged to stretch and grow beyond our current capacities.

To the extent that we manage to survive the initial shock of our predicament, and adjust to reality in this broken, wounded place, we gradually begin to realize – or perhaps remember – why we took this insane journey in the first place – to complete ourselves, to grow through our challenges into a more refined, more empowered, more resilient, more creatively realized version of the imaginal cell – the spark of the Divine – we carry within us, not just as free-floating spirits, but as embodied beings filling the embodied world with our love, our light, our wisdom, sharing our gifts in a tangible way through our active participation in the embodied life. As we remember this, we enter the first of Yggdrasil’s four soul tasks: tending the sacred wound, not as a curse, but as the pivot point around which a lifetime of learning and growth can over time catapult us toward our own highest, deepest, most authentic expression of Spirit in embodied form.

It is here that a good mentor can guide us more deeply into recognizing the priceless lessons at the heart of our pain and suffering, and help us honor ourselves for taking on the immense learning curve associated with our most intractable patterns and our most debilitating wounds. In preparation for Tracking the Soul, a mentor helps trace the story of the learning process through the cycles that structure them. Out of this emerges a kind of historical perspective that not only brings the pattern into sharper relief, but also reveals what in fact we have learned by struggling with our patterns over the course of a lifetime. The more deeply we understand ourselves to be the heroes and heroines of these stories, the more clearly the sacred wound reveals itself to be the catalyst for the re-awakening of the imaginal cell within.

### **Cultivating Visionary Calling**

The imaginal cell itself is the seed potential out of which visionary calling arises. We are not just bits of broken Wholeness afloat within a world of broken bits. Nor is the task simply a

matter of reuniting with other broken bits, so that we can regain the sense of Wholeness that we lost upon taking birth. We are unique holographic expressions of Wholeness, meant to bring something into this world that did not previously exist, but does now – at least potentially – because we are here. To the extent that we become fully alive, fully present in these bodies, fully embodied, bringing as much love, light, and well-crafted wisdom into the embodied world as we can, we begin to actualize this immense potential as visionary pioneers.

We do not live in a culture that supports this understanding of who we are, because the preservation of the culture itself is predicated on maintaining the status quo. Innovation is allowed, but only within the context of service to an agenda dictated by the culture itself – one that is increasingly controlled by corporate interests, and dependent on broken bits remaining broken bits – too poor, too preoccupied with keeping the job and paying the rent to bite the hand that appears to feed us, too afraid to reach across the many barriers that divide us (race, religion, age, gender, economic status, political persuasion, etc. etc.), too cowed by forces of oppression and intimidation to break the mold that imprisons us.

The myth of individuality is put forward, largely by the advertising industry, framed within the context of personal style – brand allegiance, conformity to a cool persona or superficial cultural stereotype, ersatz rebellion carefully orchestrated and manipulated in ways that subtly neuter it. Most of us unconsciously measure ourselves against this artificial standard, even if we rebel against it. Or we gravitate to a subculture that supports our particular brand of weirdness, without ever realizing that conformity to the mindset of the smaller group can be just as deadening as to the culture at large. We continue to define ourselves in terms of our acceptance by a more select group of people like us, and our true individuality remains nascent, a sleeping imaginal cell that hopes its caterpillar will leave the nest and strike out on its own.

Occasionally someone does break free from the Matrix, only to suffer the dire fate of ostracism, jail time or death. Environmentalists in some places are routinely murdered with impunity; journalists around the world are increasingly castigated for simply telling the truth, or asking uncomfortable questions; whistleblowers who expose the corrupt and diabolic schemes that enslave us are routinely exiled and demonized.

Awakening to one's inner sense of individuality as an imaginal adventure is relatively easy; but actualizing that awakening within a culture in which entrenched inertia is tied to economic and political advantage is a revolutionary act. Paradoxically, the truly awakened individual can no longer pretend that all is well in the broken world through which she flies, and is compelled to do something about it. This makes the awakened soul dangerous to the vested interests of the sleeping culture. Awakening also entails a responsibility to the embodied world and all sentient beings within it. You can't just fly away; you've got to participate from a place of vision and deep purpose, with everything you've learned and are learning on your own journey, and do your bit to create a more humane, more balanced, more equitable world.

In this larger context, the imaginal cell itself – the divine spark at the core of your being that is Who You Are in your Wholeness – is only the seed potential of a visionary calling that must



be actualized through conscious and intentional action within the world. This is not a process that happens entirely in the safe cocoon of your imagination, although this is where it starts. Here is where a good mentor can not only help you recognize what is stirring there, but also coax it into clarity as a seed potential begging to be planted in the world. Beyond that a good mentor can guide you toward taking the steps necessary to plant and tend the seed, and bring the creative potential at the heart of your unique holographic expression of Wholeness into fruition. This is something of course that only you can do for yourself, but having an ally who recognizes that this, in fact, is what you are doing, and encourages you to keep moving forward, is priceless.

## Communicating Clearly With Others

At the point at which you accept the deeper purpose that has been entrusted to you and the responsibility that comes with it, you must enter into a deeper dialogue with the world, one that requires you to listen and learn, as well as share the deepest truths you carry in a language that can be heard and understood by those who may not always know what you are talking about. You must seek to understand those who disagree with you, and hold to your own core truths, while understanding that there is no such thing as THE TRUTH – just an infinite number of ways to perceive reality, interpret it, and share what it is that you experience. You must understand that beliefs are rooted in experience and be open to having an experience that changes your beliefs, while honoring those who are not ready to experience your truth.

You must understand that communication across the differences that divide us into camps inevitably triggers core wounds and issues on both sides of the divide. You must take responsibility for what is triggered within you, even as you respond compassionately to others who are triggered by you. You must hold your humanity and your relationships to be of higher importance than being right, or convincing others of your truth, even as you never stop speaking as clearly as you can what matters enough to be spoken. You must learn to distinguish between what matters and what does not.

You must do all these things because any vision worth carrying and manifesting in the world will be one that you cannot carry alone. Anyone can live a small life, relatively independently of the need for more than minimal interaction with others. To manifest a vision takes a village, a circle of awakening imaginal cells committed to working co-creatively together to bring something into the world that is larger than the sum of its parts. Within this imaginal village, all the issues enumerated above will arise and be compounded to the extent that you are committed to the vision. You will carry your own visionary truth in a circle of others doing the same, and the common vision itself will evolve as each person in the group perpetually articulates and refines their understanding of it, while reaching across differences to find a common language in which to explore it.

All of this must be done within a culture that does not support the process of dialogue across differences. If anything our culture has evolved in the opposite direction toward a contentious, argumentative polarization of entrenched viewpoints, where one spews talking points at their enemies, without ever actually engaging them. In school, we learn to debate, compete, and

strive toward dominance of others; lip service is given to cooperation, but only as a way of making more manageable those who would question authority and find their own way. The strong bully the weak. The divide between us widens, and is quite effectively manipulated by those who manage to carve out a niche for themselves on the stronger side of the divide. History has shown that even when this unnatural order of things is overthrown, the revolution becomes every bit as autocratic, oppressive, and imbalanced as what it is replacing.

All of this is hard-wired into our conditioning, whether we espouse more enlightened values or not, so that in order to communicate with others – both in service to our unfolding vision and outside the circles in which our vision is appreciated – we must unlearn what we think we know, and start again. Here, a good mentor can help by providing a learning environment in which good communication skills can be practiced and learned. The mentor will not only listen attentively to you, but challenge you to articulate your feelings, your vision, and the subtle currents of change within you in ways that can be understood. As generations of psychotherapists can attest, issues on both side of the mentoring relationship can trigger issues, which a good mentor will then acknowledge and teach you to acknowledge, while working with you to find a pathway toward resolution and learning for you both. Lastly, a good mentor can coach you in building the imaginal village and the support network – outside of the mentoring relationship – in which your vision can begin to take root.

### **Courting the Mythopoetic Realm**

As we have discovered at Yggdrasil, the vision itself has the power to draw forth and amplify our differences. It's a bit like walking into a room where the light is so bright, you can no longer see, where the room itself is alive – as though the living chrysalis of imaginal cells that contains us has a life of its own that lives through us. Within such a living context, you must not only hold to your own truth while opening to the truths of others, but realize that the vision itself is opening you, and opening to you, as you deepen your relationship with it.

Here the dialogue is not just between imaginal cells, but with a Larger Reality that contains the emergence of all imaginal cells. Some call this God; some Spirit; some have other names, or multiple names for various dimensions of Oneness. Entering this realm is entering a deep Mystery, where invisible forces interpenetrate the embodied world and enrich it in ways that defy rational explanation. Occasionally the Mystery radiating at the heart of this embodied world breaks through and shows itself – through a dream, or a moment of synchronicity, in meditation, on a vision quest, or through a shamanic experience of non-ordinary reality.

Over time, each imaginal cell will find its own way into the Mystery, and with the aid of a good mentor, this process can become more conscious and intentional, accelerate and deepen. These are the kinds of experiences that are either denied – as in much of mainstream society – or spoken about superficially in coded language within many New Age subcultures. Here, a good mentor can extend the exploration into fresh language that arises out of experience itself to become a personal touchstone around which the imaginal cell that you are can coalesce.

It is our intent at Yggdrasil to make good mentors available for help with all of these soul tasks. You can find out more about our [Mentorship Program](#) on our website.



## The Inner Spiritual Guidance Workshop

*Connecting With Spirit and Remembering Who You Really Are*

October 21<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>th</sup> near Costa Mesa, California



**Find your own connection to Spirit.**

**Discover the best ways for you to access and cultivate that connection.**

**Explore direct spiritual guidance through guided meditations and shamanic journeys.**

**Meet your own spirit guides and begin a relationship that will last the rest of your life.**

*"You are never alone or helpless. The force that guides the stars guides you also."*

**Shri Shri Anandamurti**

Beyond every major religion in the world, usually built on the outer teachings of a great master like Jesus, Buddha, or Lao Tzu is an experiential tradition designed to teach direct access to the source of wisdom from which those teachings flow. Christian mystics seek "a direct, intimate union of the soul with God through contemplation or ecstasy." Buddhist and yogic meditation practices

take the practitioner beyond words toward the place inside where knowing arises. The shamanic traditions use drums, journeywork and other techniques to induce altered states of consciousness in which information not available to the conscious mind becomes accessible.

In the spirit of these traditions, co-facilitators [Steve Hayes](#) and [Bruce Durward](#) present Inner Spiritual Guidance, a two-day workshop designed to expand and deepen access to the source of guidance within. Steve is a psychotherapist specializing in trauma therapy, with extensive experience in attachment hypnotherapy, past life regression therapy, and facilitation of work with spirit guides. Bruce is a practicing shaman taught by Peruvian masters, specializing in psychopomp work, releasing old trauma in the energy body, and communication with channeled entities like Quan Yin and Archangel Michael.

Both co-facilitators of this workshop believe that each person has spirit guides that watch over them and help them in limited ways when we give them permission to do so. These guides can take many forms, including angels, spirit animals, faeries, deceased loved ones, deceased pets, ascended masters, archangels, gods and goddesses. In the workshop, Steve and Bruce will facilitate an experience of this connection with Spirit and get to know at least one of their guides.

The cost is \$200 per person. You can register by clicking the Buy Now button at the bottom of the [web page](#), and paying through Paypal.

Details and directions to the workshop venue will be provided upon registration, along with a brief questionnaire to help us better address your needs.



## Our Standing Invitation to You

If you want to stay in closer touch with what we are doing, you can easily subscribe to [our blog feed](#), like us on [Facebook](#), follow us on [Twitter](#), make a [donation](#), attend a [workshop](#), or find a [mentor](#). Or if you want to be a part of this exciting venture, [join the Talking Council](#).

Whatever your level of interest, thanks for being part of our extended community and for helping us hold a space for the vision we carry.

**Yggdrasil is a mystery school for visionary contrarians and a forest retreat for souls reinventing themselves, eventually to be housed within a self-sustaining eco-village community.**

Keep an eye out for the next *Talking Leaves* - Winter Solstice 2017  
Contributions in the spirit of Yggdrasil are welcome by December 14.

