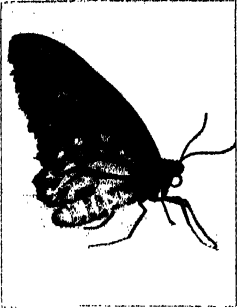


Butterflies and Moths

By Brigitte Grimm



The butterfly patient shows a pronounced imbalance between male and female tendencies, and is biased towards the female ones

The group themes and individual remedies of the Lepidoptera family, the butterflies and moths, are explored through provings from Allen to the present day. This article includes an insight into remedies from German provings not yet available in English

Insects represent the largest group in the animal kingdom. Among them, the order of *Lepidoptera* (butterflies and moths) is perhaps the most popular with professional and lay enthusiasts alike. Interest in this group goes back a very long way and the first treatise on this group was compiled during the reign of Henry VIII. Collecting butterflies as a hobby began in the last quarter of the 17th century.¹ The group comprises more than 100,000 known species worldwide.² Having a common base of origin, the true butterflies (*Papilionidae*) are a biologically distinct group, whereas the moths are a combination of several groups and are ancestral to the true butterflies.

Generally speaking, butterflies are much brighter in colour and active during the day, whereas moths, being active in the hours of darkness and twilight, developed darker, duller colours, although this is by no means always the case.³ Butterflies have a much better sensory system than humans; they can see more colours, can taste more with their taste buds, and can smell the most subtle and distant scents (especially males in search of a female).⁴ With the exception of one family, the adults are, if they feed at all, liquid feeders. The larvae possess biting jaws and feed almost exclusively on plant material. This stage is the one that is considered economically important as they can cause considerable damage to crops and ornamental plants.

What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the rest of the world calls butterfly (Richard Bach)

All the *Lepidoptera* pass through four stages in their lives: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa and imago (adult). This process is called metamorphosis. The eggs are laid directly onto the food plants of the caterpillars. All caterpillars possess a pair of silk glands. The silk is mainly used in the formation of the cocoon surrounding the pupa. Feeding is an almost non-stop activity for caterpillars, thus growth is very rapid. Larval life can extend up to three years compared to an average of three weeks for adult life.⁵

Butterflies and moths have been a symbol for metamorphosis and transformation from ancient mythology to Jungian psychotherapy. Modern developmental psychology distinguishes two basic forms of change, one consisting of the natural stages (birth, childhood, adulthood etc.), the other going beyond that into transformation in terms of consciousness (changes

in thinking, beliefs, values etc.).⁶ Jung, following Greek mythology, equates the butterfly to the human soul. As will follow from the analyses of the butterfly and moth remedies below, the development and transformation are reflected in the themes of this family of remedies.

Presently, four butterflies (*Graphium agamemnon*, *Limenitis bredowii*, *Inachis io*, *Pieris brassicae*) and three moths (*Bombyx mori*, *Thaumetopoea (Bombyx) processionata*, *Apeira syringaria*) have been proved homeopathically. The considerable differences in the methodology of provings (Hahnemannian and dream provings) makes it difficult to compare some of the symptoms, as does the use of different developmental stages (adult or caterpillar) and/or different parts of the animals, as the basis for the remedies. Mostly, the whole adult animal was used. In the case of *Bombyx mori*, however, only the wings of the adult were taken, and in the case of *Bombyx processionata* the larva (caterpillar). Because of the greater number of mental/emotional and dream symptoms in most of the dream provings, the emphasis of this comparison will be on these areas.

The Typical Butterfly Patient

Müller gives an instructive synthesis of a typical butterfly patient,⁷ in which he includes the main proving themes of all six *Lepidoptera*. However, he does not distinguish between butterflies and moths, a distinction, which I feel needs to be considered (see below). The following is a synthetic translation from Müller and Schroyens:

The butterfly patient shows a pronounced imbalance between male and female tendencies, and is biased towards the female ones; men dream of being women, or of bearing children or looking after them. This was also supported by a case where an effeminate little boy was cured by Graphium agamemnon.⁸ The typical patient loves multicoloured, beautiful clothes made from luxurious materials (silk!). Perfumes are especially important, as they help further to enhance their appearance and satisfy the person's sensitivity to smell (see animal behaviour). One of the main pleasures in life is spending money on useless but beautiful things. Personal relationships are central to their being: bringing up children, participating in family gatherings and visiting friends. This was one of the main themes in a case cured by Apeira syringaria.⁹ They are also very sympathetic towards others and also towards animals. Being sociable and sympathetic is one side of their picture; the other is a strong desire for amusement. Distraction ameliorates most of their symptoms; there is a strong longing for change,

Lilac Beauty,
Apetra syringaria.
Photo:
Christian Schou, Biopix.dk

The typical butterfly personality is extremely emotional; the heart switches off the brain

which is a central theme. Otherwise these people quickly experience boredom and even melancholy. There is often a problem with establishing one's own identity;¹⁰ the personality is rather too easily influenced and highly impressionable.¹¹ The typical butterfly personality is extremely emotional; the heart switches off the brain. Often the mental plane can somehow be impeded; there are problems with concentration and aversion to mental activity. They are also highly idealistic and dream of the ideal relationship, ideal house and so on; a difficulty in making decisions results. Based on this weakness they often long for an adult personality to guide them, or otherwise feel unprotected. They are sanguine by nature, and tend to rapidly changing moods, but are open and loving towards others. All the main themes are usually also reflected in the dreams of the patients. Butterfly patients love to spend their time outside in the sun. Generally all their symptoms are better for open air and warmth and worse indoors. Physically, circulation is often unstable and tends towards local congestions. There is a pronounced affinity to the nervous system and thus neurological symptoms, even leading to paralysis or ataxia, are common.

Differentiating The Butterflies And Moth Remedies

Deviations from the 'ideal common themes', as described above, can be noted in the individual remedies:

Graphium agamemnon, Tailed Jay Butterfly

Symptoms recorded and incorporated into the repertory on *Graphium agamemnon* are predominantly mental and emotional. In this case it seems striking, that hardly any themes in addition to those characterised above can be noticed, except a sense of wholeness. However, a marked desire for cold, sweet things could be noted in the provings, as could late and scanty menses and headaches in the temple region.¹²

Limentis bredowii, California Sister Butterfly

In the case of *Limentis bredowii* the author of the proving states that an animal was used that behaved somewhat strangely.¹³ It stayed in the same place for four days. Whether this had any impact on the remedy picture is difficult to know, but it could indicate the low vitality of the specimen in question. Compared with the common themes, there is a strong sexual and sensual aspect in the picture of this remedy where the feelings and desires are more often enhanced than diminished. The mental confusion and dullness were also extremely pronounced, combined with the feeling of deep love and emotional openness. An extension of this was an aversion to work and responsibility. The different developmental stages of humans (baby, child, adolescent, parent) also figured centrally, mainly in dreams. In the latter, the feeling of being unprotected was strong.¹⁴ Another characteristic dream aspect, only found in this remedy, was that of buildings. Herrick creates a useful analogy with the cocoon (pupa stage) from which the butterfly emerges.¹⁵ On a physical level tension and stiffness in the extremities and the back was strong, sometimes with pressing pain. I feel the picture of this butterfly is close to complete.

Inachis io, Peacock Butterfly

To establish the identity of the third butterfly remedy, *Inachis io* is more difficult. All the mental and emotional symptoms are covered, as illustrated in the picture of a typical butterfly person. The only aspect that seems to stand out is the strongly emphasised polarity in this

remedy. The positive feelings of love, caring and quiet mind show their opposites in anger, egocentricity and the desire to quarrel. There is a desire for mental activity. These aspects are very interesting when thinking of the fairly aggressive behaviour of the butterfly itself. The males are among the most territorial butterflies known, but show this only in the latter half of the day (after 1 pm) when they will chase any intruder, be it insect or even bird, over a distance of up to 200m.¹⁶ Although *Limentis* (see above) is also known to be very territorial, no such symptoms were found in the proving (Herrick 1988). Unfortunately, we do not know if the specimen used for the trituration was male or female; if the former, this might help to explain some of the mental/emotional aspects of *Inachis* found in the proving. Physically, there is a particularity of extreme itchiness of the extremities in *Inachis*, which is worse for heat.¹⁷

Pieris brassicae, Cabbage White Butterfly

The Cabbage White (*Pieris brassicae*) appears to show more psoric influences, with its sadness, fears and being easily frightened. Pronounced loquacity was experienced by the provers, as was a general amelioration from it. Another important symptom of the mental realm, which is analogically linked with the life of a flying insect, is that of a feeling of lightness and floating in the air.¹⁸ Presently, it seems to be a characteristic of this remedy only, although one would perhaps have expected it to be a common theme of the entire group.

Bombyx mori, Silk Moth

The moths have a longer history of use as homoeopathic remedies, especially their most prominent species *Bombyx mori* (*chryssorhea*), the Silk Moth. Allen first described this animal remedy from the tincture of a caterpillar. He includes a poisoning reaction from handling a cocoon, from a French source. The reactions were a *pricking, itching and burning sensations of the skin*, followed by *eruptions with more itching, and great heat*.¹⁹ According to these symptoms the remedy was best known as an urticaria remedy, with *itching of the entire body and burning heat everywhere*.²⁰ Only the recent dream proving by Müller²¹ elucidated the deeper sides of this remedy. However, even then, the emphasis still seems to be on the physical plane with only a few mental symptoms, all of which do not seem to correspond with the picture of the typical butterfly patient. Maybe this can be interpreted as a first indication from the homoeopathic point of view to support the proposed separation of the butterfly from the moth remedies.

In the Müller proving of *Bombyx mori* there is no hint of positive loving emotions; it is characterised rather by irritability, shrieking and a lack of bodily awareness.²² This is a much darker remedy than the butterflies. Comparing the physical symptoms from the recent dream proving of *Bombyx mori* with the old physicals is somewhat difficult, as the adult butterfly's wings were used for the Müller proving and not the caterpillar, as reported by Allen.²³ However, the new information on the physical symptoms of *Bombyx mori* still reflects the old sources, where redness, heat and burning were repeatedly reported by the provers.

Bombyx processionea, Procession Moth

Thaumatopoea (*Bombyx processionea*), was introduced into the homoeopathic pharmacopoea at about the same time as *Bombyx mori*.²⁴ Again, the main area of action



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Silk Moth, *Bombyx mori*.
Photo: Paolo Mazzei, Leps.it

is urticaria and related skin conditions as previously described for *Bombyx mori*. However, a characteristic symptom of this remedy is the sensation as if a foreign body were under the skin.²⁵ Here it is important to note that for the recent dream proving only caterpillars were used, which corresponds with Allen. Again, the mental symptoms appear somewhat scarce with only a single rubric of 'delirium', which is perhaps the most characteristic of this remedy picture. This scarcity, as previously noted for *Bombyx mori*, might suggest that the larval form, and thus the remedy picture, is not as diverse as when looking at the adult butterfly. However, as *Bombyx mori* was proved from the wings of an adult butterfly, and this has not fundamentally influenced the picture, it seems more likely that the group effect is prevailing.

Interesting themes can be discovered in the dream section where 'falling' and 'flying' appear.²⁶ Neither of these would appear to tie in with the expected behaviour of a caterpillar. One could interpret this on the basis that these feelings are not restricted to the dream-section (unconscious) by chance, but are an expression of a 'state-to-come'. Appropriately for the state that will follow (pupa), this is a sleepy remedy during the day, as is the last of the moths, *Apeira syringaria*.

Apeira syringaria, Lilac Beauty

The Lilac Beauty was identified by the author of the proving on its external appearance and on the basis of its occurrence on the correct food plant (lilac bushes). Although this makes it a very likely determination, one cannot be absolutely sure of its correctness and thus reproducibility. No determination of the moth's gender was undertaken. This species has so far had a recent dream proving, and is supported by published clinical evidence.²⁷ Also in this case, the existing remedy picture is reminiscent of the activity pattern of these animals. Interestingly, the description of the cured case shows more themes reflecting the mental and emotional themes of butterflies than did the proving symptoms on this moth, for example: weakness of mind; fear of

saying something stupid; strong attachment to family (parents); unprotected, unguided feeling; very sensitive to noise. Comparing his experience from the case with Müller's proving themes, Jansen established the following two central areas: wanting to help but lacking the means to do so, and losing energetic power as a guide or counsellor. On a physical level, characteristic symptoms included a cough with expectoration (lumpy, viscid, yellow) and a chill, which was not relieved by warmth.

When considering the other two moth remedies, it is striking to note that there were no skin-related symptoms (worse for heat) recorded for *Apeira*, although they are so central to *Bombyx mori* and *Bombyx processionea*.

The deviations from the 'ideal common themes' of the entire group, as described above, could either be explained by the differences in biological relationships, proving methodology or life-stages used, but could also be considered as the natural radiation of symptoms in the group. Maybe a split into butterflies and moths would be appropriate at some point? Future research into this and other animal families could help us to elucidate these as yet unknown factors.

In conclusion, it is important to point out that an understanding of families of remedies, such as the recently established one of butterflies and moths, is a very important tool for the homeopathic practitioner today, as 'change', which is perhaps the most central theme of this group, is taking place at a more rapid rate than ever before in the history of mankind.

Note: Two more provings in this group are yet awaiting publication: one is another species of butterfly, *Vanessa urtica/Aglais urticae* (Small Tortoise Shell Butterfly) proven in Ireland in 1997 by Nuala Eising; the other proving, performed by Melissa Assilem will add valuable information to the picture of *Bombyx mori* (the Silk Moth).

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