

About Butterflies and other considerations

Recently, I pursued a subject that's commonly called "the butterfly effect." The Butterfly Effect stems from an observation made back in the 1960s by a MIT scientist named Edward Lorenz. Professor Lorenz, a meteorologist, created a computer program designed to predict weather patterns. (Don't overlook the fact that this computer program was designed in the 1960s). One day, to take a shortcut, he decided to input only *three* digits into his equation rather than the usual *six* digits — i.e., instead of inputting .506127, he figured .506 would be sufficient. And that was the only change he inserted: the other twelve or fifteen data sets remained exactly the same.

But that tiny alteration — the "rounding off" of a seemingly insignificant calculation — made an enormous difference in the output of his results. He wanted to predict long-term weather patterns (a huge objective), so the enormity of that change's impact (teeny-tiny) gave him another whole research topic to explore: cause and effect. He realized that within and beyond science, every action — something as seemingly insignificant as a butterfly in Brazil flapping its wings — creates a new condition in the world, like setting off a slight wind pattern, which, in turn, causes something else, which, in turn... His conference talk, entitled "Predictability: Does the Flap of a Butterfly's Wings in Brazil Set Off a Tornado in Texas?," gives us how the effect was named.

Scientists now say that the "butterfly effect" allows people to think (wrongly) that we could trace backwards to see why a particular event occurred — when, in fact, there are so many factors involved, it would be impossible to account for what action caused what effect. So cause and effect ultimately is a philosophical issue, not entirely a physical one. If you're like me, you're probably thinking — what have I done that has caused x, y, or z to occur? Have I treated people with kindness or have I shown impatience? Have I been a source of support for people, or have I exploited them for my own selfish goals? Take a minute to consider those questions, and come to terms with them in your own mind.

Me? I want my simple writings and my blog posts to connect with you, to show you that Becky and I are thoughtful and deserving people who are ready, willing, and able to assist you when we can. The way we can best assist you is through one of the most basic goals a lot of people have: the opportunity to become a homeowner. Yes, the blog is a form of expression, but it's an expression that is meaningless unless it is received by you.

So I let my fingers flap and I send off words. I hope those words create an almost imperceptible wind pattern in the world and that wind pattern results in your reading the latest post and thinking, "hey, I need to get in touch with Becky or with Sharon...I've been meaning to talk to somebody about butterflies..."

