

The Butterfly Effect

The term "butterfly effect" is attributed to Edward Norton Lorenz, a mathematician and meteorologist, who was one of the first proponents of Chaos Theory. Though he had been working on the theory for some ten years, with the principal question as to whether a seagulls' wing movements changes the weather, he changed to the more poetic butterfly in 1973.

A speech he delivered was titled, "Does the Flap of a Butterfly's Wings in Brazil Set off a Tornado in Texas." Actually, fellow scientist, Philip Merilees created the title. Lorenz had failed to provide a title for his speech.

The concept of small variations producing the butterfly effect actually predates science and finds its home in science fiction. Writers like Ray Bradbury were particularly interested in the types of problems that might occur if one traveled back in time, trailing anachronisms. Could small actions taken in the past dramatically affect the future?

Fictional treatments of the butterfly effect as applies to time travel are numerous. Many cite the 2005 *Butterfly Effect* film as a good example of the possible negative changes that small behaviors in the past could have on the future, if one could time travel. Actually, a better and more critically accepted treatment of this concept is the 2000 film *Frequency*. In the film a father and son communicate over time through radio waves and attempt to change the past for the good.

In human behavior, one can certainly see how small changes could render behavior, or another complex system, extremely unpredictable. Small actions or experiences stored in the unconscious mind, could certainly affect a person's behavior in unexpected ways.

The Hunger Network in Ohio appropriates this principle, that seemingly small and insignificant actions can produce major changes in society. We believe that the often modest and easily dismissed work of faith communities, personified through advocacy for "the least of these...our brothers, sisters, and children," may produce tremendous changes in public systems. Pressing for justice on behalf of disadvantaged individuals and families caught in webs of poverty and often leading even to most severe expression of desperation in the form of hunger, the Hunger Network in Ohio's mission is to end hunger through ministries that seek to reduce the impact of poverty. We carry the confidence in and demonstrate that the willingness of the able on behalf of the vulnerable will ultimately produce fair and more humane communities where the naked are clothed, homeless are housed, and hungry are feed. These testimonies of overcoming great odds through modest efforts symbolize the butterfly effect.