

DEATH IS A VITAL QUESTION, ELISABETH KÜBLER-ROSS

Some notes and thoughts

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross is a reknown psychiatrist and doctor, a pioneer in the accompaniement of the people in the last stage of their lives. She uses different techniques to communicate with the dying ones and developed a communication system based on symbols.

Preliminary remarks :

- she is a very intense believer in a continuation of life after death.
- she is the initiator of the studies on the death experience (the whole light at the end of a tunnel, guided by the beloved dead there, love feeling the space...). But she brings numerous scientific elements... disconcerting.
- According to her, people – and especially children – have an exact intuition about their own death or that of the persons closest to them. It means that children are aware (though not always consciously) of the upcoming death, and in the case of their own death, they can even date it.

Butterflies:

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross visited the concentration camp of Maidanek in Poland just after the war ended, before it was cleaned up. In the blocks where the children were kept on the night preceding the gazing, she discovered the last drawings of those children on the walls. Most of these were butterflies. She wondered why such drawings, and why its constant repetition. From this experience she started to observe and analyse children's drawings. She used them to understand the relationship of children and death.

She interprets those butterflies as a symbol of an upcoming death. In her development, she explains how even though the children were not told they would die in the next 24 hours, they knew it and drew it. She collected many examples were children dying of cancer drew those same butterflies anywhere in the world.

There are also many more symbols easily readable: a violet balloon in the sky (violet being the spiritual colour); the use of red (danger)... More on the subject can be found with the studies led by Susan Bach in Zurich, a student of Jung.

Involving children actively:

Concerning the death of a parent, it is essential that the child gets involved in the house. The child should actively participate in the house were the dying one lives his last days. A child could put on his mother's favourite music, bring tea, and should have physical contacts with the patient. The distance is the worst curse that can be put on a child whose parents are dying. The grieving would be longer and harder. Death being a part of life, it should be lived through.

The story of Lorrie, 8 years old

Lorrie's mother had cancer and was in a coma in the hospital for two weeks. Lorrie was not told anything about her mother's sickness nor her upcoming death. For the last two weeks she hadn't seen her father, since he was leaving the house early and coming back late in order to go to the hospital before and after his work.

Lorrie's results in school had dropped drastically during the last months; even before the cancer had taken over the physical state of the mother.

When Elisabeth Kübler Ross asked her to make a drawing (without telling anything about the mother), she drew a red silhouette formed by many sticks and with enormous legs, next to an Indian motif angrily crossed out with red line.

Follows this dialogue between Lorrie and E. Kübler-Ross:

"- Is this your mother ?

- Yes

- A mother with such legs must have problems walking

- My mothers legs are so sick tjat she will never be able to walk with us in the park again.

- And the Indian motif ?

- It's a table with a tablecloth. My mother will never eat again with us at the kitchen table."

When asked if she meant that her mother was going to die, she just said that yes.

The girl knew even if it had been extremely carefully kept secret.