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MEANINGFUL COINCIDENCES IN THE LIGHT OF THE  
JUNG-PAULI THEORY OF SYNCHRONICITY  
AND PARAPSYCHOLOGY

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Let me begin with an anecdotal case of the encounter type of meaningful coincidences which I have observed myself. At the age of 14, Mrs. G., her parents and her younger brother visited Mont Saint-Michel in Brittany. I drove their car. While we visited the abbey, she and her brother examined the parked cars and she climbed into one of them which was particularly attractive. Its driver—so she reported with indignation—snapped at her in a foreign language and threw her out. Eight years later she met her future husband, a Scandinavian engineer, in Munich. Once, when she was married, turning over the pages of his photograph album, she found a picture of Mont Saint-Michel with the same car and driver. She had climbed into her future husband's car. The significant point, however, was to follow years later. In the same way as she had been thrown out of the car, she would be thrown out of this marriage, years later. For years the divorce hung like a shadow over her and hindered her children's development. Just a coincidence, but a meaningful one. One cannot help considering this event an omen for her future fate. By the way—the very moment I was writing this a letter from Mrs. G. was handed to me. She had not written for a long time and told me that she was struggling with depression caused by the sad fate of her son.

When we try to locate this case in the frame of normal experience or of parapsychology, we are at a loss. It resists explanation, not only in terms of physical causality, but also in terms of the categories of classical extrasensory perception, telepathy, clairvoyance or precognition. One can speculate. If Mrs. G. had dreamt of the car and had perhaps made a sketch of the dream scene, one might have thought it was a precognitive dream. In dreams, vehicles often appear as symbols for libido and it would have been plausible to interpret

the throwing out as a clearly allegorical presentation of the divorce. But Mrs. G. did not dream the scene but experienced it in reality.

I talked about this, and other cases, with Carl Gustav Jung who, throughout his whole life, paid the utmost attention to paranormal experiences as an explorer of the unconscious psyche. He told me if it was a dream or real life, it is all the same thing. It is an expression of the same cryptic acausal relationship between psyche and nature. The extraordinary aspect does not lie in the paranormal qualities of our perception but in the event itself. That is why he did not speak of telepathy, clairvoyance or precognition, but of synchronistic events.

I can now define the subject of my paper: The main purpose of my contribution to this symposium on "The Philosophy of Parapsychology" is to draw the attention of the participants to the importance meaningful coincidences, outside the framework of parapsychology, might have for our understanding of psi.

Allow me—at the risk of telling you something you all know—to give a brief account of the theory of synchronicity which Jung worked out in collaboration with or under the tutorship of the eminent physicist Wolfgang Pauli, discoverer of the "Pauli Exclusion Principle," one of the cornerstones of modern physics. The essay: "Synchronicity. An Acausal Connection Principle," first appeared in German in the volume *Natureerklärung und Psyche* (1952) together with a paper by Wolfgang Pauli on "The Influence of Archetypical Ideas on the Formation of Kepler's Scientific Theories." Jung had formulated the concept of synchronicity as early as 1930, and applied it for the first time when he attempted to explain the Chinese oracular practice of the I Ching, as an unexpected parallelism of psychic and physical events which is experienced as a "relative simultaneity." Later on, he tried to include with this concept extrasensory perception and psychokineses (meaningful coincidences in the strict sense adopted in this paper), omens, fateful encounters, oracles and, even, astrology. Jung defines synchronicity as "the simultaneous occurrence of two meaningfully but not causally connected events"<sup>1</sup> or alternatively as "a coincidence in time of two or more causally unrelated events which have the same or similar meaning."<sup>2</sup> Widely cited is the example Jung gives in his essay of the case of the scarab: "A young woman I was treating had, at a critical moment, a dream in which she was given a golden scarab. While she was telling me this dream I sat with my back to the closed window. Suddenly, I heard a noise behind me, like a gentle tapping. I turned round and saw a flying insect knocking against the windowpane from outside. I opened the window and caught the creature in the air as it flew in. It was the

nearest analogy to a golden scarab that one finds in our latitudes, a scarabaeid beetle, the common rose-chafer (*Cetonia aurata*) which contrary to its usual habits, had evidently felt an urge to get into a dark room at this particular moment."<sup>3</sup>

For the patient, this meaningful coincidence unlocked her hitherto completely blocked conscious and analysis proceeded rapidly. The scarab is a classical symbol of rebirth, interpreted by Jung as the expression of an archetypal condition of the patient's psyche, aimed at change. The cardinal point of Jung's theory is the affirmation that the "archetypes"—dispositions of the "collective unconscious" with a strong charge of psychic energy—constitute the procedures of instincts and impulses, but also the "true elements of the spirit," acting as "organizers" beyond the unity of personality and transcending the dimensions of space and time, inducing the parallelism of psychic and physical events. In such events, the paradoxical schizoid nature of the archetype is split and appears here as an image (psychic) and there as an exterior event, occasionally also as an object (physical, material)—dream and scarabaeid beetle in Jung's example. "The archetype," writes Aniela Jaffé, Jung's close collaborator, in her essay "C. G. Jung and Parapsychology," arranges or manifests itself in the facets of the synchronistic event. In other words, we are dealing here with an unusual manifestation of its "emergence into consciousness" by means of a split. Such a split, as we know, underlies the process whenever something comes into consciousness. We recognize one thing because we distinguish it from another. Under normal circumstances, the split leading to consciousness takes place within the individual's psychic world—in his thoughts, dreams, intuitions and experiences. In synchronistic phenomena, however, the various aspects of the archetype are torn apart. They present themselves at different times and at different places. This strange "behavior" may be explained by the fact that synchronistic phenomena are as much connected with consciousness as with the unconscious. The underlying or "organizing" archetype is not yet fully conscious; it is still partly in the unconscious—hence the relativity of space and time. But it has partly penetrated into consciousness, hence the split of its psychoid nature into two or more distinct and perceivable facets.<sup>4</sup>

This makes evident that the somewhat misleading term "synchronicity" does not mean "happening at the same time." In his book *Roots of Coincidence*, Arthur Koestler criticizes the term which implies

simultaneity but does not mean what it says. It includes, for instance, precognitive dreams or cases of the Mont-Saint-Michel type. "He tried to get around the time paradox," writes Koestler, "by saying that the unconscious mind functions outside of the physical framework of space-time; so, precognitive experiences in Jung's words are—evidently not synchronous but are synchronistic since they are experienced as psychic images in the present as though the objective event already existed!"<sup>5</sup>

In the summary of his essay (Chapter 4), Jung presents a fourfold conceptual scheme of world events which should serve as the basis for a comprehensive understanding of the totality of human experience: a cross with "space" and "time" vertically opposed, "causality" and "synchronicity" horizontally opposed. Following a suggestion of Wolfgang Pauli, he added an elaboration of this diagram with the view of adapting his theory with data derived from modern quantum mechanics. We find "indestructible energy" opposed to "time-space-continuum" and, horizontally, "constant connection owing to the operation of causality" to "inconstant connection based on meaningful relationships, synchronicity, or so-called contingency." "The modern discovery of discontinuity," Jung comments (e.g., the disposition of energy quanta, of radium decomposition, etc.), "has put an end to the undivided sovereignty of causality and, therefore, to the trinity of principles. The territory the latter lost belonged in olden times to the realm of correspondentia and sympathia, concepts which reached their utmost deployment in the preestablished harmony of Leibniz."<sup>6</sup> Synchronicity figures as a principle of nature equal in rank to causality—a concept which Pauli did not contradict. Yet he maintained reserve toward the "organizing" archetype in the sense of the Jaffé citation. In a conversation I had with him in 1957 and which I recorded on tape, he said with regard to the split of an archetype in a dream and therefore to the corresponding reality: "Jung would say so, but he would have to characterize this archetype. I am a physicist; I cannot do so." He had no sooner said this, when he remembered, with regard to the Mont Saint-Michel case which we were discussing, that the driver is an old archetypal image like Krishna in the Indian mythology. He gave an interpretation in this sense but cut off remarking: "I could go astray." He was well acquainted with archetypal symbols.

As a precursor of the idea of synchronicity, Jung cites the Tao perception in "entire" (*ganzheitlich*) Chinese thinking, the antique idea

of the sympathy of all things and the medieval philosophy of correspondencia with its characteristic example in Pico della Mirandola's doctrine: "Firstly there is the unity of things whereby each thing is one with itself, it consists of itself, and coheres with itself. Secondly, there is the unity whereby one creature is united with the others, and all parts of the world constitute one world. The third and main unity is that one by which the whole world is one with its creator like an army with its leader."<sup>7</sup> Passing through Agrippa of Nettesheim, godfather to the concept of "occultism," the line goes through Kepler, looking for the formative potencies at the base of correspondence in an "Anima telluris," a terrestrial soul, to the preestablished harmony of Leibniz. In the eighteenth century, in the wake of the Newtonian revolution, causality became the unique principle that explained matter and mind, to be questioned early in the twentieth as a consequence of the revolution in physics. In the middle of the materialistic nineteenth century, Arthur Schopenhauer, in his famous essay "Über die anscheinende Absichtlichkeit im Schicksale des Einzelnen" ("About the Apparent Premeditation in the Fate of the Individual"), stated that everything is interrelated and mutually attuned defining coincidence (in the sense of meaningful coincidence) as the simultaneous occurrence of causally unconnected events. In his view of causality, these events are based on a *causa prima*: "If we visualize each causal chain progressing in time as a meridian on the globe, then we may represent simultaneous events . . . by the parallel circles of latitude."<sup>8</sup>

Near relations to the concept of synchronicity are to be found in Paul Kammerer's *Gesetz der Serie* (*The Law of the Series*) (1919). This Austrian zoologist defines a series as "a lawful recurrence of the same or similar things and events—a recurrence, or clustering in time or space whereby the individual members in the sequence—as far as can be ascertained by careful analysis—are not connected by the same active cause."<sup>9</sup> The typology of non-causal concurrence related to numbers, names, situations etc., which he gives in the first part of his book, was enlarged some years later by a collection of meaningful coincidences which the writer Wilhelm von Scholz published under the title: *Der Zufall und das Schicksal* (*Coincidence and Fate*), first edition 1924. The collection contains many examples of remarkable coincidences which do not fit into ESP. He discusses them in detail and illustrates a gradation reaching from "mere chance" to "strange coincidence," and from "remarkable coincidence" to "fate" or

“destiny.” Dr. von Scholz finds that he can best describe the nature of such improbable events as a force: “The attractive force of the relevant” (“Anziehungskraft des Bezüglichen”). He likens the “attractive force of the relevant” to the forces of association of ideas in the mind and ventures the speculation of regarding the external world as the mental world of a greater being whose associated ideas constitute our material reality. Here is an example out of the material of this book, which has been enlarged from one edition to the next by new cases reported to the author: Shortly before the outbreak of World War I, a lady then living in Strasbourg in Alsace photographed her first baby in the Black Forest. She had the film developed in Strasbourg but forgot to collect it when she moved to Frankfurt soon after. She regretted the loss. Two years later she wanted to photograph her second baby. She bought a film, but when developed, it proved to have been exposed twice. The first exposure showed her first baby in the Black Forest. “Attraction of the relevant”: A lost property returns to its owner by tortuous paths. As in a magic world—the author says—the sorrow felt at the loss of the film seems to have attracted the same.<sup>10</sup>

Frederick W. Knowles, who reviewed the fifth edition (1950) of *Coincidence and Fate* in the *Journal of Parapsychology*, recognizes the bearing of meaningful coincidences irreducible to ESP—the problem we are dealing with here—when he writes: “This work suggests that the spontaneous phenomena heretofore studied by parapsychologists may be only a fraction of a very much larger field of coincidence phenomena awaiting exploration and experimental demonstration. The other phenomena may be more common than those which parapsychology has covered so far.”<sup>11</sup>

C. G. Jung discusses in his essay on synchronicity the well known vision which Swedenborg, the Swedish statesman, scientist and seer, had in Göteborg of a fire which was ravaging Stockholm: “We must assume that there was a lowering of the threshold of consciousness which gave him access to absolute knowledge. The fire in Stockholm was in a sense burning in him, too. For the unconscious psyche space and time seem to be relative; this is to say, knowledge finds itself in a space-time-continuum in which space is no longer space, nor time time. If, therefore, the unconscious should develop or maintain a potential in the direction of consciousness, it is then possible for parallel events to be perceived as ‘known.’”<sup>12</sup>

“We are, however, urged to some such assumption unless we prefer

to regress to a magical causality, and to attribute to psyche a power that far exceeds the empirical range of action. In that case we should have to suppose, if we don't want to let causality go, either that Swedenborg's unconscious staged the Stockholm fire, or conversely that the objective event activated in a quite unconceivable manner the corresponding images in Swedenborg's brain. In either case we come up against the unanswerable question of transmission discussed earlier. It is of course entirely a matter of subjective opinion which hypothesis makes more sense . . . I prefer the latter because it does not, like the first, conflict with the empiric concept of causality and can count as a principle *sui generis*."<sup>13</sup>

I have cited Jung at such length to illustrate his point: paranormal events such as Swedenborg's "true" vision are not "perceptions" stemming from paranormal capacities and induced by some sort of "magic causality" but corresponding events based on the relativity of space, time and causality. They manifest an "absolute knowledge of the unconscious" which mostly emerges into consciousness in an archetypal condition of the psyche.<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Peter Ringger referred, in an article "C. G. Jung's Concept of Synchronicity" in the journal *Neue Wissenschaft*<sup>15</sup> to a precursor of the idea of synchronicity who had escaped Jung: Max Dessoir, who proposed, in 1889, the term "parapsychology," said with regard to Swedenborg's vision and in order to avoid admitting extrasensory perception: "If the encounter is no coincidence, one should, at the utmost, be entitled to think that there can be meaningful relations between simultaneous, but differently originating events which point to a hidden structure of the order of universe. Such a secret correlation would be referred to the meaning of processes and not at all to their mechanical or psychological formation." Such are Max Dessoir's suggestions in his book *Vom jenseits der Seele (About the Beyond of the Psyche)*.<sup>16</sup> If Dessoir had passed over the obstacle of "simultaneity" by making space and time relative, the idea of synchronicity had been formulated.

In a letter addressed to H. Rossteutscher<sup>17</sup> in 1958, Jung characterized synchronicity as a "makeshift model" and as "a proposed name which takes into account the fact that causality is a statistical truth which, by necessity, presupposes exemptions." Let us now discuss if this "makeshift model" proves to be a plausible theoretical frame for the diverse manifestations of psi.

As for *spontaneous phenomena*, experience teaches that they arise almost regularly in emotional situations. The statistical evaluation of several thousands of cases gathered in the archives of the Freiburg

Institute for Border Areas of Psychology and Mental Hygiene show the following distribution (cf. *Unser sechster Sinn*:<sup>18</sup>

Kind of Psi	Kind of Experience	Topics	Contents
Telepathy and clairvoyance 50%	Dream 43%	Death 44%	negative affects 82%
precognition 39%	Presentiment 24%	Illness injuries risk of death 19%	
	hallucination and vision 18%	Important events 26%	
	physical affects 7%		positive affects 10%
Mixed forms 4%	other forms of experience 8%	events without importance 11%	ambivalent 2%
Psychokinesis 7%	(illusions, inner voices etc.)		indifferent banal 4%
			insecure 2%

It is clear that these experiences are predominantly situations of existential importance. It is striking that these situations are of a threatening character in most cases: danger-to-life and death, risk, fatal developments, etc., in 40 percent of the reports. International research shows the same results. Jung's concept that in such emotionally charged existential situations a disposition of the "collective unconscious"—an archetype, identical with "objective nature"—is activated, constitutes a plausible mythology. It acts like an "organizer," inducing corresponding events. In her lecture "Synchronicity and Causality in Parapsychology," *Erano*s 1973, Aniela Jaffé mentions that Jung pointed out explicitly "that the supposition of a paradoxical background reality is at bottom only an explaining myth or a model for something essentially unimaginable."<sup>19</sup>

The meaningful coincidence which cannot be reduced to the ESP hypothesis constitutes a special case among spontaneous phenomena. Their numbers as percentage of extraordinary events are not yet registered statistically. This type of unexpected event corroborates strongly Jung's concept that it is not perception which is paranormal



but the event itself. The problem is, as Knowles remarked, either the spontaneous phenomena which fit into the ESP hypothesis are only a fraction of a larger field of coincidence phenomena, perhaps modified by the possible interference of what parapsychologists call telepathy, clairvoyance and precognition, or they are phenomena *sui generis*, having perhaps to do with some form of causally inexplicable interaction between two or more organisms in the case of possible telepathy. I shall come back to this fundamental problem later on.

As to the interpretation of success obtained with intent in psi experiments, I must admit that the theory of synchronicity does not seem satisfactory to me. Jung counted even Rhine's card experiments among synchronistic phenomena. The archetype which comes into existence in such experiments is, in his mind, "the miracle," the emotionally exciting expectation of something that is impossible in the sense of our familiar concept of the world. It is a fact of repeated observation that with routine and becoming accustomed to the tension, expectation subsides and the rate of positive results declines or disappears completely. There is no doubt about the essential part that the "field of affection" plays in this state of tension, but we cannot decide whether it is originated in the archetype as Jung thinks. In the ordinary card experiments intended to prove the existence of psi and realized without variables, a synchronistic interpretation may seem more or less plausible. In my opinion, however, it must be rejected as soon as intentionally introduced variables show induced correlations of positive results. Here is an example from the files of the Freiburg Institute reported in my book *Our Sixth Sense*.<sup>20</sup> A technical assistant, Michael W., obtained significant scores of an astronomical height in the following experimental situation: He had before him a pack of 250 ESP cards containing five times fifty randomized symbols. He looked at a card, named the symbol, using a tape recorder and pressed a button to give a signal using an electrical device, which secured an equal length, to a subject separated from him by two rooms. The subject tried to recognize the symbol Michael was looking at, and called her guess over a microphone. This went on for the 250 symbols. Michael heard the subject's call—this possibility of a feedback proved to be encouraging—but had of course no direct speech-communication with the subject. Agent and percipients (five) often achieved 70–75 hits instead of the chance expectation of 50. In a total of 3575 calls 985 hits were obtained, 270 above chance expectation, which corresponded to a critical ratio of 11.25 or to a probability of  $1:10^{-29}$ .

This general ESP situation did not allow us to differentiate be-

tween telepathy and clairvoyance. A variable was therefore introduced. At random intervals, Michael did not look at the cards and the subject did not know of this change. In this clairvoyance situation he could not, of course, call the symbol on the microphone. A number of calls equal to the GESP situation gave mere chance results whilst in the same series "telepathy" was functioning. This inductive correlation demonstrates clearly that the subject's calls corresponded to Michael's mental representation of the symbol. Thus it appears reasonable to call him "the agent."

I need not discuss in detail that in such an obvious causation the fundamental concept of synchronicity does not become effective, at least not without most remarkable modifications. In the same way—to cite another example from a lot of similar material—Vasiliev's experiments with the "hypnogene method" cannot be interpreted by the theory of synchronicity. At a given moment, the hypnotist causes, as a telepathic agent, by means of mental suggestion, the beginning of hypnosis in the subject as well as his or her return to a waking state. In the same way, experimentally induced out-of-the-body experiences or paranormal influences on the healing of wounds, all intentional psi-effects, resist interpretation by the concept of synchronicity, which lays stress on the phenomena of "unexpected meaningful coincidences." These considerations are not a plea for the term "extrasensory perception." Indeed, we do not know if psi-information stems from a perceptive faculty of the psyche. I should prefer to use the term "extrasensory experience," but I still keep using the traditional one, as I use the term "parapsychology," which badly needs to be replaced by another one covering the whole field of scientific approaches to the paranormal.

With regard to experimental psychokinesis, Aniela Jaffé, the administrator of Jung's spiritual heritage, expresses her doubts that the concept of synchronicity can be applied here. In *Synchronicity and Causality in Parapsychology* she writes as follows: "For an explanation of psychokinesis, synchronicity seems scarcely convincing. Jung's hint at the psychical relativity of time and space, 'then the moving body must possess, or be subject to, corresponding relativity', does not lead us much further. He did not mention the question of psychokinesis with more than this short remark. But in his work as well as in his letters he does hint at a possibility that the psyche can influence non-psychical things in some way and that, therefore, there may exist some so-to-speak causal relation."<sup>21</sup>

Such a "would-be causal" relationship which does not fit into synchronicity is obvious, as a matter of fact, in all PK experiments,

especially in qualitative ones. There are, the "metal-bending experiments"—induced by Uri Geller's genuine or trick demonstrations—which are actually widely discussed and examined by parapsychologists as well as by physicists like John Taylor, J. B. Hasted, H. D. Betz and others. At the P.A. Convention of Utrecht, in August 1976, I reported, with film recordings, successful experiments with the technical designer and graphic artist Silvio from Berne, who deforms pieces of cutlery of metal and plastic material, with or without touching, and partly breaks them. An "optimistic group of physicists" (as John Beloff described them at the Parascience Conference of London in September 1975)—among them John Taylor—are trying to ascribe the phenomena to effects of electromagnetism, but others remain cautious and reserved and do not reject connections as yet physically inexplicable. Among others, the following hypothesis develops: the subject transmits, by unknown means, information to the material object, influencing in such a way the "behavior" of the molecules; the energy needed for such modifications stems from the object itself (Puthoff and Targ, 1974).<sup>22</sup> Von Lucadou and K. Kornwachs introduce, for the PK organization of the thermal energy of the object, a hypothetical macroscopic function of probability  $\psi$ .<sup>23</sup> It is evident, that the concept of synchronicity does not lead any further in this connection.

I should like to devote some consideration to the book by Alister Hardy, Robert Harvie and Arthur Koestler, *The Challenge of Chance* (1973), which I came to know only after having chosen the topic for my contribution to the present symposium. Just as is my intention, the authors treat the long neglected problem of "meaningful coincidences outside the framework of parapsychology;" especially Koestler in "Speculations on Problems Beyond our Present Understanding." As many of you will know, Koestler contributes a collection of anecdotal cases based—like the material of Dr. von Scholz—on readers' letters to the author, personal communications from friends and answers to a questionnaire sent out by the Religious Experience Research Unit (RERU). The guiding principle of selection was emphasis on the "coincidental" nature of the experience.<sup>24</sup> However, he could not present a rigid categorical distinction because "coincidental" and "ESP type" phenomena overlap sometimes. The categories range from the "library angel"—coincidental events of a verbal nature—to cases involving mechanics and engineering, poltergeists (where, to my astonishment, I found the Rosenheim case which I do not regard as overlapping but as spontaneous recurrent PK bound to an "agent"), practical joke types of stories, places or

dwellings involved with people and serial phenomena, in Kammerer's sense, which show a "clustering" or "converging" of events which are meaningfully related but causally unrelated. In this context, Koestler remarks that "some people become coincidence-prone, as others become accident-prone."<sup>25</sup>

This is very true and leads me to report on an observation of my own regarding a complex of "coincidental events," where Mrs. E., a friend of mine, was the "catalyst." This lady proved to be not only "coincidence-prone" but also "psi-prone": precognitive statements from sensitives came true for her with astonishing precision. The same sensitive persons gave barely telepathic statements with regard to myself. My case was as follows: At the end of World War II, I was occupied, as physician and interpreter, in a prison camp near Marseille. I often had arguments with a colleague, Prof. W., on behalf of a young friend of mine whose progressive political ideas he rejected whilst I agreed with them. Mrs. I. was a girl friend of this young man. Back home, I made her acquaintance through him. In 1953, Mrs. Eileen Garrett invited me to take part in a symposium on "Unorthodox Healing" in Saint-Paul-de-Vence. Flying back via Marseille, I realized suddenly, beneath the plane, that the prison camp must be there. In a sort of uncontrolled excitement, I said to an unknown neighbor, without any rational connection: "We are just crossing the location of a prison camp where I spent months with Prof. W." My neighbor replied, deeply astounded: "I know him well and shall see him in the next few days." Some time later, I met Mrs. E. in Stuttgart. When dining with her in a restaurant, I told her this story. At that very moment, the door opened, and in came a man and a woman. I could not trust my eyes; the man seemed to be Prof. W. I was so flabbergasted that I did not ask him directly if he really was my colleague in Marseille. Later I asked the receptionist to call him to the telephone. He promptly answered—it was he!

This encounter type of synchronistic event emerges from a manifold intense affective field. Jung could most probably reduce it to an archetypal condition of the psyche. But what about the trivial cases—those serial events with names that Koestler defines with the question: "What unknown agency plays the clustering games with names"?<sup>26</sup> This poses the question which type of acausal relationships can legitimately claim to be of a meaningful nature, and which has to be dismissed as neither causal nor acausal, but merely arbitrary?

In an unpublished interview with C. G. Jung in December, 1960, eight months before his death, the problem of the trivial cases was discussed. Jung acknowledged that he himself had trivial precognitive

dreams and commented: "There are evidently such phenomena where we see the future but where we cannot speak of synchronicity, because we do not see any possibility of participation mystique, because there is no archetype to which we could refer . . . The fact that we can see such nonsense [trivial things] leads us to consider that, obviously, one may see 'beside the peep-hole of time' . . . That is, of course, quite another explanation, another hypothesis. That's why I do not make theories, I keep saying these cases must be treated separately." As this remark shows, Jung was far from applying the theory of synchronicity as a doctrine. In the same way, his idea that the extraordinary moment lies in the event itself and not in a perceptive process, must not be considered as absolutely valid for him.

In the first part of *The Challenge of Chance*, the well known zoologist, Alister Hardy, compares the positive results of experiments in telepathy of a qualitative kind to somewhat comparable "hits" in pure coincidental situations—the Spencer-Brown problem. Koestler suggests the category of "para-randomness" as a special form of different categories of coincidences which all show what he tentatively calls "the convergent effect." In this context, he introduces the term "order from disorder," an integrative tendency in Nature in which the converging or clustering effects—synchronicity—would appear as the highest manifestation "although their *modus operandi* is at present unknown and may not be beyond the faculty of comprehension in our species." Koestler cites a number of tentative formulations of this principle: the formal or formative cause of Aristotle as distinct from the "effective" cause which corresponds to mechanical causation, Galen's and after him Kepler's "*facultas formatrix*," its reflection in Spinoza's pantheism and its echo in Goethe's "*Gestaltung*" and Bergson's "*élan vital*." He mentions the German biologist Woltereck, who coined the term "anamorphosis" for nature's tendency to create higher forms of life, and von Bertalanffy who adopted the term as a contrast to "morpholysis"—the disintegration of inorganic matter. One could add Driesch's entelechy and many others. It is related to Schrödinger's concept of "negative entropy," the reversal of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. "What all these tentative formulations have in common," Koestler concludes, "is that they regard the morphic, or formative, or integrative tendency, Nature's striving towards creating order out of disorder, cosmos out of chaos, as an ultimate and irreducible principle, to be considered as equal in importance to mechanical causation, and complementary in quantum theory."<sup>27</sup>

I have neither the time nor the competence to comment on the relationship of the theory of synchronicity with modern physics, which

Koestler exposes in relation to parapsychology in his book, *The Roots of Coincidence*. I am eager for information and would like to become enlightened, if there are physicists here, on the paradox that a solid world arises from the unpredictable behavior of particles in microphysics or on the problem that the half-life period of any grain of radioactive substance is precisely fixed but—as Bohm points out—“it does not have any causes.” Maybe the much discussed “hidden variables” may one day appear as a factor of convergence between physics and psi.

As you have noticed, my contribution is a mainly pragmatic one, the chief purpose of which is to provide material for a philosophical discussion. Let me conclude with a case which involved me very personally: the “coincidence” of events which led to my marriage. It made me think of Schopenhauer’s already mentioned essay “Über die anscheinende Absichtlichkeit im Schicksal des Einzelnen” (“About the Apparent Intentionality in the Destiny of the Individual”) where he writes of the “simultaneity of not causally connected things which we call coincidence.” By means of the already mentioned image of meridians and transverse lines, Schopenhauer illustrates meaningful coincidences in the field of partnership relations: “All events in the life of a human being would then underlie two fundamentally diverse kinds of connection: firstly, the objective, causal connection of natural processes; secondly, the subjective connection which exists only with regard to the individual who is experiencing this connection and which is as subjective as this individual’s dream . . . These two kinds of connection exist at the same time, and the same destiny is notwithstanding integrated as a link of two quite different chains so that the destiny of one corresponds each time to the destiny of the other; everyone is therefore at the same time, the hero of his or her own drama and a figure of a foreign drama; all this defies our comprehension and seems only possible by way of the most miraculous harmonia praestabilita.”<sup>28</sup>

When one brings to mind, retrospectively, the ways which led us to know our life partner, tiny “coincidences” often prove to have been instrumental for an encounter, a type of encounter-synchronicity which gives rise to a feeling of numinosity. Here is my case: When I was 19 years old, I left my gloves—in general use in those times—after a visit; when I went to fetch them, the intelligent lady of the house recommended my visiting a university lecturer in Heidelberg, a friend of hers, with my study problems. This conversation induced me to choose a university teacher from Heidelberg as my tutor, and I moved with him from Heidelberg to Bonn where he had been called. There

I made the acquaintance of a girl student. It was love at first sight. A little later I showed her photo to my mother, whom I met in Zürich. She became very thoughtful and reluctantly told me that this girl very much resembled a man to whom she nearly got engaged. This man was my girl friend's father. He happened to be in Zürich at the same time, and my mother met him for the first time after 25 years. He recognized me at once for my resemblance to my mother and was very perplexed. Besides, it turned out that the lady who had recommended me to go to Heidelberg was a friend of his. The girl became my wife much later. A meaningful coincidence, indeed, the implications of which—as Schopenhauer puts it—defy our powers of comprehension.

While Schopenhauer still tries to bridge, with concepts of causal thinking, the Cartesian gap between spirit and matter, for which a connection of objective aspects in natural processes with psychical aspects seems to make no sense, Jung attempts, as a metaphysical background to synchronicity, a hypothesis of a *mundus unus*, a unitary aspect of being. After a careful evaluation of present-day science, especially of physics and the psychology of the unconscious, he concluded that the two background realities were possibly one and the same thing. This would be, he writes, “as much physical as psychic and therefore neither, but rather a third thing, a neutral nature which can at most be grasped in hints since in essence it is transcendental.”<sup>29</sup>

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- <sup>8</sup> “Versinnlichen wir uns jetzt jene einzelnen Kausalketten durch Meridiane, die in der Richtung der Zeit lägen; so kann überall das Gleichzeitige und eben deshalb nicht in directem Kausalzusammenhange Stehende, durch Parallellkreise angedeutet werden.” Artur Schopenhauer, *Parerga und Paralipomena*, original edition Vol. VIII Stuttgart 1851, p. 204; compare the citation in: A. Koestler: *op. cit.*, p. 107.
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## DISCUSSION

THAKUR: I'll leave the substantive questions to the others and will only ask what might be just a simple terminological one, but in asking it, I don't mean to be difficult. At one stage you say something about reality itself being paranormal. I found this a bit strange because I would have thought that reality is something that just is. Reality itself isn't either normal or paranormal.

MAUSKOPF: Your summary of the Jung-Pauli Synchronicity Principle sounded very similar (to what I understood, at least) to Rex Stanford's remarks this morning. I would be interested in any dialogue between the two of you. Is this the sort of thing you were driving at in your concept of disposition as opposed to psychological/biological causality?

STANFORD: Well, I'm not really sure because I still don't feel that I have an understanding of the concept of synchronicity. It seems to me that Professor Bender was in many ways, commenting on and perhaps even expanding that concept and trying to clarify it, but as the concept stands, at least to the best of my understanding, it would not match my own concepts. It would attempt to deal with the many facts that I attempt to deal with in my theory and indeed in my earlier theory, but I have attempted to develop a theory that I feel has clearly testable implications. I have long felt that synchronicity doesn't have testable implications because, being an acausal theory, it has taken a form



where there are no clearly antecedent conditions to anything, and therefore I don't think we're talking about the same kind of theory.

BENDER: Well, I quite accept what you're saying and understand your point of view.

SERVADIO: Of course, I quite accept that there can be meaningful events which are linked by mechanisms, or whatever we may call them, that cannot be traced back to causality, time, or space. But let us not forget that Jung started making his observations in a clinical frame of reference and his case of the scarab which you quoted at the beginning, has become famous. Now I think there can be a danger in using the term *synchronicity* as a sort of label for many events that we *prima facie* just cannot explain. In my clinical experience I have had many cases, of course, of extrasensory perception—psi events between analyst and patient—and have seen in several cases that it would have been skipping the issue to label the case as synchronicity and nothing else; whereas, in many cases it was quite possible to assess the very subtle conditioning of an interpersonal relationship on conscious levels, which were really prominent in producing this psi effect between analyst and patient. So I would warn people who are interested in this particular area against the temptation of just putting on a label of synchronicity and stopping at that.

BENDER: I would point out that while the main point of my contribution was to draw your attention to spontaneous cases which imposed themselves as meaningful coincidences but do not fit into ESP and PK, the matter can be discussed without the theory of synchronicity. That's empirical work which has to be done to give statistics as to how often these cases are reported. Take, as a type, the Mont Saint-Michel case which I have observed myself. If you accept my impression that it has a precognitive bearing but cannot be reduced to ESP—well, this is a big problem, which we can discuss without synchronicity.

FRENCH: This is probably only a semantic question, but I'm a little bit puzzled about the use of the word *meaningful*, and I wondered if you could tell me if it would make sense to talk about a *non-meaningful* coincidence or if *meaningful* here is perhaps what I think it may be.

BENDER: The term *meaningful coincidences* is what we call anthropomorphic, because the meaning relates to a human being. I don't know if there are meaningful coincidences in this sense—for instance, in animal behavior, maybe—so, of course it's very difficult to define what *meaningful* means. It makes sense for someone. This Mont Saint-Michel

event—well, it makes sense for the woman who experienced it. For her, it was an oracle for her future life and there are thousands of cases like that.

FRENCH: It just seemed to me that perhaps labeling them as *meaningful* is something that comes rather after analysis than before. It seemed to me perhaps question-begging to call them such before serious research has gone on. That was the only problem I had with understanding what you were talking about. If they are coincidences, then the question of whether they are or they are not *meaningful* would seem to me more to the point.

BENDER: We'll let it go at that.

JOHNSON: Well, it certainly was a very interesting lecture and I think one should allow oneself to speculate, but at the same time I see a great number of problems and, as a matter of fact, some of these problems have already been touched upon. For one thing, the use of labeling events which we can't make sense of. Secondly, how to assess the degree of meaningfulness. It certainly is a very subjective matter and I'm not entirely denying the use of subjectiveness, but at the same time I'm honoring the concept of intersubjectiveness. Do you see what I see? And we need some way of assessing that, I'm quite sure. And then the use of Jung's concept of archetypes. What worries me a bit is, what kind of test implication does it have and, also being a bit of a Popperian, could we ever think of putting the concept of archetypes to the critical test of refutation just as the concept of synchronicity?

BENDER: Of course, synchronicity is a sort of mythology, but I dare say in regard to parapsychology, we are living with mythologies.

MATTUCK: This is a continuation of Professor Servadio's comment. You said that you were going to restrict yourself to meaningful coincidences which could not be put under the category of psychokinesis or extrasensory perception, yet I feel that at least two of the examples which you gave can very easily be put into these categories. For instance, the case of the lady whose baby appeared on a photo as a sort of extra picture—this seems to fit perfectly into the category of psychic photography of the type which Ted Serios makes. There you can clearly see the wish in the lady's subconscious to see the picture of that first baby and it could have been produced by psychokinesis. In the case of the scarab, there are at least two ways in which that could be described, using just ordinary psychokinesis or precognition, namely, either that the lady saw precognitively that the scarab was going to

crawl into the window while she was talking to Jung the next day, or that because of her or Jung's wish to confirm the dream of the scarab, they had a psychokinetic influence on one of the beetles crawling around outside. I imagine if you thought hard about it, most of the other cases which you gave as examples of meaningful coincidences, which could not be put into the category of PK and ESP, *could* be put in these categories nevertheless, and there would be only a little residue left of meaningful coincidences which could not be described either as examples of PK or ESP.

BENDER: I think you'll probably agree with me that the case of Mont Saint-Michel can't be reduced to ESP and psychokinesis.