

SYNCHRONICITY AND THE RELIGIOUS IMPULSE

ALAN BROVAR, MD

FIRST, WHAT IS MEANT BY SYNCHRONICITY?

THEN, WHAT IS THE RELIGIOUS IMPULSE OR
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE?

AND FINALLY, I'LL SUGGEST SOME TENTATIVE
CONCLUSIONS THAT MIGHT BE DRAWN FROM THE
SYNTHESIS OF THE FIRST TWO.

ONE. WHAT IS MEANT BY SYNCHRONICITY?

IT'S A REGULAR WORD, WITH REGULAR, COMMON
MEANING = TWO APPARENTLY DISCONNECTED EVENTS
THAT CO-INCIDENTALLY OCCUR AT THE SAME TIME.

ONE EVENT MAY EVEN APPEAR TO HAVE CAUSED THE
OTHER EVENT . WE CAN CONCLUDE THERE WAS A CAUSE-
EFFECT_INTERACTION BETWEEN THESE TWO EVENTS,
CONNECTING, LINKING THE TWO EVENTS.

AND THEN THERE IS OUR **SPECIAL** MEANING. A
SYNCHRONISTIC PAIR OF EVENTS ARE CONNECTED
WITHOUT ANY OBVIOUS CAUSE AND EFFECT

RELATIONSHIP, THE EVENTS ARE RELATED ON THE LEVEL OF **MEANING**. AND **WE** SUPPLY THE MEANING, OUR INTELLECT, OUR LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING.

THIS OTHER LEVEL OF CONNECTION, WAY OF KNOWING, I'M REFERRING TO PROVIDES A WAY OF PUTTING THINGS TOGETHER, FITTING EVENTS TOGETHER, THAT MAKES PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE, ECOLOGICAL SENSE, POLITICAL SENSE. SEE A BIGGER PICTURE.

TAKING THE TIME TO PUZZLE OVER THE MEANING OF TWO APPARENTLY, SUPERFICIALLY UNRELATED EVENTS. TAKING THE TIME. TEACH YOURSELF NOT TO DISMISS AN ODD COINCIDENCE. TRAIN YOURSELF TO NOT MISS A POTENTIAL CLUE TO THIS UNDERLYING REALITY.

ITS NOT JUST EVENTS IN EVERYDAY LIFE THAT PROVIDES CLUES TO AN UNDERLYING REALITY THAT IS BIGGER THAN ANY ONE INDIVIDUAL. THIS VARIETY OF CONNECTION WITHOUT CAUSE IS ALSO REVEALED TO YOU IN DREAMS. WHEN YOU ENTER

A HYPNOTIC TRANCE, OR WHEN YOU SIT DOWN TO MEDITATE. THIS SAME PERSPECTIVE IS SHOWN TO THE PREPARED MIND UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF LSD, MESCALINE, PSILOCYBIN OR SALVIA.

THE VARIETY OF SYNCHRONICITY THAT I AM POINTING TO THEN IS THE EXPERIENCE OF TWO EVENTS THAT ARE APPARENTLY UNRELATED CAUSALLY THAT OCCUR TOGETHER IN A MEANINGFUL MANNER.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? WHAT IS THE UNIVERSE TELLING ME. WHAT IS MY MIND TRYING TO TELL ME BY GIVING ME THE FEELING THAT THEY ARE CONNECTED? OF COURSE, YOU SUPPLY THE MEANING. AND FINDING “MEANING” IS COMPLICATED, MESSY. I KNOW. JUST BECAUSE IT’S HARD DOESN’T MEAN IT’S NOT WORTH TRYING. BETTER THAN TELEVISION.

I WILL SHOW THAT OBSERVING A SERIES OF SYNCHRONISTIC EVENTS REVEAL AN UNDERLYING PATTERN OF GREAT INTEREST, A FRAMEWORK TO

HELP ME UNDERSTAND HOW I RELATE TO THE WORLD AROUND ME AND THE PEOPLE IN THAT WORLD. AS JOSEPH CAMPBELL DESCRIBES IN HIS FOUR VOLUME SET THE MASKS OF GOD, THIS PATTERN HAS BEEN KNOWN, DESCRIBED AND USED THROUGH HUMAN HISTORY AND ACROSS CULTURAL BARRIERS.

THIS LAST YOM KIPPUR I CELEBRATED 25 YEARS WITH THE COURSE IN MIRACLES. IT'S WHAT GOT ME STARTED IN THIS "HOBBY", THIS FASCINATION WITH WHAT SYNCHRONICITY CAN TEACH ME ABOUT THE BIGGER PICTURE. THE COURSE IN MIRACLES LADY: ALL MINDS ARE JOINED. SHE WAS NO DOPE. 45 YEAR CAREER DIAGNOSING , TREATING AUTISTIC KIDS. AND IN THE WINTER OF HER CAREER, THIS IS WHAT SHE COMES UP WITH: ALL MINDS ARE JOINED. NOT BODIES; THAT WOULD BE FOOLISH. **MINDS**.

THAT'S THE LEVEL I'M REFERRING YOU TO, WHERE I'M ASKING YOU TO PUT YOUR ATTENTION.

SHE SPENDS ALL 366 LESSONS IN HER WORKBOOK TRYING TO HELP YOU SEE DIFFERENTLY, NOT SO TENACIOUSLY IDENTIFIED WITH YOUR INDIVIDUAL EGO. START SEEING SYNCHRONICITY ALL AROUND YOU, ALL THE TIME. CONNECTIONS UPON CONNECTIONS.

IT'S A VERY OLD TRADITION. HOW OLD IS THE TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD? KABALA? ALCHEMY?

THE WORK OF CARL JUNG HAS BEEN VERY HELPFUL TO ME. JUNG MOVED THE STUDY OF SYNCHRONICITY TO A USEFUL LEVEL. TO USE JUNG'S PHRASE RENDERED INTO ENGLISH: SYNCHRONICITY IS MEANINGFUL COINCIDENCE .

JUNG DEFINED THIS "A-CAUSAL [NOT BY CAUSE] CONNECTING PRINCIPLE" IN HIS PAPER ON THE USE OF THE I CHING FOR DIVINATION. "THE SIMULTANEOUS OCCURRENCE OF A CERTAIN PSYCHIC STATE WITH ONE OR MORE EXTERNAL EVENTS WHICH APPEAR AS MEANINGFUL

PARALLELS TO THE MOMENTARY SUBJECTIVE
STATE”

**HOW COULD A PERSON KNOW WHAT THEY
COULD NOT POSSIBLY KNOW? (CONTENTS OF
THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS)**

**AND IT WASN'T JUST NOTICING, CHECKING OUT
SYNCHRONICITY EVENTS IN WAKING LIFE. JUNG
ALSO BELIEVED THAT DREAMS COULD SERVE A
USEFUL ROLE IN A PERSON'S LIFE. HE WAS ALSO
DEEPLY IMPRESSED BY SCARY
DEMONSTRATIONS OF IMPOSSIBLY ACCURATE
INTUITION. WHAT DOES IT MEAN? WHAT IS THE
PERSON TUNING TO, PAYING ATTENTION TO?
TAROT, I CHING. UNCANNY. THE SPIRIT WORLD.
NOISY GHOSTS. PRECOGNITION, ALL OF PARA-
PSYCHOLOGY.**

THE RANDOM THROW, DIVISION OF THE
HANDFUL OF YARROW STALKS PROVIDED A

SYNCHRONICITY EXPERIENCE THAT POINTED TO THE GOVERNING DYNAMIC THAT UNDERLIES HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND HUMAN HISTORY.

JUNG CAUGHT ON EARLY THAT LIFE WAS NOT JUST A SERIES OF RANDOM EVENTS THAT HAPPEN TO YOU. IN FACT, HE THOUGHT ALL LIFE, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE, ANIMAL PLANT, EVEN MINERAL WAS AN EXPRESSION OF A DEEPER ORDER. A CIRCLE OF LIFE. “A SACRED CIRCLE OF NATURE”. CAREFUL OBSERVATIONS OF THE WORKING OF THIS DEEPER ORDER LED HIM TO THE CONCLUSION THAT AN INDIVIDUAL PERSON WAS BOTH EMBEDDED IN THIS ORDERLY FRAMEWORK AND WAS THE FOCUS OF THAT FRAMEWORK. THIS REALIZATION WAS MORE THAN JUST AN INTELLECTUAL EXERCISE.

NOW YOU SEE WHERE I’M GOING. PAYING ATTENTION TO SYNCHRONISTIC EVENTS CONNECTED AT THE DEEPER LEVEL OF MEANING AWAKEN ELEMENTS OF THE SPIRITUAL, THE

MYSTICAL, IN THE CAREFUL AND THOUGHTFUL
OBSERVER.

I INVITE YOU TO CAREFULLY NOTICE YOUR EXPERIENCES OF INTUITION, YOUR MEANINGFUL DREAMS. OBSERVATIONS OF MEANINGFUL COINCIDENCES, DEVELOPING AN AFFECTIONATE INTEREST IN THEM TENDS TO SHIFT A PERSON'S EGOCENTRIC CONSCIOUS THINKING TO THINKING ABOUT A GREATER WHOLE, SEEING THE BIG PICTURE.

BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE, AA: RELEASE FROM THE BONDAGE OF THE EGO. FROM THE WESTERN ORTHODOX RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE, PAYING ATTENTION TO SYNCHRONICITY SHARES CHARACTERISTICS WITH AN "INTERVENTION OF GRACE". A DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF THE DIVINE ORDER. A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING, A RE-LIGION. MORE OF THIS LATER.

I'LL GIVE TWO CLASSIC EXAMPLES DOCUMENTED BY JUNG. LET'S BEGIN WITH THE SCARAB DREAM.

"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 WINDOW-PANE 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-CHAFFER (CETONIA AURATA), WHICH CONTRARY TO ITS USUAL HABITS HAD EVIDENTLY FELT AN URGE TO GET INTO A DARK ROOM AT THIS PARTICULAR MOMENT." **HERE IS YOUR SCARAB.**

THE TREATMENT OF THIS PATIENT WAS VERY DIFFICULT BECAUSE SHE WAS CAUGHT UP IN AN UNBALANCED SUPER RATIONAL MINDSET AND SHE COMPLETELY REJECTED ANY IRRATIONAL, INTUITIVE PHENOMENA. SHE NEEDED A CHANGE OF

PERSPECTIVE TO ALLOW HER CONSCIOUSNESS TO OPEN TO THE INTUITIVE. JUNG HELPED THE PATIENT PUT MEANING TO HER EXPERIENCE.

A TRANSFORMATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS. THE EXPERIENCE PRODUCED A DEEP EMOTION IN THE WOMAN AND SHE COULD OPEN UP TO THE INTUITIVE AND WOULD SOON RECOGNIZE THE REALITY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS WORLD.

SO, THE IDEA IS ALL ABOUT TAKING AN APPARENT COINCIDENCE AND LOOKING FOR ITS MEANING.

SOMETHING SEEMS ODD, CONNECTED SOMEHOW, CONSIDER IT, SYNCHRONICITY! LOOK INWARD, ALLOW YOUR INTUITIVE NATURE TO HELP.

COLLECT A NUMBER OF EXAMPLES → BEGIN TO PERCEIVE THE CIRCLE OF WHICH YOU ARE A PART, CONNECTION OF ALL LIFE

A SPIRITUAL CONNECTION, THE CRACK IN THE COSMIC EGG

HERE IS A SECOND EXAMPLE, ALSO FROM JUNG.

" I WALK WITH A WOMAN PATIENT IN THE WOODS. SHE TELLS ME ABOUT THE FIRST DREAM IN HER LIFE THAT MADE AN LASTING IMPRESSION ON HER. IN HER DREAM, SHE SEES A FOX COMING DOWN THE STAIRS IN HER PARENT'S HOME. WHILE SHE TELLS ME THIS, AT THIS VERY MOMENT, A REAL FOX (I THOUGHT HE WAS REAL) COMES OUT OF THE TREES NOT 40 YARDS AWAY AND WALKS QUIETLY ON THE PATH AHEAD OF US FOR SEVERAL MINUTES. THE ANIMAL BEHAVES AS IF IT WERE A PARTNER IN THE HUMAN SITUATION."

JUNG WAS STRUCK BY THE EXPERIENCE. JUNG, BEING JUNG, COULDN'T STOP HIMSELF FOR SEARCHING FOR A MEANING FOR THIS COINCIDENCE.

THIS COMMON MEANING, THIS SYNCHRONICITY IS NOT EASY TO INTERPRET OR TO USE. THE DREAMER HERSELF, SYMBOLICALLY SPEAKING, SHOULD BE LED MUCH MORE BY HER "INNER FOX", MEANING THAT SHE MUST RECOVER THE INSTINCTIVE CLEVERNESS SHE HAD LOST BY ALLOWING HERSELF TO BE DOMINATED BY HER INTELLECTUAL PREFERENCE. JUNG WOULD SAY SOMETHING LIKE THIS TO HER: "YOU SEE, THE FOX IS NOW OUTSIDE. INVITE THIS SYMBOL OF INSTINCT INTO YOUR WORLD AND YOU WILL BE HELPED BY IT IN YOUR LIFE. LET GO OF ALL YOUR IFS AND BUTS, LET YOUR INSTINCTIVE ASPECT BALANCE YOUR INTELLECT. BEGIN TO TRUST YOUR INSTINCTIVE WISDOM TO SHOW YOU THE WAY." THE EXPERIENCE AND THEN JUNG'S INTERPRETATION OF THIS SYNCHRONICITY ABRUPTLY TRANSFORMED THE PATIENT'S CONSCIOUSNESS AND LED TO NEW MEANING.

LET'S MOVE ON FROM JUNG.

I'VE GOT ONE: MY MOONSTONE BEACH DREAM. I LET MYSELF BE LED. HERE, TO CAMBRIA.

I HAVE A NUMBER OF UNSAVORY HABITS. ON THE NEW MOON, I DIVIDE THE I CHING STICKS, AND KEEP A NOTEBOOK ON THE OUTCOME. SOMETIMES, UNCANNY, SOME TIMES NOTHING. BUT THE I CH'ING WAS THE SUBJECT WHEN JUNG FIRST WENT PUBLIC WITH HIS IDEAS ABOUT SYNCHRONICITY, (BRING MY STICKS): STICKS , OR COINS? USE STICKS, 20 MINUTES OF TRANCE, AN ALTERED STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS. COINS, THREE FLIPS, JUST A PARLOR GAME. (MAYBE? WHAT ABOUT SUPER-SENSITIVE, INTUITIVE PEOPLE?)

THIS IS THE OPPOSITE OF OUR PERIOD OF "MEDITATION". NO DANGER ANYONE WILL EXPERIENCE AN ALTERED STATE WHEN THEY TRY TO REFLECT INWARDLY. AS SOON AS YOU START TO GET THERE, SOMEBODY RINGS THE GONG AND ITS TIME TO COME BACK.

I HAVE A SPECIAL SKILL. IT'S NOT MUCH, BUT IT'S WHAT I'VE GOT. AND IT CONVINCED ME THAT THERE IS MORE TO THIS SYNCHRONICITY BUSINESS THAN MEETS THE EYE. I CAN PULL OFF THE RIGHT NUMBER OF STAMPS FOR THE ENVELOPES I'M GOING TO MAIL. EXACTLY THE RIGHT NUMBER. AS LONG AS I DON'T COUNT, OR TRY TO MAKE IT WORK. AS LONG AS I DON'T THINK ABOUT IT. OR I FIND MYSELF GETTING UP AND GOING TO THE MICROWAVE, OR TO THE WASHER, JUST BEFORE THE TIMER GOES OFF. BIG DEAL. I KNOW IT'S NOT MUCH, BUT I FIGURED THAT IT WAS STILL A CLUE. THE GOOD OLD GOLDEN RULE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS: LET YOUR MIND GO, DON'T CENSOR YOUR THOUGHTS. YOU CAN GET PRETTY GOOD AT THAT WITH A LITTLE PRACTICE.

SO, WHAT EXPANDED DESCRIPTION OF REALITY DO THESE SYNCHRONISTIC EVENTS POINT TO? WHAT REDRAWING OF THE MAP OF INNER SPACE?

TWO. THE RELIGIOUS IMPULSE

THIS BRINGS US TO THE QUESTION, WHAT IS THE RELIGIOUS IMPULSE , THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE? AND HOW IS THE RELIGIOUS IMPULSE ASSISTED BY OUR OBSERVATION OF SYNCHRONICITY ALL AROUND US.

TOUGH QUESTION, BUT I THINK A NUMBER OF GENERALIZATIONS CAN BE MADE, AND SUPPORTED BY EVIDENCE.

FIRST, SOME WORD STUDY. ALWAYS HELPFUL. RE-LIGARE. RE-CONNECT. RECONNECT WHAT? WHO? YOGA.

SYNCHRONICITOUS EVENTS MAY BE SEEN AS DIRECTED TOWARD A GOAL. THAT IS, WE CAN OBSERVE THE PAIR OF EVENTS THAT HAS NO EVIDENT CAUSE. THEREFORE, THEY CORRESPOND TO A SPECIAL FORM OF CREATION. IN RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE SUCH "EFFECTS" WITHOUT "CAUSE" WERE CONSIDERED MIRACLES. THE CATHOLIC

CHURCH CALLS THIS UNDERLYING PRINCIPLE THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

CAREFULLY NOTICING [INTUITION](#), MEANINGFUL DREAMS AS WELL AS OTHER SYNCHRONICITY EVENTS TENDS TO SHIFT A PERSON'S EGOCENTRIC CONSCIOUS THINKING TO A PERSPECTIVE OF GREATER WHOLENESS.

FROM THE RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE, SYNCHRONICITY SHARES SIMILAR CHARACTERISTICS TO AN "INTERVENTION OF GRACE". A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING, A RE-LIGION.

WE CAN OBSERVE SIMILAR EVENTS IN OTHER SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS. SUFI, THE MYSTICS OF ISLAM, SAY: "DIE BEFORE YOU DIE!" THE MAHAYANA BUDDHISTS: STRESS THE HELPFUL RECOGNITION THAT YOU ARE ALREADY DEAD. IN A MORE LOCAL TRADITION, 12 STEPPERS SAY: LET GO, LET GOD.

IN SUCH PEOPLE, A NEW CONSCIOUS ORIENTATION TAKES PLACE. THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS BECOMES MORE CONNECTED TO

THE PRINCIPLE OF SYNCHRONICITY THAN TO CAUSALITY. THIS LETTING GO ALLOWS A FRESH OUTLOOK. THEY BEGIN TO LET THEMSELVES BE LED BY MEANINGFUL COINCIDENCES AND TO TAKE ASSISTANCE FROM THEIR DREAMS. THEY BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND WHERE THEIR LIFE LEADS. (CAMPBELL: FOLLOW YOUR BLISS, BLISTERS.)

IN CRITICAL MOMENTS, SYNCHRONICITIES OCCUR THAT POINT TO THE REAL GOALS OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S LIFE, GOALS THAT CANNOT BE FOUND BY WILLPOWER AND STRICT CAUSE-EFFECT THINKING ALONE.

THREE. TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

SO, WHAT IS ALL THIS? LIKE THE JOKE I STARTED OFF WITH, I DON'T KNOW WHERE I'M GOING. BUT I DI WANT TO SHARE SOME OF MY THOUGHTS WITH YOU.

EXAMPLES OF SYNCHRONICITY ARE EVERYWHERE, IF YOU HAVE EYES TO SE, EARS TO HEAR. THE AUTOMATIC, VERY CONSERVATIVE OPERATIONS OF THE SENSORY SYSTEMS REQUIRE THAT 99% OF SENSORY EVENTS BE IGNORED OR YOU RISK BEING OVERWHELMED BY EXCESS INPUT. PERCEPTION CAN NOT HOLD ALL THE INFORMATION POTENTIALLY AVAILABLE TO IT.

BUT IF YOU RESOLVE TO TRAIN YOURSELF TO NOT DISMISS THESE EXAMPLES AS MERE COINCIDENCE, YOU WILL BEGIN TO DISCERN MORE DEEPLY. ACIM LADY: ALL MINDS ARE JOINED. YOU'LL BEGIN TO NOTICE IN WHAT WAYS SHE IS RIGHT AND YOU'LL SEE THAT THE NOTIONS OF INDIVIDUALITY ARE BOTH A SHORT-HAND CONCEIT OF

PERCEPTION, THE WORLD REVOLVES AROUND ME, NO ONE ELSE MATTERS, AND ONLY A PART OF REALITY.

SYNCHRONICITIES ARE MOST FREQUENTLY CONSTELLATED WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL IS STUCK IN AN "IMPOSSIBLE" SITUATION, WHERE WE THINK THERE IS NO WAY OUT. IT IS NO SURPRISE THAT SUCH OCCURRENCES ARE DISMISSED AS SENSELESS COINCIDENCE. WE ARE NOT USED TO LISTEN TO THE MESSAGES FROM THE INNER WORLD, DREAMS, INTUITION, "FEELINGS" . WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT TO EXCLUDE THEM FROM OF CONSIDERATION. DON'T IGNORE THE POSSIBILITIES THAT WHAT APPEARS TO BE A COINCIDENTAL PAIRING OF EVENTS TO THE CASUAL OBSERVER MAY BE POINTING YOU TO A DEEPER REALITY. JUST BE OPEN, IS ALL I'M SAYING. BE OPEN TO SEE .

I HAVEN'T DONE MORE THAN SURVEY THE SURFACE AND DEFINE OUR TERMS. PERHAPS AT

SOME LATER TIME, WE'LL GO FURTHER, DEEPER. LOOK AT THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CAMPBELL, ALAN WATTS, STAN GROF, TIMOTHY LEARY AND THE INSIGHTS PROVIDED THROUGH THE LENS OF PSYCHEDELIC DRUGS. WE CAN LOOK AT WHAT THE STUDY OF QUANTUM PHYSICS CAN ADD TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF AN EXPANDED MAP OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

MOST PEOPLE DISMISS POTENTIAL SYNCHRONICITY AS A PURELY EXTERNAL PHENOMENA THAT HAS NO DEEPER MEANING. OVER THE NEXT, SAY, DAY, PERHAPS YOU WOULD CARE TO CONSIDER THE ACCUMULATION OF POSSIBLE MEANINGFUL COINCIDENCES AT A SYMBOLIC LEVEL. PICK A DAY, ANY DAY.

I'M NOT GUARANTEEING THAT YOU'LL GET A SCARAB OR A FOX OR SYMBOLS OF REBIRTH. BUT EVEN IN THIS SHORT DAY OF YOUR CHOOSING, YOU CAN SEE THAT THE EXPERIENCES YOU DO HAVE POINT YOU TO THE DEEPEST PROBLEM WAITING ITS SOLUTION, THE MEANING OF LIFE.

