

# SYNCHRONICITY

## THE BRIDGE BETWEEN MATTER AND MIND

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[Abridged]

Carl Jung defined **synchronicity** as "**The coincidence in time of two or more causally unrelated events which have the same meaning.**" His implication is clear--certain events in the universe cluster together into meaningful patterns without recourse to the normal pushes and pulls of causality. These synchronicities therefore must transcend the normal laws of science, for they are the expressions of much deeper movements that originate in the ground of the universe and involve, in an inseparable way, both matter and meaning. The true story of synchronicity begins with the collaboration of two remarkable thinkers, the psychologist **Carl Jung** and the physicist **Wolfgang Pauli**. Their concept of synchronicity originated in a marriage between the approaches of physics and psychology. Jung writes, "In writing this paper I have, so to speak, made good a promise which for many years I lacked the courage to fulfill. The difficulties of the problem and its representation seemed to me too great...If I have now conquered my hesitation and at last come to grips with the theme it is chiefly because my experiences of the phenomenon of synchronicity have multiplied themselves over the decades". "Meaningful coincidences are unthinkable as pure chance--the more they multiply and the greater and more exact the correspondence is...they can no longer be regarded as pure chance, but, for the lack of a causal explanation, have to be thought of as meaningful arrangements."

W. Pauli writes, "There must be something else. I think I know what is coming. I know it exactly. But I don't tell it to others. They may think I am mad. So I am doing five dimensional theory of relativity although I don't really believe in it. But I know what is coming. Perhaps I will tell you some time."

*Despite our appeal to a "scientific view of nature," such events do occur, and while it is true that anyone of them can be dismissed as "coincidence" such an explanation makes little sense to the person who has experienced such a synchronicity.* Indeed the whole point of such happenings is that they are meaningful and play a significant role in a person's life. Synchronicities are the jokers in nature's pack of cards for they refuse to play by the rules and offer a hint that, in our quest for certainty about the universe, we may have ignored some vital clues. Synchronicities challenge us to build a bridge with one foundation derived into the objectivity of hard science and the other into the subjectivity of personal values.

Synchronicities take the form of patterns that emerge by chance out of a general background of chance and contingency and hold a deep meaning for the person who experiences them. Often these coincidences occur at critical points in a person's life and can be interpreted as containing the seeds of future growth. Synchronicities could, therefore, be said to involve the meaningful unfoldment of potential. Synchronicities are therefore often associated with periods of transformation; for example, births, deaths, falling in love, psychotherapy, intense creative work, and even a change of profession. It is as if this internal restructuring produces

external resonance's or as if a burst of "mental energy" is propagated outward into the physical world.

Such synchronicities begin within the outer world and then move inward as their meaning is revealed. Such synchronicities depend on detecting a deeper meaning to the patterns and clusterings of the phenomena around us. *They may involve our becoming linked with the environment in a special way, anticipating events or sensing some underlying pattern to the world.* While the conventional laws of physics do not heed human desires or the need for meaning--apples fall whether we will them to or not--synchronicities act as mirrors to the inner processes of mind and take the form of outer manifestations of interior transformations.

The many examples of coincidental movements of thought, feeling, and ideas between unconnected groups and across disciplines suggests that a deeper meaning lies beyond these coincidents and synchronicities.

Such curious events may not be so much the result of a "psychic link" or mental communication but rather indicate that a mutual process is unfolding out of the same ground and that this ground must therefore lie beyond the individual consciousness that is located in space and time. It is as if the formation of patterns within the unconscious mind is accompanied by physical patterns in the outer world. Synchronicity is therefore the expression of the potential or meaning contained within a certain point of existence. It acts as an intimation of the meaning that lies hidden within a particular life, relationship, or historical moment.

The special flavor of a synchronicity lies in its being, at one and the same time, a unique, individual event and the manifestation of universal order. Wrapped within the temporal moment, a [synchronicity exhibits its transcendental nature](#). It is this relationship between the transcendent and the coincidental arrangement of mental and physical happenings that the synchronicity acquires its numinous meaning.

*Synchronicities represent a bridge between matter and mind* and the concept of causality is clearly not appropriate to the world of mental events. *By probing causality to its limit, it has been discovered that "everything causes everything else"* and that each event emerges out of an infinite web or network of causal relationships. Causality therefore remains an idealization that can never be put into absolute practice.

Neils Bohr, for example, stressed that quantum theory had revealed the essential indivisibility of nature while Heisenburg's uncertainty principle indicated the extent to which an observer intervenes in the system he observes. A contemporary physicist, [John Wheeler](#), has expressed this new approach in particularly graphic terms: "We had this old idea, that there was a universe out there, and here is man, the observer, safely protected from the universe by a six-inch slab of plate glass. Now we learn from the quantum world that even to observe so minuscule an object as an electron we have to shatter the plate glass; we have to reach in there... So the old

word *observer* simply has to be crossed off the books, and we must put in the new word *participator*. In this way we've come to realize that the universe is [a participatory universe](#).

Quantum theory and relativity had a revolutionary effect upon this Newtonian approach, not only in transforming the formalism of physics but also changing the worldview that was associated with it. The worldview that we have all inherited from an outmoded physics still has a profound effect on our whole lives; it permeates our attitudes to society, government., and human relations and suggests that every adverse situation can be analyzed into an isolated "problem" with a corresponding solution or means of control. It is for such reasons that synchronicity can have such a profound effect on us, for it reaches beyond our intellectual defenses and shatters our faith in the tangibility of surfaces and the linear orders of time and nature.

While quantum theory has successfully challenged the exclusive nature of this (Newtonian) worldview, the loophole it offers is simply not enough to admit synchronicity. It is only when causality is pushed to the limit that it is discovered that the actual context in which everything that happens in our universe is in fact caused by everything else. Indeed the whole universe could be thought of as unfolding or expressing itself in its individual occurrences. It is within this global view that it becomes possible to accommodate synchronicities as meaningful events that emerge out of the heart of nature.

In building the bridge between mind and matter, the notion of causality must be bypassed in favor of transformations and unfoldings. **Causality and synchronicity are not contradictory but are dual perceptions of the same underlying reality.** In other words, synchronicities are manifestations, in mind and matter, of the unknown ground that underlies them both. In this way similar orders are found in both consciousness and in the structuring of matter. The parallelism between the objective and the subjective aspects of the universe do not so much arise through causal connections, or linear patterns in time, but out of underlying dynamics that are common to both. Synchronicities therefore introduce meaning and value, in an essential way, into nature. The meaningful patterns of the world, which transcend all our attempts to limit and encompass them, arise not so much through the mechanisms of external orders but through the unfolding of their own internal significance.

While science has an awesome power to predict and control, it is also clear that its essential [fragmentation of nature](#) is no longer able to address all the major problems that face the world today. Synchronicity, however, with its sensitivity to harmony and the indivisibility of consciousness, humanity, and nature at least opens up the possibility of a new approach. But again this does not mean making a choice to "adopt" synchronicity or to "replace" some of the approaches of science with those of synchronicity. Rather, by being perceptive to these issues it may be possible to move, in a creative way, in an entirely new direction...One step toward becoming more sensitive to the duality between these different worldviews is to begin to question the whole current order of science and to develop new ideas and [theories that have a more holistic approach](#).

In the present century the ultimate level of nature appears to be that of space-time and the infinite energy of the quantum field. But there is no reason to suppose that the ground of reality lies there and that there may not be an uncountable number of yet more subtle levels to be discovered. Indeed both consciousness and matter may be discovered to evolve out of a common order where the processes of matter and the [activity of information are two sides of one reality](#).

The real message of synchronicity, for the Western scientific viewpoint, is not to throw away all that is of value within the last five hundred years, but to be sensitive to new perspectives and to allow the mind its full creative potential. In this way it becomes possible to retain a subjective experience of nature and a sense of the meaning and interconnectedness of things without needing to reject the scientific approach. Synchronicity will appear very naturally to a mind that is constantly sensitive to change, for it reveals the overall patterns of nature of mind and provides a context in which events have their meaning.

Synchronicity has gradually been enfolded into an entirely new dimension; in place of a causal deterministic world, in which mind and matter are two separate substances, appears a universe of infinite subtlety that is much closer to a creative living organism than to a machine. Reality, in this way, is pictured as a limitless series of levels which extend to deeper and deeper subtleties and out of which the particular, explicate order of nature and the order of consciousness and life emerge. Synchronicities can therefore be thought of as an expression of this underlying movement, for they unfold as patterns of thoughts and arrangements of material processes which have a meaningful conjunction when taken together. Paradoxically, the nothingness of the ground state, out of which the universe is sustained, is [both a vacuum and a plenum](#). It is a vacuum because, as in the everyday idea of empty space, matter is able to move through it without interruption. But it is also a plenum because it is infinitely full of energy. Indeed, *the observable material universe is nothing more than the minor fluctuations upon this vast sea of energy. And, it should not be forgotten, just as this infinite energy is used in the generation of matter, so it is also available to mind*, through the deeper ground of its source.

Why should synchronicity be considered as some isolated coincidence of mind and matter when the one underlying source is constantly giving birth to the universe at every eternal moment? An answer to these questions is given in the final chapter, where it is suggested that a [fragmentation in the way the mind has come to perceive](#) the orders of time, and the growth of the self with all its attachments, has blinded our perceptions to the basic creativity in the universe. *While the source of all reality is an unconditional creativity, it does appear that human society, and the individual within it, often operate in a fairly mechanical way so that they respond to new situations from relatively fixed positions and in uncreative ways. In other words, they appear to be trapped in structures and forms of their own making, such as the beliefs, goals, and values that have become so rigid that they are unable to move in the flexible and subtle ways that characterize the general order of the universe.* Is it possible therefore for the creative source to permeate the life of the individual? By no longer sustaining the mechanical order of time and attachment can the division between mind and

body, individual and society, and society and nature be healed and the whole order of consciousness transformed in a creative way? Is it possible that the balance of life on this planet may be restored and a deeper sense of meaning function within the individual and society?

Within each part is enfolded the whole, so that each element becomes a microcosm of the macrocosm. In this sense, the individual truly stands as an image of a wider reality, with all its complex orders... However, as this self becomes more rigidly identified with set structures and its the sequential order of becoming, it believes itself to be the only and true source of all progress and creativity...In operating from its fixed forms and relatively limited order, the self assumes itself to be the origin and sustainer of all things... In this way the self has fragmented itself from the general field of consciousness and has become blocked from creativity so that a synchronicity now appears to be a rare and isolated incident, rather than one aspect of the general order of time and unfoldment.

Synchronicities, epiphanies, *peak*, and *mystical experiences* are all cases in which creativity breaks through the barriers of the self and allows awareness to flood through the whole domain of consciousness. It is the human mind operating, for a moment, in its true order and extending throughout society and nature, moving through orders of increasing subtlety, reaching past the source of mind and matter into creativity itself.

Synchronicity gives us an image of what such a transformation may be like, for within the operation of its meaningful coincidences, time has its end and creativity dissolves and transcends all structures and distinction. Synchronicity is therefore an intimation of a much greater transformation. An intimation of a more creative life in which the self takes its proper place within consciousness.

Synchronicities have opened a window onto a creative source of infinite potential, the well-spring of the universe itself. They have shown how *mind and matter are not distinct, separate aspects of nature but arise in a deeper order of reality*. Synchronicities suggest that we can renew our contact with that creative and unconditioned source which is the origin not only of ourselves but all of reality. By dying to the self and its mechanical, reactive responses to nature, it becomes possible to engage in an active transformation and gain access to unlimited ranges of energy. In this way, body and consciousness, individual and society, mind and matter may come to achieve their unlimited potential.

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