Synchronicity
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Synchronicity is the experience of two or more events that are apparently causally unrelated or unlikely to occur together by chance and that are observed to occur together in a meaningful manner. The concept of synchronicity was first described in this terminology by Carl Gustav Jung, a Swiss psychologist, in the 1920s.[1]

The concept does not question, or compete with, the notion of causality. Instead it maintains that, just as events may be grouped by cause, they may also be grouped by meaning. A grouping of events by meaning need not have an explanation in terms of cause and effect.

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Description

The idea of synchronicity is that the conceptual relationship of minds, defined as the relationship between
ideas, is intricately structured in its own logical way and gives rise to relationships that are not causal in nature. These relationships can manifest themselves as simultaneous occurrences that are meaningfully related.

Synchronistic events reveal an underlying pattern, a conceptual framework that encompasses, but is larger than, any of the systems that display the synchronicity. The suggestion of a larger framework is essential to satisfy the definition of synchronicity as originally developed by Carl Gustav Jung.[2]

Jung coined the word to describe what he called "temporally coincident occurrences of acausal events." Jung variously described synchronicity as an "acausal connecting principle", "meaningful coincidence" and "acausal parallelism". Jung introduced the concept as early as the 1920s but only gave a full statement of it in 1951 in an Eranos lecture[3] and in 1952, published a paper, *Synchronizität als ein Prinzip acausaler Zusammenhänge (Synchronicity — An Acausal Connecting Principle)*[4], in a volume with a related study by the physicist (and Nobel laureate) Wolfgang Pauli.[5]

It was a principle that Jung felt gave conclusive evidence for his concepts of archetypes and the collective unconscious,[6] in that it was descriptive of a governing dynamic that underlies the whole of human experience and history—social, emotional, psychological, and spiritual. Concurrent events that first appear to be coincidental but later turn out to be causally related are termed *incoincident*.

Jung believed that many experiences that are coincidences due to chance in terms of causality suggested the manifestation of parallel events or circumstances in terms of meaning, reflecting this governing dynamic.[7]

Even at Jung's presentation of his work on synchronicity in 1951 at an
Eranos lecture his ideas on synchronicity were still evolving. Following discussions with both Albert Einstein and Wolfgang Pauli Jung believed that there were parallels between synchronicity and aspects of relativity theory and quantum mechanics. Jung was transfixed by the idea that life was not a series of random events but rather an expression of a deeper order, which he and Pauli referred to as Unus mundus. This deeper order led to the insights that a person was both embedded in an orderly framework and was the focus of that orderly framework and that the realisation of this was more than just an intellectual exercise but also having elements of a spiritual awakening. From the religious perspective synchronicity shares similar characteristics of an "intervention of grace". Jung also believed that synchronicity served a similar role in a person's life to dreams with the purpose of shifting a person's egocentric conscious thinking to greater wholeness.

A close associate of Jung, Marie-Louise von Franz, stated towards the end of her life that the concept of synchronicity must now be worked on by a new generation of researchers.[8] For example in the years since the publication of Jung’s work on synchronicity, some writers largely sympathetic to Jung's approach have taken issue with certain aspects of his theory, including the question of how frequently synchronicity occurs. For example, in The Waking Dream: Unlocking the Symbolic Language of Our Lives, Ray Grasse suggests that instead of being a "rare" phenomenon, as Jung suggested, synchronicity is more likely all-pervasive, and that the occasional dramatic coincidence is only the tip of a larger iceberg of meaning that underlies our lives. Grasse places the discussion of synchronicity in the context of what he calls the "symbolist" world view, a traditional way of perceiving the universe that regards all phenomena as interwoven by linked analogies or "correspondences." Though omnipresent, these correspondences tend to become obvious to us only in the case of the most startling coincidences. The study of astrology, he argues, offers a practical method of not only becoming more conscious of these subtle connections but of testing and even predicting their occurrence throughout our lives.[9]

One of Jung's favourite quotes on synchronicity was from *Through the
Looking-Glass by Lewis Carroll, in which the White Queen says to Alice: "It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards".\[10][11]

'The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday--but never jam to-day.'
'IT MUST come sometimes to "jam to-day,"' Alice objected.
'No, it can't,' said the Queen. 'It's jam every OTHER day: to-day isn't any OTHER day, you know.'
'I don't understand you,' said Alice. 'It's dreadfully confusing!
'That's the effect of living backwards,' the Queen said kindly: 'it always makes one a little giddy at first--'
'Living backwards!' Alice repeated in great astonishment. 'I never heard of such a thing!'
'--but there's one great advantage in it, that one's memory works both ways.'
'I'm sure MINE only works one way,' Alice remarked. 'I can't remember things before they happen.'
'It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards,' the Queen remarked.

Examples

The French writer Émile Deschamps claims in his memoirs that, in 1805, he was treated to some plum pudding by a stranger named Monsieur de Fontgibu. Ten years later, the writer encountered plum pudding on the menu of a Paris restaurant and wanted to order some, but the waiter told him that the last dish had already been served to another customer, who turned out to be de Fontgibu. Many years later, in 1832, Deschamps was at a dinner and once again ordered plum pudding. He recalled the earlier incident and told his friends that only de Fontgibu was missing to make the setting complete—and in the same instant, the now senile de Fontgibu entered the room.\[12]

In his book Synchronicity (1952), Jung tells the following story as an example of a synchronistic event:
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 the 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 one finds in our latitudes, a scarabaeid beetle, the common rose-chafer (Cetonia aurata), which, contrary to its usual habits had evidently felt the urge to get into a dark room at this particular moment. I must admit that nothing like it ever happened to me before or since. [13]

The comic strip character Dennis the Menace featuring a young boy in a red and black striped shirt debuted on March 12, 1951 in 16 newspapers in the United States. Three days later in the UK a character called Dennis the Menace, wearing a red and black striped jumper made his debut in children's comic The Beano. Both creators have denied any causal connection.

Jung wrote, after describing some examples, "When coincidences pile up in this way, one cannot help being impressed by them—for the greater the number of terms in such a series, or the more unusual its character, the more improbable it becomes."[14]

**Criticism**

Among some psychologists, Jung's works, such as *The Interpretation of Nature and the Psyche*, were received as problematic. Fritz Levi, in his 1952 review in *Neue Schweizer Rundschau* (New Swiss Observations), critiqued Jung's theory of synchronicity as vague in determinability of synchronistic events, saying that Jung never specifically explained his rejection of "magic causality" to which such an acausal principle as synchronicity would be related. He also questioned the theory's usefulness.[15]

A possible explanation for Jung's perception that the laws of probability seemed to be violated with some coincidences[16] can be seen in Littlewood's
law.

In psychology and cognitive science, confirmation bias is a tendency to search for or interpret new information in a way that confirms one's preconceptions and avoids information and interpretations that contradict prior beliefs. It is a type of cognitive bias and represents an error of inductive inference, or as a form of selection bias toward confirmation of the hypothesis under study or disconfirmation of an alternative hypothesis. Confirmation bias is of interest in the teaching of critical thinking, as the skill is misused if rigorous critical scrutiny is applied only to evidence challenging a preconceived idea but not to evidence supporting it.[17]

Wolfgang Pauli, a scientist who in his professional life was severely critical of confirmation bias, made some effort to investigate the phenomenon, coauthoring a paper with Jung on the subject. Some of the evidence that Pauli cited was that ideas that occurred in his dreams would have synchronous analogs in later correspondence with distant collaborators.[18]

It has been asserted that Jung's analytical psychological theory of synchronicity is equal to intellectual intuition.[19]

**See also**

- Apophenia
- Multiple discovery
- Pareidolia

**References**

6. ^ Jung defined the collective unconscious as akin to instincts in Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious.
7. ^ In Synchronicity in the final two pages of the Conclusion, Jung stated that not all coincidences are meaningful and further explained the creative causes of this phenomenon.
10. ^ lecture notes, Jung Foundation, New York City, 1980s.
11. ^ Through the Looking-Glass, by Lewis Carroll, Ch. 5, Wool and Water.
12. ^ Emile Deschamps, Oeuvres completes : Tomes I — VI, Reimpr. de l'ed. de Paris 1872 - '74
14. ^ C. G. Jung Jung on Synchronicity and the Paranormal, p. 91
16. ^ Jung On Synchronicity and the Paranormal p.91

Further reading

- Aziz, Robert (1990). C.G. Jung's Psychology of Religion and


- Mardorf, Elisabeth (in German). Das kann doch kein Zufall sei.


External links

- Carl Jung and Synchronicity (http://www.carl-jung.net/synchronicity.html)
- The Synchroncity of the Two Octopuses, Rhine Research Center Summer 2011 Newsletter (http://www.rhine.org/Newsletters/201106RhineNewsletter.pdf)


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