

CHANGING VIEWS OF
SYNCHRONICITY-
FROM CARL JUNG TO ROBERT PERRY

Christopher Jargodzki

Professor of Physics

Director, Center for Cooperative Phenomena (c4cp.org)

University of Central Missouri

Warrensburg, MO 64093

March 25, 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Apparent Design in the Life of Individuals

- Abraham Lincoln
- Winston Churchill
- Adolf Hitler

Arthur Schopenhauer

2. Carl Jung

- Biography (incl. relation to Freud, Einstein, and Pauli)
- Jung's Model of the Psyche
 - Upper and lower threshold for consciousness
 - The ego
 - The persona
 - The personal unconscious (complexes)
 - The collective unconscious (archetypes and instincts)
 - The shadow
 - The anima
 - The self
- Individuation
- Jung's Narrow and Broad Definitions of Synchronicity
- Conditions Favoring Synchronistic Events According to Jung
- Four Characteristics of Synchronistic Events
- Jung's Example of a Synchronistic Event

TABLE OF CONTENTS, CONT'D.

3. Robert Perry—Co-founder of The Circle of Atonement, Sedona, AZ
 - CMPE: Conjunction of Meaningfully Parallel Events
 - Perry's Four-point Model for CMPEs
 - Providence and Synchronicity
4. Several Proposals
 - A Model of Spiritual Growth
 - A New Foundation for Ethics
 - Ascending Levels of Providential Care and Invulnerability
5. Recommended Readings

CHANCE IN THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS

- **Abraham Lincoln** (1809-1865). His formal education consisted of only 18 months of schooling. “One day a stranger came to Lincoln with a barrel full of odds and ends. He said that he was in need of money [...] The contents, he said, were not of much value [...] Lincoln, with his characteristic kindness, gave the man a dollar for the barrel [...] Some time later...he found that it contained almost a complete edition of Blackstone’s *Commentaries*.
 - Adapted from Ira Progoff, *Jung, Synchronicity, and Human Destiny—Noncausal Dimensions of Human Experience* (1973)

CHANCE IN THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS, CONT'D.

- **Winston Churchill** (1874-1965). “In the fall of 1899 his job was to report on the Boer War in South Africa for the *Morning Post*. On November 14, the armored train he was traveling on was attacked by Boers [..] he and a number of British soldiers were captured and placed in a confinement in the city of Pretoria [...] of the two thousand imprisoned in Pretoria, he was the only one to escape [...] Exhausted, hungry, and with no clear idea of his location, he decided one night to approach some lights in the distance [...] Knocking at a door, he found himself in the company of John Howard, the only English sympathizer within twenty miles. Howard was able to smuggle Churchill out of enemy territory, and he arrived home a hero.”

– Adapted from A. Combs and M. Holland, *Synchronicity* (1996)

CHANCE IN THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS, CONT'D.

- **Adolf Hitler** (1889-1945). “Hitler served in the German infantry during the First World War. As a courier it often was his job to carry messages along battle lines—a dangerous assignment, but one that he seemed to thrive on. [...] Time and time again Hitler seemed to come within a hair’s breadth of death and escaped unharmed. This ability was to stay with him throughout his life. He later wrote to a reporter about one episode from his combat experience: ‘Four times we advanced and had to go back; from my whole batch only one remains, beside me; finally he also falls. A shot tears off my right coat sleeve, but like a miracle I remained safe and alive.’”
 - Adapted from A. Combs and M. Holland, *Synchronicity* (1996)

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

- “The fate of one individual invariably fits the fate of the other and each is the hero of his own drama while simultaneously figuring in a drama foreign to him—this is something that surpasses our powers of comprehension, and can only be conceived as possible by virtue of the most wonderful pre-established harmony.”
 - From “On the Apparent Design in the Fate of the Individual” (1851)
- Schopenhauer compared the chain of causality that establishes the path of a single person’s life to a meridian on the globe, while lines of latitude represent interactions between lives of separate individuals
 - Adapted from A. Combs and M. Holland, *Synchronicity* (1996)

FIRST-ORDER APPROXIMATION OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CAUSALITY AND SYNCHRONICITY

Causality has to do with events that happen in sequence, a cause producing an effect, whereas synchronicity has to do with events that happen together.

Carl Jung (1875-1961)



Carl Jung

- 26 July 1875
 - Born in Kesswil, Switzerland
- 1895
 - Enters Basel University to study science and medicine
- 1900
 - Graduates with an M.D. from Basel University
- 1900-09
 - Works at the Burghölzli Mental Hospital in Zürich with Eugen Bleuler
- 1902
 - Gets his Ph.D. at the University of Zürich with a dissertation: *On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena*
- 1906
 - Sends a copy of *Studies in Word Association* to Sigmund Freud, which begins a close six-year friendship

Carl Jung

- 1912
 - Publishes *Psychology of the Unconscious* which results in a theoretical divergence with Freud and a break in their friendship
- 1930s
 - Has an indirect role in establishing Alcoholics Anonymous
- 1934
 - First mentions the term *synchronicity* during a lecture at London's Tavistock Clinic
- 1952
 - Publishes *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*
- 1955
 - Publication of *The Interpretation of Nature and the Psyche* by C.G. Jung and W. Pauli
- 6 June 1961
 - Dies at 85
- 2001
 - Publication of *Atom and Archetype: The Pauli/Jung Letters, 1932-1958*

Jung's response to Bill Wilson's letter of appreciation about Jung's role in the development of Alcoholics Anonymous (1961). The letter included the following statement about Roland H:

“His craving for alcohol was the equivalent, on a low level, of the spiritual thirst of our being for wholeness; expressed in medieval language: the union with God.”

CARL JUNG'S MODEL OF THE PSYCHE

- Consciousness may be compared with the perceptible scale of sound or light, having like them a lower and upper limit
- By analogy with the visible band which ranges from extreme red, 760 nm, to extreme violet, 393 nm, and the audible range of frequencies from 20 Hz to 20,000 Hz, Jung posits that there is a lower as well as an upper threshold for psychic events, and that consciousness, the perceptual system par excellence, has a lower and upper limit. At the ends, the psyche fades into matter and spirit.
- **The ego** is the center of the field of consciousness. The term refers to one's experience of oneself as a center of willing, desiring, reflecting, and acting. The ego moves around within the field of consciousness, observing, selecting, directing motor activity to an extent, but also ignoring a good deal of material that consciousness is otherwise attending to.
- **The persona** is the psychic interface between the individual and society that makes up a person's social identity. It is the person we become as a result of acculturation, education, and adaptation to our physical and social environments.

CARL JUNG'S MODEL OF THE PSYCHE, CONT'D.

- **The unconscious** is the portion of the psyche lying outside of conscious awareness. The contents of the unconscious are made up of repressed memories and material, such as thoughts and images and emotions, that has never been conscious. The unconscious is divided into the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious.
- **The personal unconscious** contains the **complexes**. A complex is a feeling-toned autonomous content, usually formed through psychic injury or trauma. Complexes exist as satellite-like objects in relation to ego-consciousness but are able to cause ego disturbances in a surprising and sometimes overwhelming way. We refer to the complex-laden areas of the psyche colloquially as “buttons” as in “She knows how to press my buttons!” The mother and father complexes are the giants of the personal unconscious.
- **The collective unconscious** contains universally prevalent patterns and forces called “**archetypes**” and “**instincts.**” As a result, a human being is not born as a **tabula rasa**, he or she is merely born unconscious.

CARL JUNG'S MODEL OF THE PSYCHE, CONT'D.

- **Psychoid** is an adjective referring to the boundaries of the psyche, one of which interfaces with the body and the physical world and the other with the realm of “spirit.”
- **The shadow**, which Jung identified with Freud's notion of the **id**, contains the rejected and unaccepted aspects of the personality that are repressed and form a compensatory structure to the ego's self ideals, and to the persona.
- **The anima** is the archetypal image of the eternal feminine in a man's unconscious that forms a link between ego-consciousness and the collective unconscious, and potentially opens a way to the self, that is allows the ego to enter into and to experience the depths of the psyche.
- **The animus** is the archetypal image of the eternal masculine in a woman's unconscious that forms a link between the ego and the collective unconscious, and potentially allows the ego to enter into and to experience the depths of the psyche.

CARL JUNG'S MODEL OF THE PSYCHE, CONT'D.

- **The self** is the center, source of all archetypal images and of innate psychic tendencies toward structure, order, and integration. When the ego is well connected to the self, a person is not narcissistically invested in nearsighted goals and short-term gains. In such persons there is an ego-free quality, as though they were consulting a deeper and wider reality than merely the practical, rational, and personal considerations typical of ego consciousness.
- **Individuation** is the process of psychic development that leads to the conscious awareness of wholeness. According to Jung, the first half of life is typically devoted to ego and persona development. When that is done, another task begins to emerge, for the ideal development of ego and persona have left a great deal of psychological material out of the conscious picture. The shadow has not been integrated, the anima and animus remain unconscious, and the self has been hardly glimpsed directly.

Adapted from Murray Stein, *Jung's Map of the Soul* (1998)

“Professor Einstein was my guest on several occasions at dinner... These were very early days when Einstein was developing his first theory of relativity... It was above all the simplicity and directness of his genius as a thinker that impressed me mightily and exerted a lasting influence on my own intellectual work. It was Einstein who first started me on thinking about a possible relativity of time as well as space, and their psychic conditionality.”

Carl Jung's letter to Carl Seeling,
Swiss biographer of Albert Einstein

“Synchronicism is the prejudice of the East, causality is the modern prejudice of the West.”

Carl Jung, 1929

JUNG'S TWO DEFINITIONS OF SYNCHRONICITY

- **Narrow definition:** The simultaneous occurrence of a certain psychic state with one or more external events which appear as meaningful parallels to the momentary subjective state. By simultaneous he means within hours or days, but not necessarily at exactly the same moment.
- **Broad definition:** Acausal orderedness in the world without special reference to the human psyche. The universe can best be described using four principles: indestructible energy, the space-time continuum, causality, and synchronicity.

CONDITIONS FAVORING SYNCHRONISTIC EVENTS ACCORDING TO JUNG

Synchronicities occur more often when a person is psychically in an *abaissement du niveau mental* (a lower level of conscious awareness akin to reverie). As a result the unconscious is more energized than consciousness and complexes and archetypes are aroused into a more activated state and can push over the threshold into consciousness.

Adapted from Murray Stein, *Jung's Map of the Soul* (1998)

“WHEN I PRAY, COINCIDENCES START TO HAPPEN. WHEN I DON’T PRAY, THEY DON’T HAPPEN.”

WILLIAM TEMPLE (1881-1944), BRITISH ARCHBISHOP

(QUOTED IN A. COMBS AND M. HOLLAND, *SYNCHRONICITY—SCIENCE, MYTH, AND THE TRICKSTER*, 1900)

Swami Rama Tirtha

“The truth is undeniable that so long as you are in perfect harmony with nature, so long as your mind is in tune with the universe and you are feeling and realizing your oneness with each and all, all the circumstances and surroundings, even winds and waves, will be in your favor.”

From a talk given at Golden Gate Hall in San Francisco in 1906 (qtd in A. Combs and M. Holland, *Synchronicity*, p. 132)

FOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF SYNCHRONISTIC EVENTS

1. Such events are *acausally* connected, rather than connected through a chain of cause and effect that an individual can discern as intentional and deliberate on her or his own part.
2. Such events always occur with an accompaniment of *deep emotional experience*, usually at the same time of the event itself, but not always.
3. The content of the synchronistic experience, what the event actually is, is always *symbolic* in nature, and almost always related specifically to the fourth aspect of the synchronistic event.
4. Such meaningful coincidences occur at points of *important transitions* in our lives. A synchronistic event very often becomes a turning point in the stories of our lives.

Jung's Example of a Synchronistic Event

“My example concerns a young woman patient who, in spite of efforts made on both sides, proved to be psychologically inaccessible[...] Her excellent education had provided her with a weapon...namely a polished Cartesian rationalism with an impeccably ‘geometrical’ idea of reality. After several fruitless attempts to sweeten her rationalism by a somewhat more human understanding, I had to confine myself to hope that something unexpected and irrational would turn up[...] Well, I was sitting opposite her one day...listening to her flow of rhetoric. She had had an impressive dream the night before, in which someone had give her a golden scarab—a costly piece of jewelry.

An Example of a Synchronistic Event, Cont'd.

While she was telling me about this dream, I heard something behind me gently tapping on the window. I turned around and saw that it was a fairly large flying insect that was knocking against the windowpane from outside[...] I opened the window immediately and caught the insect in the air as it flew in. It was a scarabaeid beetle[...] I handed this beetle to my patient with the words, 'Here is your scarab.' This experience punctured the desired hole in her rationalism and broke the ice of her intellectual resistance. This treatment could now be continued with satisfactory results."

(Jung, *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*, p. 110)

CMPE: Conjunction of Meaningfully Parallel Events

A CMPE (or “sign”) consists of at least two events occurring within hours of each other that, seemingly by chance, are strikingly similar—they share an impressive list of parallels. Through the relationship between the two events, the CMPE highlights a situation in our lives and communicates a definite perspective on that situation.

Robert Perry, *Signs—A New Approach to Coincidence, Synchronicity, Guidance, Life Purpose, and God’s Plan*, 2009, p. 10

ROBERT PERRY'S FOUR-POINT MODEL FOR CMPEs

- **Events.** Two or more distinct events that are independent of each other and strikingly similar occur within hours.
- **Parallels.** These two events share a long list of objective similarities. This list will be composed of specific, unlikely parallels surrounded by more general parallels.
- **Subject situation.** The CMPE is about a situation in your life that fits the overall story told by the parallels and is probably current, uncertain, unresolved, or at least needing confirmation.
- **Interpretation.** The parallels and symbolic situation will together frame the subject situation in certain way, a way that addresses your specific concern.

Robert Perry, *Signs*, 2009, p. 86

PROVIDENCE AND SYNCHRONICITY

Synchronicity appears to be “a phenomenon in which events converge in ways that are so incredibly improbable that chance seems out of the question. Rather it appears as if some unseen presence is mysteriously orchestrating events so as to shape them into a message for us. This presence seems responsive to our needs, since it speaks to situations in which we need counsel. By giving us this counsel, it displays the characteristics one would associate with a counselor, a guide, or a parent. It seems to have our welfare in mind, since it apparently tries to move us in the direction of achieving successful outcomes and realizing our highest potentials.”

Adapted from Robert Perry, *Signs* (2009)

A MODEL OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1. Quiet the mind, i.e., quiet the voice of the ego which is characterized by fear, anxiety, blame-seeking (emphasized in Buddhism and Yoga)
2. Open the heart or change the heart by eliminating the bitterness blocking the expression of *agape* (emphasized in the Gospels as the *metanoia* and often mistranslated as repentance)
3. Unite the mind with the heart so all intrapsychic divisions are healed
4. Transform your relationships, relationships understood here in the broadest sense of the word so one lives in harmony with the Universe

“I believe it is possible that we may be at the same stage in discovering new laws of nature at the human level as the medievals were 600 – 700 years ago in their movement toward the discovery of the laws of nature at the simplest level, the laws of motion in mechanics. The early history of mechanics includes scholars such as Jean Buridan (1295 – 1358) who developed the impetus theory that eventually led to the concept of inertia, and advancements such as the 14th century Mertonian rule (after Merton College, Oxford) for the distance traveled in uniformly accelerated motion which in the hands of Galileo three hundred years later resulted in the development of the concept of acceleration. Interestingly, simple collision-free motion through space will be seen below as one of the components of invulnerability which can be regarded here as one of the defining characteristics of the transhuman state.”

Christopher Jargocki, “From Stephen Hawking’s Flexiverse to Synchronicity: Intimations of Our Transhuman Future,” a paper presented at the Metanexus Conference in Phoenix, AZ on July 19, 2009

PROPOSALS

1. The degree to which one is in harmony with the Universe can be measured by an intensified flow of synchronicity
2. Synchronicity may provide a **new foundation for ethics**: instead of actions being classified as right or wrong, the new criterion will be the extent to which they are developmentally appropriate as measured by an increased or decreased flow of synchronicity
3. If synchronicity is understood as an empirically-based aspect of divine providence, one can envision ascending levels of providential care and invulnerability that depend on the degree to which one follows inner and outer (synchronistic) guidance:

Level 1: Growing freedom from accidents

Level 2: Growing freedom from sickness

Level 3 (Optimistic scenario): Transformation of the physical body into the glorified (glorious) body, i.e., a radiant body free from physical and biological constraints, thus assuring a spiritually based form of immortality

Cf. Philippians 3:21 “[Jesus Christ] who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body”

MINIMALIST SCENARIO: A COLLISION-FREE MOTION THROUGH SPACE AS ONE ASPECT OF INVULNERABILITY

Much suffering and death result from discontinuities in our passage through space: arrows, knives, and bullets ripping through flesh; automobile collisions; falling bodies colliding with the ground; buildings collapsing on top of occupants, etc. Much of what is understood as evil involves discontinuities in motion through space, and much suffering can be avoided if objects move smoothly around each other. At the very least this would involve a synchronization of motion. We have a wonderful example of that in superconducting materials where at low temperatures the trillions of electrons which constitute the current behave as one, moving in a highly correlated and organized pattern. The BCS theory proposed by Bardeen, Cooper, and Schrieffer in 1957, envisions electrons joining in pairs due to the mediating action of the crystal lattice, rather unusual for two negatively charged particles, at which point they can move without resistance through the lattice. In this physical phenomenon the electrons travel uninhibited because of this uncharacteristic pairing.

MINIMALIST SCENARIO: A COLLISION-FREE MOTION THROUGH SPACE AS ONE ASPECT OF INVULNERABILITY, CONT'D.

Moving back up the scale of organizational complexity to the human level, one can postulate that synchronicity might produce the kind of behavior that one observes in a rudimentary form in a school of fish - synchronization on the macroscopic scale that ideally might result in a coordinated collision-free motion and thus a degree of invulnerability. It appears that a single ego-bound individual is incapable of achieving this sort of invulnerability for the simple reason that the ego-level mind is by definition unable to join with others on a deep level. To achieve a collision-reducing relationship one needs at least two individuals who are connected on a deep level as a result of lowering their ego defenses.

Christopher Jargodzki, "From Stephen Hawking's Flexiverse to Synchronicity: Intimations of Our Transhuman Future" (2009)

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Roderick Main, *Revelations of Chance—Synchronicity as Spiritual Experience*, SUNY, 2007
- Victor Mansfield, *Synchronicity, Science, and Soul-Making*, Open Court, 1995
- David Peat, *Synchronicity—The Bridge Between Matter and Mind*, Bantam Books, 1987
- Murray Stein, “Synchronicity and Divine Providence,” in J. M. Spiegelman (ed.), *Protestantism and Jungian Psychology*, New Falcon Publications, 1995