

The Day the Gods Stopped Laughing

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There is a theory kicking around which, as time passes, is going to cause more and more trouble. The theory - or more accurately, principle - is called Synchronicity, and was developed by the eminent German physicist Wolfgang Pauli. Synchronicity is an acausal connective which links happenings on a vertical, so to speak, rather than the usual horizontal basis of cause and effect. Consider this: Jean Harlow's death - then Monroe's - then Mansfield's. Three blonde sex-symbols, all dying unexpectedly at the height of their careers; all three nipped in the bud, and all three so very much alike. Is there a cause and effect in their death? Of course not. But ah: here is where Pauli's synchronicity enters. See what I mean?

Another example. My ex wife used to say that whenever a new baby came onto the scene the family dog or cat somehow managed to die. I laughed in my cultured, cultivated way... but again synchronicity. Five month ago I and my present wife had a baby. One of our cat died two weeks before the baby was born; the other died three weeks after. Coincidence? That's the key word. That's what synchronicity is all about. But up until Pauli's principle we had no way to take coincidence into account; we had only the poolball-hitting-another-poolball world set up originally by Aristotle. As early as Roman times there was some worry about the universal validity of physical cause and effect events. "Post hoc, ergo propter hoc"; that was their term for fallacy - the fallacy that because an event took place after another event, then the first event must have caused it.

The next - and greatest - blow to the concept of causality come in the form of David Hume. In one of the most brilliant papers in the English language, Hume made it clear that what we speak of as causality is nothing more than the phenomenon of repetition. When we mix sulphur with saltpeter and charcoal we always get gunpowder. This is true of every event subsumed by a causal law - in other words, everything which can be called scientific knowledge. "It is custom which rules," Humes said, and in that one sentence undermines both science and philosophy. Humes has never been answered (unless you accept Kant's response). I remember when at nineteen I read Hume - and like Kant, fell senseless to the floor, my whole world destroyed. For years - literally - I kept poking at the question of causality, upon which so much rests - and which Hume has so successfully demolished. If not causality, the what? Well, we we have it now, in Pauli's Synchronicity. But what a Pandora's box synchronicity is!

Let's, for example, examine Kennedy's assassination from the standpoint of Synchronicity. There are so many "coincidences" involved that without the use of the principle of Synchronicity one must assume the existence of an incredible gigantic, complex plot involving high officials in the U.S., Cuba, the USSR and China - the most vast political plot since the Thirty Year War. And the deeper you probe into it, the more "coincidences" you find. And yet those coincidences lead nowhere, because what we are running into is Synchronicity; yes all these strange little and big people did all these peculiar and puzzling things one day... but it adds up to nothing from a cause and effect stand point. Nor will it ever.

I think I can best explain Synchronicity by referring to Leibnitz' concept of predetermined harmony. Leibnitz asks us to imagine large numbers of clocks all showing the same (or 'right') time. It is twelve o'clock, all these clocks begin to bong and chime and **xxxxx**. Now is there any cause and effect relationship between these clocks? No. But as Hume points out, we would be inclined to think so - except that as regards clocks, we know that it is a coincidence that they give the same reading and all chime together. Leibnitz then asks us to imagine, then, that everything in the universe is as it is with the clocks. For example, as a writer I have several times dreamt up new ideas, written them into story form, and then discovered that another s-f writer was experiencing the same inspiration. And everyone in the high academic spheres knows of the phenomenon of two research workers, unknown to one another, bringing forth the exact same discovery simultaneously.

This is a far-reaching concept, this Synchronicity. So far it has been applied very little in scientific circles. But consider for example its meaning for the so-called psionic powers. Consider a medium, who claims to have occult powers. He can "read my mind." He is "telepathic." All right. Earlier this year I participate in a sitting with a medium. He told me any personal things about myself, that I have never published, facts even my wife did not know. Telepathy? He claimed that the spirit of my dead greatgrandfather was telling him all this. I even had a question which I told no one: if the medium mentioned that my recently dead cat was "up there", then I would take note of all this occult business; no mention of my cat - no belief on my part. It was as simple as that. "You love animals," the medium told me. "And there's a dog in the afterworld waiting for you". OK, so he said dog instead of cat. But it was close enough for me. Yet think such "occult" and "psi" phenomenon as these are examples of Synchronicity, and I think to ignore Pauli's theory, is to put ourselves in the position in having to believe in occult, psi, whatever you want to call them, powers.

Here and there in the theological community, highly perceptive individuals are beginning to take note of the concept of Synchronicity. In his most recent book, *IF THIS BE HERESY* (Harper and Row, New York, 1967), Bishop James A. Pike discusses it, saying: "...Thus the word coincidence/luck/chance are found to be treated in a serious manner and can no longer stand for a comfortable dismissal of evidence of any kind." Carl Jung has written at length about Synchronicity in an article called, "Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle" in his book, *THE STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS OF THE PSYCHE* (Pantheon Books, New York, 1960). What neither Jung nor Jim Pike sees, however, is that the principle of Synchronicity automatically leads us back to the world-view of the medieval schoolmen: the concept of simultaneous worlds existing in a parallel manner and consisting of the macrocosmos, our Earth, then the microcosmos, or at any rate something of this sort, something like Leibnitz' pre-established harmony of level upon level, but not having a causal effect on each other. "On Earth as it is in Heaven," as Christ put it, and perhaps it was meant more literally than we've realized.

All this, of course, would demolish Plato's idea of the form existing above and the imperfect impression made by it here on matter in our rather lowly world. It would seem, in fact, that the two great Greek thinkers, Plato and Aristotle, would be in trouble, when faced with this new theory. Some of the merriment around Mount Olympus might dim a bit - at least temporarily. More seriously it might explain why God, in the form of a man, had to die here on earth, as everyone of us must; running parallel to our world, the macrocosmos would of necessity contain a threat of Synchronicity so awful and so terrible in its scope that even God would cry out in pain. Maybe, using the concept of Synchronicity, we can understand why the agony on the cross had to take place.

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