

THE RHINE JUNG LETTERS: DISTINGUISHING PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL FROM SYNCHRONISTIC EVENTS

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ABSTRACT: Along with the previously published works and correspondence of J. B. Rhine and C. G. Jung, we use letters recently discovered in the Rhine archives from these two pioneers to discuss their relationship. Employing Jung's definition of synchronicity as an acausal connection of meaning between inner psychological states and outer events, we argue that, contrary to Jung's view, parapsychological phenomena are distinct from synchronicity. We base our argument for this distinction on a careful consideration of the roles of causality and meaning in both parapsychological phenomena and synchronicity. We show that the distinction is true to Jung's original formulation of synchronicity, and affords a better understanding of both classes of experience. This distinction also helps illuminate the different understandings of these phenomena held by Rhine and Jung.

In his essay "Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle" (1978c), Carl Jung repeatedly mentioned J. B. Rhine's experiments and how important they were to him. Jung's two-volume set of letters also contains much of the correspondence between them. However, a more complete set of the letters between Jung and Rhine recently surfaced in the Rhine archives. For example, the following quotation is from a letter to Rhine that did not find its way into Jung's two-volume set of letters:

I regretted very much not seeing you when you were in Europe. Soon after you left I recovered from my illness and I have been able to finish a paper that is largely based upon your ESP experiment which, by the way, is intensely discussed over here by psychologists as well as physicists. (C. G. Jung, personal communication to J. B. Rhine, September 3, 1951)

The startling revelation that Jung's synchronicity essay "is largely based upon your ESP experiment" cannot be found in Jung's *Collected Works*, his published letters, or his autobiography.

Here we explore the relationship between these two great pioneers

¹ We thank the Rhine Research Center for their help with the collected letters of Rhine and Jung. V. M. especially thanks his spouse, Elaine, for her careful reading and comments on early drafts of this paper. V. M. offers special thanks to the Jungian analyst Dr. Jan Marlan, and an anonymous referee for many useful comments on an earlier draft of the paper.

and their work. We attempt to build upon their achievements by developing the recent idea (Mansfield, 1995) that, contrary to Jung and subsequent Jungian writers, synchronicity is distinct from parapsychological events. We show how this distinction leads to a deeper understanding of both phenomena and aids in their laboratory study. Along the way, we weave some of the previously unpublished letters into our discussion.

SYNCHRONICITY AND UNCONSCIOUS COMPENSATION

In synchronicity, according to Jung, an inner psychological state such as a dream, fantasy, or feeling acausally connects to outer events through meaning. Comprehending Jung's definition requires us to appreciate how he understands *acausality* and *meaning*.

Causality/Acausality

Jung uses the term *cause* in the conventional sense of an efficient cause involving some force, energy, or information traveling from one well-defined object to another. For example, in discussing synchronicity he writes,

We must give up at the outset all explanations in terms of energy, which amounts to saying that events of this kind cannot be considered from the point of view of causality, for causality presupposes the existence of space and time in so far as all observations are ultimately based upon bodies in motion. (Jung, 1978c, para. 836)

Any classical interaction in physics serves as an example, such as an electric field causing a proton to accelerate, or, psychologically, anger causing blood pressure to rise. In synchronicity, however, no causal connections exist between the inner psychological states and the outer material events: no inner states cause the outer events, or vice versa. We call this *horizontal acausality*, since the inner states and outer events are on the same epistemic level—both are consciously known. There is also *vertical acausality*, since there is no transcendent or unconscious cause. Marie-Louise von Franz (1992), whose contribution to synchronicity is second only to Jung's (see her book *Psyche and Matter*, 1992) clarifies this when she writes:

According to the Jungian view, the collective unconscious is not at all an expression of personal wishes and goals, but is a neutral entity, psychic in nature, that exists in an absolutely transpersonal way. Ascribing the arrangement of synchronistic events to the observer's unconscious would thus be nothing other than a regression to primitive-magical thinking, in accordance with

which it was earlier supposed that, for example, an eclipse could be “caused” by the malevolence of a sorcerer. Jung even explicitly warned against taking the archetypes (of the collective unconscious) or psi-powers to be the *causal agency* of synchronistic events. (p. 231)

Thus, neither the unconscious, nor archetypes, nor some other transcendent principles are causal agents for synchronicity. Synchronicity does not deny causality, however, but is a complementary or compensatory principle. As Jung (1975) said, “It is obvious to me that synchronicity is the indispensable counterpart to causality and to that extent could be considered compensatory” (p. 426). Although easy to state, acausality is mysterious, especially because our commitment to causal processes is so deep and unconscious, so pervasive in our thinking and language. Usually we believe that if there is no causal connection between things, then there really is no connection at all. Fortunately, quantum processes are excellent examples of deeply interrelated but acausal processes in nature, as Jung learned from Wolfgang Pauli (Mansfield, 1995).

Like most of us, Rhine had difficulty accepting the idea of acausal connections. After nearly two decades of correspondence with Jung, and in response to a synchronicity paper by C. A. Meier (no English translation of Jung’s synchronicity essay was available then), Rhine wrote on July 17, 1954:

Professor Dr. C. G. Jung
Seestrasse 228
Kusnacht-Zurich
Germany

Dear Professor Jung:

I have just finished a letter, a very tardy one, to Professor Meier, attempting to answer his question concerning my reaction to his paper on synchronicity. I told him I was playing for time on that question and that psychologically he might have to classify me as a very cautious person. At any rate, I was disposed to try to cling to the causality hypothesis, patching up the psychophysical interaction by supposing the necessary energetics.

I think it is possible that I simply do not understand all that synchronicity represents and involves in your concept of it. It is not that I have any great confidence in causality or that I understand very much of what it might mean in a psychophysical interaction in any case. It is more a matter with me of taking very cautious, timid steps, and I do this partly because I am determined to go as far as I can in fact-finding in this area of problems.

There is a fair possibility that I may come upon the kind of evidence that can discriminate between causality and noncausality in the psychophysical realm. I shall not make up my mind with any feeling of confidence or finality for a long time to come in any case.

I think it would help enormously if I could read your latest book in English. I do not see why so important a book cannot be brought out in several lan-

guages at the same time. Certainly if you are right about synchronicity there will be a revolution in scientific thought and it could be a timely one.

I am eager to hear more about any developments that have followed the publication of your book. Has anything come of any experiment such as Bender's?¹ I have read a number of fairly good reviews but I still want the original in English.

Thank you for your good letter and best wishes for your continued good health.

Sincerely yours, J. B. Rhine.

Further on, we show how a more refined view of causality supports Rhine's attempt to cling to it in understanding parapsychological phenomena. Jung promptly replied to Rhine's letter on July 26, 1954:

Prof. J. B. Rhine
Parapsychological Laboratory
College Station
Durham, N. C.

Dear Professor Rhine,

Thank you for your kind letter! Synchronicity is indeed a difficult and involved problem. The translation of my book into English is finished and the printing must be on the way, so that you will have a chance to read it rather soon. I must warn you though that in spite of all sorts of alterations I have made, it is still a difficult book that appeals chiefly to the thinking function as it consists in its main substance of the description of a point of view rather unfamiliar to our epoch. Certain main points of my book have not been understood at all, but that is what I have always seen with my books: I just have to wait for about 10 or 20 years until certain readers appear understanding what my thought is. That sounds most arrogant, and everybody is free to think that I am writing a particularly unclear and obscure style. The writer himself has to suspend his own judgment. As far as I can see, my book has not had any noticeable effect yet, with the exception of Prof. Bender's experiments. I have seen him recently, and he told me that he pursues his experiments with success. My best wishes to you; I always remember our rather noisy lunch at the Ambassador's.

Sincerely yours, C. G. Jung.

Meaning

We need to understand the principle of meaning that connects the inner state with events in the outer world. This is best approached through an understanding of Jung's concept of unconscious compensation. Let's begin with an example.

When V Mansfield (V M.) got copies of the Rhine-Jung letters, he read the first half of them just before going to bed. He thought "these are

¹ Professor of Psychology at the University of Freiburg and editor of the *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie*.

interesting letters, but there is nothing earthshaking in them.” He then had the following short dream: “I am carrying the letters around in a knapsack and telling people how important they are.” He had also just finished reading the fairy tale, “Brother Lustig” (Grimm & Grimm, 1972), in which Saint Peter is an initiatory trickster figure who rewards Lustig with a magic knapsack. Anything Lustig wishes into the knapsack instantly appears there. At the end of the tale, Saint Peter denies Lustig entrance into heaven. Lustig then tricks Saint Peter into taking back the knapsack and then wishes himself inside the knapsack. Instantly he finds himself in the knapsack in heaven, where Saint Peter relents and allows him to stay.

Given this dream and amplification of its imagery by V M., we have a simple case of unconscious compensation—an attempt by the unconscious to correct an inadequate assessment of the letters or the project of writing about them. For Jung, the chief form of interaction between the unconscious and consciousness is through unconscious compensation, the psyche’s way of correcting the ego’s blindness or lopsidedness and propelling the process of individuation. Through this dynamic principle we glimpse the purposiveness or guidance of the unconscious. Because of it, almost any psychological experience can be understood as presenting a new insight, compensation, or correction for our deficiencies or prejudices. We ask, “What does the dream, fantasy, or emotional irruption intend? What is the psyche trying to express through this experience?” Rather than viewing psychological phenomena as merely causally produced, Jung understood them as purposive, striving toward some goal or as yet unattained objective. The emphasis changes from the *efficient causes* of psychological phenomena to their *final causes*. Where is our neurosis trying to lead us? What does it demand of us? As Jung said:

By finality I mean merely the immanent psychological striving for a goal. Instead of striving for a goal one could also say sense of purpose. All psychological phenomena have some such sense of purpose inherent in them. . . . (1978a, para. 456)

Although the unconscious sometimes seems in conflict with consciousness, deeper appreciation shows it is a lodestone for consciousness, providing meaning and direction through unconscious compensation.

This phenomenon [of compensation] is a kind of developmental process in the personality itself. At first, it seems that each compensation is a momentary adjustment of one-sidedness or an equalization of a disturbed balance. But with deeper insight and experience, these apparently separate acts of compensation arrange themselves into a kind of plan. They seem to hang together and in the deepest sense to be subordinated to a common goal, so that a long dream-series no longer appears as a senseless string of incoherent and iso-

lated happenings, but resembles the successive steps in a planned and orderly process of development. I have called this unconscious process spontaneously expressing itself in the symbolism of a long dream-series the individuation process. (1978b, para. 550)

Unconscious compensation is thus not simply a mechanical balancing principle that corrects for our psychological distortions and unadapted behavior. It is a much more subtle expression of the purposiveness of the psyche, the dynamism expressing the meaning and intelligence embedded in our individuation, our development into what we are meant to be. It is the thread of Ariadne that guides our escape from the labyrinth of our own neurosis into a meaningful life.

Inherent in Jung's notion of unconscious compensation is the revolutionary idea that some final cause operates in us, some foreknowledge of what we are meant to be. Otherwise, how could the unconscious "know" the appropriate attitude or psychological orientation for us or how to guide us along our unique path? The process of individuation implies some abstract vision of what we are meant to be, one we discover and help unfold, and this inexorably implies some timeless and self-subsistent knowledge. This timeless knowledge, implicit in the individuation process, gradually reveals itself to the ego through unconscious compensation and occasionally through synchronistic experiences. Jung (1978c) comments:

Whether we like it or not, we find ourselves in this embarrassing position as soon as we begin seriously to reflect on the teleological processes in biology or to investigate the compensatory function of the unconscious, not to speak of trying to explain the phenomenon of synchronicity. Final causes, twist them how we *will*, *postulate a foreknowledge of some kind*. It is certainly not a knowledge that could be connected with the ego, and hence not a conscious knowledge as we know it, but rather a self-subsistent "unconscious" knowledge which I would prefer to call "absolute knowledge." (para. 931)

In the process of individuation, an ongoing dialogue is set up between this timeless foreknowledge and the ego. Using the symbolic method, we decipher the intelligence expressing itself through our feelings, fantasies, dreams, and, occasionally, synchronicity experiences and attempt to actualize it in our lives. Sometimes this intelligence, which Jung symbolized by the archetype of the self, expresses itself through a synchronicity experience.

To put some flesh on these theoretical bones, we include an anonymous, first-person account of a synchronicity experience in the words of the protagonist from V M.'s recent book, *Synchronicity, Science, and Soul-Making* (1995). This example involves what Jung calls "absolute knowledge," the space and time-transcendent aspect of the collective unconscious.

Healing Old Wounds

This happened twenty-one years ago, four weeks after the birth of my first son. I was a twenty-nine-year-old graduate student living in an idyllic cottage on Cayuga Lake. My wife and I were luxuriating in being parents, our healthy new son was greedily nursing, and the fall leaves swirled around us with vibrant colors.

In two successive nights, I had very similar dreams of my father. I had never dreamed of my alcoholic father in my life, nor have I since. He left me as an infant and had almost no contact with me. My mother lovingly raised me entirely by herself and remarried when I was twenty-one. In my mother's eyes he was justifiably evil incarnate. Occasionally when she was at the height of her anger because of some bad behavior of mine she would say, "You're just like your father!" This was the nuclear weapon of curses.

Both these vivid dreams portrayed my father in a very favorable light. In the dreams, he told me that he was a sensitive and poetic person who found it impossible to live with my headstrong, aggressive mother. He claimed that it really was not his fault that he left. The two successive dreams seemed very peculiar to me, especially since they were so alike. I attributed them to my becoming a father, but they were still mysterious.

The day after the second dream, my father's brother called me on the telephone; a real shock, since I had nothing to do with anyone in my father's family and had no contact with them for fifteen years. He told me my father was dying in a Veterans Administration Hospital in Washington, DC, and that I should go and visit him. I immediately blurted out, "Would he come and see me if I were dying?" I told my uncle I had no interest in seeing him now after all these years.

I hung up the telephone. Rage, bitterness, and self-pity enveloped me like live steam. Where was he when I needed him? How come I had to take my mother's brother to the father and son banquet when I got my letter in high school football? How come my most vivid early memory of him was his stumbling into my mother's apartment and vomiting explosively all over the walls in the bathroom? Ferocious fights between my father and mother, face scratching, me standing there in helpless fear saying, "Mommy, I'll get you my hammer to hit him . . ."—all this washed over me. That rotten bastard! No, he made me a bastard! He cheated me of a normal childhood. He would not even pay the \$5.00 per week of child support awarded by the divorce court. Maybe the half-brother I had never met, sired while he was married to my mother, would visit him in the hospital. How embarrassing it was to be investigated by welfare workers to see if my mother and I were eligible for aid. After all those years of telling people my father died in World War II, that stupid bum writes my high school and asks how I am discharging my military obligation. He never even sent me a Christmas card! Why did he screw me up like that? Let the son-of-a-bitch die by himself as he deserves!

I wandered around all that beautiful fall day with hot tears streaming down my face, alternating between bitterness and sadness. Gradually I became torn about whether I should see him after all. I started thinking how good it would be to tell him he was a grandfather. I didn't know what to do. The battle raged. I had been reading some Jung and experimenting with the *I Ching*. I

consulted it in desperation. The hexagram “Gathering” came up. Part of the interpretation reads, “The family gathers about the father as its head.” I was dumbfounded! That hexagram, plus the dreams, decided it for me. I realized there was something bigger operating than just my fury and self-pity. We all piled into my little car and sorrowfully drove to Washington, DC.

The intensive care nurse asked me if this man was my father. I confessed, with embarrassment, “I don’t know.” In fact, that ashen gray man with tubes running into his head was my father. I told him who I was and that he was a grandfather. He said, “When I get better I’ll make it up to you.” He was always making alcoholic promises he could never keep right to the end. I wept for him, for me, for my mother, for the family that never was. I wiped blood oozing from his mouth. I felt him suffer and watched my bitterness and self-pity dissolve in sadness for us all. I said a tearful goodbye and never saw him again, since he died in a few days. Nor did I ever again feel that bitterness and anger toward him. Yet, those old wounds still bleed a little.

The night after that hospital visit I dreamed of a beautiful old black car from the nineteen-thirties carrying me up a streambed behind my maternal grandfather’s house. I remember the house from living there in my infancy. Although I could make no sense of this short dream, I felt very comforted by it. I always remembered the feeling of it and wondered what it meant. Twenty years later, among the half-a-dozen pictures containing my father, I saw that beautiful black car. In my childhood I had seen that picture a few times. My father stood in front of it with his left foot on the running board and me cradled in his arm. That handsome young man seemed to beam with pride and affection for me—and perhaps some anxiety about his looming responsibilities. That is the only picture I have of my father and me.

What does it all mean? Certainly, my bitterness about my father needed to be overcome, for both my sake and that of my family. Although my life has been very good, there was a hard knot of rage, hatred, and shame that was poisoning me. It had to be dissolved.

There is another dimension. Through the genuine need for self-reliance and as a defense against my pain and vulnerability I had built some real armor around me. Through time the wounds of my childhood had largely healed, but at the expense of a large build up of hard scar tissue, a sort of encasing shell. The wounds were reopened and the armor was cracked by directly experiencing my loss and my father’s suffering. Thanks to the preparation of the dreams and the urging of the *I Ching*, the wounds could heal more thoroughly with less hard scar tissue. The curious thing about armor is that it keeps the outside world from harming you, but it also prevents you from expressing much tenderness or from letting the world in. All in all, it’s a heavy burden to carry around.

Of course, the experience made me question my relationship to the world. What in me “knew” my father was dying? What knew that my encrusted bitterness needed softening through those extraordinary dreams of my father? How can coins “randomly” thrown connect so meaningfully to my psychological state then? I only have partial answers to these questions, but they will not go away.

Later, when I spoke to my teacher, Anthony, about this experience, he only said, “Unless we can learn to forgive others, we’ll never forgive ourselves.” Perhaps that is the best lesson. (pp. 41-44)

This synchronicity experience shows the psychic relativity of space and time. The inner psychological state (the two dreams of his estranged father) and the outer event (the fatal sickness and the psychological healing) are acausally connected through their shared meaning. The dreams surely did not cause the sickness nor is it likely that his father's sickness caused the dreams. However, it is possible that a causal telepathic link occurred. If there were such a causal link between the father's guilt or sorrow about his son and the son's dreams, then this is not an example of acausal synchronicity.

We stress that parapsychological phenomena commonly accompany synchronicity phenomena, but there are many synchronicity experiences without parapsychological phenomena (see Mansfield, 1995). Besides an acausal connection between an inner content and an outer event, an archetypal meaning—the *sine qua non* for synchronicity—must be present. Such transforming meaning is evident in the present example.

If we follow Jung, we also cannot say that the unconscious or an archetype *caused* the synchronicity. Instead, both the inner psychological state and the corresponding outer event *embody the same meaning* crucial for his individuation. Such synchronicity experiences also numinously express the underlying unity of mind and matter. Von Franz (1992) stresses the meaning and unity that are both so central to synchronicity:

For Jung, individuation and realization of the meaning of life are identical—since individuation means to find *one's own* meaning, which is nothing other than *one's own* connection with Universal Meaning. This is clearly something other than what is referred to today by terms such as *information, superintelligence, cosmic* or *universal* mind—because feeling, emotion, the Whole of the person, is included. This sudden and illuminating connection that strikes us in the encounter with a synchronistic event represents, as Jung well described, a momentary unification of two psychic states: the normal state of our consciousness, which moves in a flow of discursive thought and in a process of continuous perception that creates our idea of the world called “material” and “external”; and of a profound level where the “meaning” of the Whole resides in the sphere of “absolute knowledge.” (p. 258)

It is precisely this unification of our image of the material world with the deepest levels of our being that makes synchronicity such a revolutionary idea, with repercussions far beyond psychology. Whatever the archetypal meaning in a synchronicity experience, the expression of unity is always paramount. As von Franz (1975) says:

The most essential and certainly the most impressive thing about synchronicity occurrences. . . is the fact that in them the duality of soul and matter seems to be eliminated. They are therefore an empirical *indication* of an ultimate unity

of all existence, which Jung, using the terminology of medieval natural philosophy, called the *Unus Mundus*. (p. 247)

Like any revolutionary idea that challenges the prevailing worldview, Jung's concept of synchronicity met with resistance and misunderstanding both within and without the Jungian community. After one of Rhine's many requests for him to write down his parapsychological experiences, Jung (1975) wrote on September 25, 1953:

I am not sure whether I can get together all my reminiscences concerning parapsychical events. There were plenty. That accumulation of such tales does not seem to be profitable. The collection by Gurney, Myers, and Podmore² has produced very little effect. People who know that there are such things need no further confirmation, and people not wanting to know are free, as hitherto, to say that one tells them fairy tales. I have encountered so much discouraging resistance that I am amply convinced of the stupidity of the learned guild. (p. 126)

WORK BY RHINE THAT INFLUENCED JUNG

J. B. Rhine was a young psychology instructor at Duke University when he first wrote to Jung on November 14, 1934:

Dear Doctor Jung:

After having seen your interesting contribution, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, I thought you might be remotely interested in my work published in a volume, *Extra-Sensory Perception* [Rhine, 1934], and I therefore asked the publishers to put your name on the list for complimentary copies.

He goes on to characterize his Duke experiments as designed

to test the capacity of the human mind to exteriorize or externalize itself. We have some results that would seem to be interpretable only in light of some such principle. Professor McDougall [Rhine's mentor and Chairman of the Duke Psychology Department] told me of your interest in such a principle on the basis of some personal observations which you have made.

The *Extra-Sensory Perception* monograph was the first report of the card-guessing tests that Rhine had begun in 1930 under the direction of William McDougall. Rhine's previous efforts to study the claims of psychical research in any quantifiable or conclusive way were unsuccessful. In this successful test, subjects guessed the order of concealed cards

² *Phantasms of the Living* (1886), as cited in Jung, 1978c, para. 830.

composed of five simple geometric designs (star, cross, circle, square, and wavy lines). These designs were selected because they were easily distinguished, remembered, and readily subjected to mathematical analysis.

What had begun as one semester's exploratory testing of Duke students in his psychology classes led to the discovery of a number of students who scored very high when tested individually in separate series. By the end of two years of testing, the overall results were highly significant, even when the experimental conditions were tightened and greater safeguards imposed. By 1932, Rhine and his team felt that they had demonstrated the existence of psychic phenomena, which Rhine named "extrasensory perception." More importantly, they had noted that the subjects' ESP scores showed natural relationships, just as ordinary psychological phenomena do (i.e., performance dropping off with fatigue and picking up with the use of caffeine). Judging just from references to it in the synchronicity essay, the card-guessing test impressed Jung.

Spurred on by their success, positive public reaction, and departmental support, the Duke work expanded to include other independent variables such as distance, time, and psychological factors. Experimental conditions and methodology were refined, largely in response to the extensive criticism the monograph had received from skeptics in the scientific world. With funds raised almost single-handedly, Rhine established the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory in 1935. In 1937, the *Journal of Parapsychology* was initiated to provide a forum for parapsychology papers that were being rejected by the orthodox publications of the time.

In 1940, Rhine sent Jung a copy of his third and most definitive book, *Extra-Sensory Perception After Sixty Years* (Pratt, Rhine, Smith, Stuart, & Greenwood, 1940). Written with five colleagues from the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory, this book summarized the extensive work done to that point at the Duke Lab. It answered in some detail all the 35 criticisms current at that time. In response to this book, Jung graciously replied, "Dear Dr. Rhine, Your volume has reached me safely in spite of all the war trouble. It is a most interesting and valuable piece of work you have produced with your collaborators. I'm glad that somebody has undertaken the enormously patient work to produce an unshakable basis for ESP" (C. G. Jung, personal communication, July 24, 1940).

The correspondence between Rhine and Jung continued, sometimes sporadically, over the next two decades, even during the war years. They exchanged their more recent books, usually inquired about the other's health, and frequently expressed appreciation and admiration for the ideas or achievements of the other. On April 1, 1948, Jung (1973) wrote to Rhine about his book *The Reach of the Mind* (Rhine, 1947):

Dear Dr. Rhine,

I've read your book with greatest interest and I thank you very much for sending me more than one copy. People read it a lot over here and I have recommended it to several physicists interested in psychological and parapsychological matters. I think it is one of the greatest contributions to the knowledge of unconscious processes. Your experiments have established the fact of the relativity of time, space and matter with reference to the psyche beyond any doubt. (p. 495)

As we can tell from the references in the synchronicity essay, *The Reach of the Mind's* discussion of psychokinesis also impressed Jung. There Rhine reported on an experiment that showed statistically significant results for the ability of a subject to influence mechanically thrown dice.

Rhine and Jung were united by their strong interest in the psyche's ability to transcend the usual boundaries of time and space, although these two independent thinkers arrived at this common area of interest from different routes and perspectives. Jung came to the paranormal and eventually to his concept of synchronicity from his own experiences and clinical experience. Rhine, on the other hand, never had any significant extrasensory experience of his own, but came to parapsychology because of the scientific and philosophical implications of the phenomena. For him, the ultimate test of the genuineness of the paranormal was the rigorous and repeated laboratory tests, the major focus of his life's work. For Jung, these research data were reassuring, personally and intellectually, lending legitimacy to his own experiences, but he went on to formulate and develop his conceptual formulations on a much broader basis than Rhine ever did.

The two men respected each other's attempts to make sense of the ESP and PK data, but did not wholeheartedly embrace the other's point of view. Rhine's concept of causality remained conservative, and it is doubtful that he ever completely understood Jung's concept of synchronicity. He was not inclined toward philosophical matters, nor did he have any special training along these lines. In his 1953 book, *New World of the Mind*, Rhine expresses his ideas on psi and causality as follows: "Until there is some reason to do otherwise, one will naturally continue trying to think about psi phenomena in terms of causation (even while we respect Dr. C. G. Jung's suggestion that in psi operations his hypothesis of synchronicity may supplant causation)" (p. 82).

DISTINGUISHING SYNCHRONICITY FROM PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL EVENTS

Causality

As we discussed earlier, Jung uses causality to mean efficient cause or

an interaction where one well-defined thing affects another through energy or information exchange. For example, von Franz (1992) writes, “Jung just presumed the same thing that nearly all [classical] physicists do today: that causality implies a provable interaction within the space-time continuum. All other formulations represent, for Jung, an overstretching of the concept of causality. . . .” (p. 234).

Jung was deeply impressed that Rhine’s correlations did not fall off with the distance between the sender and the receiver. Nor did it matter if the order of the cards was guessed well before they were actually turned. Several modern descendants of Rhine’s experiments have confirmed these effects. Jung (1978c, paras. 832-836) interpreted this effect as strong evidence for acausality, despite Rhine’s resistance. However, before we can evaluate that point, we must examine causality more carefully.

Contemporary working scientists usually avoid such strong philosophic positions on causality as that held by Jung; they prefer more pragmatic approaches. Roger Newton (1970) gives an excellent statement of this position and refers to Jung’s use of causality as “historical causality” when he writes:

The most practical and the only foolproof method of scientifically testing a causal connection between A and B is “wiggling” one of them and watching the response of the other. We are not interested here in what might be called “historical causality” (establishing a causal connection in a single chain of events) but in “scientific causality” (establishing a connection in repeatable events) ... It is the external control of A together with the correlation with B that establishes, in good Humean sense, the causal connection between them, as well as the fact that A is the cause and B, the effect. (p. 1570)

With this terminology, parapsychological experiments are acausal in the Jungian (historical causality) sense, but exhibit “scientific causality,” since repeatable connections between mental and physical events can be reliably established. We can therefore begin to understand the wisdom of Rhine’s attempt to hold on to causality in parapsychology, even if he did not have the more specific view of causality we are using here. On the other hand, since synchronicity is a sporadic, nonrepeatable expression of the *Unus Mundus*, the unitary ground underlying both matter and psyche, it is both historically acausal and “scientifically acausal.” Thus, Jung appropriately emphasized the completely acausal aspect of synchronicity.

In quantum mechanics, innumerable phenomena do not have any well-defined cause or causes for an individual event, yet these phenomena exhibit great regularity and lawfulness. The lawfulness and order can only be found upon examining a large number of events. Therefore, these phenomena are “historically acausal,” but “scientifically causal.”

From both a modern understanding of causality and quantum mechanics, we suggest that parapsychological phenomena are acausal expressions of natural laws. Although they are clearly acausal (in the Jungian sense of historical causality), they also exhibit scientific causality in being repeatable and controllable phenomena. In this sense, parapsychological phenomena are acausal expressions of natural laws-but not, as in the case of true synchronicity experiences, acausal expressions of the archetype of meaning, the self, guiding the process of individuation.

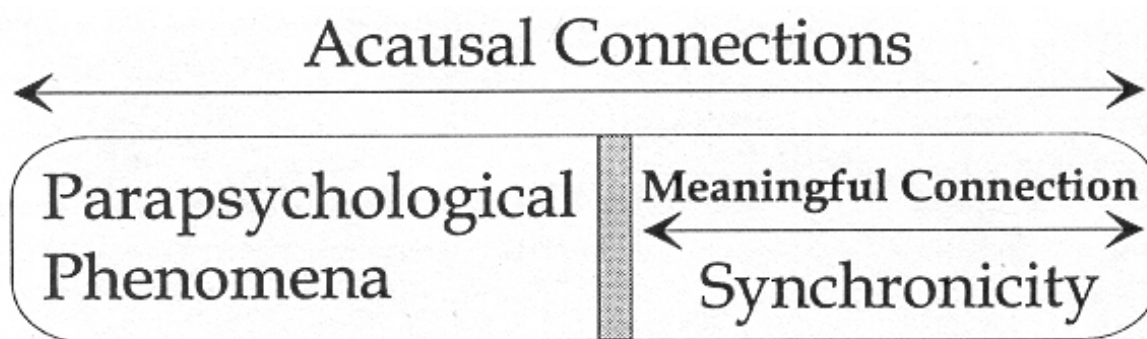


Figure 1. Classification of acausal connections.

Let us apply the classification scheme shown in Figure 1 to a particular problem. Jung (1975) wrote to Rhine, "The main difficulty with synchronicity (and also with ESP) is that one thinks of it as being produced by the subject, while I think it is rather in the nature of objective events" (p. 180). Synchronicity is a creative, spontaneous, and acausal expression of meaning by the unitary ground underlying matter and psyche and not "produced by the subject." Such a meaning, whether in a dream, fantasy, or a synchronicity, cannot be something willed by the ego or under its control, otherwise, it could not compensate the ego. This suggests that parapsychological effects depending upon volition, upon the subject's intent, differ from synchronicity. There is also the possibility that parapsychological events may be concomitant with volition and intent without being caused by them. The problematic role of volition raises a difficulty, because Jung (1978c) also writes in his synchronicity essay:

Among Rhine's experiments we must also mention the experiments with dice. The subject has the task of throwing the dice (which is done by an apparatus), and at the same time he has to wish that one number (say 3) will turn up as many times as possible. The results of this so-called PK (psycho-kinetic) experiment were positive, the more so the more dice were used at one time. (p. 434)

Later in this essay, Jung says, “The experiment with dice proves that moving bodies, too, can be influenced psychically—a result that could have been predicted from the *psychic* relativity of space and time” (para. 978). So, on one hand, Jung tells us synchronicity (which, for Jung, includes ESP, which, in turn, includes psychokinesis) cannot be produced by the subject, while, on the other hand, he draws support from experiments in which “bodies, too, can be influenced psychically,” or the subject wills or causes the result. We eliminate this confusion if we distinguish synchronicity from parapsychological phenomena. Parapsychological phenomena such as psychokinesis can then be “scientifically causal” in the above sense (establishing a connection in repeatable events) and this makes them statistically susceptible to human volition—but not in a strictly causal or deterministic sense. Of course, precisely how human volition can influence matter is still a mystery.

Meaning

To make our case for a distinction between synchronistic and parapsychological events fully self-contained, we review an argument (Mansfield, in press) based upon the role of meaning in synchronicity. *Meaning* is used here in the technical sense employed by Jung and von Franz: The archetypal meaning in a synchronicity experience, expressed through unconscious compensation, which seeks to transform the ego.

Consider any of the parapsychological phenomena sketched above. *They do not usually include meaningful connections* or correlations, as Jung and von Franz regard them. It is true that parapsychological phenomena may often be psychologically compelling and may alert us to the possibility of acausal connections between psyche and matter—no small realization. For some rare persons, such an acausal parapsychological occurrence might be a numinous experience providing an important unconscious compensation, one deeply meaningful for that individual. This would be a genuine synchronicity experience, but then its parapsychological nature would be incidental rather than necessary. Nevertheless, we suggest that, for most persons, parapsychological phenomena have little to do with their individuation, the Jungian concept of a self guiding them toward wholeness, or their unique path to a meaningful life.

If, as Jung and von Franz claim, some transcendental meaning is manifesting in both the inner and outer world in synchronicity, then we should interpret the synchronistic experience symbolically, just like a numinous dream: a specific expression of the guidance of the Jungian archetype of self. We could hardly say this of any of the parapsychological experiments mentioned above.

An interpretation of a symbolically rich and numinous dream would

not be complete or satisfying if it merely reaffirmed the existence of the unconscious. Such interpretation would not show how this numinous dream is a specific expression of that person's individuation. Analogously, we suggest not considering parapsychological phenomena as synchronistic merely because they illustrate acausal connections between a subjective state and objective events. We propose reserving the word *synchronicity* only for those completely acausally connected events that express some specific, archetypal meaning, some particular display of unconscious compensation. Jung's categorizing parapsychological phenomena as synchronistic is not fully consistent with his own definition of synchronicity as acausal connection through meaning, where meaning is an expression of the self in our individuation. Figure 2 illustrates our more accurate classification scheme.

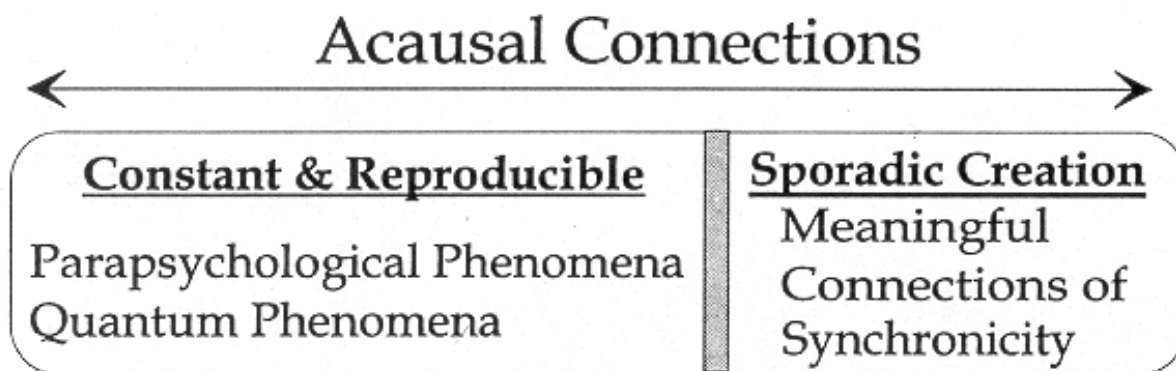


Figure 2. Revision of Jung's categories of acausal connections.

Precise boundaries rarely exist in psychology. The shaded area separating synchronicity from parapsychological phenomena is our diagrammatic attempt to recognize that the distinction between these phenomena may not always be precise or easy to make. The meaning might actually be there—if only we had the eyes to see. It is true that even if we cannot articulate the significance of a psychological experience, it can often still be transformative, and the unconscious compensation may still be effective. However, the sine qua non for all truly synchronistic experiences is meaning—significant expression of unconscious compensation, genuine guidance from the unconscious. Strictly applying this criterion eliminates some parapsychological experiences that others might consider synchronistic.

In the case of laboratory tests of parapsychological phenomena, the distinction we are suggesting is easier to make. However, in spontaneous cases of ESP the distinction is much more difficult. Like synchronicity experiences, these cases occur sporadically and are often emotionally

compelling. Our suggestion is that unless these spontaneous ESP experiences are an expression of unconscious compensation propelling individuation, a manifesting of the purposiveness of the unconscious, then they are distinct from synchronicity. Without a strict interpretation of synchronicity, we are constantly in danger of confusing it with parapsychological phenomena. This would result in a great loss in clarity, especially since our present understanding of both phenomena is so rudimentary.

We do not understand Jung (1978c) when he says, “Rhine’s experiments confront us with the fact that there are events which are related to one another experimentally, and in this case *meaningfully*, without there being any possibility of proving that this relation is a causal one. . .” [italics are Jung’s] (p. 435). How could he be using “meaningfully” here? Yes, a greater than chance correlation has meaning in the conventional sense of the word. We can analyze it mathematically speak intelligibly to others about it, and so on. However, this use of meaning is not the way Jung normally uses the term. As von Franz (1992) says, “The realization of ‘meaning’ is therefore not a simple acquisition of information or of knowledge, but rather a living experience that touches the heart just as much as the mind” (p. 257). Can we say that laboratory studies in parapsychology “touch the heart as much as the mind?” Are these statistical correlations expressing the self-the archetype of meaning? Are they a spontaneous and creative unfolding of our unique wholeness, of what we are meant to be?

Jung also had doubts about classifying the parapsychological as a type of synchronicity because of the lack of archetypal meaning in laboratory parapsychology. For example, he writes (1978c):

Meaningful coincidences—which are to be distinguished from meaningless chance groupings—therefore seem to rest on an archetypal foundation. At least all the cases in my experience—and there is a large number of them—show this characteristic. . . Although anyone with my experience in this field can easily recognize their archetypal character, he will find it difficult to link them up with the psychic conditions in Rhine’s experiments, because the latter contain no direct evidence of a constellation of the archetype. Nor is the emotional situation the same as in my examples. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that with Rhine the first series of experiments generally produced the best results, which then quickly fell off. But when it was possible to arouse a new interest in the essentially rather boring experiment, the results improved again it follows from this that the emotional factor plays an important role. Affectivity, however, rests to a large extent on the instincts, whose formal aspect is the archetype. (para. 846)

In the two paragraphs that follow this quotation, Jung points out that synchronistic and parapsychological phenomena are similar in that both have an air of impossibility about them. Despite this parallel, and the role

of emotional affect in both types of phenomena, Jung is concerned because synchronicity rests on “an archetypal foundation” and Rhine’s experiments “contain no direct evidence of a constellation of the archetype.”

Given Jung’s concern, and that he could have made many of our arguments for distinguishing synchronistic from parapsychological phenomena, it is reasonable to ask why he did not do so. We suggest that Jung failed to distinguish them because he wanted the support of Rhine’s experiments for his new concept of synchronicity. It is evident from the first paragraph of Jung’s synchronicity essay that he approached the controversial subject with trepidation. We also quote a letter from Jung to Rhine in our concluding section that describes Jung’s strong desire for “coherent material collected along certain scientific lines.” Thus, we suggest that conflation of synchronicity with laboratory parapsychological phenomena served Jung’s desire for legitimacy—a concern shared by many readers of this journal.

We stress that our distinction between the parapsychological and synchronicity in no way diminishes the importance of parapsychology. Yes, the parapsychological may not be intimately connected to the archetypal meaning propelling our individuation. Yet these meticulous laboratory studies of parapsychological phenomena with all their consistency and repeatability (their scientific causality) have more potential to revolutionize science and our entire worldview than the sporadic and unpredictable synchronicity phenomena. For all their numinosity, synchronicity experiences are, by their very nature, resistant to the kind of careful empirical investigation required for them to be integrated into our modern scientific understanding. While synchronicity speaks directly to the evolution of our-subjective being, the exacting laboratory studies of the parapsychological speak more directly to our objective understanding of nature.

GENERAL ACAUSAL ORDEREDNESS

If we examine Jung’s more inclusive notion of general acausal orderedness, of which synchronicity is a part, we can harmonize our strict interpretation of synchronicity with Jung’s broader use of the term. Jung (1978c) describes this more inclusive acausal ordering principle:

I incline in fact to the view that synchronicity in the narrow sense is only a particular instance of general acausal orderedness—that namely, of the equivalence of psychic and physical processes where the observer is in the fortunate position of being able to recognize the *tertium comparationis*. But as soon as he perceives the archetypal background he is tempted to trace the mutual assimilation of independent psychic and physical processes back to a (causal) effect of the archetype, and thus to overlook the fact that they are merely contingent. This danger is avoided if one regards synchronicity as a special instance of general acausal orderedness. (p. 516)

Jung considers synchronicity (“in the narrow sense”) as a special case or a subset of a much broader phenomenon “of general acausal orderedness.” The “equivalence of psychic and physical processes” is an equivalence of their meaning that provides Jung’s *tertium comparationis*—the third comparison term. The phrase “they are merely contingent” refers to the psychic and physical process. The archetypal meaning is the primary and essential aspect of a synchronicity experience, while the psychological and physical correlates are contingent and accidental. According to Jung (1978c), “*a priori* factors such as the properties of natural numbers, the discontinuities of modern physics, etc. . . [and] constant and reproducible phenomena” (p. 516) fall into the category of general acausal orderedness.³

We suggest that parapsychological phenomena be considered an example of general acausal orderedness, but not of synchronicity, which we define strictly as a completely acausal exemplification of meaning in the inner and outer world. Parapsychological phenomena are acausal—historically, but not scientifically—because no energy or information exchange seems responsible for the correlations measured, but they lack the meaning associated with synchronicity. Furthermore, parapsychological phenomena, like similar quantum phenomena, are “constant and reproducible.” In this sense, they are scientifically causal. Their reproducibility is in contrast to the sporadic, unpredictable, and unique nature of the more narrowly defined synchronicity.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite Jung’s being so frequently labeled a mystic, he always considered himself an empiricist. For this reason alone, he took great interest in Rhine’s laboratory studies. From the opening quotation of this paper, taken from Jung’s letter to Rhine of September 9, 1951, we can see that Jung was deeply indebted to Rhine for his careful empirical studies in parapsychology. Jung (1975) explained in a letter of September 18, 1945, how reluctant he was to act on Rhine’s repeated pleas to write about the paranormal (including synchronicity) without a systematic collection of data:

Dear Dr. Rhine,

Your letter has been a great joy to me. I have often thought of you in these last years and I also often mentioned your name and your experiments to

³ Because Jung did not have a technical understanding of physics, there are some difficulties with his examples. This problem and more details of the notion of general acausal orderedness are dealt with elsewhere (see Mansfield, 1995). Our classification scheme is summarized in Figure 2, which modifies Jung’s classification, shown in Figure 1.

many people.

I wish I could fulfill your wish but having a scientific conscience I feel very hesitant about it since, being a doctor, my observations are all of a clinical kind, which means that they are unavoidably subjective to a certain extent and never systematic in as much as they are all isolated cases and facts which form a rather incoherent mass, which would look like a collection of anecdotes. I despise such a way of dealing with this matter and I would much prefer to be in a position to deal with a coherent material collected along certain scientific lines. Of course I have had quite a number of noteworthy experiences, but you know how it is: circumstances and persons involved, though indispensably important for the explanation of the facts, cannot be described in a way that would convince the outsider. It would all look hopelessly haphazard and pretty flimsy. As you assume, I have thought a great deal about parapsychological facts and I tried to establish certain connections, but I always refrain from talking publicly about such matters for the above mentioned reasons. (pp. 378-379)

Given that Jung “despised” only using the kind of anecdotal information available in synchronicity experiences and his desire for “coherent material collected along certain scientific lines,” it is reasonable to assume that he never would have written the synchronicity essay without Rhine’s repeated requests and especially his careful laboratory work. We are thus deeply indebted to Rhine for what many consider Jung’s most far-reaching essay. Of course, just from reading the synchronicity essay, we can tell that Wolfgang Pauli and Richard Wilhelm also deeply influenced Jung.

We tried to show that a careful and modern appreciation of causality and a strict definition of the concept of “meaning” argue for clearly distinguishing parapsychological phenomena from synchronicity. This distinction honors both of these great pioneers and paves the way for a better understanding of each phenomenon.

Yet, there are still many subtleties to understanding both synchronicity and parapsychological phenomena.⁴ Synchronicity is more sporadic, less regular and reliable than parapsychological phenomena (as it is tested in the laboratory, at least). Von Franz (1992) tells us, “The most we can say is that something might happen when an archetype is constellated; and if something does happen, then it will have the same meaning as the archetype. But we cannot predict this with certainty—it might happen, it might not” (p. 27). Since ordinary mortals cannot “compel the gods,” or control

⁴ For example, there is a long tradition of the willful direction of telepathy, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, and related phenomena, called occult powers, or *siddhis*, in the East. Although spiritual practitioners are warned against cultivating these powers, since they can distract us from the goal of individuation or worse, the belief in their existence is widespread. We speculate that magic-primitive, black, or white—is the willful employment of acausal orderedness, the as yet obscure laws of nature. Just as psychokinesis subjects willfully but acausally affect matter, presumably genuine magicians can powerfully employ these same natural laws for good or evil.

archetypal manifestations, this suggests, as was pointed out by V. M. (in press), it would be very difficult to do scientifically controlled experiments on synchronicity. At the very least, any synchronicity experiment would be very different from what is ordinarily meant by the term “experiment” in science. It could not in any way be a forced, controlling, or manipulating approach to nature, since the maximum freedom for nature to respond must be allowed. It must be a careful monitoring of the sporadic creativity of the *Unus Mundus*, one sensitive to both the correlating material events and the archetypal meaning of the phenomena. Of course, this need not be so for parapsychological phenomena.

Von Franz (1992) supports our conclusions about laboratory measurements: “Since synchronistic events seem to be irregular, they cannot be grasped statistically; nevertheless acausal orderedness can be investigated experimentally, because it is something general and regular” (p. 237). Although she does not classify parapsychological phenomena as an example of general acausal orderedness, success in the laboratory shows it is “general and regular.” In harmony with our remarks in the preceding paragraph, she then describes a synchronicity experiment Jung proposed at the end of his life. He suggested that once it was clear that an archetype had been constellated—because of some serious psychological stress, for example—then several divinatory procedures whose functioning depends upon synchronicity could be employed. For example, imagine if the man in “Healing Old Wounds” were in analysis so that his dream life and active imagination could be carefully observed and simultaneously he could cast the *I Ching* and have skilled practitioners read his Tarot cards and horoscope. Then the results of all these procedures should converge to the same archetypal meaning.

Such an experiment fits our description of not being forced, controlling, or manipulating, but it presents its own difficulties. How, for example, can we convincingly show that the divinatory procedures in fact converge, that appropriate subjects were chosen when an archetype was actually constellated, that the data was taken without biasing the interpretation, and that other extraneous factors are not distorting the outcome? These problems are not insurmountable, but to do more than “preach to the converted,” this experiment or any other must be done with sufficient rigor that the larger scientific community would be satisfied with all aspects of the data taking, analysis of the data, and so forth. This is a formidable task, but learning from the successes in parapsychology, it would be done most convincingly if, at the beginning of any synchronicity experiment, a group of outside skeptics were extensively consulted to help with the design of the experimental protocols. They could also be consulted regularly to ensure a high level of integrity throughout the experiment.

Depth psychology teaches us not to project the Shadow (the Jungian

archetype of negative or repudiated qualities denied in ourselves, but unconsciously attributed to and criticized in others) on our skeptical and critical colleagues. Instead, right from the beginning of our studies we can learn from them and integrate them into our efforts to understand the mysteries of synchronicity. If, with their help, we do this well enough, then we have a chance of experimentally establishing synchronicity and thereby moving toward reinstating repressed issues like teleology into science. Even more importantly, we might make progress in overcoming the Cartesian fantasy which, despite its early success in guiding science, is now a burden in many areas of science. This would truly honor Rhine and Jung, who both strove mightily to expand the scientific view of mind.

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