



SYNCHRONICITY

By Dr. Kirby Surprise

Rethinking Synchronicity:

You Have the Amazing Ability to Create Coincidence

Synchronistic events (SE) are those uncanny coincidences in which the environment seems to be speaking directly to us through events. In my work as a psychologist, I have clients who report radio and television broadcasts, random events of all sorts, comment on what they are thinking as if something was reading their minds. Psychologists call this experience “Thought of Reference.” Events seem to reference the thoughts of the client. Many clients with psychotic disorders experience thoughts of reference. But what if they were not reporting a symptom of mental illness, but an experience everyone has in some form? What if televisions really do seem to comment on what we are thinking?

There is a measure of self-awareness called “The Mirror Test” developed by biopsychologist **Gordon Gallup**. Animals are shown their own reflection in a mirror. If they recognize the reflection in the glass as their own, it is taken as an indication it is a self-aware being. Humans, some great apes, elephants, and dolphins generally recognize their own reflections; a few birds do as well. Interestingly, some birds and dogs that can’t initially recognize their own reflections can be trained to do so. Synchronicity is a form of mirror test. People see in the mirror of events around them the image of their own inner life. They see what they think, feel and believe. They even see their fantasies about what causes these reflections. For some clients who report thoughts of reference, it is the stories they tell themselves about the causes of the SE, not the SE themselves, that label them as symptomatic.

Everyone has experienced meaningful coincidences. They are explained by supernatural and religious beliefs, archetypal influences, or more exotic personal mythologies. SE mirrors these beliefs back to the observer. SE sometimes become mistaken for confirmations of the objective reality of personal beliefs. Most people are looking into the mirror of SE every day. They don’t realize the images they see are their

own thoughts. You have an amazing ability. Your thoughts and feelings, your memories and experiences, are reproduced in the events around you as coincidences. The world shapes itself around your thoughts, presenting you with meaningful coincidences based on your inner life. Everyone creates their own SE, constantly. The ability is innate to the way our brains process information into meaning. This seemingly magical ability goes largely unnoticed, unexplained and misunderstood until it presents itself in spectacular form.

Consider the following SE: "One cool autumn day I was sitting in my car waiting to pick up a friend. I was listening to the radio to pass the time. During a commercial break an ad for the movie "Carrie" was played. The movie is about a teenager who discovers she has the ability to move objects at a distance. I started having fantasies about what it would actually be like to experience moving an object this way. I had seen the film; during its climax Carrie uses her power to crush her family home. I looked across the street and saw an old cottage. Focusing on the house, I fantasized about what being able to move an object that large would be like. I was remembering a National Inquirer headline about a house that supposedly was turned over on its side by some psychic force. I was wondering what effect such a power would have on a person, how it might feel to move a house.

As I stared at the house the entire cottage shuddered violently. The house started to move. It rolled over onto its side. The roof was now facing me. I was astonished and felt panicky. I stared at the overturned house and asked "Could I have really done this?" "No", I answered. I wondered if this was just a vivid dream. I decided I was awake and the event was real. "OK" I said to myself. "If I just did that, then I want to see the house crushed like in the movie." As I stared awestruck the house again began to shudder. The roof started to collapse inward as if the center of the house were slowly imploding. Beams burst through walls, windows shattered, as the house began to tear itself apart. A moment later I saw a flash of yellow paint above the house, then the largest bulldozer I'd ever seen climbed lazily over the center of the house crushing the structure into rubble in a few moments. It then started to load the debris into waiting dump trucks. The house had obscured the demolition equipment from sight. With the radio on and windows up, I couldn't hear the tractor engine. My fantasy had come to pass, my wish fulfilled through a series of synchronistic events."

SE defies the way we usually think about cause and effect. In the SE of the moving house there was a connection between the observer and the event, but finding the cause seems impossible. The house moved, but there was no physical force exerted by the observer. Radio commercials, memories and patterns of thought and physical events became coordinated, but there was no obvious force doing so. Yet, there is a pattern

evident in the events. The pattern is in the person's thoughts. People have always reported seeing SE. They are the basis for many superstitions and religious beliefs. The difficulty in finding the cause of SE has always been the mirror effect. Some of my clients seem delusional when they are referred to me. They report SE that tell them God has special and grandiose plans for them. They may believe the government is reading their minds and talking to them through broadcasts on the evening news. I have a version of the mirror test for these clients. I tell them they have the amazing ability to reflect their thoughts and emotions off the environment. If they believe they had been communicating with secret government agencies, I tell them to look for messages from Mickey Mouse. If they believe they were in communication with God, I tell them to talk to Bugs Bunny. The SE often responds in the pattern the clients look for. If they stop believing what they think is real, just because the world reflects their thought back to them, they are no longer delusional.

The evidence for SE being created by our thought is fairly strong. In science the best experiments are done with the "Double Blind" method. Neither the experimenter, nor the subjects, know what the expected outcome of the experiment is. This is because the act of observing an experiment changes the outcome. Just expecting to find a significant result, will alter what happens in the direction the researcher is looking for. Although the causes of this phenomenon remain a mystery, it must be accounted for in any good experiential design.

Most explanations for synchronicity have done more harm than good. Carl Jung, who created the term, speculated that SE were created by patterns he called archetypes. These universal patterns of creation existed somewhere outside of time and space, and caused events to cluster around them in patterns. He did the world a great service in acknowledging that SE were real, not just disturbed minds misinterpreting reality. But, he placed the cause of SE in imaginary archetypes, not in the people who actually create and observe them. In Jung's writings he describes several series of SE that he ascribes to archetypes he was formulating at the time. He seems to miss the fact that he created these thought forms, and that SE always reflected his thoughts. When people look for SE based on one of Jung's archetypes, they find them, because their thoughts create them.

Many SE can be explained by the way the brain processes information. The human evolutionary niche is to excel at matching and remembering patterns. Each moment our senses present the brain with billions of bits of information that it must organize into patterns. The brain deletes most information before it reaches consciousness, and often substantially alters our sensory information, filling in gaps and highlighting patterns it believes are important. As a result of this process we all live in a highly modified

representation of the world. Our reality is literally a massively simplified construction of the patterns our brain thinks most important at any given moment. Finding meaning between patterns, between events, is what we do best.

For SE, there are no physical limitations. Rolling over a house is no more of a coincidence than rolling over a pair of dice. Our mirror test is the entire universe, and it reflects the meanings your mind creates. SE will appear to be caused by whatever the observer believes causes them. Looking for SE consciously, knowing SE are a mirror of your thoughts, reveals your astonishing ability to shape your experience of the universe according to the thoughts you choose.

Dr. Kirby Surprise is the author of "Synchronicity", published by New Page and due out December 15, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-60163-183-1 List Price: US \$16.99, Canada \$18.95