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Why Is This Happening To Me? Synchronicity, Serendipity, Mysticism, Accidents, and Coincidence

by Jon Mundy, Ph.D.

God: "How could you do this to me?"

The only survivor of a shipwreck washed up on a small, uninhabited island. He prayed feverishly for God to rescue him. For days he scanned the horizon but he saw nothing. Exhausted, he was finally able to start a fire and he eventually managed to build a little hut to protect himself from the elements, and to store a few possessions. One day, after scavenging for food, he arrived home to find his little hut in flames, with smoke rolling up to the sky. The worst possible thing had happened. Everything was lost. He was stunned with disbelief, grief, and anger. He cried out, "God! How could you do this to me?" The next day, he was awakened by the sound of a boat approaching the island! "How did you know I was here?" asked the weary man. "*We saw your smoke signal*" came the reply.

Remember falling asleep in the back of the car, and having your parents carry you to bed? Remember the gentle feeling of trusting your body to the arms of your parent? Surrendering to God's Will is like this – it is a willingness to be carried. One advantage of getting older is that the longer we live, the more we may understand why life went the way it did. According to an article in *Scientific American Mind* in 2007, as we get older, one of two things happens. Either we get grumpier, more mean spirited, and projective; or we become more open minded, laid back, loving, and receptive. Which way do you want to go? Fortunately, most folks choose the more loving response.

*Time is a trick, a sleight of hand, a vast illusion
in which figures come and go as if by magic.*

A Course in Miracles

In everything, even things which do not make sense or seem significant, there is a plan. The script is written. Our passage through time and space is not without design. When we come to revelation, we come at last to the knowledge of "What already is!"

Consciousness of Coincidence

The *Celestine Prophecy*, by James Redfield, popular during the early 1990's, lists nine insights. The first insight is becoming more conscious of *coincidences*. Coincidence is an unplanned alignment of events; things happening in a way that seems planned, even though it is an accident. We wonder how life is going to work out and then we go someplace or meet someone or read something that is just what we needed. Mystical awakening means becoming progressively aware of coincidence and experiencing coincidence makes life more exciting.

Carl Jung was fascinated with the concept of synchronicity – a coincidence in time of two or more seemingly unrelated events having the same meaning. We experience synchronicity when we meet a friend in an unexpected place. Joe Campbell, one of my teachers, loved to play with paradox. He once said, *Unless you allow for serendipity, you will never find your way.* Serendipity occurs when we find valuable or agreeable something we weren't looking for or expecting to find, but it is exactly the right thing. Sometimes, to find ourselves we have to get lost. We go on a detour and there discover what we need. Sometimes, at the precise moment you think things cannot or will not change, everything changes.

There is a French Proverb which says that *we often meet our destiny on the road we took to avoid it.* From 1982-1990, I taught college classes in philosophy inside Sing-Sing Prison. It was a privilege to have had such a captivated audience. (Sorry about the pun). I wanted to work in prison and teaching philosophy and religion was ideal. I've had prisoners tell me that they were glad they got caught. They couldn't keep running, hiding, and acting out forever. The only way out was getting arrested.

Chinese theories of medicine, philosophy, and architecture are based on a *science* of coincidence. Chinese texts do not ask what *causes* what, but what *likes* to *occur with* what. According to the Chinese certain events "like" to cluster together. Everything makes sense at the level of archetypical configuration. There is a pattern to everything and everything flows naturally from one thing to another even if it does not look that way in the world of form.

Patterned events are more clearly seen during “crucial” phases in spiritual development. Dr. Carl Jung noticed prior to World War II that many of his patients were having horrific dreams of fire, war, destruction, and death -- absolutely apocalyptic images. He was concerned that his patients were going mad. Later, he realized that their dreams portended the coming war. Once, Dr. Jung watched a beetle crawl up the curtain behind a patient, while the patient was describing a dream about an Egyptian beetle scarab. The movie *Crash* is a good example of how synchronistic events occur. People come “crashing” into each other but there are a host of decisions by each individual leading up to this moment and then another host of experiences that result from the crash, all of which actually leads to fulfillment of their destiny.

Responsibility

We've all had the experience of having something happen and then saying: "I would never have chosen this." When I lost a country inn I owned in 1989; left the Methodist ministry and lost nearly everything I had, financially speaking, I asked, "Why is this happening?" I later realized that it “had to happen.” I had to go through this crash and burn and I had to step away from the institutional church to gain perspective. I had “chosen” this experience and it was necessary to go through this purification to experience life at a deeper level. In 2001, dealing with cancer and possible death enabled a letting go of planning. The only way ahead was to let go, accept the real possibility of physical death and live in the moment – doing so miraculously brought everything to life.

According to the Dalai Lama, when everything is falling apart something else is trying to be born. Accepting responsibility for what is happening helps us through loss. Life then takes an

upward turn. We are not driven by external, purposeless events. Everything comes our way as part of our spiritual journey and no accidents are possible in God's Universe. As Einstein expressed it, "God does not play dice with the universe." Every accident is a lesson. We are constantly learning. The older we get, the more we learn about daily life and life beyond this life. There is no sickness, no physical loss, no financial difficulty, no interpersonal problem, and no death -- no experience, however extraordinary or mundane -- that does not come our way as it should.

The problems people bring me often find expression in terms like "Why is this happening?" as though some cosmic force was behind everything. Problems are doors that lead us home. Vaclav Havel (1936-Present), the former President of Czechoslovakia says, "Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that things make sense, regardless of how it turns out."

With one exception, each of the Roman Emperors got involved in the ego's world. Mystic Emperor, Marcus Aurelius once said, "All things happen as they should." That is, after all, the way they happen. We are here, our best thinking got us here, and we have to be responsible for being here. Our journey through time and space is not by chance. We can't help but be in the right place at the right time.

In February 1997, Ram Dass, author of *Be Here Now!*, had a stroke that left him partially paralyzed, after which he wrote a new book called *Still Here*. Ram Dass looks at life before and after his stroke as two different incarnations. Since the stroke, he said, he has learned to play with this new incarnation. *I was a golfer--a pretty good golfer and I was a cellist," in the first incarnation. "I had a sports car that had a shift that . . . oh, boy!" he continued, his face lighting up as he mimed slamming his car though the corner of a winding road, "Oh boy! Those three things!"*

When we hear of someone who has gone through some difficulty or has perhaps been born with a disability and has gone ahead to live to the fullest despite that difficulty, we cannot help but be impressed. One of the purest, clearest *seeing* of the mystics is Helen Keller (1880-1968, U.S.). Scarlet fever left her blind and deaf at 19 months of age. Despite severe disability, with the aid of her teacher Anne Sullivan, Helen graduated from Radcliff and she wrote twelve books. The title of her autobiography, *Light in Darkness* says it all. Keller once said, *I thank God for my handicaps, for through them, I have found myself, my work, and my God.*

Accidents, Coincidence, and Destiny

No one comes to us by accident. No meeting of any two people is unplanned. It does not matter if the encounter lasts one second or a lifetime. Even in the simplest encounter as a smile, it is possible for two people to lose their sense of separation. As you walk around in a mall, look people in the eyes. See how many look back at you. Smile and see how many smile back your way. Giving a smile is just a little positive boost -- a little love energy in the engine of God.

In *The Lazy Man's Guide to Enlightenment*, Thaddeus Golas says, "Enlightenment doesn't care how you get there." One of the characters in the movie, Buckaroo Bonsai says, "Wherever you go--there you are!" No matter where we are, no matter what is going on, we are responsible

for being here -- in this marvelous place -- at this marvelous time!

I was once counseling someone who said her problems were because she lived in New York. Her problems, of course, had nothing to do with the “state” of the nation. They did, however, have something to do with the state of her mind. We can procrastinate and we can find innumerable excuses for not paying attention. Eventually, we have to face life straight on and deal with whatever stands in front of us. Eventually, all bills must be paid or forgiven.

I was listening to a 15 year old girl describe a death experience and all she kept saying was, “It’s all connected.” Suzuki Roshi (1904-1971, Japan), the former head of the Zen Center, in San Francisco, says we cannot make a date with enlightenment. *Enlightenment is an accident and Spiritual practice makes us accident-prone.*

Choosing for God is choosing our own greatest happiness. Choosing with the ego means despair. In this moment “right now,” we either know the peace of God or we do not. The next moment is the same, as is the next. We have a choice as to how to view the moment. The power of decision is our “*last remaining freedom.*” As we change our minds about the mind, we change the world. Letting destiny unfold in accordance with God’s will is beautiful. Every one has a mission. Those who find a way to fulfill their destinies tell us time and again that they “knew” there was something they had to do. Destiny “had” to be fulfilled, and the best thing was to fulfill it.

Psychiatrist Victor Frankl M.D. Ph.D., a neurologist and a Holocaust survivor, said that the people who handled the trauma at Auschwitz best, were those who somehow knew that even in the horror of this situation there was some purpose. He found in Auschwitz two types of people. It did not matter what class or ethnic group they were from, there were still two types: *decent and non-decent, loving or not loving, trusting or fearful.*

Those who impeccably pursue their destinies are the happiest people, though they may choose to remain single, turn down wealth, or even be crucified. No step that anyone makes along the road is inadvertent. As a matter of fact, we’ve already walked this road, so it is a matter of remembering what we already know. We are already at home resting in the arms of God. The story has been played through. We have attained entrance to the Kingdom. We are already perfect and whole. We were just dreaming a “silly dream.” In Maya’s (illusions) house are many mansions. Heaven is reality, not a dream.

So how does this work with freewill?

Computers today are 1 billion times more powerful than they were 25 years ago and this growth is exponential. The more it grows, the faster it grows. Behind everything there is something analogous to the genetic code of the universe. There is a “reason” why each of us are going through life the way we are. It’s amazing to think how much information can be put into a little MP3 player and it’s getting ever smaller. Look at how much is contained in a new iphone. Jesus tells us in the scriptures that “Even the hairs on your head are numbered.” And, “not even a sparrow falls to the earth without God’s knowledge.” Look at DNA and we see how miniscule everything can be. DNA is proof of the fact that in everything there is the whole.

Lesson 49 from *A Course in Miracles* says, “God’s voice speaks to me all through the day.” God’s voice does speak to each of us every minute of every single day. WGOD is broadcasting a “program” we could follow if we want things to work out well. His plan is the best plan. We have free will, the ego has its own plan and we are much more attentive to WEGO than we are to WGOD.

GPS – God’s Plan for Salvation

My wife Dolores gave me a Garmin GPS system for Christmas and it works wonderfully. You simply tell it where you want to go and it verbally tells you the shortest path to take, “make a left,” “make a right,” mile by mile, sometimes even foot by foot. God has come up with an amazing computerized GPS system designed to direct us back Home to Him. Right now anyone on earth can pick up a cell phone and within seconds be talking with another person on the other side of the world with micro-waves sent through the air. In the same way, God’s got your number and guidance is being sent to each and every one of us every moment of every day. For each of us the path is highly individualized. What I’ve got to go through to get back to God is different from the terrain you’ve got to go through.

What happens if we choose some diversion or some detour? Let’s say we choose not to follow God’s plan. Rather than finding the entrance to God’s Kingdom, we decide to build our own kingdom. God’s plan is all laid out and should we choose to follow it, we’ll find that the path is fairly straight and smooth. As Jesus expresses it in the gospels, *Straight is the path, and narrow is the gate which leads into life and few there are who find it.* Few of us find the straight path and the narrow gate because we’re busy bumbling and stumbling down some diversion, some distraction, some habituated activity perhaps, or we’re off trying to build our own world.

Recalculating

God’s guidance system, remains operative at all times and it’s persistent in its gentle guidance regardless of the detour we may have chosen. If you’re driving your car with a GPS system and you decide to turn off the prescribed route for lunch, perhaps, or for gas, the GPS system will start saying, “Recalculating – Recalculating.” Every single moment of every single day each and every one of us are receiving direction from **God’s Positioning System**. Should we chose to slip into denial, anger or projection, should we go off course, God’s guidance system will immediately recalculate the way back to the main road and thus home once again.

Love Always and Always Love,

Jon