

Co-Incidence or Miracle?

October 25, 2009

It has happened to all of us, especially the phone thing; thinking of someone out of the blue we hadn't spoken with in a while and presto, the phone rings and there they are on the other end ... "Wow, that's amazing, I was just thinking of you, what a coincidence!" Everyone of us have had these kinds of stories to tell; of unexpected or fortuitous events and insights, co-incidences that happen all the time and there are some we cannot really explain but never forget, that leave an impact.

Last week I was sitting in my office, researching this sermon topic, which I was beginning to wish I had never started. The internet was so loaded with either sophomoric blogs, religious suppositions claiming there are no coincidences, only Gods will, or those from the scientific community attempting to come up with an airtight equation that would prove or disprove such unexplainable events as either garbage or fact. At that point I didn't know where to begin. As co-incidence would have it, Richard Levy dropped in and handed me a Book by Jean Bolen M.D. Titled "The Tao of Psychology," thinking it might help. I read it that afternoon and found it more than helpful. It was just what I was looking for. Thank you Richard, AHH the powers of the Universe..."Don't ya love it!"

In the 1930's the famous psychiatrist Carl Jung defined such occurrences as *synchronicity*, or "the link between two events that are connected through their meaning, a link that cannot be explained by cause and effect." He broke down the term synchronicity into the 3 categories: The first is to experience a thought or a feeling as a related external event takes place. For example, I recall one day in college I was thinking I needed new sox, and as a former Phys Ed major, as fashion would have it, mine were far from chic! The next day a package arrived from my mother, whom I had not spoken with in several weeks, and she had sent two pairs of sox! That was spooky!

The second category Jung describes as "a dream or a vision which coincides with an event that is taking place at a distance and is later verified." There are many accounts

of a close friend or family member knowing the exact moment when a loved one has passed away, or has a dream in detail of a particular accident, and it takes place exactly as the dream images portrayed.

The third is a premonition is of something that will take place in the future, which then does occur. Precognition and clairvoyance would fall into this category. Psychics and mediums have somewhat cornered the market on these kinds of predictions however, in spite of a lack of a rational cause and effect, a reason for such ethereal, intangible occurrences, there are many predictions that do come true.

All of these are rooted in subjective interpretation, when a vision a thought or a premonition coincided with a matching event.

Eastern culture and religious thought has a centuries old, ancient concept for what Jung and the Western world termed as a *synchronistic event*.

In her book, Bolen correlated Jung's observations with the lessons of The Tao, she wrote:

“The experience of the Tao or of a unifying principle in the universe to which everything in the world relates, underlies the major Eastern religions-Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Zen. Although each religion may call the experience by a different name, the essence of all varieties of Eastern mysticism is the same. Each holds that all phenomena-people, animals, plants, and objects from atomic particles to galaxies are aspects of the One...beginningless, incomprehensible, indescribable an ever transforming essence of all things, unifying and underlying the numerous Gods and goddesses that are worshipped.” P.4 The Chinese consult the hexagrams of the *I-Ching*, assuming that synchronicity exists without question., the *I-Ching*, to quote Bolen's book, “teaches principles through which it may be possible to learn to live in harmony with the Tao, the invisible meaning giving matrix of the Universe”

While the acceptance of synchronistic events are second nature to Eastern Culture, the Western world views it all quite differently.

Scientific research has attributed our positive or negative perception of synchronistic events to the functioning of the Western brain, or how we have been trained to function.

We are viewed by many non westerners as predominately a “left brained” society. The left brain controls the right half of our bodies, the logic and reasoning centers of linear thinking. Left-brainers focus on what is measurable and tangible, valuing the cause and effect relationships in scientific thought, or that which can be seen, touched, heard, felt and proven as the catalyst for all discovery. Left brained thinking is considered a masculine trait and valued as such. In our society right brained functioning, which controls the left side of our bodies, it centers on intuition, images... the thinking patterns of the creative...musicians, artists and poet, mediums and mystics. Unfortunately right brained thinking has been devalued as contrary to Western progress and technological advancement. Reacting to situation based on intuition or a “feeling” is often programmed out of our kids as illogical, especially for boys who are also discouraged from showing true emotion when moved by a piece of music, or who may demonstrate an irrational “feminine” intuitive sensitivity. This accounts in part for the difficulties many women have faced in the business world when proposing a plan of action based on intuition.

Oppression of this basic human need to balance our brain hemispheres, the left and the right equally, have influenced our functioning in such a way that we have lost or ignored some of our intuitive perceptions, dreams and visions that could have real value in assisting us in deciphering the issues we are dealing with and in choosing the course of our pathways.

This concept also applies to how religion is divided and structured in this country.

The rational religious thinkers among us are likely to dismiss the significance of synchronistic experiences as mere coincidence, circumventing any idea that there might be more to it, more than our logical brains can cope with; whereas conversely, the evangelistic, or religiously dogmatic community would rather refer to synchronicity as miracles provided for by God as a divine endorsement of their particular belief. If I can't see it, touch it, smell it, or taste it, it ain't there!

The extremes in both cases, relying only on linear thinking, is as detrimental to our spiritual growth as being totally engrossed in the meaning of dreams or intangibles. They can be equally as crippling to personal growth if used exclusively to their extremes. There is value in a balance of both, the ability to utilize the advantages and gifts of reason with attention to synchronicity, that unknown energy that we cannot account for by logical means. *P. 81*

As Unitarian Universalists, as a rational cognitive faith, there is a hesitancy to openly discuss and embrace the aspects and lessons of synchronistic experience, of clairvoyance and dreams or visions as a valid aspect of our spiritual selves, for fear of being thought of as woolly brained or too spiritually impractical. We have in many aspects become the by-products of a left brained religious heritage, of purely reason, and knowledge, which may need a bit of right braininess to balance our personal searches for a truth that is all encompassing of our whole selves.

The fact remains as I said the mysterious happens and there is one instance in my life I would like to share with you.

Twenty years ago my sister and her husband of three years were driving home from a baby shower for a mutual friend when they were broad-sided by a very intoxicated teenager. My brother in law lived a week and died just before Christmas.

My sister who was herself critically injured had to make some decisions about selling the home that she and her husband had just settled into.

She spoke to my brother who was a land realtor in Whitefield NH 150 miles away and asked who he would recommend. He had no real contacts in Massachusetts, but said he would ask around. That Sunday afternoon, he drove back to NH and decided to stop at the land realty office, even though it was closed on Sunday. As he drove in, wondering why he was there in the first place, he spotted a car in the parking lot. A young couple got out and inquired about buying land in Whitefield. They got talking, while going through what was available for sale, and the couple said they were originally hoping to purchase a home in Tewksbury Ma, but there was nothing they had seen that they liked. My brother said, I have just the home you are looking for and

arranged for them to see my sister's house, in Tewksbury Ma. They bought it on the spot.

God's gentle hand? Synchronicity? co-incidence or miracle?

You decide...

So be it

Amen

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