

## what a coincidence!

Is it just a fluke or does what happens make sense? Has it ever happened that a name, a person or an animal that you have never really thought much about, suddenly starts cropping up time and time again in the space of only a few days?

Have you ever given a fleeting thought to a friend whom you haven't seen in months, only to find him phoning you soon after quite out of the blue? Have you ever decided exactly what you wanted and then found it just as you imagined it? Or have you ever missed a bus by the merest fraction of a second? Tried to buy a book, only to be told that the last copy had just been sold? Find that the restaurant you were looking forward to was closed and the tickets for the play you wanted to see sold out? Well, Jung would have described these events as "synchronicities". That is, external events that reflect a person's internal state in a relationship that is not cause-effect but rather one of significance.

Jung speaks of synchronicity when material originating in the unconscious manifests itself simultaneously in the consciousness in the shape of dreams, phantasies, presentiments, and in real life as a real event. Jung went even further than that, and stated that every slightly unusual event in a person's life holds a synchronous value for that person. This gives rise to numerous possibilities, since everything depends on how we interpret "the unusual"; is it only a golden scarab flying in the window, or also our radiator breaking down? If we include the radiator breaking down, we come closer to the concept of synchronicity as the organizing principle of the ordinary, of the every-day. Synchronicity generally does not concern the deepest fathoms of our unconscious, problems with which we cannot immediately cope, superficial issues or situations which we have already solved.

Synchronicity, dreams, disease, creativity - all seem to stem from that which we call the frontier of consciousness, a zone that the ego progressively expands into, incorporating more and more of the self.

The connection or synchronicity existing between an external event and the inner world is unrelated to who we think we are or who we would like to be, but rather who we actually are or what we actually want. That is why it can, for instance, be difficult to acknowledge synchronicity; we may at times view synchronicity negatively. In reality, synchronicity is neither positive or negative - it is not a judgment, but simply reflects what is going on inside us. The young man who misses a date with his sweetheart might have been so excited as to feel released by the mishap. And the cat which synchronistically crossed his path was not a bad omen, but only a signal that things would not turn out as he had expected them to.

Some leading authors that have developed Jung's theories on synchronicity, suggest considering the people we come into contact with as our own synchronous parts. So, for example, if I often, but quite unintentionally, find myself dealing with a certain type of person, this should teach me something about myself.

Thus, every member of any group incarnates a synchronous part of each of its components. This may easily lead to crystallized roles: the deep thinker, the

perfectionist, the romantic, the trouble-maker. We are kidding ourselves if we believe we can remove a problem by removing a member of the group, thereby eliminating that person's role. Since this role is synchronic, the system needs it, and it will inevitably resurface under another shape. By accepting that the infuriating trouble-maker is not to "blame" for what happens to me or the group, but instead that this situation is simply the concrete representation of where we are, the rage and hostility felt towards the "culprit" may give way to the healthy depression typical of those who have come to terms with their own limitations, and thus, can start turning them into opportunities. Otherwise, we run the risk, at best, of merely switching roles and remaining trapped in a never-changing scenario. In other words, if we sweep bad news out of the window without working through it, it will fatally come creeping back in through the door.

Synchronicity can also be a way of avoiding the trap of putting events governed by a strict cause-and-effect relationship against those generated by a senseless randomness. This takes us into a dimension in which we can regard the individual particles of life as carrying a meaning that relates them to other particles, both individual and collective.

Synchronicity is not a judgment, but simply a reflection of a person's inner organization. The point is not to judge or eradicate a certain part of oneself, or those who in the world represent that part. What is important is to consider how these parts relate within the system that hosts them, and to change, improve and optimize the relationship. When this process takes place within, the effects are inevitably also felt by the outside world.

Take the old friend who has been complaining for years to anyone who will listen to him that he yearns to fall in love, but as yet has not had the good fortune to find the right woman. One might conclude that if he has not yet found her, it is because he has not yet found her within himself. Only when the woman in his unconscious mind stops frightening him, or he manages to reconcile attractiveness with realism, will his longing for a relationship materialize.

Does this mean running the risk of being crushed by an overdose of responsibility? If neurosis is defined as a compulsive behavior characterized by the impossibility to make choices, then there are two classic neurotic processes involved in feeling responsibility for the things that take place - and they are at the same time contrary and complementary. One has me feeling responsible for nothing, and the other has me feeling responsible for everything: in either case I cannot grow, because I am either crushed by my sense of utter helplessness, or I am struggling to shoulder the weight of the entire world. A healthy person already unconsciously chooses the situations in which to display power, and those in which to adopt a wait-and-see attitude, the first being of little interest, or the second demanding too much effort. The way to make this choice is also by looking at synchronicities, and eventually taking responsibility for some of them.

Using synchronicity as a sort of "Rosetta stone" for interpreting reality provides an excellent opportunity to break free of the shackles of self-pity; according to Taoism, "every day is a good day" if we are prepared to accept its message.

*Salvatore Delse (from the magazine H'Q)*

