

Is There No Such Thing as Coincidence?

"There is no such thing as coincidence, only the illusion of coincidence"

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We have all had experiences with what we call coincidence. We've picked up the phone to call someone only to discover they are already on the line, we've heard a word we have never heard before only to hear it yet again within 24 hours, we've run into someone we know in the middle of a huge crowd while half way across the country (someplace like Disneyland, a shopping mall or airport) or even something as simple as having spaghetti for lunch only to discover that we are going to end up also having spaghetti for supper that very same day.

We think of coincidence as those things that happen that we just don't expect because the chance of them happening is very low. Of course just because something has a low chance of occurring doesn't make it a coincidence if it happens. For example we know the odds of being dealt a Royal Flush in a 5-Card Stud Poker game is exceedingly low, but if it happens we would not necessarily think it is a coincidence. However, if two or more people in the same hand are dealt a Royal Flush we would consider it either an amazing coincidence or else someone is "stacking the deck." The chance of being dealt a Royal Flush in 5-Card Stud Poker is 1 in 649,739. However, the chance of two people being dealt a Royal Flush in the same hand is less than 1 in 420,000,000,000 (420 billion).

Even though there are incredible odds against something happening this does not mean that it cannot happen at the very next opportunity. This is why someone can put only \$1 into a slot machine and win millions even though the odds against doing this are stupendous. That is because the odds against something happening really tell us nothing about "when" the unexpected will happen, just how often we might expect it to happen. Of course then there are the coincidences where the odds can not even be calculated.

In 1898, *Futility* by Morgan Robertson was published. This was the story of a 40,000 horsepower 800 foot long ship named the Titan, the largest afloat, crashing into an iceberg in April in the north Atlantic. The Titan didn't have enough lifeboats for its passengers and sunk with great loss of life. Sound familiar? It should, but the story was written 14 years before the 45,000 horsepower 880 foot Titanic crashed into an iceberg in the North Atlantic on April 14, 1912.

Robertson later wrote a book, *Beyond the Spectrum*, which described a future war fought with aircraft that carried "sun bombs." Incredibly powerful, one bomb could destroy a city, erupting in a flash of light that blinds all who look at it. The war begins in December, started by the Japanese with a sneak attack on Hawaii. When did he write about something that sounds like World War II? It was 1914, twenty seven years before the fact.

We could call these coincidences, but should we? Clearly they seem prophetic, and such things actually happen all the time. On March 4, 2001 a pilot show for a short running television series aired (The Lone Gunmen). In the pilot episode there are people with an agenda that take control

of a domestic airliner with the objective of crashing it into the World Trade Center. The scenes of an airliner heading for the World Trade Center twin towers are rather eerie. Of course, TV being what it is, the heroes narrowly avert the disaster. Six months later (9/11) the reality of airliners hitting the WTC towers was not averted.

Many Earth cultures, including the Mayans and the Australian Aborigines, believe history is cyclic rather than linear. They believe that the world lives and dies and lives again, a little different every time but always following the same general historical sequence of events. Sometimes this is summed up by saying that all of this has happened before, and all of this will happen again. The idea being that, rather than foretelling the future with these seemingly coincidental stories, what is happening is somehow recalling the past in some previous cycle of history.

Strangely enough there are theoretical physicists today who also subscribe to this idea. They are beginning to think that the 4-dimensional universe we perceive is the result of the cyclic collision of branes in a 10-dimensional universe. This results in the creation, expansion, eventual collapse and rebirth of the 4-dimensional universe over and over and over again. What is unknown is how similar, if not identical, each succeeding 4 dimensional universe may be to its predecessor.

A similar concept involves considering that from some extra-dimensional perspective everything past, present and future actually exists simultaneously. If so one might under certain circumstances literally “recall” the future. If this is true then one might answer the yet-to-ring telephone, place the dollar in the yet-to-pay-off-a-jackpot slot machine, or even write the story of a yet-to-happen tragedy.

Another possibility that could make coincidence a nonsensical concept is that everything that makes up reality just might be consciously related. That is, everything we see, touch, taste, smell, hear and feel is connected to every other part of reality by some conscious cause that operates independent of the restrictions of time. If this is true then that which makes up our brain and body can know that the phone will ring because it is connected to the person who is making the call. We could sense that the slot machine will pay off because the consciousness of the universe has decided to let it pay off and simply allows us to know what is coming. Foreshadowing of future events could then happen because the consciousness of the universe knows what it is planning.

If any of these alternatives are true then coincidence (i.e., the amazing chance occurrence of a low probability combination of events) becomes meaningless. Why? Because being in the right place at the right time is not necessarily a matter of chance, putting the dollar in the right slot machine is not necessarily a matter of chance, picking up the phone that hasn't rung yet is not necessarily a matter of chance, running into someone you know half way across the country in a crowd is not necessarily a matter of chance and that which we consider coincidence really is only the illusion of coincidence.

So perhaps when we think an amazing coincidence has happened we may be sensing a future event that already exists in a higher dimensional space, we may be recalling the echoes of a previous cycle of the universe or the ultimate consciousness of the universe might be simply

letting us know about or moving us to do the very thing we need to do to allow the seeming coincidence to take place. If this is so, then how is it possible to preserve the illusion of coincidence?

The only thing necessary to preserve the illusion of coincidence is for seemingly “coincidental” events to not happen so often as to flaunt any deviation from being rare events. That is, only rarely can a book seemingly foretell a future event, only rarely can a slot machine pay off to provide money that is needed, only rarely can you pick up a phone to find the person you are calling is already there. However, the fact that these happen rarely doesn’t mean that they are obeying any laws of probability. In fact it is impossible to tell simply because no one compiles such events against the number of opportunities in order to determine whether such instances are defying chance occurrence.

On a personal note, numerous life and death “coincidences” have occurred in my past. In one case I jokingly tell people that I have had a car accident that started in Arizona where I then slid through New Mexico and wound up in Colorado.

One November night in the late 70’s I was the passenger in a Pinto station wagon that hit a patch of black ice as we topped a small rise right near the four corners area of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Utah. Seeing headlights on our side of the road the driver tried to stop and suddenly we were watching helplessly as the car was sliding sideways down the road. As we nosed into the snow bank at the side of the road the car rolled completely over and continued sliding down the road as we eventually backed into the snow bank on the opposite side of the road and came to a stop. Everyone was unharmed but the car was totaled. As we got out I spotted something in the middle of the road. It was my 30 pound tool box that had been in the back of the station wagon. It was sitting upright in the middle of the road without a scratch on it. How did it get out of the car? As the car rolled it apparently had passed right between my head and to door post and went through the window right beside me without even touching me. Coincidence?

On another occasion I was conducting some tests of electrical equipment at work only to find my self being electrocuted. In one hand I had hold of a grounded cable and in the other hand I had hold of a cable connected to 120 volts AC. This happened because of a fault in a piece of equipment that had strangely not caused a fuse to blow. For what it’s worth, being electrocuted doesn’t exactly hurt. Both of my arms were vibrating and completely out of my control so that I had no ability to release the cables. All I could manage to do was yell, take about two steps back and fall backward on the ground. Unfortunately the cables came with me so I was still being electrocuted and helpless. Just when everything seemed hopeless the power suddenly cut off. Someone in the lab saw what was happening and quickly found just the right plug to pull to cut the power that was reaching me. I had been electrocuted from arm to arm for eight seconds but suffered no injury other than a few sore muscles. There had been no reason for this person to be in the lab at the time, nor was there any reason for him to know exactly which plug to pull. Coincidence?

I’m one of those people who don’t take much time to get going when a traffic light changes from red to green. In fact I tend to be a little impatient with people who always seem to have their

head in the glove box when the light changes to green. However, on one occasion, for no reason, when a traffic light changed from red to green I just sat there for a good two seconds (just about enough time to normally get me into the middle of the intersection). The intersection was a blind one where you couldn't really see what was coming on the cross street. As I sat there at the green light I watched an 18 wheeler blaze through the red light at about 45 miles per hour. If I had gone the car would have been right in front of him. Why did I wait? Coincidence?

On May 24, 1979 three people I was working with and I were returning from New York to Phoenix via Chicago O'Hare airport. We had missed our scheduled connection at O'Hare and managed to wangle standby seats on a later flight, a DC-10. We even got to sit in the first class section which was pretty nice. As the flight progressed across country I listened to the air traffic channel on the entertainment headphones. I noted that night that we dodged thunderstorms all the way across the country and could see the lightening first on one side and then the other during the flight. We ultimately arrived home that night and the next morning we went into work only to find that a DC-10 had crashed at O'Hare that morning (May 25th). Later in the day we found that the aircraft we had flown the night before had traveled back to O'Hare and was the very aircraft that crashed on its next take-off because of a damaged engine pylon that allowed an engine to break loose. Turbulence from one of those thunderstorms we dodged the night before could just as easily have broken that engine loose a few hours earlier while we had been on board. Coincidence?

So often it is true that "you don't know why" coincidental events take place, but maybe we really should ask that question more often rather than just chalking things up to random chance.