

Essay on coincidence BROUILLON

- Do coincidences exist or are they just illusions our mind creates to make us believe in miracles?
- Is the universe sending me a sign?
- Are there signs that are worth noticing?
- Are the signs I notice really signs or is it my mind telling myself what I want to hear?
- Is my unconscious behind every sign I believe the universe is sending me?
- Is the universe sending me these signs or do they originate from my own unconscious?
- Do I believe because I think the signs are the universe speaking to me or was it already foretold I was going to believe in what I think is true?

Is meaning something the universe gives me, or something I create?

Plan détaillé:

1. The universe acts on consequence of my unconscious (or in the case of religion, God) to show me what it's hiding me. So the universe/God sends me signs (coincidences) to guide my actions and beliefs, through religious ethics or realisations (through psychoanalysis)
 - Carl Jung and synchronicities
 - Psychoanalysis, Freud and the unconscious telling us stuff
 - Christian miracles
2. Coincidences aren't real, just an illusion our mind creates to find meaning where there isn't any, we are constantly seeking meaning and understanding of the universe when in reality the meaning we find is just a way to substitute science when science is still not able to prove our imagination wrong
 - Mathematical coincidences
 - Debunking Christian miracles (Greek mythology) + Laplace's demon
 - Not everything is science: Fate? Stoicism (Does everything happen for a reason, or do we give events a reason once they happen?)

Different definitions of coincidences: first, things that affect us and our reality, in some cases, miracles; second, random events that aren't that special, we just attribute them that special character because we don't understand fully what happened why and how. (technically speaking everything is a coincidence)

Introduction

We have always searched for meaning in the world around us, especially in unexpected events, "miracles" that seem to defy logic and reason. But is meaning something the universe gives us, or something we create? To answer this question, I will consider three perspectives: in the first place, the idea that the universe (or God) sends us signs; then, the idea that such signs are just an illusion; and finally, a mix of both, where meaning is a combination of both the world and our own unconscious.

I. The universe (or God) as a sender of meaning

Many believe meaning is not created by the individuals themselves but is revealed to them. The universe (or God) acts then as a messenger, communicating through events that seem charged with significance, those we commonly call "signs".

Carl Jung's talks about this idea through the term of "synchronicity"⁰. He defined synchronicities as "meaningful coincidences", moments where an internal psychological state corresponds with an external event to reveal hidden meaning. For Jung, these coincidences suggest that the unconscious and physical matter are not separate realities but pretty much the same thing. The universe acts upon our unconscious and reveals what is hidden from our conscious mind.

Freud approached the same phenomenon from another point of view. For him, dreams and slips of the tongue are messages from our own unconscious. Thus, the mind is our own universe, and the meaning we think we "receive" from the world might actually just be projections of what our unconscious already knows.

Religion extends this logic to the divine: in Christianity, miracles are interpreted as manifestations of God's will, signs meant to guide believers. From this perspective, meaning is not something that is given by us humans, but rather received, like a gift from God. It is revealed through faith and not reason. The world is controlled by

God, and every event, however small, can be read as part of a divine message. This is how Christians might believe in miracle or unexplainable healings: it was through God and faith that the person was healed. This, however, can be due to a lack of understanding of how our world truly works.

Indeed, this view risks mixing coincidence and causality. What if the meaning we find in these “signs” and meaningful coincidences doesn’t come from the universe or God, but from our own desire to make sense of it?

II. The rationalist critique: coincidences as illusions of meaning

The rationalist perspective challenges the idea that coincidences hold hidden meaning. From a scientific point of view, what we interpret as “signs” are often just statistical inevitabilities.

The human brain is wired to detect patterns — even where none exist.

Psychologists call this “apophenia”¹: the tendency to see meaningful connections in random data. Statistically, improbable events happen all the time; given enough opportunities, coincidences become inevitable. When we are constantly looking for mirror hours, for example, we will eventually consider the event where we see one special, when we were just more prone to pay attention to it². Thus, the feeling that “the universe is speaking to us” might simply reflect our need to seek meaning even when there is none.

Science also shows that what seems mysterious or coincidental can often be explained rationally. Wegener’s theory of continental drift, for instance, was a theory that was at first dismissed in the 1920s as “just a coincidence” because it was against the world view of the time despite the evidence³. Similarly, Laplace’s Demon⁴ is the idea of a determinist universe where events are only caused by rational and logical causes, thus leaving no room for divine intervention or synchronicity. From this point of view, miracles in Christianity can be read as just mythological fictional stories, just like in Greek mythology, where natural phenomena such as thunder was attributed to Gods⁵. This shows humanity’s need to seek meaning and understanding, to make sense of the unknown.

III. The middle ground: meaning as co-created

Still, a purely rational explanation feels incomplete. Even if meaning is a human construction, it remains powerful, since it shapes our emotions, decisions, and sense of purpose. As Jung said, synchronicities happened when emotional intensity is created (surprise, fear, hope...). This is how we can explain the consequences of the placebo effect⁶, for example, or of miracle healings. Maybe meaning is neither fully given by the universe nor entirely invented by us. An entirely determinist theory could be possible, since (this is shown with Laplace’s Demon⁴) events could happen due to causes that we are yet to discover. In the

end, we are humans and there is no way of fully knowing how the universe works and why things happen the way they do. Yet, when we attribute meaning and importance to an event, even if erroneously, we alter the way we behave and how we interact with the world we live in.

The Stoics believed that everything happens for a reason, that the universe follows a rational order⁷. Modern thinkers might reinterpret this as the idea that we give reason to events after they happen. Fate and free will, in this sense, are two ways of describing the same process: we encounter the world's randomness, and then we interpret it.

Conclusion

The universe neither fully gives nor fully denies meaning. Meaning arises when the human mind encounters the world and interprets it. Perhaps what we call "a sign" is just the moment when inner and outer realities align, when our imagination meets and interprets the world. Just then, we might feel in power, as if we have our lives under control, since we understand (or think we understand) what is happening and why.

⁰Jung, C. G. *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*. Princeton University Press, 1973. 28-35

¹"Apophenia is the tendency to perceive meaningful connections between unrelated things" -> [Apophenia - Wikipedia](#)

²Richard Feynmann, a famous mathematician, once talked about how ridiculous meaningful coincidences might seem: "You know, the most amazing thing happened to me tonight. [...] I saw a car with the license plate ARW 357. Can you imagine? Of all the millions of license plates in the state, what was the chance that I would see that particular one tonight? Amazing!" -> [Math 19b, Spring 2011, Linear Algebra and Probability](#)

³Continental drift is the theory that the world before was just formed by a sole continent called Pangea, that later split into the continents we know today. Wegener proposed this idea to explain why certain fossils were found in both African and South American coasts, even though separated by the Atlantic ocean, and his idea wasn't believed until the 1950s -> [Intro to Synchronicities | why patterns in your life aren't a coincidence](#)

⁴Laplace's Demon is used to explain determinism. "If someone (the demon) knows the precise location and momentum of every particle in the universe, their past and future values [...] can be calculated from the laws of classical mechanics." (explained by cause and effect) -> [Laplace's demon - Wikipedia](#)

⁵*In Greek mythology, Zeus' anger was used to explain thunder, which was later disproved by science. [List of thunder deities - Wikipedia](#)*

⁶*"A placebo effect is a phenomenon of medication or medical treatment, even inert or ineffective ones, to exhibit results simply because the recipient believes that it will work.", the patient believes they are being helped, and that belief triggers measurable changes in their body. Thus, the placebo effect shows that meaning is not just abstract but has actual causal power.*

⁷*[Does Everything Happen for a Reason || Fate vs Coincidence Explained || Ancient Philosophers - YouTube](#)*