Synchronicity and the Enigma of Time

Part 1 of the series on the *Gods of Time* for the CG Jung Society of Melbourne by Brian Clark

Space and time are not conditions in which we live.

They are modes in which we think.

~ Albert Einstein

Contemplating Time

When we look out at the wonder of the night sky, we look back in time. The light we see tonight left a long time ago. As science tells us, when we look up at the Andromeda Galaxy, the illumination that we see is from over 2 million years ago — we stand in the present looking up to the past.. The beauty of the night sky reminds us of a timeless cosmos. While we can measure the passing of time within milliseconds, even jiffies and nanoseconds, time itself remains a great mystery, inaccessible to our senses. We cannot touch, taste, see, smell or hear time; we can wonder and think about time, but it defies our sensibilities. Contemplating time in a way is a meditation on life, a record of having momentarily existed.

St. Augustine, when contemplating time, wrote: 'What is Time? If no one asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to a questioner, I do not know'. Sixteen centuries ago he expressed what I feel in this moment when speaking to you about the enigma of time. Even now, all this time later, we are still bewildered by the intangibility of time. Time remains a mystery. And like all mysteries, it returns us to the sacred, the universal, the divine. The saint did concede he knew that if nothing passed, or approached, or happened in that moment, there would be no past, no future, nor present. Continuing, Augustine asks himself, if we're always in the present, where is the past and future? He concludes that the measure of time is within us. In the moment is the sanctity of the eternal.

Yet time is also outside us, in our temporal life. It is on the clockface, in the wrinkles of our skin, the ache in our bones, in our final mortgage payment and last week's news. Time is abstract, yet real; both physical and psychical, mystic and pragmatic. Two times, temporal and eternal, are woven into the fabric of our life events and experiences. Science and fiction play together on the physical and psychic landscapes.

Philosophy has amplified and argued time's eternal qualities, ever since Plato suggested it was the moving image of eternity. Physics weighed in on the quantum and relative qualities of time. And both practices have more to share about the nature of time than we might imagine. Both question the reality of time and the way that we commonly accept its sequential movement from past to future. Ancient philosophers would appreciate Einstein's well-quoted line in his letter to Michele Besso's son:

People like us who believe in physics know that the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.³

'Neoplatonists and contemporary eternalists agree that the fundamental nature of reality is timeless, while the passage of time is, in some sense, a secondary, derivate or illusionary feature of our experience.' Times of creativity, of mourning, of passion are timeless; unmeasured by hours. Jung brought a psychological perspective to ways of thinking about our experiences of time, culminating in his conceptualization of synchronicity and acausal connections that occur in and through time. He suggested synchronistic phenomena were 'acts of creation in time.' As a psychic explorer he found meaning in mythic images, philosophy, divinatory arts, physics, random events and chance encounters. So, tonight I would like to start our time travel by exploring mysteries of time that Jung

encountered, weaving some of his personal stories, his experiences and experiments together through time. Like all great mysteries, time does not seek to be explained, but experienced.

The Problem of Synchronicity

Jung's interest in synchronicity was heightened as he was writing his book *Aion*. Aion was a Hellenistic god, who symbolized the unbound nature of time, yet the deity was often depicted alongside the Earth Mother and other seasonal embodiments and images of time. Aion invokes the paradox of time through its fusion of eternal and temporal symbols. Interestingly, the word *aion* also mixes metaphors, as both natures of time are implied in this word. During this Hellenistic period, the word *aion*, which translates as 'always being', represented a long time or eternity. During the Homeric period it was synonymous with one's lifetime. However, as Plotinus pointed out, what is a long time, even of an infinite duration, is not eternity. What is eternal is not in time; eternal actuality contains all. No doubt, this distinction between eternal oneness and temporal duration is complex, certainly complicated by semantics. Plotinus points out that: 'nowhere is there any future, for every then is a now; nor is there any past, for nothing there has ever ceased to be.' Echoes of Augustine's musings on time. It was this ancient enigma between the temporal/causal and eternal/acausal worlds that would both complicate and cooperate with Jung's thinking on synchronicity.



Aion

Jung had been interested in what he called the 'problem of' synchronicity ever since the mid-1920s, He experienced coincidences, visions, and dreams so meaningful he knew they were beyond chance, as if something beyond the bounds of time had constellated in that moment. He began to question the doctrine of causality. Yet, even earlier Jung alluded to the shortcoming of methods that were based solely on causality. As early as 1916 he had written in his *Collected Papers on Analytic Psychology* that 'causality is only one principle' and that psychology is not exhausted by causal methods only. He felt this was only half the picture as causal methods excluded the felt experience and meaning, which 'only lives when we experience it in and through ourselves'. Jung was deeply aware of the importance of subjective experiences and unconscious processes that revealed meaning through

dreams, waking visions and inner descents. He was personally moved by many psychic experiences which lay outside the rational constructs acceptable to the academic establishment of that period. When Mircea Eliade interviewed Carl Jung at the 1952 Eranos Conference, Jung reflected back on these years, especially to his waking visions and dreams of 1913-14 that involved images of European destruction. When World War I broke out, and the reality of these inner visions became apparent. Jung was relieved that this was 'no schizophrenia', as he was fearful these visions may have been. Instead, he recognized that 'my dreams and visions came to me from the subsoil of collective unconscious. What remained for me to do now was to deepen and validate this discovery.' 11

How had his visions and dreams breached time? In a way, Jung's images of European death and destruction were of a time not yet happened, as if his disturbing psychic images later temporalized. Jung would record and recall many of these kinds of experiences. During this period, his descents and encounters with the unconscious seemed to have given him a deeply felt sense of this territory, yet not the voice, nor the language to articulate that clearly enough to be heard by those who favoured rational and intellectual arguments. The two worlds were separate, yet at the end of his temporal life as he looked back, he said: 'the only events in my life worth telling are those when the imperishable world interrupted into this transitory one. That is why I speak chiefly of inner experiences, amongst which I include my dreams and visions.' ¹²

Jung's commitment to understanding the interconnectivity of all things and his breadth and depth of enquiry in cross cultural philosophies and psychologies led to his conception of synchronicity. While Jung was already experienced and deeply engaged in acausal connections, his first reference to this idea is recorded in 1928 in his published dream seminars. During these classes a confluence of bull imagery had appeared in dreams, outer events and images; for instance, a patient's drawing of a bull head and Jung receipt of a letter from a friend in Mexico who had just attended a bull fight. This cluster of coincidences was beyond any rational or causal explanation. Since dreams are living imagery, he clarified that it would be 'a mistake to consider them as causal; events don't come about because of dreams, that would be absurd, we can never demonstrate that; they just happen'. "Just-so" as he would often say. It just is!

Around the same time Henry Fierz, who was a neighbour of Jung's, tells his personal story about when he first met Jung in 1928 at a dinner party. His parents, who owned the adjacent property at Bollingen, invited their son Henry to join them for dinner at their Zurich home. At dinner Jung described a recent dream which included the image of a small garden shovel. The day after, on his walk, Jung found a small garden shovel in exactly the spot that he had dreamt it was located – on the path between his tower and Bollingen village. The dream, like he had told his class, was 'living'.

Fierz reported that even thirty years later, Jung could often be seen sitting before his tower, pondering something and playing with a watercourse, using a little garden shovel fixed to a broomstick. Mr. Kahn, who looked after the tower and brought supplies for Jung, once said to Fierz "If one sees the professor sitting and playing like this, if one does not know that this is a world-famous scientist, one would think this is a very queer man who behaves in a rather odd way." The power of the symbol is often at odds with scientific thinking. Perhaps it was a comforting mnemonic that reminded Jung of the synchronicity between psychic images and their outer manifestations, which he would later illustrate through his concept of synchronicity. The small garden shovel linked the reality of the inner and outer worlds through time, as do dreams, synchronies and divination. It is also a vibrant symbol for a man who dug down into the layers of psyche.

By the next year (1929) Jung had used the term 'synchronicity' in his seminars as a way to capture the phenomena of things happening at the same moment, as an expression of the same time content.¹⁵ On May 10, 1930, in his memoriam to his colleague Richard Wilhelm, his understanding of the quality of time was first expressed as 'an acausal or synchronistic connective principle'.¹⁶ Another

two decades would pass before he would give his first public address on synchronicity - at the Eranos Conference in 1951. In his foreword to his more comprehensive work *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*, Jung reveals the difficulty he felt through the intervening years to find ways to articulate this phenomena.¹⁷

Jung begins his address to the 1951 Eranos conference with his much-quoted concept of *meaningful* coincidence. When speaking of the etymology of his concept of synchronicity, he says:

....this term has something to do with time or, to be more accurate, with a kind of simultaneity. We can also use for simultaneity the concept of a *meaningful coincidence* of two or more events when something other than the probability of chance is involved.¹⁸

Jung concluded this 1951 lecture with mentioning the 'vast problem of synchronicity'. He said: 'In this short space of a lecture I cannot, unfortunately, do more than give a very cursory sketch of the vast problem of synchronicity'. He did mention there would be more depth in his upcoming publication, *Synchronicity and Acausal Principle* to be released the following year. I am intrigued by the word 'problem'- was it because, as Jung says, 'no one yet has built a causal bridge between the elements making up a meaningful coincidence'. The problem perhaps was the complexity in the western way of thinking that created a split between the two worlds of object and subject, a Cartesian divide that kept the world at right angles. And as long as these remained binary, symbols would be simply signs, devoid of their psychic power to transcend temporal time. Yet, perhaps too this was complicated by Jung's own personal divide between his two personalities, those he numbered 1 and 2, the scientist and the mystic. Yet, in his work on synchronicity, he honoured both.

After Jung's published his synchronicity article, he invited lecturers and analysts from the institute to his home for a discussion on this theme. As Barbara Hannah recalls, it was a lively discussion, but as it drew to its close Jung remarked, "Well, every one of you has discussed synchronicity from the standpoint of cause and effect. Not one of you has thought synchronistically." Our ways of thinking are so immersed in the paradigm of cause and effect; it is difficult to break free of this model to be in another time.

Personality # 1: The Scientist

Jung was also a scientist, perhaps more in his commitment to it as a living study, than evidenced-based research; today we might speak of him as a scientist of the soul. By the time he had published *Synchronicity*, he often clearly and humorously was able to articulate the differences between objective and subjective evidence. In response to Philip Wylie who expressed doubts about Jung's quantum mechanics and mathematics, Jung replied: 'Don't worry about my mathematics, I never dreamt of adding anything to mathematics, being myself utterly "amathematikos". And then he draws the distinction: 'it may seem ridiculous to a mathematician – the mystery of the psychologist'.²² He continues to articulate these differences metaphorically. In an earlier letter to Carl Seelig, Jung reiterates a similar sentiment: 'One can scarcely imagine a greater contrast than that between the mathematical and the psychological mentality. The one is extremely quantitative and the other just as extremely qualitative'.²³ This is the divide over which Jung built a bridge.

In the same letter to Carl Seelig, Jung mentions that it was 'Einstein who first started me off thinking about a possible relativity of time as well as space, and their psychic conditionality.' Then he mentions 'this stimulus led to my relation with the physicist Professor W. Pauli and to my thesis of psychic synchronicity.' Two Nobel Prize winners for physics were instrumental in his ideas on time.

Einstein lived in Zurich in the years before Jung's split with Freud. On January 18, 1911, Jung wrote to Freud telling him of a dinner conversation with an unnamed physicist; later we discover this is

Albert Einstein.²⁴ In the Tavistock lectures of 1935 Jung mentions Einstein in Zurich, saying that: 'I often saw him, and it was when he was beginning to work on his theory of relativity. He was often in my house, and I pumped him about his relativity theory. I am not gifted in mathematics and you should have seen all the trouble the poor man had to explain relativity to me.'²⁵ Ira Progoff also suggested that 'Albert Einstein's theory of Relativity is a primary background for Jung's own theory of synchronicity and for his progressive reformulation of his theory of Archetypes.'²⁶ But it was with Wolfgang Pauli where Jung found the productive interrelationship between physis and psyche, nature and soul, was able to be partnered.

Pauli was a motivating force to help Jung publish his work on synchronicity. He critiqued the manuscript and altered some of Jung's views and ideas on archetypes. Their combined manuscript *The Interpretation of Nature and Psyche* was released in 1952, which included Jung's *Synchronicity an Acausal Principle* and Pauli's *The Influence of Archetypal Ideas on the Scientific Ideas of Kepler*. Synchronicity, like chance encounters, often occur at crossroads, so I was interested in how these men's lifepaths crossed.

After his mother's suicide, his father's remarriage to an 'evil stepmother' his own age, and his unhappy marriage and divorce, Pauli experienced a personal crisis and difficulty with alcohol. He was now in Zurich; therefore, his father recommended him to Jung for therapy. Pauli was 31; Jung was 56. Jung did not take the case, but supervised a junior colleague who worked with Pauli and his dreams. This arrangement lasted about five months and shortly after Jung became his therapist for the next two years. At this stage, Pauli had recorded more than 300 dreams.²⁷

The collection of dreams from Pauli's analysis were used by Jung in CW 12 *Psychology and Alchemy*. ²⁸ Their relationship explored psyche through the intimacy of dreams, from which Pauli came to respect the order of nature as both physical and psychical. Both men also appreciated that reality is regulated by archetypal principles that manifest physically and psychologically. And, that synchronicities reveal the interconnection of these different realities through moments of time. Their relationship began with the nexus between a deeply personal issue and a professional setting and structure, as if the psyche temporalized in that moment to arrange a meaningful encounter. A physicist that explored his dream life was a welcomed companion for the psychological expedition.

Personality # 2: The Mystic

Jung's life experiences led him to try and conceptualize the qualities of time through his own inner explorations, philosophy and physics. But he also found insight in divinatory traditions. He turned towards astrology and later the I Ching and alchemy to stimulate ways of thinking about the nature and quality of time. From 1911 we have a record of Jung's interest in astrology; shortly after this, his interest in the I Ching began.²⁹ In both ancient systems he encountered the cosmic consideration and Tao of time. As he said, he was not concerned with 'establishing objectively the validity of the I Ching' but 'the astonishing fact that the hidden qualities of the moment become legible in the hexagram'. And he repeated that the 'interconnection of events made evident by the I Ching is essentially analogous to what we find in astrology.'³⁰ Roderick Main reiterates the influence of astrology and the I Ching on Jung's way of thinking about time:

Jung's first theorizing about synchronicity was done with reference to astrology and the I Ching and focused on the fact that things arising in a particular moment of time all share the characteristics of that moment. It appears to have been the understanding of the role of time, an understanding in which simultaneity does indeed play an essential part, which led Jung to coin the term synchronicity with its emphasis on the element of time (Gk. syn = together, chronos = time). 31

Jung experimented with these divinatory techniques that imagined qualities of time. Later, Jung would no longer use the expression qualitative time, replacing this idea with synchronicity, which he felt was a fuller concept that included acausal events as well as affective factors.

Synchronic time is counterpoint to diachronic time. This way of thinking about time as possessing meaning, even character and quality, correspondent with the events simultaneously taking place in the outer world, is reflected in the traditions of astrology and the I Ching. Each works with quantitative and qualitative dimensions. While astrology's moment is different in that it is based on an astronomical moment, both systems, whether through an arrangement of planets or yarrow sticks, find meaning, virtues and qualities in time. Jung expressed this idea in his 1949 foreword to Richard Wilheim's translation of the I Ching: 'whatever happens in a given moment possesses inevitably the quality peculiar to that moment'. He had articulated a similar statement in his memoriam to Richard Wilhelm 19 years earlier: 'whatever is born or done at this particular moment of time has the quality of this moment of time'. This catchphrase became a boon for astrologers as well as all divinatory practitioners in the 80s and 90s when pressured to defend their craft!

For nearly two decades between 1911, when he first wrote to Freud about astrology, and 1930, when he gave the memorial address for Richard Wilhelm, Jung was deeply involved with his 'confrontation with the unconscious', especially in those early years. He says: I have never lost touch with my initial experiences. All my works, all my creative activity, has come from these initial fantasies and dreams which began in 1912.³⁵

These 'initial experiences' of visions and dreams profoundly moved Jung. He was in the presence of Psyche. Oracular and divinatory models appealed to Jung, because when stripped of our need to verify or prove them, they loosen the bounds of time and engage the unconscious in the eternity of the moment.

Synchronicity & The Astrological Experiment

Time, like place, is deeply embedded in the practice and principles of astrology. As an analogic method, astrology uses the quantifiable measure of planetary and other astronomical cycles to imagine time in a qualitative way.³⁶ Like a clock, an astrologer tells time metaphorically as if Saturn was half past the Sun, which in astrological reality translates to Saturn being opposite or at the half way point in its cycle in relationship with the Sun. But the analogy to be drawn from this image is qualitative, not a prediction, nor literal event. This quality of time is informed by the archetypes that have arisen within this frame of astrological image. How might we continue to amplify and muse on these archetypes, to invite them into the present? As the archetypes of Saturn and the Sun are in focus, meaning is to be found in contemplating, amplifying and associating with these archetypal images.

A seasoned astrologer is familiar with the symbols of time. These symbols evoke analogies and images that facilitate the astrologer to contemplate time. Through amplification of these images, reflection, and dialogue with their clients, astrologers discover meaning in time. Unfortunately, in a world smitten with plastic and concrete, astrological analogies are often assumed to be superficial and literal. Astrological symbols facilitate an interconnection between inner and outer experiences that resonate on internal and external levels. Astrological symbols enhance time qualitatively when the connection between the internal symbol and external event is perceived. In private conversations, Jung mentioned that he had cast his own horoscope and it had taught him about himself. Hence, he often recommended an astrological consultation to his patients, as the horoscope often provided a cathartic effect. ³⁷ No wonder Jung had a lifelong interest in astrology and felt drawn to use some of its precepts in his experiments with synchronicity.

During his research and writing *Aion*, on the first Friday of April 1949, Jung came across at least six coincidental encounters with fish, the symbol with which he was engaged and which he said were 'frequently symbols of unconscious contents' – fish on a piece of embroidery, the mention of "April fish", an inscription in a book, dream, in pictures, for lunch! Here we have what Jung called 'runs or series' of coincidental images. And as he tells in his footnotes there was a 7th coincidence – when he finished writing these ones down, he walked over to the sea wall where he found a dead fish. While all are quite ordinary occurrences on their own, what do we make of this series of coincidences. Are they to 'be regarded as fortuitous', 'meaningful cross-connections' or both? ³⁸ (and on the day trickster Mercury was at the last degree of Pisces, the last degree of the zodiac).

As an astrologer I was intrigued by Jung's use of astrological principles in his treatise on Synchronicity. Working on *Aion*, Jung explored the 'the fish symbol in history', which included an examination of the astrological Age of Pisces and its congruence with the unfolding times within the Christian era. ³⁹ Aion, in Jung's imagination, was the 'Platonic' year of 26,000 years, the complete cycle of the precession of the equinoxes. The Age of Pisces was 1/12 of this great period. In a letter to H.G. Baynes in August 1940, Jung starts his letter with, 'This is the fateful year for which I have waited for more than 25 years' and continues, '1940 is the year when we approach the meridian of the first star in Aquarius.' He was referring to one of many dates for the beginning of the Age of Aquarius, when the Piscean aion cedes to Aquarius. This date was supplied to him by an astronomer, Rebekka Aleida Biegel, who was also an analysand and trainee. Astrological timing of the new aion had been on his mind for some time. Jung began to consider whether astronomical facts and astrological tradition could be useful in demonstrating whether astrological symbols might induce meaningful coincidences, as he discovered in his research on *Aion*. Hence 'An Astrological Experiment' was included in his synchronicity thesis. ⁴²

Jung saw psychology and astrology as having 'striking analogies' and 'that a given well-defined psychological situation will be accompanied by an analogous astrological configuration' for like psychology, astrology 'consists of symbolic configurations.' He likened the planets to the gods of the unconscious. Astrology's *modus operandi* was a question of 'sympathy' or synchronicity that cannot be 'formulated in terms of causality'. ⁴³ In these ways Jung recognized astrology connected universal patterns in time through symbolic associations and correspondences, not causality. Still, given these considerations, Jung wavered between astrological causality and synchronicity. In the astrological experiment Jung decided to steer away from character traits and concentrate on an unquestionable fact, and that was the marriage connection between two people. Since antiquity, the astrological tradition has developed certain astronomical correspondences between marriage partners and Jung used some of these guidelines to analyze the astrological data from the experiment.

While Jung, in his foreword to *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*, thanks Dr. Lilianne Frey-Rohn for her 'help with the astrological material', there were four other women who also assisted with the collection and analysis of astrological data, as well as the calculation and construction of all the horoscopes. His daughter Gret Baumann-Jung, an astrological consultant and teacher, who along with three other women, his patients Sabina Tauber and Hanni Binder, and Mary Elliot, a friend of Barbara Hannah, comprised the astrological working group. They met together between 1950 – 1952 as well as privately with Jung on the project. Gret was mainly responsible for the astrological research on the couples, while the other women were often assigned to focus on other astrological topics. ⁴⁴ Professor Markus Fierz helped with the statistical probabilities and mathematics of the astrological experiment.

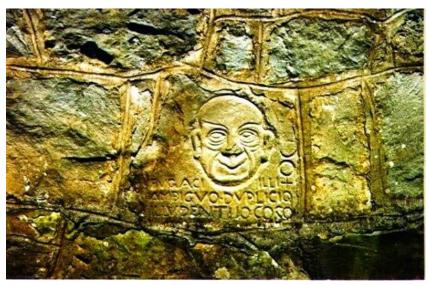
The birth data for the married couples was collected from 'friendly donors in Zurich, London, Rome and Vienna'. Once 180 responses with the couples' birth data was received, Jung decided to conduct

a pilot investigation.⁴⁶ The task of constructing 360 horoscopes by hand with logarithms began! But the astrological experiment seems fated in a way, as Jung still holds onto the idea that a causal link might be proven between the astronomical positions of the planets and the 'indubitable fact' of marriage. While he acknowledges that we do not know how horoscopes can be valid, he also says: 'it is just conceivable that there is a causal connection between the planetary aspects and the psych-physiological disposition. One would therefore do well not to regard the results of astrological observation as synchronistic phenomena, but to take them as possibly causal in origin.⁴⁷

Yet, on the other hand, when referring to statistically significant statements, Jung says they produce 'a merely average picture of natural events, but not a *true* picture of the world as it is.'⁴⁸ This position on figures and measurements was also supported by Professor Pauli. As Jung says there are 'uncontrollable effects the observer has upon the system observed, the result being that reality forfeits something of its objective character and that a subjective element attaches to the physicist's picture of the world.'⁴⁹ We might add that a subjective element attaches to the psychologist's and astrologer's picture of the world. This is what happens to Jung in the Astrology Experiment - this is the fate I alluded to earlier, that the experiment supported the affective, subjective, qualitative and acausal factors of sympathy and synchronicity, not any proven causal connections.

Jung used the horoscopic positions of the Sun, Moon, Venus, Mars, the Ascendant and Descendant to highlight 50 possible astrological links between marriage partners. He was interested in the Sun – Moon connections, as he recognized the conjunction of these luminaries symbolized the personal appearance of the archetypal, alchemical image of *conjunctio*. When all the number crunching was done, the aspect of the Sun conjunct the Moon in the 180 marriage partners was highly significant. The result was very positive. But, as Marie Louise von Franz recounts, 'Jung was, however, not comfortable.'

She relates an experience that Jung had at this time as he sat in front of his tower at Bollingen. In the dance of light and shadow on the stonework, he recognized the face of the mischievous trickster Mercury laughing at him. Had he been played a trick? The astrological experiment was working well, but outside the confines of the laboratory, Jung recognized that he was emotionally invested to 'an unusual degree' in the work. The image of the Sun-Moon as *conjunctio* activated an 'excited state'. Jung recognized that his affective state had invited Mercurius, the out-of-bounds god, to slip into and slip up the experiment. ⁵⁰



Mercurius

Back to the laboratory. Another batch of data was analyzed – in all a total of 966 horoscopes. But the initial results were not duplicated; instead, another equally meaningful aspect, the Moon conjunct Moon, emerged as highly significant in the second batch. In the third and smallest batch, another noteworthy aspect, the Moon conjunct the Ascendant, was statistically significant. The most important astrological trinity of the Sun, Moon and Ascendant was highlighted. Yet when all three batches were merged, these standout combinations became markedly decreased. What Jung was looking for presented separately, but not collectively; appeared in the moment, but not over time. But as he said, 'one has to have a very thick skin not to be impressed by the fact that, out of fifty possibilities, three times precisely those turned up as maxima which are regarded by [astrological] tradition as typical.'

On one hand the total statistical results were not valid, yet separately each batch was meaningful as it validated Jung's expectation. He remarked: 'it is just what I call a synchronistic phenomena.'⁵¹ Like other divinatory traditions, astrology is mercurial - it slips through the net of causality and crosses psychic borders, unchecked by rational constructs.

Jung took a cue from the 'curious behaviour' of the statistics and decided to go a step further. He chose three people whose 'psychological status was accurately known' and had each one analyze twenty marriage pairs drawn at random. The first person was a 'woman patient' in a 'state of intense emotional excitement'. The second was also a female patient, whose main problem was to assert herself in 'the face of her self-suppressive tendencies'. The third woman had 'strong inner oppositions'. A batch was analyzed separately by one of these women and the different results were highly significant for Jung. He pointed out that the astrological results mirrored the subject's emotional state, as if by observing the data, they had affected what they were observing. While astrological statements 'rested on a precarious foundation', Jung accepts that astrologers, like himself, were involved in 'a secret, mutual connivance' which 'existed between the material and the psychic state of the astrologer.' Simply, we are not outside looking at the experiment, but we are an essential part of it. Jung's astrological research echoed this secret, mutual collusion between psyche and matter, subject and object. Synchronicity aligns the subject-object split for a moment in time. In the astrological experiment, synchronicity manifested, but statistical proof was questionable!

Later, Jung honoured Mercury, a god of synchronicity, by carving him into the masonry where his face had been shaped through the marriage of light and dark. I wonder if he thought about his Sun in Leo marrying Emma's Moon in Leo, or his Moon in Taurus with Sigmund's Sun in Taurus. However, he does mention an interesting and quite amazing synchrony that occurs in light of the marriage of the Sun and Moon. At a dinner party that Jung attended during this time, the table had to be reset to accommodate an 'esteemed' male guest. In haste the table was rearranged. And during dinner its was noted that of the eight dinner guests there were four Sun – Moon combinations, and they just happened to be sitting opposite one another.

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Because of the rush to rearrange the table, Jung mentions that his hostess, who was fluent in astrology, had no opportunity to deliberately arrange the guests in this way, so the 'unconscious had a free hand in secretly arranging the "marriages". ⁵³ And while it was never revealed who the 'esteemed' male guest was, I venture a guess that it was Wolfgang Pauli, who sits opposite Jung, and whose Taurus Sun marries Jung's Taurus Moon!

Time as a Psychological Principle

Jung noted that when there was a constant renewal of interest or when emotions 'tipped the scales in the favour of the unconscious', then a creative process was set in motion that could not be logically explained. And this, he suggested, is why mantic methods are so effective: 'by touching an unconscious aptitude they stimulate interest, curiosity, expectation, hope and fear, and consequently evoke a corresponding preponderance of the unconscious.'⁵⁴. When this occurs, the symbols engage us in subjective experiences and focus us on interior and deeper meaning, not in a factual, but a more amplificatory, reflective and personal way ...when we turn towards these experiences, another way of knowing is aroused. When working with a client, this is when the symbol turns to a mutual experience, a transferential level - this shared and subtle coexistence that Jung called the 'secret mutual connivance'.

While Jung's stories of his own experiences and those of his clients and colleagues demonstrate uncanny coincidences beyond what we would normally consider a chance happening, how might we derive the meaning from this breach of time to conclude that it is a *meaningful coincidence*. Jung recognized that meaningful coincidences were numerous and he categorized three psychic states that connected concurrences in time and space:

- 1. The coincidence of the observer's psychic state with a corresponding observable external event with no causal link
- 2. The coincidence of the observer's psychic state with a corresponding external event happening outside the observer's field of perception
- 3. The coincidence of the observer's psychic state with a corresponding future event⁵⁵

The first state can be seen in Jung's account of the scarab beetle that appears at his consulting room window just as his client is telling a dream of a golden scarab. This story is well known and often quoted as it demonstrates how psyche breaches the surface of the outer world in a way that is irrational. The client as Jung describes was 'psychologically inaccessible' as she was highly rational with an 'impeccably geometrical idea of reality'. He resigned himself to the hope that something irrational would burst 'the instinctual retort into which she had sealed herself'. Psyche cooperated. While she was telling her dream of the night before there was a rapping at the window behind Jung. She had just shared that in the dream she had received the gift of a golden scarab jewelry piece. Jung got up, opened the window and caught the insect, a scarab whose gold-green colour matched her dream image. He handed her the beetle and said: 'Here is your scarab'. Her rational defenses were punctured.⁵⁶ In that moment the inner and outer images were simultaneous, as if the psyche had temporalized for the moment. Just one of many stories of meaningful coincidence that Jung had experienced.

Psychological states are not subject to the same causative structure as physical states; for instance, when in the grip of an emotional charge or a poignant encounter, the awareness of linear time is distorted. Jung suggested that causal connectivity breaks down due to psychic revitalization, that is, when there is a considerable emotional affect. As he demonstrated, affective factors, subjectivity,

participation, feeling, sentiment and memory all influence the deconstruction of causally-based experiments. Unconscious dynamics alter our experience of chronological time.



The agents of the unconscious stirred in these affecting situations are the archetypes, prompting Jung to suggest that most synchronistic phenomena he observed 'can be easily shown to have a direct connection with an archetype'. ⁵⁷ This archetypal force that underpins synchronicity is often numinous and wondrous and accelerates the intuitive faculties. Given that 'synchronicity seem[s] to be bound up with the archetypes' ⁵⁸, the meaning is to be found through reflection on what archetypal pattern has been simultaneously aroused by the psychological impact and influence in the moment. Jung identified that 'the collective unconscious surrounds us on all sides' and that 'whenever we come in contact with an archetype we enter into relationship with transconscious, metapsychic factors'. ⁵⁹

This anecdote demonstrates Jung's premise that synchronistic, spontaneous, unconscious processes challenge our opinions, decisions and self-interests. A coincidence, an accident, a chance encounter or a random event often constellates a meaningful process that assists us in considering other possibilities or choices. Similar to dreams, synchronicities, along with the awareness of unconscious processes, opens the psychic landscape onto a wider and more holistic view of the engaged moment. This invites us to yield to our consciously-held attitudes and beliefs.

This story concerns time, literally and metaphorically, and how it can reveal an alternative way to see through a situation when aware of the unconscious elements presenting in the moment

Henry Fierz, who we met earlier, was assigned to publish a book by a recently deceased scientist and the publishers wanted Jung's judgement of the book. Jung agreed to read the book and offer his opinion. An appointment was made for five o'clock. The appointment began on time but as Fierz describes, the discussion was 'rather sharp', as Jung did not agree that the book should be published. At one point Jung looked at his wristwatch and asked: "When did you come?" Fierz answered "at 5 pm, as arranged". "But that's queer" Jung replied "my watch came back from the watchmaker this morning after a complete revision, and now I have 5.05. But you must have been here much longer."

The correct time was 5.35. Jung conceded that Fierz had the right time, and he had the wrong time. He then asked to discuss the publication again, and in this discussion, Jung agreed that the book

should be published. The mistake of time had confronted Jung with his certainty in that moment. At the same time, he considered the unconscious quality that had presented him with a counterpoint to his opinion about the book. Knowing that more than 5 minutes had elapsed was not reflected in the outer world by his watch. This lapse in time challenged his inner conviction. Rather than dismiss the connection, he reconsidered that his conscious attitude also may have been distorted.

In that moment of realization that his newly serviced watch had stopped, Jung recognized the unconscious at work. But what underlying archetype may have been presenting in that moment? The precision and quality of Swiss watches is celebrated and the brand 'Swiss-made' implies that a Swiss watch will last a lifetime, perhaps an aion!. But is precision and chronology in the way of the moment? The confluence of material images like the watch, watchmaker, exact time with characteristics like authority and judgement are in accord with Chronos/Saturn, an archetype resonant in that moment, as Jung was the expert whose advice, acknowledgment and blessing was being sought. Chronos also symbolizes time and stoppages. Through reflecting on the archetypal symbols in that moment, Jung embraced the supportive and discerning qualities of the senex. He reworked his consciously-held view, agreeing that the book should be published.

As Richard Tarnas points out, this ability to read the atmosphere is twofold:

- 1. the ability to think and perceive symbolically, including the sensitivity to metaphor and analogy, and
- 2. an openness to the interconnectivity of the outer and inner world. 61

Jung was masterful at both these. He was a mentor figure for thinking symbolically, trusting Psyche, living a psychological life. From an early age, he was introduced to spiritual and scientific systems, where he experienced the interconnectivity between the psychological and physical worlds, dream images and waking experiences, 'the stream of life'. With a great number of these experiences, it seems commonplace for Jung to be comfortable between these two worlds, as this delightful story described. However, it is an uneasy comfort, living a psychological life in a physical world that does not see or value internality or mystery, one that is unfamiliar with Psyche's ways. As he said: 'The difference between most people and myself is that for me the "dividing walls" are transparent.'62 Most people want certainty from outside themselves in facts and theorems, and cannot see through to the other side of the wall. For most people the dividing walls are opaque.

Marie Lousie von Franz in her lectures *On Divination and Synchronicity* says that when Jung first put forward his hypothesis of synchronicity, there was a great deal of discussion whether synchronistic events had a certain regularity, or were bound by laws, and if so, were these events predictable. But she tells us that: 'Jung, after long reflection and discussion, came to the conclusion that we have to admit, much as it annoys our rational minds, that synchronistic events are just-so stories.' That is, this is the nature of the unconscious. She concludes that it is not the actual event that is meaningful, but the quality of that event, the quality of time.

Jung's way of thinking that led from reframing qualitative time into his concept of synchronicity was articulated in his 1954 letter to Andre Barbault, the eminent French astrologer.

Qualitative time. This is a notion I used formerly but I have replaced it with the idea of synchronicity, which is analogous to sympathy or *correspondentia*, or to Leibniz's *preestablished harmony*. Time in itself consists of nothing. It is only a *modus cogitandi* [a way of thinking] that is used to express and formulate the flux of things and events, just as space is nothing but a way of describing the existence of a body.... But "qualitative"

time" is a tautology and means nothing, whereas synchronicity (not synchronism] expresses the parallelism and analogy between events in so far as they are noncausal.⁶⁴

For Jung synchronicity included psychic layers of feeling, intersections through time, the meaningful turn of an event into an encounter with the unconscious. It was not just the qualities of the moment, but the consciousness they awoke, a meaningfulness that lasted a lifetime, perhaps many lifetimes. These experiences are visceral and engage us with another intelligence beyond causality and empirical knowing. After his publication on *Synchronicity*, Jung became more comfortable with his exposition of psychological timing and acausal events. In later years Jung felt freer to make statements, like this one, when referring to the holy trinity of time, space and causality: 'I am convinced that something ought to be done about this blind and dangerous belief in the security of the scientific Trinity'. 65

The incompatibility of the two worlds of temporal and eternal time is well-articulated by Marie Louise von Franz:

all these symbolic references to the meeting of those two worlds seem to show that the world of time and the world of acausal orderedness outside time, are two incompatible systems that cannot be put together but are complementary. They are, that is, more than complementary - they are incompatible and we cannot imagine how they are linked to each other, which is probably the reason why we cannot establish any law of synchronicity. ⁶⁶

Of course, she is referring to a scientific law, as Jung did demonstrate a psychological law. Gaston Bachelard who wrote eloquently about the polarity of concepts and images, reason and imagination and science and poetry also expresses the incompatibility of these two worlds.

The axes of poetry and science are opposed from the start. All that philosophy can hope is to make poetry and science complementary, to unite them as two well-chosen contraries.⁶⁷

This union was the *coniunctio oppositorum* or the unity of opposites of which Jung spoke. That image appeared in *Aion* as the two fish of Pisces bound together, yet directionally opposed. It was also the image of the Sun – Moon conjunctions in the astrological marriage experiment. Jung's concept of synchronicity was an image of his unitarian explorations of where the physical and the psychical realities crossover in time. Impressed by the alchemical image of one world or the Unus Mundus, a world where matter and psyche are not yet separated or analyzed, his synchronicity experiment proved that when these two worlds are no longer separate, they coexist in an astonishing way. We live in an environment which is a living matrix of potential synchronistic meaning, which remains mostly invisible. Yet, at moments, eternality pierces the temporal, and in that moment, we recognize a parallel condition in the self.⁶⁸ We are connected to a larger time – a mythic time – and like Jung, the "dividing walls" become transparent.

Marie-Louise von Franz expressed this beautifully when she said: 'the most impressive thing about synchronistic occurrences, the thing which really constitutes their numinosity, is the fact that in them the duality of soul and matter seems to be eliminated'.⁶⁹

Synchronicity has slipped into common use – it's accredited with shaping destiny, self-transformation and enlightenment, omen-like qualities, even divine confirmation that you're on the right path. Humans do like to explain things. Synchronicity casts its shadow when aligned with a narcissistic desire to explain phenomena in terms of one's self interest, or when it is confused with manic states, used for self-promotion, quick fixes or reasons why. Jung reminded us to reflect on the archetype that

has breached the surface to confront our self-interest and conscious position. He demonstrated how the emotive affect in the synchronous moment was a line of connection between eternal and temporal time..

Carlo Rovelli is a poetic physicist. In his book *The Order of Time* he concludes his illuminating journey through time by saying:

Perhaps, ultimately, the emotional dimension of time is not the film of mist that prevents us from apprehending the nature of time objectively. Perhaps, the emotion of time is precisely what time is for us.⁷⁰

Jung's synchronicity was time affected and moved by unconscious, acausal, soulful and emotive colours that brought meaning to the present, the now, that moment psyche and matter are aligned. It exists in the presence of each moment, if only we could be in the present. It is an exposition of ensoulment, a living experience of how psyche participates in the moving image of eternity to offer not only meaning, but the profound sense of feeling cared for and being one with something much greater than we can imagine.

To philosophy, psychology and physics, I would like to add another p – poetry - to make it a quaternity! Certainly, TS Eliot's many references to time in Burnt Norton are memorable, but I will end with Emily Dickinson's Forever – is composed of Nows –

Forever – is composed of Nows –

'Tis not a different time –

Except for Infiniteness –

And Latitude of Home –

From this – experienced Here –
Remove the Dates – to These –
Let Months dissolve in further Months –
And Years – exhale in Years –

Without Debate – or Pause –
Or Celebrated Days –
No different Our Years would be
From Anno Dominies –

ENDNOTES

¹¹ William McGuire and R.F.C. Hull, *Interviews and Encounters*, Princeton, University Press, Princeton, NJ: 1977, p. 234. On a personal note, Eliade noted:

At seventy-seven years of age, Professor C.G. Jung has lost nothing of his extraordinary vitality, his astonishing youthfulness He has just published, one after another, three new books: on the symbolism of Aion (Time), on Synchronicity and "Answer to Job", which has already given rise to sensational reactions especially among theologians.

- ¹² Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, translated by Richard and Clara Winston, Pantheon Books, New York, NY: 1973, p. 4.
- ¹³ CG Jung, *Dream Analysis*, edited by William McGuire, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ: 1984.

- ¹⁸ C. G. Jung, "On Synchronicity", from *Man and Time*, edited by Joseph Campbell, Bollingen Series 3, Princeton University Press, Princetin, NJ: 1983, p. 201.
- ¹⁹ C. G. Jung, "On Synchronicity", from *Man and Time*, edited by Joseph Campbell, Bollingen Series 3, Princeton University Press, Princetin, NJ: 1983, p.211
- ²⁰ C. G. Jung, "On Synchronicity", from *Man and Time*, edited by Joseph Campbell, Bollingen Series 3, Princeton University Press, Princetin, NJ: 1983, p.203

¹ St. Augustine, Confessions, XI, 14, translated by F. J. Sheed, London:1944.

² See Carlo Rovelli, *The Order of Time*, translated by Erica Segre and Simon Carnell, Penguin Books, London: 2017, pp. 156 – 158.

³ Albert Einstein and Michele Besso, *Correspondence*, 1903 – 1955, Hermann, Paris: 1972. March 21, 1955.

⁴ Michael Chase, "Time and Eternity from Plotinus and Boethius to Einstein" ΣΧΟΛΗ Vol. 8. 1 (2014) © M. Chase, 2014 www.nsu.ru/classics/schole p.79. Contemporary eternalists refers to the philosophical approach to the nature of time.

⁵ CG Jung, CW Vol 8, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 966.

⁶ The Roman 2nd Century CE Mithraic god was used by Jung as the front piece to Aion.

⁷ Michael Chase, Time and Eternity from Plotinus and Boethius to Einstein, p.77

⁸ Plotinus, V 1,4, translated by Stephen MacKenna, Penguin, London: 1999, p. 351.

⁹ CG Jung, CW Vol 8, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 843.

¹⁰ Sonu Shamdasani (ed.), The Red Book, A Reader's Edition, translated by Mark Kyburz, John Peck and Sonu Shamdasani, W.W. Norton & Company, London: 2009, p.27.

¹⁴ See David Fierz, Memories of C.G. Jung on Carl Jung Depth Psychology website - https://carljungdepthpsychologysite.blog/2020/07/15/memory-of-c-g-jung-by-henry-k-fierz/#.YJ3cj6gzbIU

¹⁵ See Joseph Cambray, *Synchronicity*, Texas A&M University Press, USA; 2012, pp.7-8 and C.G. Jung, *Dream Analysis*, p. 417.

¹⁶ CG Jung, CW Vol 8, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 866, footnote 59.

¹⁷ CG Jung, CW Vol 8, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 816.

²¹ Barbara Hannah, *Jung His Life and Work*, Michael Joseph, London: 1977, p. 305.

- ²³ *G.G Jung Letters*, *Volume II*, translated by RFC Hull, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ: 1974, pp.108-109.
- ²⁴ *The Freud/Jung Letters*, translated by Ralph Manheim and R.F.C. Hull, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ: 1975,p.384.
- ²⁵ CG Jung, CW Vol 18, The Symbolic Life, 140
- ²⁶ Ira Progoff, Jung, Synchronicity, and Human Destiny, Dell Publishing, New York, NY: 1973, p. 151.
- ²⁷ https://nautil.us/issue/93/forerunners/the-synchronicity-of-wolfgang-pauli-and-carl-jung
- ²⁸ Joseph Cambray, Synchronicity, Texas A&M University Press, USA; 2012, p. 9.
- ²⁹ In his letter to Freud June, 1911, he says: 'My evenings are taken up very largely with astrology'. See William McGuire, Ed. *The Freud/Jung Letters*, translated by Ralph Manheim and R.F.C. Hull, Princeton University Press (Princeton, NJ: 1974), 427. In his 1949 foreword to the I Ching Jung says 'For more than thirty years I have interested myself in this oracle technique'. See *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, The Richard Wilhelm Translation, Routledge & Kegan Pauk, London: 1968, p. xxii.
- ³⁰ CG Jung, CW Vol 15, The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature, 84.
- ³¹ Roderick Main (ed.), *Jung on Synchronicity and the Paranormal*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ: 1997, p. 23.
- ³² The I Ching or Book of Changes, The Richard Wilhelm Translation, p. xxxiii.
- ³³ CG Jung, CW Vol 15, *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature*, 82. Jung and Wilhelm had collaborated on the book The Secret of the Golden Flower for Jung's commentary on this see CG Jung, CW Vol 13, *Alchemical Studies*, 1 -84.
- 34 See Michael Harding, *Hymns to Ancient Gods*, Penguin Arkana, London, 1992, for a critique of Jungian views, including Synchronicity (pp. 23 41), and astrology.
- ³⁵ Carl Jung, *Memories*, *Dreams*, *Reflections*, p. 193.
- ³⁶ For instance, astrologers use physical measurements of a planet's motion, speed, light, position as well as angular and other measurable relationships between planets. How these quantifiable methods then delineate or inspire meaning for an individual level is the mystery of astrology, a mystery which has had many attempts at solving. But like any great mystery, it eludes solving.
- ³⁷ Deidre Bair, *Jung A Biography*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, MA: 2003, p. 825.
- ³⁸ CG Jung, CW Vol 8, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 826-7.
- ³⁹ For an engaging examination of Jung's astrological connections and Aion, see Liz Greene, *Jung Studies in Astrology*, Routledge, New York, NY: 2018, pp. 153 -156.
- ⁴⁰ G.G Jung Letters, Volume I, translated by RFC Hull, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ: 1973, p. 285.
- 41 Liz Greene, *Jung Studies in Astrology*, Routledge, New York, NY: 2018, pp. 167 168. She also gave Jung two other possible dates -2129 and 2245.

²² G.G Jung Letters, Volume II, translated by RFC Hull, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ: 1975, pp.404 -405.

- ⁴² Maggie Hyde's *Jung and Astrology*, The Aquarian Press, London:1992 is been a wonderful and insightful guide into Jung and Synchronicity especially with the astrological experiments. The book at its Saturn return is still and evocative and exciting journey into Jung's relationship with astrology.
- ⁴³ *G.G Jung Letters*, *Volume II*, translated by RFC Hull, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ: 1975, pp.175 176.
- ⁴⁴ Deidre Bair, *Jung A Biography*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, MA: 2003, p. 549 -550.
- 45 Birth times had been recorded in Europe for some time. Jung stresses that those who gathered the material did not know the aim of the study.
- ⁴⁶ The 180 pairs were also analyzed as a control group, that is each person had a possibility of 179 partners, generating 32,200 unmarried pairs.
- ⁴⁷ CG Jung, CW Vol 8, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 896f
- ⁴⁸ CG Jung, CW Vol 8, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 904
- ⁴⁹ CG Jung, CW Vol 8, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 438.
- ⁵⁰ Marie Louise Von Franz, *C.G. Jung: His Myth in Out Time*, translated by William H. Kennedy, G.P. Putman's Sons, New York, NY: 1975, p.238.
- ⁵¹ CG Jung, CW Vol 8, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 905.
- ⁵² CG Jung, CW Vol 8, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 897 900.
- ⁵³ CG Jung, CW Vol 8, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 912.
- ⁵⁴ CG Jung, CW Vol 8, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 912.
- ⁵⁵ C. G. Jung, "On Synchronicity", from *Man and Time*, edited by Joseph Campbell, Bollingen Series 3, Princeton University Press, Princetin, NJ: 1983, p.206
- ⁵⁶ CG Jung, CW Vol 8, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 982.
- ⁵⁷ CG Jung, CW Vol 8, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, 912.
- ⁵⁸ CG Jung, CW Vol 8, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, 842.
- ⁵⁹ G.G Jung Letters, Volume I, p. 433.
- ⁶⁰ See David Fierz, Memories of C.G. Jung on Carl Jung Depth Psychology website https://carljungdepthpsychologysite.blog/2020/07/15/memory-of-c-g-jung-by-henry-k-fierz/#.YJ3cj6gzbIU
- ⁶¹ Richard Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche*, Penguin Viking, New York, NY: 2006, pp. 54 55.
- ⁶² Carl Jung, *Memories*, *Dreams*, *Reflections*, p. 356.
- ⁶³ Marie Louise Von Franz, *On Divination and Synchronicity*, Inner City Books, Toronto: 1980, p. 100-1. Jung used the term 'Just-So in CW8:965.
- ⁶⁴ G.G Jung Letters, Volume II, translated by RFC Hull, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ: 1975, p.176.
- ⁶⁵ G.G Jung Letters, Volume II, translated by RFC Hull, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ: 1975, p.216.

⁶⁶ Marie Louise Von Franz, On Divination and Synchronicity, Inner City Books, Toronto: 1980, p. 108.

 $^{^{67}}$ Gaston Bachelard, *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie*, translated by Colette Gaudin, Spring, Publications, Putnam, CT:2014, pp. 59 – 60.

⁶⁸ See Richard Tarnas, Cosmos and Psyche, p.56.

⁶⁹ Marie Louise Von Franz, C.G. Jung: His Myth in Out Time, p. 247.

⁷⁰ Carlo Rovelli, *The Order of Time*, p.174.