

**PUTTING THE SINN BACK INTO SYNCHRONICITY:
SOME SPIRITUAL IMPLICATIONS
OF SYNCHRONISTIC EXPERIENCES**

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Introduction

I ought to begin by apologising to anyone I may have lured to read this paper under false pretences. The word 'Sinn' in the title is not a spelling mistake, and I regret that I have nothing novel to contribute on the subject of vice and wickedness. Sinn, spelt with a capital 's' and two 'n's and pronounced as though the 's' were a 'z', is a German word for 'meaning'; it appears in the phrase 'sinnvolle koinzidenz', 'meaningful coincidence', which is C. G. Jung's (1875-1961) most succinct definition of his concept of synchronicity.¹ A slightly fuller definition of synchronicity, which will be clarified and amply illustrated in what follows, is that it is *the meaningful acausal paralleling of events, usually of an inner psychic event with an outer physical event.*² A simple example is where one is thinking intensely about an obscure subject such as the alleged mystical significance of a certain number sequence, then, unable to pursue these thoughts any further, one switches on the radio to relax, only to find that one is listening to an unscheduled and illuminating discussion of precisely this subject. Here, the psychic event of one's intense thoughts and the physical event of hearing the discussion on the radio obviously parallel each other in a way which is likely to strike one as meaningful, yet neither of the events can have caused the other in any normal sense. In discussions of such experiences, attention usually focuses either on the improbability of the paralleling between the events or on the certainty with which a normal causal relationship between the events can be ruled out.³ When the meaning of the experiences is considered, it is usually in terms of how they further the practical or psychological needs and goals of the experiencer.⁴ The possible spiritual meaning of the experiences—that is, succinctly, their significance in terms of one's relationship to a dimension of existence that transcends the psychophysical—has, with few exceptions, been variously denied, neglected, or treated too superficially and idiosyncratically⁵—in spite of the fact that this level of meaning was implicit, albeit in a problematical way, in Jung's original conception of synchronicity.⁶

In this paper I shall present and comment on an extensive series of synchronistic experiences in which spiritual meaning is conspicuously present. I shall bring this spiritual meaning into focus both phenomenologically, through discussing some of the experiencers' own responses to their experiences, and analytically, through teasing out some of the spiritual aspects arguably implicit in synchronicity as such. This neglected spiritual meaning which I hope to elicit is the Sinn that I would like to see put back into synchronicity.

The Birth of Athena: a Synchronistic Narrative

The synchronistic experiences I shall examine happened to Edward Thornton and have been recounted by him in his autobiographical book *The Diary of a Mystic*.⁷ Thornton, a self-made Bradford wool merchant, manifested an early propensity towards various kinds of mystical experience, which he developed through a lifelong practical interest in both eastern and western religion. Shortly after the Second World War, the Dominican Fr Victor White introduced him to C. G. Jung and his associates in Zurich. There Thornton underwent analysis and trained to become a Jungian therapist himself, though he afterwards came to feel that this was not his true vocation. The following series of events happened to him around this period in the mid to late 1940s.

(1) Thornton relates that the following occurred on 20 October 1944:

During a period when I was particularly devoted to our Blessed Lord ... I saw in clear daylight [he was in his living room] a vision of what, to me, was the interior of a Greek Temple ... In front of me stood what I took to be an altar upon which was the image of a white owl.⁸

(2) He was, he says, 'all the more moved by this scene when I began to return to ordinary consciousness, as during meditation the previous day, I had had the vivid impression of a live owl'⁹

(3) Further, 'some days before that [I] had experienced a dream in which a flock of owls came swooping down over my head as I walked through a wooded glade.'¹⁰

Thornton soon learned one of the main symbolical meanings of the owl and found that this gave profound personal significance to his experiences. As he explains:

[T]he owl was the bird sacred to Athena the Virgin-goddess and Protectress of Athens. Her supreme attribute was said to be that of Divine Wisdom. Later, when I started to offer particular devotion to the Blessed Virgin, I found that one of Her aspects, contained in the Loretan Litany is *Sedes Sapientiae* (Seat of Wisdom); consequently I found that I had a special affinity with the Eternal Mother in her aspect of Divine Wisdom.¹¹

(4) The above events occurred before Thornton's meetings with Jung and involvement with analytical psychology. When, a few years later, he started going out to Zurich, 'the owl,' he says, 'again began to appear in my dreams and visions'¹²

(5) And:

I also found that a couple of owls had come to nest quite near to my garden in Yorkshire, reminding me continually of their presence by hooting at night. Although this may seem to be a perfectly natural phenomenon, we had never before had owls in our garden as far as anyone could remember.¹³

This appearance of the owls in the garden was the first physical event in the series. As such, it also marks the occurrence of the first conspicuous synchronicity; that is, it involves a meaningful acausal paralleling of inner psychic with outer physical events. It is meaningful because of what the owl symbolised for Thornton (his connection to the Blessed Virgin); and it is acausal because his dreams and visions did not cause the owl to appear in his garden, nor did the eventual appearance of the owl in the garden cause his earlier dreams and visions.

(6) Now a different set of motifs started appearing. Thornton reports a dream of 17 March 1948 in which 'I was examining the back of my brother's head. At the top of the spinal column there was a wound which reminded me of a vagina.'¹⁴

(7) This caused him to recall that 'About a month earlier I had dreamt that my head was to be shaved after the manner of a monk in the oriental tradition'¹⁵

(8) Then, on 10 May 1948,¹⁶ he had the following dream:

I was in a room where an operation was to take place, before a class of medical students. Professor Jung was in the vicinity. Before the operation began, all stood up and sang a hymn. When we came to the end I continued with: *Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto*, but soon realised that this was not part of the hymn, and felt somewhat embarrassed. A surgeon standing by me, however, smiled and assured me that I need not worry as many make the mistake of continuing as I did. It appeared to be the school song.¹⁷

With these dreams, we have three further inner experiences. At this stage, they seemed thematically unrelated to the earlier owl incidents, though Thornton recognised that they too required to be interpreted symbolically. He suggests:

The dream where the stress is laid on the vagina-like wound contains the first intimation of symbolic copulation and a consequent birth, but in a spiritual sense, as the next head-shaving dream implies. The so-called school-hymn in the [third dream] has close association with a hymn to Aesculapius, the God of Healing ...¹⁸

(9) Both sets of motifs continued to occur in further inner experiences. On 7 June 1948 Thornton experienced an 'interior vision' during meditation, in which he saw 'The luminous form of two owls sitting upon the branch of a tree with the full moon behind them. As I gaze upon them they merge into one.'¹⁹

(10) And on 23 September 1948 he dreamed the following:

I was going the round of solitary cells in a prison with my brother, whose job it was to awaken the various inmates by chopping their foreheads with an axe. Each occupant was found kneeling in the classical Christian way at a prayer desk, with his head resting on a block. As we entered the last cell my brother gave one chop at the slumberer's forehead and immediately awakened him. I felt that I was the one to whom this had happened and became fully conscious.²⁰

(11) It was not until the following year, 1949, that Thornton felt he began properly to understand these dreams and other experiences. The key was provided when he heard Karl Kerényi lecturing in Zurich on Pallas Athena and expounding the main myth concerning the goddess's birth. Quoting the Homeric Hymn to Athena, Kerényi related as follows:

'... Hephaistos ... assisted at the birth and smote Zeus's skull with a double-edged axe or [a] hammer. Pallas Athene sprang forth ... All the [im]mortals were afraid [and astonished at] the sight of her, as she sprang out [in] front of aegis-bearing Zeus, from his immortal head, brandishing her sharp javelin. Mightily quaked great Mount Olympus beneath the weight of the owl-eyed maiden.'²¹

Through this episode from myth Thornton was able to appreciate the interconnection of his two series of inner experiences, those concerning the owl and those concerning some kind of wound or operation to the head. Both related to the myth of Athena's birth: the first because she is symbolised by the owl, and the second because her birth was effected by an axe-blow to Zeus's

head. The timeliness of Thornton's learning about this myth can itself be considered a synchronicity; that is, there was a meaningful but acausal connection between his inner state of interest in the motifs of the owl and of the head-wound or operation and his outer physical encountering of a myth which involved precisely these two motifs.

Knowledge of the myth enabled Thornton to crystallise his own interpretation of the meaning of the events so far. He considered the overall pattern to represent 'the prefiguration of a dynamic experience which is related to the feminine principle in that attribute of its validity which is expressed in masculine psychology, namely the birth of Divine Wisdom in man.'²²

A Parallel Experience

(12) The next and final episode before the full synchronistic status of the series of incidents began to reveal itself occurred on 2 April 1949. Thornton was visiting a local osteopath, having dislocated the little toe of his left foot. While the osteopath was massaging and strapping up his foot, she 'quite unexpectedly' began telling Thornton some of her own experiences. She claimed to be 'mediumistic', 'a born healer', and she mentioned 'an experience which impressed her profoundly.'²³ As Thornton relates:

She felt a crack open suddenly at the top of her head while lying in bed, and blood was running down from it all over her body. Upon touching herself she discovered that there was no blood and that she was quite well, but felt that the end had come and that she was quite ready.²⁴

The osteopath came to believe that this experience related to her need to accept unconditionally her vocation as a healer: 'she realised,' Thornton tells us, 'that a power was working through her, and that she must submit to it absolutely.'²⁵ She told Thornton as he was taking his leave of her that 'she had never before spoken so intimately to anyone.'²⁶

This incident paralleled to a remarkable extent the inner experiences that Thornton himself had been having so far, as well as his interpretation of them. Just as he had been dreaming about wounds to the head and had considered these dreams to constitute some kind of revelation concerning an imminent spiritual transformation (the birth of Divine Wisdom, as he articulated it), so the osteopath hallucinated having a wound on her head, took the experience as a kind of revelation concerning her vocation, and considered herself to have been spiritually transformed by it. This paralleling is again both meaningful and acausal, thereby qualifying the incident as a further synchronicity. But even more striking, as we shall now see, was the prefigurative nature both of this encounter with the osteopath and of Thornton's other dreams and visions.

Subsequent Events and Synchronistic Climax

(13) On 20 April 1949, eighteen days after the visit to the osteopath, Thornton 'experienced a terrible spasm beginning, as it seemed, in the left foot, and working up to the heart.'²⁷ The left side of his body became paralysed and his speech was impaired. He was taken to the Duke of York's Hospital in Bradford where initial diagnoses suggested the problem lay in the upper region of the cerebral hemisphere behind the right forehead. Later he was moved to Leeds Infirmary where it was confirmed that he had a tumour over the right hemisphere, on which it would be necessary to operate.

Thus, Thornton's dreams regarding wounds to the head and an operation taking place (6, 7, 8, 10) proved to be synchronistic with his actual life. It is also interesting to note that the

osteopath felt moved to relate her head-wound vision while massaging Thornton's left foot (12)—the part of his body where the symptoms of his illness first manifested.

(14) Once diagnosed and admitted to hospital, Thornton remembered two other relevant dreams. First, on 24 December 1948: 'I was looking in a glass [i.e., a mirror] and I or someone was drawing a silver wire from my right temple.'²⁸

(15) The second dream had never been written down but Thornton says he 'remembered it quite vividly': 'I was looking in a glass and found that the skin on my right temple was like parchment, as if it had dried up after a wound.'²⁹ He now had Dr C. A. Meier, one of Jung's closest associates in Zurich and Thornton's own analyst, informed of these dreams by telephone. Meier assured him that they gave 'a perfect prognosis concerning the illness and operation.'³⁰

(16) Nor was it just Thornton's series of head-wound dreams that were synchronistic. His dreams and visions involving owls proved to be so also—and in a way which, at the time, impressed him even more powerfully. Having been moved to Leeds Infirmary, he was composing himself for the night, when

I happened to look out of the window, and to my great amazement saw a colossal bronze owl looking down on me from the top of one of the spires of Leeds City Hall which was situated directly opposite. ... the image of the owl seemed to be just outside of my window.³¹

This appears to have been the most critical experience in the whole series and the one that moved Thornton most deeply:

I experienced a shudder, both of dread and holy awe, and the synchronicity of the happening struck me as soon as the first shock seemed to subside, and I realised its implication. I was under the special patronage of the Eternal Mother in her aspect of *Sedes Sapientiae*.³²

His interpretation seemed to be further confirmed for him when, 'casting my eyes further over to the right, across the tops of the buildings beyond the City Hall, I saw the figure of Athena with helmet, shield and lance, standing out above the tops of the surrounding buildings.'³³ (This statue, he later learned, stood on a public hall known as the Coliseum.)

That same night, while under the influence of his 'breathtaking experience', Thornton 'suddenly became aware that I had to prepare to die.'³⁴ He reflected on his life and faith and eventually reconciled himself to the fact of dying, to the point where he says he 'actually welcomed the experience.'³⁵ However, 'no sooner had I accepted the situation thus, than I knew in full clarity that I was not yet required to die.'³⁶ As soon as he realised this, he 'fell into an undisturbed sleep of peace and never had the slightest qualm or doubt as to the outcome of the operation.'³⁷

(17) The operation was performed on 10 May 1949. In several details it closely paralleled Thornton's earlier dreams. The dream about his head being shaved (7) was fulfilled when, as he relates, 'at 8 a.m. a male nurse arrived and shaved off my hair'³⁸

(18) After the operation, when the bandage was eventually removed from his head, 'I discovered that my skull had been cut right down the middle, thus fulfilling in the outer world the head-chopping dream [10] which I had experienced on September 24th of the previous year.'³⁹

(19) Again, 'I was also later to establish that I had experienced foreknowledge of the operation accompanied by the Hymn to Aesculapius in the early morning exactly one year before.'⁴⁰ That is, the operation was on 10 May 1949, while his dream of attending an operation had taken place on the morning of 10 May 1948 (8). Moreover, just as the operation commenced, a religious community with which Thornton had been associated began saying a High Mass on his behalf, thus reflecting the ritual and hymn of the dream.⁴¹

(20) One final incident closes the series. The following year, 1950, was pronounced Holy Year by the Vatican, and Thornton decided to visit Rome on a pilgrimage. There, as he recounts,

I was taken to see the small temple of Athena, and shown a photograph of two figures of the Goddess. This seemed to confirm the interior vision in which I had seen two owls which merged and became one [9]. It was pointed out to me that the two figures which stand side by side are identical, except for the engraved image on the front of each shield.⁴²

Synchronicity and Spirit

Altogether here I have isolated twenty incidents within Thornton's narrative, of which nine have a strong claim to being synchronistic (5, 11-13, 16-20)—eleven if one includes the implied fulfilment of the two dreams reported to Meier (14 and 15).⁴³ It is abundantly clear from the manner in which Thornton responded to these incidents that he himself was viewing them in a spiritual light. In summary, he appears to have believed that the transcendent or Divine, in the form of the Eternal Mother, was working directly in his life, revealing specific meanings to him and providentially arranging his experiences in order to bring about his spiritual transformation.

It is important to note that many of the experiences Thornton relates are dreams, visions, meditational realisations, and critical life events that are powerful in their own right. This might lead one to suspect that the core of Thornton's beliefs regarding his relationship to the Divine, as well as regarding the content of his specific 'revelations', could have been sustained even if these experiences had entirely lacked their eventual synchronistic status. However, I think it can be shown that in the actual event synchronicity contributed to the spiritual character of Thornton's experiences much that would otherwise have been absent or present only to a lesser degree.

First, synchronicity enhanced the sense of numinosity about the experiences.⁴⁴ It is true that a fairly strong emotional charge had accompanied some of Thornton's earlier inner experiences, making them especially 'vivid' or giving them the quality of 'visions' which he was 'moved by'.⁴⁵ But there was nothing to equal the 'great amazement', the 'shudder, both of dread and holy awe', or the 'shock' which he says attended his 'breathtaking' synchronicity of seeing the bronze owl from his hospital bedroom.⁴⁶

Second, synchronicity made available an inference that strengthened Thornton's sense of the transcendent. If two or more events are ordered but not from within the psychophysical, in the sense that the psychic events do not cause the correlated physical events or vice versa, then it may be that these events are ordered from a level that transcends the psychophysical.⁴⁷ Thornton made this inference continually and quite naturally, most conspicuously when he inferred from his synchronicity of seeing the bronze owl that he was 'under the special patronage of the Eternal Mother.'⁴⁸

Third, synchronicity gave to Thornton's series of experiences the character of a minor miracle. His various dreams and visions and encounter with the osteopath all related significantly to his subsequent illness and accompanying experiences, yet there seemed to be no plausible causal connection between the two sets of events. Their meaningful co-ordination seemed to transgress the usual limitations of what is considered psychophysically possible.⁴⁹

Fourth, synchronicity justified Thornton in considering the content of many of his experiences to be revelatory. For once one has inferred the operation within one's experiences of something transcendent, it is a simple step to viewing the specific content of those experiences as communications from the transcendent, especially when that content, as in Thornton's case, is highly intelligible.⁵⁰ This step was taken by Thornton throughout. The owl visions revealed to him his 'special affinity with the Eternal Mother';⁵¹ the head-wound/operation dreams revealed to him a 'first intimation of symbolic copulation and a consequent birth';⁵² when synchronistically co-ordinated, the two series of inner events revealed to him 'the prefiguration of a dynamic experience ... the birth of Divine Wisdom in man';⁵³ and seeing the bronze owl from his hospital bedroom revealed to him that he 'was under the special patronage of the Eternal Mother in her aspect of *Sedes Sapientiae*'.⁵⁴ Whereas earlier Thornton spoke of a 'special affinity' with the Eternal Mother, now, under the impact of his synchronicity, he speaks in more direct and intimate terms of the 'special patronage', the 'special protection',⁵⁵ and 'the overwhelming reality of the protecting grace of the Divine Mother'.⁵⁶

Fifth, synchronicity had a profound unifying effect on the whole field of Thornton's experiences. The very fact that an intimate non-causal connection can be experienced between the outer physical world and one's inner subjectivity implies that the separateness usually experienced between inner and outer, psychic and physical, or self and world can to a significant degree be dissolved.⁵⁷ This is symbolically expressed, as well as perhaps actualised, in Thornton's dreaming of two owls merged into one, then subsequently seeing the photograph of the two near-identical figures of Athena.⁵⁸ More generally, one could say that through revealing a profound paralleling between the psychic and physical events, synchronicity as it were adds a missing half to each, making the psychic events more embodied and the physical events more ensouled.⁵⁹ Thus, Thornton's appreciation of the myth of the birth of Athena deepened immensely when he found it being symbolically enacted in his own life. Conversely, his appreciation of the significance of his physical illness owed much of its depth to his ability to relate it to a psychic background of intimately acquired symbolic and mythic knowledge. Even further, the sense of unity was recognised by Thornton as existing not just between the psychic and the physical but between the psychophysical as a whole and a transcendent, spiritual, or divine aspect of reality.⁶⁰ Hence, he concluded his narrative by stating that 'One of the most profound things which I gained through this illness and the operation was an increased awareness of the Divine Immanence in the material universe.'⁶¹

Sixth and finally, synchronicity contributed substantially to the transformative impact of Thornton's experiences. Through establishing new relationships among psychic and physical events, synchronicity can effectively re-order both the general field of the psychophysical and the individual consciousness of the experiencer. Thus, Thornton's inner dreams and visions about owls and about a wound or operation to the head were brought into a new and more ordered relationship by his timely synchronistic encountering of the myth of the birth of Athena. This in itself deepened his understanding of the process of transformation in which he felt

himself to be involved. Later, the synchronistic paralleling between his inner experiences and illness precipitated even deeper transformations, such as his experience of symbolic death and rebirth.⁶²

Concluding Remarks

These, then, are the principal ways in which the specifically synchronistic character of Thornton's experiences contributed to his appreciation of their overall spiritual nature. Since all of the basic features of Thornton's synchronicities to which I have drawn attention are common to synchronicity as such—that is, to varying degrees all synchronicities are uncanny, irreducible to and unlimited by the psychophysical, informative, unitive, and re-ordering—it follows that the derived spiritual implications of numinosity, transcendence, miraculousness, revelation, immanence, and transformation are also potentially present in all synchronicities.⁶³

Clearly, experiencers are most likely to appreciate these implications if they, like Thornton, are already both alerted to the reality and dynamics of synchronicity and disposed to accept an overall spiritual worldview. In some cases, however, the transformative effect of synchronicity can be precisely to bring an experiencer to this position. As Arthur Koestler has noted, some coincidences can have

a dramatic impact which may have a lasting effect and lead to profound changes in a person's mental outlook—changes ranging from religious conversion in extreme cases, to a mere agnostic willingness to admit the existence of levels of reality beyond the vocabulary of rational thought.⁶⁴

One highly intelligent and critical experiencer whose case I have studied stated explicitly that his synchronicities, which are even more intricate and extensive than Thornton's, ended up for him 'proving the reality of the spiritual dimension of the universe.'⁶⁵

In conclusion, I would suggest that the recognition of an intimate relationship between synchronicity and spirituality could be valuable for the future study of both.⁶⁶ On the one hand, greater awareness of a possible spiritual dimension to synchronicity could alert one to the existence of deeper levels of intelligibility within synchronicity, especially within the often-cryptic symbolic content of the experiences. On the other hand, greater awareness of a synchronistic dimension to spirituality could lead to fresh insights into many of the traditional concepts and processes of spirituality, such as the nature of miracles and the dynamics of individual revelation. Above all and in sum, I think it would be worth recognising synchronicity as itself a distinctive but relatively unexplored category of spiritual experience.

NOTES

1. C. G. Jung, 'Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle' (1952), in *Collected Works*, vol. 8, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* (London: Routledge, 1991), 426.
2. This is distilled and slightly simplified from Jung's various formulations throughout 'Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle'.
3. See, e.g., Alister Hardy, Robert Harvie, and Arthur Koestler, *The Challenge of Chance: Experiments and Speculations* (London: Hutchinson, 1973); Brian Inglis, *Coincidence: A Matter of Chance—or Synchronicity?* (London: Hutchinson, 1990); and Caroline Watt, 'Psychology and Coincidences', *European Journal of Parapsychology* 8 (1990-1991): 66-84.
4. See, e.g., Michael Fordham, 'Reflections on the Archetypes and Synchronicity', chap. in *New Developments in Analytical Psychology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), 35-50; Alan Vaughan, *Incredible Coincidence: The Baffling World of Synchronicity* (New York: Ballantine, 1989 [1979]); and Ivor Grattan-Guinness, 'Coincidences as Spontaneous Psychical Phenomena', *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 52, no. 793 (1983): 59-71.
5. For a rejection of synchronicity as spiritually meaningful, see Mel Faber, *Synchronicity: C. G. Jung, Psychoanalysis, and Religion* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998). For a superficial and idiosyncratic promotion of the spiritual meaning of synchronicity, see James Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy* (London: Bantam, 1994). Conspicuous among the few serious studies of the spiritual implications of synchronicity are the works of Robert Aziz, *C. G. Jung's Psychology of Religion and Synchronicity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990) and Victor Mansfield, *Synchronicity, Science, and Soul-Making: Understanding Jungian Synchronicity through Physics, Buddhism, and Philosophy* (Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1995).
6. See Aziz, *passim*, and Mansfield, especially chapters 12 to 15; also Roderick Main (ed.), *Jung on Synchronicity and the Paranormal* (London: Routledge; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 34-39.
7. Edward Thornton, *The Diary of a Mystic* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967).
8. *Ibid.*, 125.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, 125-26.
15. *Ibid.*, 126.
16. Thornton initially records this dream as having occurred on 9 May (*ibid.*). Later, it transpires that it occurred in the early hours of 10 May (*ibid.*, 132).
17. *Ibid.*, 126.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*

21. Ibid., 127, quoting from Karl Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1951), 120. Matter in brackets is correction of Thornton's careless quoting. He has 'hammer' for 'a hammer', 'mortals' for 'immortals', 'afraid of' for 'afraid and astonished at', and 'out of the front of' for 'in front of'.
22. Thornton, 126.
23. Ibid., 128.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 128-29.
28. Ibid., 129.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 129-30.
33. Ibid., 130.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., 131.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 132.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid. The religious community was a Trappist order based in Hertfordshire.
42. Ibid., 133.
43. A closer examination of Thornton's narrative would uncover even more synchronistic events. I am focusing on the most salient, which are sufficient for my purposes.
44. For the defining account of numinosity, see Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950).
45. Thornton, 127.
46. Ibid., 129-30.
47. Jung himself resisted positing any transcendental cause to account for synchronicity. See Jung, 'Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle', 446, 515-16. Some difficulties in this position have been noted by John Beloff, 'Psi Phenomena: Causal versus Acausal Interpretation', *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 49, no. 773 (1977): 573-82 and Charles Tart, 'Causality and Synchronicity: Steps Towards Clarification', *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* 75 (1981): 121-41.

48. Thornton, 130.
49. Jung sometimes referred to the quasi-miraculous quality of synchronicities (see references in Main, *Jung on Synchronicity and the Paranormal*, 38). A philosophical case for according some coincidences the status of miracles has been made by R. F. Holland, 'The Miraculous', chapter in *Religion and Understanding*, ed. D. Z. Phillips (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967). John Polkinghorne suggests that highly significant coincidences may fall into a borderline area between special providence and miracles. See John Polkinghorne, *Science and Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 1998), 85.
50. For a sophisticated discussion of various ways of understanding revelation, especially in relation to the concept of symbolic mediation, see Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983). For an application of Dulles's discussion to synchronistic experiences, see Roderick Main, 'Synchronicity as a Form of Spiritual Experience', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Lancaster, 1996, 230-41.
51. Thornton, 125.
52. Ibid., 126. This and the preceding event are not yet synchronistic, but they do illustrate the pattern of Thornton's thinking. My point is that synchronicity can enhance the revelatory character of events, not that synchronicity is a necessary condition of revelation.
53. Ibid., 127.
54. Ibid., 130.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., 131.
57. Jung reports some personal experiences of mystical unity that can be understood in terms of his theory of synchronicity; indeed, the experiences may have had an influence on the theory. See Main, *Jung on Synchronicity and the Paranormal*, 7, 37, 136-41. Jung was explicit about the unitive implications of synchronicity at a theoretical level: he states that the synchronistic principle 'suggests that there is an inter-connection or unity of causally unrelated elements, and thus postulates a unitary aspect of being which can very well be described as the *unus mundus*'. See C. G. Jung, *Collected Works*, vol. 14, *Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy* (1955-56) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 464-65.
58. Thornton, 126, 133.
59. Cf. the second of the three stages of the alchemical conjunction as understood by Gerhard Dorn and discussed by Jung in *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, 457-553. The first stage is the *unio mentalis*, a state of 'interior oneness ... of equanimity transcending the body's affectivity and instinctuality' (471). The second stage is 'the re-uniting of the *unio mentalis* with the body' (476). The third stage, the 'complete conjunction', is 'union [of the individual] with the *unus mundus*' (476).
60. Cf. the third of Dorn's stages of alchemical conjunction (see preceding footnote).
61. Thornton, 133.
62. Ibid., 130-31. In his principal essay on the subject, Jung presents a paradigmatic synchronicity and notes that for the patient to whom it occurred 'the process of transformation could at last begin to move'. See Jung, 'Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle', 439. Others, including Aziz and Mansfield, have related this transformative impact of synchronicities more explicitly to the way they promote the core Jungian process of individuation.

63. For a fuller discussion, see Main, 'Synchronicity as a Form of Spiritual Experience', 196-241.
64. Hardy, Harvie, and Koestler, 159-60.
65. Main, 'Synchronicity as a Form of Spiritual Experience', 316.
66. David Hay, working for the Alister Hardy Research Centre in Oxford (now the Religious Experience Research Centre), writes that in a 1987 study into the incidence of various kinds of religious experience in Britain the most commonly reported category was 'synchronicity and patterning of events'. See David Hay, *Religious Experience Today: Studying the Facts* (London: Mowbray, 1990), 41-43, 83-84.

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RERC Second Series Occasional Paper 28
June 2001
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ISBN 0 906165 39 3