

Synchronicity and holism

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Introduction

Carl Gustav Jung's (1875-1961) concept of synchronicity – designating the experience of meaningful coincidence and the implied principle of acausal connection through meaning – has been extensively discussed and deployed within the field of analytical psychology (von Franz 1974, 1980, 1992; Bolen 1979; Hopcke 1997; Cambray 2009; Haule 2011). It also continues to exert allure across many areas of popular culture (Hocoy 2012). Within academic contexts, there have been book-length studies of synchronicity within, for example, religious studies (Aziz 1990, Main 2007a), intellectual history (Bishop 2000), and psychosocial and psychoanalytic studies (Main 2004). Other books on synchronicity occupy intersections among academic, clinical, and popular scientific and/or religious frameworks (Peat 1989, Combs and Holland 1994, Mansfield 1995, Storm 2008, Atmanspacher and Fuchs 2014). In addition to these book-length studies, numerous scholarly, clinical, and popular articles have also been published on synchronicity (see Main 2007b and 2018 for overviews of some of this literature). However, despite all this work, there has been little success in integrating the concept of synchronicity into frameworks of thought beyond that of analytical psychology or operationalising it within non-Jungian programmes of research (Main 2018).

In this article I explore the relationship of synchronicity to holistic thought as one of the more promising directions in which synchronicity could gain greater purchase within wider academic and intellectual culture. Associating with holism may not seem an obvious way of enhancing academic and intellectual credentials, given the questionable standing of many of the activities that have attracted the label ‘holistic’ in contemporary culture (Heelas and Woodhead 2005, pp. 156-57) and some of the nefarious appropriations of holistic thought historically (Harrington 1996). But in addition to these expressions of holism there have been and continue to be others that have gained a more mainstream academic and often progressive hearing, such as discussions of Gestalt psychology (Ash 1995), holistic methodologies in the social sciences (Hanson 2014, Zahle and Collin 2014), and holistic perspectives in philosophy of physics and philosophy of mind (Esfeld 2001). And even where holistic thought is explicitly non-mainstream it can still represent an important cultural force that, at least episodically, needs to be taken into consideration (Wood 2010).

Some important work on synchronicity and holism has already begun to appear. Joseph Cambray (2009, pp. 32-44; 2014a; 2014b; 2014c), for example, has related synchronicity to theories of emergence and complex adaptive systems, emphasising the influence on Jung of the scientific holism to which he was exposed, directly and indirectly, throughout his life. John Haule (2011) has highlighted the potential relevance for synchronicity of the organismic philosophy of Arthur North Whitehead (pp. 171-92). Harald Atmanspacher (2012, 2018), focusing on Jung’s relationship with the physicist Wolfgang Pauli and drawing on insights from quantum holism, has elaborated and begun to test empirically a dual-aspect monist framework for understanding synchronicity. And Christian McMillan (2018) has drawn resources from the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze to examine critically Jung’s references to organicistic holism in his essay on synchronicity.

The present article takes its starting point from the view that Jung's psychological model is itself a richly articulated form of holistic thought, which would repay study in relation to its core holistic ideas, its affinities with contemporaneous currents of holism, and its influence on subsequent holism. For such a project, clarification of the relationship between synchronicity and holism, which is the principal focus of this article, could be particularly valuable. For synchronicity is, I argue, itself a deeply holistic concept, and one that, far from being a late adjunct to Jung's psychology, may have been implicit in his thinking about the holistic dynamics of the psyche from the beginning, and in an important sense arguably underpins them.

Jung's holism

Wholeness is a concept of pervasive and arguably preeminent importance in Jung's thought, as a few selected observations makes clear. For Jung, 'human wholeness' was the goal of psychological development (1944, §32), the aim of individuation (1939, §490). He characterised wholeness as consisting in a union of opposites (1911-12/1952, §460; 1946, §532; 1958, §784), most generally as 'the union of the conscious and unconscious personality' (1940, §294), and he designated this united state with the concept of the self (1955-56, §145), the 'archetype of wholeness' (1952a, §757). The self, or wholeness, could be expressed by a multitude of symbols, among which the mandala was of particular importance for Jung (1944, §§323-31). In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, commenting on his own experiences and search for psychological understanding, he wrote that 'in finding the mandala as an expression of the self [and therefore of wholeness] I had attained what for me was the ultimate. Perhaps someone else knows more, but not I' (1963, p. 222). In the concluding chapter of his late work *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (1955-56, §§654-789) Jung presented his model of psychological development in terms of three 'conjunctions' (or a conjunction in three stages) as described by the sixteenth-century alchemist Gerhard Dorn. The first conjunction or stage is the union of the psyche and spirit, or of the mind within itself, a realisation of inner psychic integration (§§669-76). The second conjunction or stage is the union of

the integrated psyche with the body or with the world of physical reality (§§677-93). And the third conjunction or stage is the union of the integrated mind and body with the world of potential, the unitary source of all actualisations, the ‘one world’ or *unus mundus* (§§759-75). Finally, Jung’s colleague and early biographer Barbara Hannah reported that a few nights before his death Jung, who throughout his life had attached tremendous importance to inner experiences (1963, pp. 17-19), had the following dream: ‘He saw a big, round block of stone in a high bare place and on it was inscribed: “This shall be a sign unto you of wholeness and oneness”’ (1976, p. 347).

The fundamental importance of wholeness in Jung’s thinking is confirmed in a systematic study by Curtis Smith (1990). Smith notes three phases in the development of Jung’s thinking about wholeness. In the first, ‘developmental phase’, extending from 1895 to 1913, Jung was concerned with delineating and understanding psychic fragmentation (Smith 1990, pp. 27-46). In the second, ‘formative phase’, from 1913 to 1928, Jung identified individuation of the self, the quest for psychic wholeness, as the goal of life and source of ultimate meaning (Smith 1990, pp. 49-78). In the third, ‘elaborative phase’, from 1929 to 1961, Jung increasingly stressed that the wholeness achieved through individuation was not just intrapsychic but entailed a unity between the self and the universe, and he amplified this idea with reference to Eastern concepts such as Tao, the mandala, and Atman as well as, especially, to the process of Western alchemy, culminating in the notion of the *unus mundus* or ‘one world’ (Smith 1990, pp. 81-115).

Despite fully recognising the centrality of the concept of wholeness in Jung’s thinking, Smith does not connect it with holism as such. While it is true that Jung himself did not use the German word for holism (*Holismus* — a translation from the English), using instead mainly the word *Ganzheit* and its cognates, there is nevertheless a compelling case for discussing Jung’s thinking about wholeness in the context of discourses about holism, which themselves also use many alternate terms (Lawrence and Weiss 1998, p. 6). In the first place, Jung’s ideas relating to wholeness have,

not accidentally, had a profound influence on many areas of later Western culture that explicitly have presented themselves as holistic. These include, among others, holistic psychotherapy (Pietroni 1992, House 2016), holistic education (Forbes 2003, pp. 141-70), and holistic spirituality (Heelas 1996, pp. 46-47; Hanegraaff 1998, pp. 496-513).

In the second place, Jung developed his ideas about wholeness at a time and in a cultural context when holistic currents of thought were being developed and were gaining a measure of traction across a range of disciplines. The term holism was coined in 1926 by the South African soldier, statesman, and philosopher Jan Christiaan Smuts (Smuts 1926). However, the main themes with which Smuts engaged had already been under discussion for several decades in physics, biology, psychology, sociology, philosophy, and other disciplines, not least in the German-speaking countries of Europe (Phillips 1976; Ash 1995; Harrington 1996; Lawrence and Weiss 1998; Weber and Esfeld 2003; Esfeld 2003). Jung's work was very much a part of this intellectual climate, whatever his level of awareness of the concurrent developments may have been in any particular case, and it is at least as justifiable to apply a general understanding of the term holism to his work as it is to apply it, as is often done, to these other developments.

In the third place, Jung's thought seems to fit almost any of the main ways of characterising and defining holism. Several commentators have noted that, rather than define holism positively, it is easier to characterise it by what it opposes: namely, the assumptions of reductionism, mechanism, individualism, atomism, and dualism (Hanegraaff 1998, p. 119; Dusek 1999, pp. 17-19; Weber and Esfeld 2003, 2). Such assumptions are also frequent targets of Jung's (Main 2004, pp. 123-25). However, there have also been positive definitions of holism. For Smuts, the originator of the term, holism was a 'fundamental factor operative towards the creation of wholes in the universe' (1926, p. 86) and, more fully, 'the ultimate synthetic, ordering, organising, regulative activity in the universe which accounts for all the structural groupings and syntheses in it, from the atoms and the

physico-chemical structures, through the cell and organisms, through Mind in animals, to Personality in man' (1926, p. 317). Jung's thought maps onto at least part of this with his claim that 'everything living strives for wholeness', which in the case of the human being means realisation of 'a wider personality [the self]' (1945/1948, §557).

Arguably the most sophisticated and lucid definition of holism remains that of Denis Phillips (1976). Phillips identifies three kinds of holism, which he calls Holism 1, Holism 2, and Holism 3. Holism 1, which Phillips equates with 'organicism', involves five propositions:

1. The analytic approach as typified by the physicochemical sciences proves inadequate when applied to certain cases — for example, to a biological organism, to society, or even to reality as a whole.
2. The whole is more than the sum of its parts.
3. The whole determines the nature of its parts.
4. The parts cannot be understood if considered in isolation from the whole.
5. The parts are dynamically interrelated or interdependent. (Phillips 1976, p. 6)

The first proposition states the need for a holistic approach, while the remaining four propositions articulate how the parts of a whole or 'organic system' are related both to the whole and to one another within the whole (Phillips 1976, p. 7).

If we take the principal whole with which Jung was concerned, the self, we can see how his thought fits even with Phillips's detailed analytical definition of holism. In relation to the first proposition, Jung likewise started with the inadequacy of the analytic approach, which for him was preeminently a conscious and rational approach: 'the conscious mind', he wrote, 'can form absolutely no conception of this totality [of the self], because it includes not only the conscious but also the

unconscious psyche, which is, as such, inconceivable and irrepresentable' (1942/1948, §230); the self 'does not allow of scientific proof' (1928, §405; cf. §274) but is graspable only non-analytically 'in the form of symbols' (1942/1948, §233; cf. 1951a, §52) or through direct experience (1955-56, §778; 1976, p. 456; Colman 2006, p. 158).

The second proposition, which in fact often stands by itself as a concise definition of holism, finds its parallel in Jung's view that the self is more than the sum of 'the integrated contents [of the collective unconscious]' which are its 'parts' (1951a, §43). 'As it is a concept of human totality', wrote Jung, 'the self is by definition greater than the ego-conscious personality, embracing besides this the personal shadow and the collective unconscious' (1955-56, §145).

The third, fourth, and fifth propositions also all apply to the relationship between the self as the whole and (in shorthand) the ego and archetypes as its parts. In relation to the third proposition, as the principle governing the process of individuation, the self is the 'organizer of [the components of] the personality' (Jung 1958b, §694) and in that sense determines them. In relation to the fourth proposition, since the manifestations of the ego and archetypes at any time are related to their role in the process of individuation, which in turn is governed by the self (1928, 1944), it is not possible adequately to understand the ego and archetypes in isolation from the self. And in relation to the fifth proposition, the entire nature of Jung's dynamic psychology testifies to the complex ways in which the ego and archetypes are dynamically interrelated and interdependent.

Within Phillips's Holism 1, while it is not possible to predict the properties of a whole based solely on knowledge of its parts, it is still in principle possible, once the whole has been sufficiently studied, thereafter to explain the whole in terms of the parts. Some holists, however, make the stronger claim that there are cases where it is not possible to explain the whole in terms of the parts no matter how thoroughly the whole has been studied. To cover claims such as these Phillips

formulated Holism 2, which states that ‘a whole, even after it is studied, cannot be explained in terms of its parts’ (1976, p. 36). This stronger claim seems to apply in Jung’s case, since not even his decades-long study of the phenomenology of the self was able to put him in a position fully to explain the self in relation to the ego or any other components of the conscious or unconscious psyche; the self remained ‘an undefinable existent’ (1928, §405).

Finally, there are holists who claim that special concepts are needed to discuss systems as wholes. As examples, Phillips refers to Paul Weiss’s use of the concept of ‘hierarchies’ (1976, p. 35), to the widespread use of ‘concepts pertaining to field theory’ (p. 36), and to Arthur Koestler’s coinage of the term ‘holon’ to express the idea that things can be simultaneously both wholes and parts depending on whether they are being considered from above or from below in the hierarchy of a system (p. 70). These kinds of claims are covered by Phillips’s Holism 3, which states that ‘it is necessary to have terms referring to wholes and their properties’ (p. 37). For his part, Jung developed, with his concepts of the self and the *unus mundus* and their prolific symbolism, an extraordinarily rich set of terms for expressing insights, albeit necessarily incomplete, into the particular whole with which he was concerned.

Thus, based on Jung’s own references to wholeness, his explicit influence on subsequent holists, the parallels between his thought and that of contemporaneous thinkers designated as holists, and various characterisations and definitions of holism, there seem to be ample grounds for considering his psychological model to be a form of holism in even quite a strict sense of the term.

Synchronicity and holism

Smith’s (1990) book-length survey of the development of Jung’s thinking about wholeness curiously includes not a single reference to Jung’s concept of synchronicity. The omission is curious because the main concepts through which Jung articulated his ideas about wholeness — the

self and the *unus mundus*, which Smith does discuss — are both deeply implicated with synchronicity. More specifically, as I shall now argue, synchronicity is pivotal to understanding the holism of Jungian psychology and its possible distinctive contributions to holistic thought. Since much of my argument will turn on specific features of Jung’s conceptualisation of synchronicity, it is necessary at this point to give a brief overview of the concept.

Synchronicity

Jung defined synchronicity in several ways and illustrated the concept with a wide range of examples (Main 2004, pp. 39-47). On the one hand, synchronicity was for Jung a kind of experience — ‘meaningful coincidence’ (1952b, §827) — in which an inner psychic state is connected with an outer physical event not causally but through the meaning that the events jointly express. In such meaningful coincidences the connected physical event may be perceived either simultaneously with the psychic state or only later because it occurs at a distance or in the future (1951b, §984; 1952b, §§850, 855; 1955, pp. 144-5). Jung’s examples include, among others, (1) the case of a patient who was telling him her dream about being given a jewel in the form of a scarab beetle, when an actual scarabaeid beetle appeared at his consulting room window (1951b, §982; 1952b, §§843, 845); (2) the story of how Emanuel Swedenborg, in a visionary state, described the course of a fire hundreds of miles away in Stockholm, all the details of which were subsequently confirmed (1951b, §983; 1952b, §912); and (3) an anecdote told to Jung by a friend who dreamed of certain scenes and events unfolding in a Spanish city he had never visited and which then occurred exactly as in the dream when the friend did visit the city shortly afterwards (1951b, §973).

On the other hand, synchronicity was for Jung the principle — ‘an acausal connecting principle’ (1952b, title) — that explained why it is that these kinds of experiences occur. He argued that this principle was ‘intellectually necessary’ (§960) to account for meaningful coincidences (§967), and

he suggested that synchronicity and causality stood in a relationship of complementarity to each other as principles of explanation (§§960-61, 963). He came to consider that there was both a general principle — ‘general acausal orderedness’ (§965) — which accounted for all events that connected non-causally, including non-psychological ones such as certain phenomena in physics (§965), and a ‘special instance’ of this general principle, namely, synchronistic experiences themselves (Jung’s primary concern, as described above) involving ‘the equivalence of psychic and physical processes where the observer is in the fortunate position of being able to recognise the *tertium comparationis* [the third term of comparison, i.e., the meaning]’ (§965).

As Jung observed in the ‘Foreword’ to ‘Synchronicity: an acausal connecting principle’ (1952b), the postulation of the concept of synchronicity raises issues that are ‘philosophically of the greatest importance’ (§816). Above all, these issues include the nature of causality and meaning, the two terms around which the notion of synchronicity revolves. But they also include a range of implicated issues relating to probability; the nature of space and time and their apparent relativisation under certain psychic conditions; the possibility of obtaining unconditioned (or, as Jung called it, ‘absolute’) knowledge, which seems somehow to by-pass the need for the sensory transmission of information; the relationship between mind and body and between mind and matter more generally; the underlying nature of reality that can account for the deep interconnectedness between mind and matter and among events generally; and the relationship between empirical knowledge and metaphysical speculation (Bishop 2000, pp. 45-58; Main 2004, pp. 36-62).

In relation to causality, Jung argued that this by itself was insufficient as a principle of explanation because there were certain events — demonstrated in microphysics (1952b, §§818, 959-60) and seemingly also observed during psychotherapy (§§816, 843-45), in parapsychological experiments (§§833-39), in divinatory practices (§§863-69), and as spontaneous anomalous events (§§830-32) — for which no plausible cause could be found or, in stricter cases, even conceived (§967). Yet the

high degree of meaningfulness of these events — the strong sense of correlation they involved between a mental state, such as a prediction or a detailed fantasy, and a parallel physical event — made it seem improbable, if not impossible, that the events were pure chance occurrences (§967). Accordingly, Jung considered it ‘intellectually necessary’ (§960) to postulate ‘another principle of explanation’ (§819), namely, the acausal connecting principle of synchronicity.

Jung does not discuss the nature of causality in any detail, and his argument in relation to it could be challenged in a number of ways (Main 2004, pp. 53-56; 2018, p. 141). For present purposes, however, the most important point to note is that the conception of causality against which he was arguing was one that ascribed to it ‘absolute validity’ (1952b, §818) as a principle of explanation and basis of the laws of nature, and hence made it ‘the exclusive principle of natural science’ (§929). Jung’s concern was that such a conception supported an account of reality that was deterministic (§§828, 944), erased from consideration the occurrence of ‘unique or rare events’ (§819), and denied the freedom that was the source of creativity and meaning (1958a, §1187; 1950-55, §1198).

In relation to meaning, Jung’s main argument was that this was not just a subjective factor — ‘just a psychic product’ (1952b, §915), ‘an anthropomorphic interpretation’ (§916) — but could be objective. While he was aware of the extreme difficulty, perhaps impossibility, of proving this point (§§915-16; 1976, p. 495), he nonetheless reiterated throughout ‘Synchronicity: an acausal connecting principle’ that meaning, or, more cautiously, ‘that factor which appears to us as “meaning”’ (1952b, §916), could ‘exist outside the psyche’ (§915), ‘outside man’ (§942), that it was ‘self-subsistent’ (§944), ‘transcendental’ (§915), ‘a priori in relation to human consciousness’ (§942). In support of this position, he referred to synchronistic experiences themselves (§948); to certain dreams that express the idea of self-subsistent meaning (§§945-46); to the ““meaningful” or “intelligent” behaviour of the lower organisms, which are without a brain’ (§§947-48); to out-of-

body experiences (§§949-55); and above all to a range of Chinese, Greek, medieval, and Renaissance ‘forerunners of the idea of synchronicity’ — notions of Tao, the sympathy of all things, correspondences, microcosm and macrocosm, and pre-established harmony — each of which presupposes the existence of objective meaning (§§916-46; see also Main 2014).

Holistic aims, ideas, and sources

The relevance of synchronicity for understanding the holism of Jung’s psychology can be clarified by teasing out some of the implications of these two core ideas of acausality and objective meaning. Jung had two overarching aims with his essay on synchronicity. One aim was to affirm the existence of a certain kind of psychophysical event — synchronicity or ‘meaningful coincidence’ (1952b, §827), including radically anomalous events (‘telepathy’, ‘clairvoyance’, ‘precognition’, and ‘psychokinesis’) (§§833-37; 1955-56, §662; 1976, p. 538) — that could not be satisfactorily explained in terms of space, time, and causality and therefore tended to be denied or disregarded by science. This aim can be considered holistic in that it attempted, through postulating the idea of acausality, to include in our scientific picture of reality phenomena that were normally excluded from that picture, in Jung’s view mainly due to the levelling effect of statistics (1952b, §§818-21).

Jung’s other overarching aim was to establish a principle — synchronicity as acausal connection through meaning — that could allow for and explain such psychophysical events. This aim can also be considered holistic in that the principle of synchronicity was introduced as a complement to the principle of causality in order to produce a more complete picture of reality, one that could admit ‘the psychoid factor in our description and knowledge of nature — that is, an *a priori* meaning or “equivalence”’ (1952b, §962) and thereby make possible a ‘whole judgement’ (§§961-62).

The idea of acausality, as Jung developed it, affirms that events can be connected not through cause and effect but through their relationship as psychic and physical components (or parts) of a greater

psychophysical whole. In keeping with the logic of holism, this whole, the meaningful coincidence, has properties (such as archetypal resonance, numinosity, and the quality of expressing objective meaning) that the psychic and physical components do not have when considered separately or simply in aggregate. The psychophysical whole is a pattern of meaning, experienced not as a subjective projection but as an objective feature of reality. Atmanspacher (forthcoming) expresses this well when he characterises meaning for Jung as ‘our “sense” of psychophysical correlations’. In an important sense, then, the connecting factor in synchronicity, namely meaning, *is* the experience of wholeness. This is a view not entirely alien to more mainstream psychological discussions of meaning. The psychologist Roy Baumeister, for example, notes that one of the important respects in which meanings of life are like other kinds of meaning is in ‘having the parts fit together into a coherent pattern’, that is, into a whole (1991, p. 16).

Implicated with the idea of acausality are the ideas of the psychic relativisation of space and time, (Jung 1952b, §840) and the deep unity of psyche and matter (§§960, 962, 964). The psychic relativisation of space and time was suggested to Jung by anecdotal data such as Swedenborg’s vision of the Stockholm fire (§912) and his friend’s precognitive dream of scenes he would later encounter in a Spanish city (1951b, §973), as well as by empirical data from J. B. Rhine’s experiments in extra-sensory perception (1952b, §836). Jung inferred from these data that, rather than providing an absolute frame of reference within which events occur, space and time were inextricably and holistically bound up with the psyche (§§840, 948). He envisaged ‘psychically relative space and time’ as ‘an irrepresentable space-time continuum’ containing objective (‘self-subsistent’) meaning as a ‘form of existence’ that was ‘transcendental’ (§948).

The deep unity of psyche and matter was suggested to Jung by the way, in synchronistic events, the same archetypal pattern of meaning could be expressed in both psychic and physical contexts. It was largely based on this that he reformulated his concept of the archetype as ‘psychoid’ (1952b,

§§840, 964). Conceived as ‘psychoid factors’, he wrote, archetypes ‘are not found exclusively in the psychic sphere, but can occur just as much in circumstances that are not psychic (equivalence of an outward physical process with a psychic one)’ (§964; cf. 1958b, §780). This conception, Jung argued, provides ‘some possibility of getting rid of the incommensurability between the observed and the observer’ and thus arriving at ‘a unitary idea of being’ (1952b, §960). As Atmanspacher has clarified (2012, 2018), Jung’s thinking on the relationship between mind and matter, much of it pursued in dialogue with the physicist Wolfgang Pauli, ultimately articulates a form of dual-aspect monism, whereby mind and matter, rather than being viewed as separate substances (dualism) or as a single substance to which the apparent other substance can be reduced (materialism or idealism), are instead considered to be different epistemic expressions of an underlying unitary reality (the *unus mundus*) (Jung 1952b, §960; 1955-56, §662). Thus, synchronicity led Jung through the mind-body problem to a position of ontological holism.

If we now consider the various fields and thinkers from which Jung drew in presenting synchronicity (Main 2004, pp. 65-90), whether actual influences or just parallel lines of thought that he felt supported his own, we again find holistic thinking at almost every turn. The idea of acausality was influenced above all by contemporaneous developments in relativity and quantum physics (1952b, §§818-19, 959-61, 963-64), and precisely these developments are among the most ambitious and, in the case of quantum physics, best substantiated expressions of holistic thinking in the sciences (Primas 2017, p. 9; Esfeld 2001; see also Dusek 1999). Also influencing Jung’s thinking about acausality, as well as about the implicated notions of the psychic relativisation of space and time and the inseparability of psyche and matter, was experimental parapsychology (1952b, §§830-40). As Egil Asprem has shown, this new discipline achieved what salience it did in the interwar years partly by associating itself with holistic (vitalistic and organicistic) currents in the philosophy of biology (Asprem 2014, pp. 13, 398-412). In the work of the physicist Pascual Jordan, with whom Jung corresponded (Jung 1973, pp. 176-78, 494; see also pp. 174-76), the

holistic trajectories of both of the above-mentioned disciplines, modern physics and parapsychology, had already been aligned (Asprem 2014, pp. 408-9).

The idea of objective meaning was influenced, or at least supported, by what is undoubtedly the most conspicuously holistic influence of all on Jung's conceptualisation of synchronicity: the range of thinkers surveyed in the third chapter of his essay, 'Forerunners of the idea of synchronicity' (1952b, §§916-46). In his quest to find examples of 'another factor in nature [other than causality] which expresses itself in the arrangement of events and appears to us as meaning' (§916), Jung turned to Chinese Taoism, ancient Greek thought, and Medieval and Renaissance esotericism, as well as to the early modern philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646-1716), and in each case he highlighted thoroughly holistic formulations.

Jung characterised the Taoism of the ancient Chinese philosophers Lao-tzu and Chuang-tzu as 'a thinking in terms of the whole' (1952b, §924). In the *Tao Teh Ching*, Jung noted, the Tao is described as 'something formless yet complete' (§918), as 'The Uncarved Block' (§922). Elsewhere in the essay he discussed the ancient Chinese divinatory system of the *I Ching* as 'the experimental foundation of classical Chinese philosophy', characterising it as 'one of the oldest known methods for grasping a situation as a whole' (§863).

Jung also picked out holistic ideas in his discussions of the ancient Greek thinkers Hippocrates, Philo, Theophrastus, and Plotinus (1952b, §924-27). For example, one of the major forms of holistic thought is organicism (Phillips, 1976: pp. 6-20; Hanegraaff, 1998, pp. 120, 155-58), and Jung selected for quotation Hippocrates' classic formulation of this idea: '[A]ll things are in sympathy', wrote Hippocrates: 'The whole organism and each one of its parts are working in conjunction for the same purpose' (in Jung 1952b, §924). Another major holistic trope is the notion that the whole of the macrocosm (the universe) is contained in the microcosm (the human being). It

was this notion that Jung emphasised from Philo, for whom heaven, the macrocosm, is ‘infused into man the microcosm [“a miniature heaven”], who [...] thus [...] contains the whole’ (§§925-26).

The next set of forerunners Jung invoked includes the Renaissance esoteric thinkers Pico della Mirandola, Agrippa von Nettesheim, and Paracelsus (1952b, §§927-32), and here the holistic notions of organicism and microcosm-macrocosm are again to the fore. For example, for Pico, noted Jung, ‘the world is one being, a visible God, in which everything is naturally arranged from the very beginning like the parts of a living organism’ (§927). And for Agrippa, in both ‘the archetypal World [and] this corporeal world, all things are in all’ (in Jung 1952b, §930); there is a ‘World Soul’ which ‘is a certain only thing, filling all things, bestowing all things, binding and knitting together all things, that it might make one frame of the world’ (in Jung 1952b, §931).

Jung concluded his roll call of forerunners with the German philosopher Leibniz (1952b, §§937-38), a thinker who has been hailed as a ‘pioneer in holistic psychology’ (Ehrenstein 2008, p. 3). For Leibniz, as quoted by Jung, ‘the soul follows its own laws, and the body its own likewise, and they accord by virtue of the harmony pre-established among all substances, since they are all representations of one and the same universe’ (in Jung 1952b, §937).

The self, synchronicity, and holism

The aims, implicated ideas, and sources of Jung’s concept of synchronicity thus all reveal its thoroughly holistic nature. I hope to have shown that this is not just a glow of holism that synchronicity has borrowed from the concept of the self. If anything, I would argue, it was Jung’s implicit commitment to synchronicity *avant la lettre* that underpinned the holistic nature of his concept of the self and of his psychological model generally. For

synchronicity was not a mere optional adjunct to the concept of the self, or a mere derivative from it. Even though Jung integrated his concept of synchronicity into his overall psychological model somewhat later, in the 1950s, than he did his concept of the self, from the late 1920s, the two concepts were developed at the same time and are closely connected with each other (Coward 1996). Jung first published his ideas about the self in 1928 in ‘The relations between the ego and the unconscious’ (1928, §§274, 398-405), then again, the following year, in his ‘Commentary on “The Secret of the Golden Flower”’ (1929, §§36, 67), included in a work co-authored with the Sinologist Richard Wilhelm. It was at this same time that Jung also first used the terms ‘synchronism’ (on 28 November 1928) and ‘synchronicity’ (on 4 December 1929), both during a private seminar series on dream analysis (Jung 1928-30, pp. 44, 417). Shortly afterwards, in May 1930, he referred publicly, albeit still not in a formal professional work, to ‘the synchronistic principle’ in relation to the modus operandi of the *I Ching* in his memorial address for Wilhelm (Jung 1930, §81).

The co-arising of these concepts is scarcely accidental, for, as Harold Coward has remarked, ‘this notion of correlative parallels between the inner and the outer realms [in synchronicity] is fundamental for understanding Jung’s complex notion of the “Self”’ (1996, p. 477).

Synchronicity, he argues, is ‘a fundamental principle underlying the archetypes and the way in which the opposites within and without the psyche interact’ and as such is ‘a basic building block for Jung’s concept of self’ (p. 489). Moreover, as Coward details (1996), both concepts, self and synchronicity, were influenced by Jung’s reflections on the Chinese concept of Tao. It is thus not surprising that both concepts received early expression in works related to Wilhelm, who was Jung’s main interlocutor on Taoism.

In fact, the linkage of self, synchronicity, and Tao is even tighter than Coward claims. For at different times Jung explicitly equated Tao both with the self (1956-57, §1628) and with

synchronicity (1930-34, p. 608; 1935, §143). This three-way equation is implicit in Jung's further identification of Tao with meaning (1952b, §§917-18), for both synchronicity and the self were likewise identified with meaning: synchronicity is acausal connection through meaning (§915) and the self is 'the archetype of orientation and meaning' (1963, p. 224). A similar nexus also binds self, synchronicity, and Tao together in relation to the concept of the *unus mundus*, which Jung described as 'the Western equivalent of the fundamental principle of classical Chinese philosophy, namely the union of *yang* and *yin* in *tao*, and at the same time a premonition of that *tertium quid* which [...] I have called "synchronicity"' (1955-56, §662; cf. §762).

While Jung's equations here may reflect the polyvalence of symbolic thinking more than the precision of binary logic, they do testify to the very close relationship he saw between synchronicity and his most holistic concept of the self. Insofar as the self underpins and governs his entire psychological model, synchronicity, in being so tightly linked to the self, is likely also to be deeply implicated with Jung's other distinctive concepts and ideas. For example, it is difficult to envisage how, as understood by Jung, processes such as compensation, individuation, symbolisation, and the transcendent function, or techniques such as dream analysis, amplification, and active imagination, to say nothing of transference and countertransference, could be accounted for solely in terms of efficient causality. Arguably, this difficulty is eased if we also think of these processes and techniques in the light of a principle of acausal connection through meaning.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that Jung's psychological model is a richly articulated form of holism, and thereby prepares the ground for possible future studies that could undertake in-depth historical or conceptual comparisons of Jung's holistic psychology with earlier, contemporaneous, or

subsequent expressions of holism. Given how thoroughgoing Jung's holism is, such comparisons would likely be illuminating.

The article has also demonstrated how Jung's concept of synchronicity is itself deeply holistic and as such is pivotal for understanding the holism of his overall psychology, which it arguably underpins. Clarifying this role of synchronicity helps to establish more deeply the concept's significance within the framework of analytical psychology, as well as, potentially, within academic and intellectual culture more generally.

More particularly, synchronicity, with its core idea of acausal connection through meaning, may be articulating a principle that has remained unarticulated, though hinted at, in other forms of holism. It might be fruitful, for example, to compare synchronicity with the idea of internal relations, which some commentators, such as Phillips, have identified as the essence of organicistic holism (1976, pp. 7-20), or with the idea of non-linear or cybernetic causality that has been invoked by holists influenced by General System Theory (Hanson 2014, pp. 115-21, 140-43).

Another possible benefit of establishing connections between synchronicity and holism is that it could help to identify with more precision the underlying logic of holistic critiques of the cultural condition Max Weber termed disenchantment (1918, pp. 139, 155), including the implicit metaphysics underpinning such critiques. Several commentators have identified disenchantment as the implicit target of much cultural critique that is grounded in holistic perspectives (Berman 1981, Harrington 1996). Yet their analyses of the points of engagement between holism and disenchantment often lack precision and depth. In the light of recent detailed work on the critique that synchronicity – as well as Jungian psychology more generally – can level against disenchantment (Main 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2017), it may be possible to gain a clearer and deeper understanding also of these other holistic critiques.

Finally, appreciating the holistic nature of synchronicity, its role in the holism of Jung's thought, and its possible relevance for holistic thought generally could also help to resolve the question of how synchronicity can achieve wider deployment as a method of research both within and beyond the ambit of Jung's psychology (Main 2018, pp. 139-40, 148-50). If it is indeed the case that synchronicity underpins Jung's core concept of the self and by extension other core concepts of Jung's such as archetypes and individuation, then any research that takes orientation from those concepts will also, at least implicitly, be depending deeply on the principle of synchronicity as acausal connection through meaning.

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