

COINCIDENCES * THE QUEST OF LIFE

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I N T R O D U C T I O N :

Looking back at more than 3 score and 10 years of my life, I am, like many millions of people all over the world, wondering what it is, or was, all about.

Mine was ~~so far~~ a life of many wonderful and strange experiences, but also of personal frustrations and failures, not to mention external or environmental tragedies, like two world wars, the collapse of the Hapsburg empire, the stock exchange crash in 1929, the following Depression, the Hitler nightmare, the cold war and the present "peace" based on all out fear of general extermination. All of this had inevitable effects on the ups and downs of my struggles and problems, which I am to write about. However, compared with many other lives, mine was ~~so far, somehow,~~ spared the full tragic impact of these major catastrophies.

The path I have travelled crossed many lives. Most of these lives group themselves rather obviously into two major categories, if one is willing to apply such a crude simplification in order to produce some point of departure.

The majority of people make one formidable group of drifters. They live, what is usually called, a life without significance, without goal or direction. As Leonarde da Vinci put it so enlightningly more than ~~of~~ four centuries ago: "Most people eat, drink, sleep and play some. When they die, the only ^{contribution} ~~contribution~~ they have made in life, is an overflowing latrine". (Translated

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from a german translation).

If humanity would consist only of this type, it would have to be treated as a part of Natural History. This is not mentioned here as a criticism. After all, the brutality and junglification of society in our "advanced" technical age does not always seem too convincing as a desirable form of existence and invites periodically a nostalgic dreaming of a "BACK TO NATURE" trend for which, unfortunately, most of us are no longer fit.

At this moment we can only wait, not knowing whether all the contributions of genius in the past and present shall culminate in the destruction of civilization, of mankind and the planet, or whether a combination of genius and a new progressive civilization (not yet known) shall make the necessary new "contributions" which will create the means of stopping the megalomaniac threats of destructive, power-demented man. Therefore we are in no position to criticize the natural-history-existence.

However, there is a great difference between natural man and the drifters.

The other less numerous type can be recognized by a perseverance with which a "chosen" plan is being pursued. Of course, at closer investigation one finds, that almost all people start as little "Natural-History" animals", born with unequal charges of vital energy, in varying environments, also widely differing in favorable or unfavorable conditions as far as the struggle for survival or the possibilities for development are concerned. For a shorter or longer number of years they too drift through life until their "EGO" becomes strong enough to seek pleasure or satisfaction in a special direction, decided upon as the choice of highest desirability.

The ability to "make" a plan, or, to accept one of the

existing plans, and to mobilize all willpower, perseverance and many other faculties into the service of the realization of the chosen plan, varies. So does the age, at which such individuals are ready. Many remarkable contributions in the fields of business, politics, religion, technology, science, art, etc. were made ^{by} people of this type.

To return to my own life; it does not seem to fit into either category. Although it may look at a distance like a most eloquent demonstration of perseverance in pursuit of a ^{single} goal, the direction of this goal ^{and the goal itself} was most certainly not "chosen" by me for pleasure, ambition, desirability or for the assertion of my EGO, nor was it ^{or the persuasion of environmental influences} forced upon me by the weight of external necessity. It seemed to have been decided, before my ego, whatever that may be, was developed enough to make a choice. So many phases of my life and my career as an artist were brought about by what we usually call coincidences. At times there were surprising, even fabulous results without preceding planing or efforts. At other times, when I was making, what some people might call superhuman efforts and risked my health or life toward a certain achievement the results disappeared with almost cruel monotony. Positive as well as negative experiences seemed completely outside of ~~my~~ ^{control} my personal influence of any kind.

Yet, I would fit even less into the category of the drifters. All this will, I hope, become clearer as the story advances.

In order to understand the problems of my life we shall, therefore, have to come to grips with this phenomenon called "COINCIDENCE".

Such an undertaking faces two mountainous obstacles. One is caused by the language, the other one is due to our

"dimensional deficiency".¹

The first difficulty deals with a situation which a great number of people have become conscious of, in recent years. It deals with what several writers (including myself) recognized^{indefinitely} as the "Tower of Babel-Disease". This simply refers to a realization, that a language is like a living thing and not a dead unchanging instrument of "correct" communication. It is an instrument, yes, but it is one, produced by life and ^{it is} developing constantly, according to the living needs, conditions, and purposes of the people who use it. It is by no means a passive victim of the minds who shape it. It is alive, that means, it even has a strong effect on the very minds and lives of its creators and users.

This phenomenon of a living language can be compared to an arm or another part of the body, something that could not exist or function by itself but which as a living part of an organism, participates in ^{life} living cycles of growth, youth, maturity and decline.

Thus, language is not an independent organism which can exist by itself, but it has become ages ago such a vital part of ~~the~~ mans life that we cannot consider it an outside tool to be picked up when needed and dropped when its usefulness is over. How much of our thinking, ⁱⁿ planning, acting and achieving is done in words? Not only expressed in words but guided, ^{can be} understood and commanded verbally.²

Millions of people had become almost exclusively saturated with verbal thinking at the expense of almost all other mental faculties. In fact it amounted to an alarming condition of an unbalanced intellectuality² until the unexpected tidal wave of photographic

*1 This term was introduced by me in my lectures and in articles. See articles on "Dimensions" and "Photographic Analysis" in Encyclopedia of Photography. 1942.

**2 See chapter on "Evolution of Visual Consciousness" in the Encyclopedia of Photography. 1942.

information and entertainment in newspapers, magazines, movies and television produced atleast a strong visual antidote to the formerly almost exclusively verbal food of the mind.

It is safe to say that even poor people in this country ~~today~~ ^{today} can consume ^{more} visual food via newspapers, ^{magazines} movies and T.V. in a week or month than Alexander the Great or other world conquerors ^{of former periods} saw in a life time, having to be on the spot in person to see what anything or anybody looked like. This direct contact by travel is also possible today at a ^{great} speed and quantity. Trips to 10 or 20 different countries in a few weeks are available to great numbers of ~~people~~ tourists at rates undreamed of in the past, though too many return from world tours ^{or} all-Europe trips quite untouched. ^{except for memories about hotels or food} Much of this new visual communication seems already to ^{share} ~~share~~ the fate of the verbal language, through massproduction, super mass consumption and the degenerative influences of unscrupulous production for profit instead of for mental ^{vital or other} ~~or other~~ nutrition. In that respect the difference between devitalized pictures and devitamed food becomes negligible--especially when gulped down on the run. *One can today speak of visual pollution.*

Like in so many other fields, which we tried to interpret according to the superstition of an one-dimensional evolution in a straight line from a primitive beginning towards a progressively superior state and final perfection, we now have to look for a rhythmic curve following that biological development of an organismsm.

There are times when a language seems full of vigor, a perfect organ of communication, or even a grandiose stimulus to living.

And then again, there are times when the language goes dead on us. Then comes that realization that the Bible story of the Tower of Babel is more than a historical report about a local event. It becomes the symbolical description of an ever returning cyclical phenomenon, the tragedy of people, who knew how to build skyscraping

ziggurats, people gifted, skilled, ambitious, successful materially, but unable to understand one another. Just as today, when understanding has become imperative, understanding is one of the most painfully missing ^{m/} commodities.

How many millions of people have used, through how many centuries, our language for business, practical, political, competitive purposes, where success, that is "advantage" was all that mattered? In this pragmatic ~~immorality~~ or amorality almost all importance of the meaning of things was lost. Once or twice, maybe during a generation or a century a few strange figures appeared, here and there, ^{in the old universities of Krakow, Padua, Salamanca, or Leyden} to devote their life to the quest of meaning, of understanding and of what they called truth, regardless of profit, advantage or popular appreciation. Those philosophers, poets and searchers often had to pay a heavy price of ^{insecurity} ~~safety~~, hunger, torture and sometimes death for such an "idealism", which was in bitter contrast to the solid, well accepted fight for possession, social status, and power over man and nature, in peace or war, or to the love for the line of least resistance. Many times ~~honest~~ thinking and writing had to be done in great secrecy, ^{and was written in Latin for a long time.}

Therefore it is no surprise that ^{for} our language is excellently developed for tricking people or diluting the mind with sweetish or brutish entertainment, justifying practically anything from lies to murder or mass extermination, persuading, selling, accusing, persecuting or defending, gambling, fighting, - spreading or broadcasting of accepted formulas, ^{of} contagious fashions of thinking and appearance, or rebellion against existing conditions with violence or nonresistance, and of proving to be right by the pretense of measuring immeasurables and defining indefinables.

Measuring (including counting) and defining are perfectly legitimate procedures of the sciences which deal with measurable data within the 4 dimensions of space-time (mathematics, geometry, physics

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and parts of chemistry, as far as they are based on agreed upon measurements and definitions. Over ^{more than} half a century ago, Wilhelm von Ostwald made a useful division between mathetic sciences, sciences of forces (including certain parts of physics and chemistry), sciences of life (physiology, biology, psychology) and the science of "Kulturologie" (dealing with the problems of man's culture and sociology). Those divisions and sciences have, since Ostwald, undergone vital changes, overlappings etc. Yet the basic idea of a difference and separation of disciplines into those that can function with statements ^{and definitions} based on physical, 3dimensional, agreed upon measuring units - and on the other hand those ^{dealing with} of higher dimensional, multidimensional, ^{or perhaps multidimensional} or omnidimensional levels, where low-dimensional methods simply do no longer suffice, ^{still is} ~~is~~ helpful.

The wide spread academic mania, this blind faith in squeezing everything, including multidimensionals like life, love, art, history etc. into a mold that fits ~~our~~ dimensionally limited minds, who have lost the capacity and the "language" for intuitive understanding, creative imagination and empathy (those three ^{much} most neglected parts of our education), as well as all interest in and tolerance for higher dimensional experiences - all those symptoms and results of an obsolete mental training I call DIMENSIONAL DEFFICIENCY.

A perfect demonstration of the situation indicated here, was the ^{conference} meeting or symposium on "NEW KNOWLEDGE ^{IN} OF HUMAN VALUES"

^{KRESGE AUDITORIUM of the} at the M.I.T. auditorium in Cambridge Mass. October 4-5 1957
(MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY) ^{at} ^{Alburtum, Boston Mass.} sponsored by the Research Society for Creative

Many well known thinkers and experts in different fields had prepared carefully, and with serious intentions, papers on the key-theme; "New Knowledge of Human Values". There were scholars present like Pitirim A. Sorokin from Harvard (Social and Cultural Dynamics), Gyorgy Kepes (Dept. of Design M.I.T.) Erich Fromm (Psychoanalysis) Un. of Mexico), Tillich (Religion, Harvard), D.T. SUZUKI, (Zen Buddhism) and others

representing Philosophy, Psychology, Psychiatry, Economics, Anthropology etc.

As often before, there was, also here, soon an agreement reached, that in view of our present means ^{to} of total destruction, mankind cannot survive unless greed and hatred are universally substituted by "love."

And then the verbal fiesta turned into a grimm tournament of academic precision. Even, during intermissions, in the corridors and lobbies, obsidian-sharp logic and erudition were fencing bravely to rope ^{or rope} LOVE, this dragon of unfathomable elusiveness, into the rigid traps of safe formulas and exact definitions.

Two precious days went by and when of course no agreement seemed in sight, I heard voices gradually admitting that it was rather hopeless at this time, because the proper research had been neglected and future efforts have to be more concentrated in order to find out how LOVE can become a "measurable entity", or at least, how it could be "broken down into measurable components" in order to create the "Science of LOVE". I heard no one indicate that "love" is one of the many words which had been completely victimized by misuse and that, at best, love is like a tool which depends on who uses it for what intentions or purposes. ^{or abilities} As such, it can be beneficial, inspiring or divine as well as maddening, cruel, devilish, infernal, monstrous or trivial.

I hope that no selfrespecting pupil of mine will ever make publicly the same ridiculous effort of strangling spiritual, emotional or life experiences into mathetic straightjackets. even in mathematic ^s you can't turn incommensurable numbers into commensurable ones for convenience reasons except by drawing symbols in 2 or 3 dimensional geometry (root two rectangles ^{to} or eubes ^{diagonals of squares} etc.). you cannot squeeze a 3dimensional pyramid into a one-dimensional line without losing everything the pyramid stands for ^{dimensionally}.

Anyhow, the big meeting finally adjourned with the resolution:

that we really have no new knowledge or human values, to speak of, that practically no research had been ~~made~~ made in that direction, and that, while we are spending so many billions of dollars on research for war and destruction some money should be collected to start some research on human values etc. All we seem to have now are ideas ~~has~~ borrowed from ancient sources, from distant lands, apparently indigestible for the Western mind.

While I stopped writing, I glanced at a newspaper (Nov. 1960). There I found a report from India describing the governments concern about the lack of words for objects, actions and ideas introduced by the Industrial age and modern education. The life of the Hindu developed, ² (in the ³ past, his language) according to his needs which simply did not include any of the paraphernalia of the technical age.

I remember from my own childhood, that the Czechs ^{in Old Austria} were in a similar situation over half a century ago. In fact, all European languages annexed foreign words, whenever conquests, social or political changes confronted people with new conditions for which the language was not prepared. The Czechs had all the words they needed in an agrarian society, but when schools had to catch up with the education of the rest of the Austro-Hungarian Empire they lacked even words for "compass" or "ruler" and other technical equipment for their ^{grammar-see} schools. At that time they were preparing for the struggle for their future independence and they preferred creating their own new words instead of importing them. The Hindu's seem to have a similar ambition.

As a contrast, I remember my studies with Dr. Suzuki, who lectured on Zen Buddhism at Columbia University a few years ago. In discussing problems of a philosophical or spiritual nature we frequently had no words in the English language, and my notebook is full of Chinese, Japanese, or Sanscrit symbols, which to us were untranslatable.

Dr. Suzuki had to spend considerable time to explain what they did not mean and if then some of us had an intuitive "feeling" of a non-verbal subconscious kind there was a possibility that it might be close to the meaning of the symbol, that was all one could expect. The arrogant idea that our language or our phonetic script can express everything becomes somewhat ridiculous in such cases.

It shall take a great deal of optimism, therefore, to face our problem of writing or thinking about coincidences after we realized that our thinking is mostly verbal, that the very language we are using is sick (to put it mildly) or inadequate, inept, unfit, ^{for such a task!} and that our education and its victims are suffering from dimensional deficiency. It would be even considerably less promising if we would ignore those limitations and, as in so many other occasions proceed on the false pretense of working with a perfect language used by a perfect mind. We can under such conditions only compromise, by using our language "as is," and some habitual ways of presentation, with a clear definite agreement to keep their and our limitations in mind.

I hope it is clear by now that we shall have to be careful, not to make statements with mathetic finality based on definitions, measurements and proofs. All I can do is to tell stories, mostly out of my own experience, stories which seem to throw perhaps a certain light on how certain things developed. The purpose will not be to prove this or that. The victories of competitive thinking do not interest me. I am not trying to sell you my ideas. All I try to get is a contact. Just like meeting a person under certain circumstances when one sometimes has an immediate contact, so one also can hope ~~for~~ for a contact with events, phenomena or problems in general. Even if I

know the exact height, weight, age, address, phone number, social security number, bank account, business, political party, etc. of a person with whom I share a room daily for years in an occupational position or in a family, still, that person may be a distant stranger to me for a long time. It takes something entirely different to become acquainted and to make a real contact. It may be easier with people of the same color, type, temperament, occupation, age and social position. Yet sometimes we can get that interal ^{an} "knowing" regardless of age, sex, background or money or the lack of it. What causes this, we (as we now understand) cannot define. One thing seems quite obvious and pretty sure that if we approach a person heartlessly, though correctly, with a questionnaire to collect all the above mentioned information about those quantitative details we shall have a collection of data and shockingly little else; but probably no contact at all. I have to add, though, that I am aware of the value of those data if in the hands of someone, who has empathy and understanding or an honest desire for it. After sufficient experience one can use material of quantitative information to start a picture of the external causes for a person's problem.

Many other phenomena in life, and even ideas, act usually like you and I. In order to get acquainted we shall have to treat them with respect and behave like gentlemen.

So, we shall have to leave the third degree method to the police or to charity and the proof to the DA, (^{in certain} like these TV programs) and remember that some of the most valuable teachings have come down to us in stories, parables, analogies, legends and myths, not in formulas.

In other words, I feel, in a way, justified to tell from my own life the stories ^{of events} which have helped me (sooner or later) to comprehend or rather to contact certain things. If it helps you or someone else too, fine. If not, I have no argument, I am not trying to be right or prove anything. If you

don't agree and you want to be right, I am ready to hand you the victory on a silver platter (as the saying goes) right now, because long ago I realized that winning an argument solves no problem. How many students and teachers learned in school the naive concept that one finds the scientific truth by contradicting everything until a man or his idea survives somehow the brutality of the attack? Even gifted men with original ideas have been beaten by arguments and contradictions because the attackers were in the majority or had other powers ^{like} to protect their ignorance or professional position, by ~~contradicting or judging~~. The fallacy of this old trick has been too often shown up when the legion of condemned or defeated ideas of yesterday become the accepted and ruling arguments of today. Still the ^{original parties} users, as well as the victims, keep on believing. The study of those many people who have substituted contradicting for thinking is not a pleasant thing to contemplate. Please believe me I am not trying to win arguments or anything else.

And of course I am not trying to write a real ^{auto} biography. I am only trying to remember certain experiences which might illustrate or throw some light on the mysterious problem of coincidences, mainly through experiences of my own life, and in the process I hope to show the gradual evolution of certain ideas ^{or concepts} under the influence of certain events.