

Invisible Ties that Bind
Synchronicities, Extended Mind, Gravity,
Dark Matter and Other Ordinary Stuff

By

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In 1995, the *Journal of Scientific Exploration* published an article by French researcher, René Peoc'h, entitled, "Psychokinetic Action of Young Chicks on the Path of An Illuminated Source."¹ If the title doesn't grab you, its content will. It regards the testing of 80 groups of 15 chicks to see if they can somehow influence a robot programmed to randomly move about. Here's how the experiments worked. The hatchlings were placed in a small transparent cage at one end of a large darkened room. The robot (that looks something like those small round automatic vacuums you may have seen) is described as a, "self-propelled robot driven by an internal random generator to move about on a level surface in successive segments of random length and orientation."² It's also equipped with a plotter so that researchers have a precise computer record of the path it takes. As you might expect, given that its movements are random, under normal circumstances where there is no cage, or there is only an empty cage, the robot moves pretty evenly about the entire room. But when researchers mounted a candle on top of the robot and put it in the room with the caged hatchlings, that desire light during their waking hours, the robot spends "two and a half times longer on the half of the surface closer to the chicks."³

In the first series of experiments, Peoc'h explains, "The use of baby chicks was motivated... by the fact that birds are readily imprinted. After hatching from the egg, many species of baby birds adopt the first close moving object as their mother. We conditioned our chicks to adopt the [robot] as their mother, by placing them for one hour alone in the presence of the moving robot, every day for six days after their birth."⁴ But when placed into their cage and unable to follow the robot around, the chicks somehow get the robot to stay mostly in their vicinity. This was the case in 57 of the 80 experiments with the candle, meaning "the robot spent more time in the chick half of its range"⁵ 71% of the time. When the experiment was tried with rabbits, the rabbits were initially frightened by the robot, and the robot, rather than moving about randomly, mostly stayed away from them. But after a few weeks, when they got used to it, the robot began spending most its time near them too.

¹ *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 223-229, 1995

² *Ibid.*, p. 223

³ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

Those who cite this study often presume the chicks and rabbits must be “pulling” or “repelling” the robot through some sort of *psychokinetic* power. While this seems most likely, I suppose it’s possible the robot might also have something to do with it, perhaps as part of a compassionate universe that doesn’t like to see frightened babies. However we explain the results of these experiments, it seems certain there must be some sort of invisible connection between the animals and the machine.

Although these results seem extraordinary, and something many of us cannot help but doubt, despite the evidence, I would propose that this example of the invisible connections that bind us all is actually quite ordinary and usual. Perhaps we simply don’t acknowledge them, or quickly forget about them, because they defy reason and can’t be causally explained. Cornell’s psychology professor, Thomas Gilovich, for instance, completely debunks psychic phenomena in his book, *How We Know What Isn’t So*, in which he states:

[One] phenomenon which tempts many people to speculate about a transcendent force is the experience of a remarkable coincidence. Two friends who have not seen each other in years sit in adjacent seats in a theater in a foreign town. A man dials a wrong number in a distant city, and the recipient turns out to be his college roommate. A woman is thinking about an event she has not thought of in years and intends to discuss it with her spouse: miraculously, he brings it up first. These events seem so improbable, and often produce such powerful emotion, that they strike many people as more than just coincidence.⁶

Yet, Gilovich argues that given the enormous human population, now 7 billion people, it is statistically probable that such coincidences will happen to some of us on a daily basis. He says, for example, “...the probability of thinking of an acquaintance roughly five minutes before that person’s death is roughly 3×10^{-5} per year. Thus, with the population of the United States as it is, we can expect there to be over 3,000 of these events every year, or almost 10 every day.”⁷ His argument is sound, but, I think, his statistics are off. My experience is that these sorts of coincidences don’t happen to a mere 3000 out of 300,000 million of us once a year, but to most of us rather frequently. Nor does his explanation help us understand experiences of those like Anne Ring, a woman who had a dream that her father was decorating his house for the holiday, when he suddenly died. She woke up very disturbed, told her husband about it, noticed it was 2:00 AM, and eventually fell back to sleep. The next morning, Thanksgiving Day, she received a call from her brother in London informing her that her father had indeed died suddenly and unexpectedly at 10:00 AM London time, which was 2:00 AM in California.⁸

⁶ Gilovich, Thomas, *How We Know What Isn’t So*, The Free Press, New York, NY, 1991, p. 175.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁸ Radin, Dean, *Entangled Minds*, Paraview Pocket Books, New York, NY, 2006, p. 104.

In light of many similar stories, Gilovich's statistical explanation seems inadequate. Although I read his book, subtitled, *The Fallibility of Human Reason in Everyday Life*, with great interest and appreciation, as a devotee of logic myself, I could not help but feel throughout that Gilovich leaves us with no room for mystery, no room for the unexplained. It seems as if he equates the adage, "Everything has a logical explanation," with, "if it can't be explained, it isn't logical." His book, *How We Know What Isn't So* would be complimented by the title, *How We Don't Know What Is So*. Reason, as we say in our faith, ought to help "warn us against the idolatries of the mind," but when it is used, like a religion, to give us a false sense of security in a world of chaos and uncertainty, it just becomes another kind of magical thinking. Such thinking, which classical psychology called the *omnipotence of thought*, represents an unconscious wish to control reality with our minds, or to ignore the world outside us in deference to our beliefs and ideals.

I personally don't believe that in the 13.7 billion year history of the Universe, there has ever been one miracle—meaning I don't believe any phenomenological laws have ever been violated. But just because I believe there is a logical explanation for everything, doesn't mean I think we have an answer for everything. Just as physicists are now telling us most the Universe is comprised of dark matter, most knowledge also remains in the dark. That is to say, we know very little of all there is to know.

Carl Jung referred to the kind of "remarkable coincidences" Gilovich explains away as *synchronicities*, which he described as, "acausal" and "uncanny." This is not unlike what Einstein seems to have meant when he referred to the odd unexplainable connection between distant particles as "spooky."⁹ Neils Bohr, the Nobel Prize winning physicist who discovered this holistic nature of quantum reality, suggested we can't even think about it without getting, "*schwindlig*,"¹⁰ the German word for "dizzy."

No matter how dizzy it makes me, however, this underlying holism, the connection between all that is, the interdependent web of all existence, seems a much more likely explanation for the chick's connection to the robot, dreams that come true, and the remarkable coincidences all of us experience, than does statistical probability. Indeed, the fact that the robot stays near the chicks 71 percent of the time is not statistically probable. Something else seems to be going on.

Our son was born at 12:17 AM. We were married on 12-17 1988. Although this is a remarkable coincidence for us, it does seem well within the realm of statistical probability. Given that there are 300 thousand people born everyday, and there are only 365 days per year, and just 1,440 minutes in a day, such a circumstance seems likely to happen frequently. And were this the only

⁹ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁰ Ibid.

synchronicity to happen to me in my life, I could easily dismiss it as mere chance. But, in my experience, I have had many, even more profound, synchronicities occur during my life.

Many years ago, for example, when I was still working in TV news, I stopped by White Castle for a coffee on my way to an early morning live shot at a gym. I instructed the intern who was with me to keep the doors locked because, as I put it at the time, “there are a lot of bums around here.” A little later, while still en route, I mentioned that I used to always give a little change to anyone who asked, but had to stop. When she asked why, I told her I was having a tough enough time providing for my own family and though I had once felt responsible for them, I now felt my main obligation was to own wife and kids. As much as I hate to admit it, I was saying that I no longer felt it was my responsibility to help.

Upon arriving at our location, I immediately began raising the mast on the live truck, then went to the back of the van to get the spools of AV cable I would need. Just as soon as I opened the double doors I saw the silhouette of what at first looked like a corpse stuffed onto the top shelf. A moment later, however, I smelled the booze and realized a drunken bum had found his way into the garage at work and climbed into the van for a little shelter. “Alright, get out!” I said. “Get out!” The still inebriated fellow stumbled to his feet, which I presumed would be the end of our interaction. But I didn’t notice him follow me into the gym as I was stringing my cable. He immediately began trying to bum cigarettes from those in the midst of their early morning workouts. The employee looked at me with some confusion, thinking the odd fellow was part of my crew.

“Alright, come with me,” I said. He followed me outside whereupon I opened the van doors and said, “Get in,” figuring he could have another hour to sleep and sober up, and I could better deal with him later. So, after the show was over and the sun was up, I opened the doors again and said, “Alright buddy. That’s it. Time to get out.” He followed my instructions without complaint, but as I began to pull away I saw him in my side-view mirror spinning about rather aimlessly, having been dropped off in the suburbs, which I imagined was much less conducive to his lifestyle than the downtown area where in he initially became my stowaway. I stopped, opened the cab doors this time, and said, “Come on, I’ll give you a ride back downtown.” He asked me to take him to the bus station, which I did.

I thought the story would end there, but it didn’t. After parking the live truck back in its bay at the TV station, ready to go home after a long night’s work, I noticed the man had left his backpack on the concrete floor. I really wanted to just go home, but instead I loaded the pack in my car and headed back to the bus station to find him again. Yes, once I found him and returned what were likely his only belongings, he asked if I could spare a little change. And, yes, I gave him a few bucks. The moral of the story is, next time you’re tempted to ignore a bum because you don’t think it’s your responsibility, be careful, our spooky Universe might just have a different opinion.

Back in 1986, after I first moved to Louisville to attend the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I was immediately attracted to another student who enjoyed my friendship and company but did not return my romantic inclinations. It turns out she was gay, and like so many Baptist seminary students had enrolled in a last ditch effort to “fix” herself. Half a dozen years later, just before our first child was born, Peggy and I moved from our small apartment into a duplex, shared by two women living upstairs. You guessed it, one of them was Sherri, the girl I had once been mildly infatuated with, and the other was her partner Laura. Over the months and years that we shared this home together, we grew to become great friends, if not family.

Eventually, however, Laura and Sherri split, and Laura took an internship in my old stomping ground, San Francisco. In fact, it worked out so well for her, that she got a job and decided to move there. When she came back to Louisville to collect her belongings, we got together for a visit during which she and I talked about what a great city Frisco is. She happened to mention the Mission district, which I told her was the neighborhood my father grew up in. She responded by saying, “Oh, that’s where I lived my first three months in the city.”

“I can always remember the name of his street,” I said, “because it’s the same as the oranges—Valencia.”

“That’s the street I lived on,” she said, a bit surprised.

“Yeah, and I can remember the street number too,” I continued, “because my grandmother used to say, ‘take bad luck and double it.’—1326.”

“Why I lived on the 13 hundred block,” she said, as she began fumbling through her bag for the exact address, which, as it turns out, was 1326 Valencia.

What are the probabilities, I wonder, that a woman involved in the synchronistic sharing of our home in Louisville would also end up living for a time in the very home my father grew up in, in a city with nearly 8 million residents?

Peggy had been a stay home mother while our children were young, giving her lots of time to volunteer at their school, which she loved doing. Eventually she got the teaching bug and returned to school to work on her M.A. in Teaching. She finished her work midyear, in December, which meant she wouldn’t likely be able to find a position for many months, until the start of a new school year. But it turned out the elementary school our children had attended, did have a 4th grade position open. Still, it seemed highly unlikely that, in one of the largest school districts in the nation, a new teacher would get a job mid-year at both the school and grade level she wanted. But she did. The story doesn’t end here, however. Just a few weeks after she was hired, I was fired from my secular job, our sole source of income, after I took a public stand in favor of gay marriage. Yet, just as I lost my income, Peggy gained another, so timely, in fact, that her benefits began just three days before mine ended.

When our daughter Cassidy picked out her new puppy less than two years ago, she began pondering what to name him as the paperwork was being finalized at

the Human Society. His pound name was Rebel. "I've always liked 'Sparky,'" she said, "but that's a little over done." A few moments later she said, "Chester. I like the name Chester." As soon as I heard it something about the named seemed familiar. It was then I remembered that before Cassidy had been born we picked out our first family dog, that we named, Chewy. Chewy's original pound name, however, had been, Chester.

I could go on with many other examples, and, I bet, given the opportunity, so could many of you. These sort of things happen, not to just 3000 out of 300 million of us once a year, but to many of us quite often. They are not extraordinary events, remarkable as they may seem, but rather ordinary.

In his book, *Recovering the Soul*, Larry Dossey, M.D., relates the story of a young female collie named Bobbie who got lost in Indiana while moving with her owners from Ohio to Oregon. Just three months later she showed up at the door of her family's new home, more than 2000 miles from where she disappeared. Her remarkable story was publicized well enough that it became possible to retrace her course through reports from a number of people who had seen her along the way. "When the trail was mapped out it was found that Bobbie picked a very reasonable route with few detours."¹¹ In other words, Bobbie made a beeline toward her family, to a place she'd never even been before!

Dossey also mentions the great Texas naturalist, Roy Bedichek (1878-1959), who once wrote about tagging, capturing, and relocating deer that had become troublesome to the wintering grounds of the endangered Whooping Crane at the Arkansas National Wildlife Refuge near Corpus Christi.

In the spring of 1942 a doe released near Goliad, ninety miles due west of the Refuge, returned to be trapped again in twenty-one days. In the spring of 1944 a six-point buck was trapped and transported four hundred miles west to Sheffield, Texas. In the fall of 1945 he was again caught and trapped on the Refuge. This pathfinding ability occurs early in life. A fawn was caught in the autumn of 1946 and was driven one night to San Angelo, Texas, 390 miles to the west of the Refuge, and from there to Nolan County, 77 miles to the north. Only two weeks later the same fawn was caught in another trap just 125 yards from the site of the original capture in the Refuge.¹²

All of us know of homing pigeons, but there are also numerous accounts of homing cats, homing dogs, homing fish, homing horses, homing insects, and even homing pigs. How do we explain it? Bedichek simply called it, "...mystery, deep mystery!" I tend to agree with biologist Rupert Sheldrake's theory that consciousness is an invisible field that extends beyond our individual bodies, not

¹¹ Ibid., p. 113.

¹² Dossy, Larry, M.D., *Recovering the Soul*, Bantam Books, New York, NY, 1989, p. 114.

much different from invisible magnetic, electromagnetic, and gravitational fields. We can't see these fields, but we know they are real because we can see their effects. Likewise, we can't see the invisible connections between us, but we know they are real because we see their effects. In his book, *Entangled Minds*, Dean Radin, a senior scientist at the Institute for Noetic Sciences, suggests these invisible connections occur so regularly because everything is part of a Universe that is bound together in what physicists call quantum entanglement. "The brain," he says, "like all other objects, is part of the entangled fabric of reality. As such, brain functioning is not just ruled by classical physics and biochemistry, but also participates in events distributed throughout space and time."¹³

"Hence this life of yours," said Erwin Schrodinger, "which you are living is not merely a piece of the entire existence, but is, in a certain sense, the whole."¹⁴ Nevertheless, I admit that I cannot explain such mysteries. I do not, ultimately, know how week old chicks can lure a robot toward them, how lost animals find their way home, or how humans thousands of miles away can remain so intimately connected. Just because I can't explain such things, however, doesn't mean I can explain them away either. So, I suppose it might simply be best to end with a thought from the genius who called them "spooky action at a distance" to begin with, Albert Einstein. "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. [One] to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead." Or, as the English poet, Francis Thompson put it:

All things by immortal power,
Near and Far
Hiddenly
To each other linked are,
That thou canst not stir a flower
Without troubling a star

¹³ Radin, *ibid.*, p. 266,

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 260.