

April 2009

COINCIDENCE OR NOT?

Sometimes the confluence of two events is merely coincidence, while at other times what appears to be coincidence may be an indication of unseen forces at work. The other day, for example, my wife and I left our home to see a movie just as our neighbor was leaving. My wife and I returned three hours later; as we parked our car we noticed our neighbor had also returned and was parking his car. Was that coincidence? Probably.

The next situation involves a phone call. First, some background is necessary. As the Director of Education at the Theosophical Society, I work with many prisoners who enroll in our correspondence courses. One such prisoner—we'll call him Randy—had been working with me throughout 2007. He was a good student and always gave thoughtful answers to the study questions. Randy was released from prison in February 2008, at which time he returned to his hometown of Charlotte, North Carolina. He still kept in touch with me by phone, and I tried to encourage him in his job search. After living at the Salvation Army for a few months, he eventually found a job installing carpet. The last time I heard from Randy was in August 2008, and he was still holding down that job.

Fast forward to March 2009. I'm in the office organizing my files when I find Randy's old study papers. Why not give him a call? Seven months had passed since we last talked. For several days I considered phoning him, but work deadlines are encroaching so I never get around to it. The following Monday morning, there's a message on my phone. It's from Randy, who had called to say hello.

Randy was 700 miles away and we hadn't spoken in seven months. There was no compelling reason for either of us to contact the other. Yet, after thinking of him for a couple of days, I received a phone call from him. Is that coincidence? Or is it evidence of "unexplained laws of nature" at work?

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