

Oracular Theory: Why Oracles Work

The most remarkable quality about any of the “consulting” oracles—*The Living Oracle*, the Tarot, the *I Ching*, the Runes (as well as so many others)—is reflected in the notion that the invoking of a “chance” occurrence, whether this be the flip of a coin, the selection of a card, the drawing of a ceramic tablet out of a bag, can have relevance to a posed question, and connect the inquirer meaningfully to a passage or image that has a high degree of pertinence to the matter at hand. Everyday logic, which rests its case on the presumption of the linearity of cause and effect, balks at any such notion.

Even if passages arrived at seemingly by pure chance have relevance to an inquiry, one avenue to debunking oracles is to see all such texts as being written in such a vague yet inclusive way that something in all of them is bound to pertain to something that the consulter is going through, regardless of what and when that may be.

Yet the crux of the matter may hinge not so much on the apparent accuracy or aptness of a given passage, but on the resonance which the act of consulting an Oracle sets up in the person who is consulting it. Something, often utterly unexpected, is awakened, something is felt, and the interaction can be as real and compelling—and sometimes as startling—as any number of interactions between people, including those in which two people meet, unexpectedly, and discover an unanticipated “awakened” connection between them.

If we entertain, even just as a provisional hypothesis, the perennial mystical intuitions: “All is One,” and “The macrocosm is contained within the microcosm” (and vice-versa), we may have a starting point to speculate about (and hopefully develop some comprehension about) oracular doings. Such mystical notions have received powerful, if largely (in terms of philosophical implications) disregarded, substantiation at the sub-atomic level through the rigorous scientific observations of particle physics and quantum mechanics, and within our own, everyday dimensional range as evidenced by the documenting of synchronic events, and research into the phenomenon sometimes referred to as “nonlocality.”

In quantum mechanics, within certain equations describing the creation and expiration of a range of sub-atomic particles, the vectors depicting the “time” dimension have long been known to be bi-directional. Additionally, quantum mechanics has demonstrated that experimental outcomes do not exist independent of the consciousness of the observer. The consciousness of the observer is an inseparable part of the equation describing the process and outcome of such experiments; the act of observing influences (and even determines) outcome. Regarding the description of meaningful, coincidental events on the human scale, the Swiss psychiatrist C. G. Jung felt compelled to postulate the existence of an “acausal connecting principle” based on his observations of the workings of “coincidence” within his own interior (mental life) and exterior (outer world) experiences, as well as those of his patients. His monograph *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle* remains a pioneering, seminal work in describing the arena of what is sometimes termed nonlocality. (Dr. Jung later wrote the “Foreword” to the classic Wilhelm/Baynes edition of the *I Ching*, in which he expresses his views on the acausality of oracular consultation.) In a more contemporary vein, nonlocality effects have been quantified in the work of Larry Dossey, M.D., who has studied the efficacy of prayer-at-a-distance.⁷

[7] Please consult the “List of Selected Readings” on page 187.

The inference that may be drawn from such concepts as quantum mechanics, synchronicity and nonlocality is that there is a domain of our being which “exists”—and functions—outside the apparent, consensually assumed limits of space and time. Within the apparently functional domain of this extended side of our being, the boundaries partitioning off the dimensions of space and time collapse, or are at least relativized to such an extent as to be momentarily suspended. This domain beyond our four-dimensional space-time perception is the domain of simultaneity in which every “thing” is connected, seamlessly, with “everything else.” Stanford University neurosurgeon Karl Pribram developed the concept of the “holographic paradigm” to describe this process in which everything is simultaneously encoded within everything, and David Bohm, the late English physicist, coined the expression “implicate order” to designate this non-spatially-confined/non-temporally-confined substrate in which all phenomena, including space and time, are embedded.⁸

By tentatively positing this principle of the simultaneity of universal interconnectedness, we can begin to appreciate that the moment-of-chance which steers us to a passage in the *Oracle* is as linked to the question we pose as it is to the moment-in-time in which we pose it and even our very intention to pose it. In formulating an inquiry we upholster a “moment” in space-time with our conundrum, and then invite the nonlocality—the implicateness of the moment—to touch through simultaneity the “all-that-is,” in order to gather from its interface with the implicate order that which synchronicitously pertains to our space-time situation.⁹ “Chance,” then, is the expression of implicateness in direct relation to the question we pose. It is the

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[9] The syntactical awkwardnesses of several of the sentences in this paragraph are intentional. They constitute the author’s attempt to render an impression, through language, of the multidimensional workings of simultaneity in the course of making an inquiry to the *Oracle*. Written, discursive language does not lend itself all that wonderfully to this task.

direct highway leading into implicateness, and back out again. At the crucial moment of “chance,” the mind of the inquirer, the intention to inquire, the inquiry itself, the moment of inquiry, and the Universe’s resources in addressing our inquiry (limited only by the vehicle of the *Oracle* itself and the local consciousness of the consulter)—all are “one.” We are letting the interrelated pieces of an underlying, multidimensional oneness, or unity, express themselves through that very oneness at the moment of inquiry.

So it is that oracles, in partnership with our own inquiring mind, link up to, tap, and interpret, the wellspring of the beyond-linear and beyond-rational that undergirds everything we know, and can know.

A related, though decidedly more traditional, psychological way of considering the workings of oracles is to envision them as forming a channel, or pathway, external to us (our resident ego-consciousness), through which our unconscious mind can speak to, or reach, us. In this more psychological view of oracles the relevance of acausality —the non-linearity of cause and effect—still provides a starting point for comprehension. It is, however, the *source* of that which is qualified—as stemming from the unconscious mind of the person framing the inquiry, rather than from the “Universe” itself. (This may be only a specious distinction.) The psychological view holds that in our everyday state of wakeful consciousness we are often constrained against—even marshaled against—letting portions of our being reach us, especially those portions which may contain information we would rather not know or consider. To this end oracles can form a feedback loop which, as partially “external” to us and our censoring agenda, permits aspects of our unconscious to “end run” around our conscious vigilance, delusion or denial—and reach us (become known to us within our own ego-consciousness).

This view of oracles holds particular relevance to those inquiries that are responded to by seemingly “off-the-wall” passages. It can be contended that the surfacing of whatever the unconscious material is that would be perceived as posing a challenge of some kind to our conscious orientation is consistent

with the evocation of strange, recondite, arcane or otherwise spurious responses via the *Oracle*. Therefore, when such a response is tendered, it is wise to not simply “shake it off like a bad pitch,” but to follow wherever our mental associations and reflection, as spurred by such a passage, truly lead. In short, the extent to which a given passage strikes us as discordant to a particular inquiry may be the very extent to which that part of ourselves which is hidden from us is emerging, and finding us. In such a circumstance, the meanings encoded in particular responses may or may not seem “obvious,” in addressing whatever inquiry has been made; however, the less “obvious” such meanings, at first glance, appear, the more interesting and far-reaching they may turn out to be.

Since any oracle such as the *I Ching*, the Runes, the Tarot, or *The Living Oracle* involves, in its construction, the artificial “segmentation” of the Universe into pieces through which it can subsequently speak, it should be clear that any oracle, so constructed, will “work”—the differences between various oracles being the nature of the spectrum into which the Universe is split. With any of the well-established oracles, depending on the text involved (and many oracles have numerous texts and commentaries that can be consulted), we typically find that various texts, regardless of the specific oracle to which they attach, fall along a continuum between polarities. At one end of the spectrum are texts which strive to be quite exact and cut-and-dried, in their content—not lending themselves particularly well to associative interactions on the part of the consulter. Within such texts, the potential for associative richness gets sacrificed in service of obtaining specific, declarative responses. In consulting them, one has the experience of being “told,” or informed about, something—as if the provenance of the information is outside of oneself.

On the other end of the spectrum are texts which are quite vague on specifics, yet revel in a kind of imagery that leads to dynamic interactions between the passages and the consulter. Strong associative linkage is cata-

lyzed in the process of consulting them. The experience in using such texts is that one discovers, or happens upon, responses as they arise, spontaneously, from “within.” They come across as being sourced within one’s own consciousness, rather than as being introduced as foreign, or external to oneself. *The Living Oracle’s* texts appear to strike a balance between offering fairly specific responses, yet retaining a kind of studied imprecision and sometimes cryptic ambiguity that can lead to strong associative linkage. This form of oracle seeks to be more engaging of the consulter than simply providing declarative “fortune telling.” What “arises” is as important (if not more so) than what is “declared.” As with any good oracle, any given passage can, and should, hold very different meanings depending on the nature of the inquiry to which it is in response.

Hopefully this little chapter gives you enough of a sense of grounding in oracular theory that you can make room in your life for *The Living Oracle* (as well as other oracles, should you so choose) to begin to work for you. A good oracle becomes a good friend—one who knows you really well and who can say truly wonderful things about you, as well as the difficult things that sometimes need to be said, in ways that are measured enough to be helpful, while still giving evidence of an underlying care and concern in such a manner that the motive of the counsel as “being for you own good” is never in question. Such a friend—companion—is, indeed, a rare and precious gift.