

THE VIRTUAL UNIVERSE

Evidence Demonstrating That an Advanced Post-Human Civilisation Has Created Us

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Evidence Demonstrating
That an Advanced Post-Human
Civilisation Has Created Us

First Edition

-

When reality is fiction, there is no need to make things up.

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For information or other issues regarding this book, contact the writer at:

trafoc@hotmail.com

Preface

Is this universe a simulation run by an advanced humanoid civilisation? Can we establish that? Science cannot answer these questions, but it can help to make the argument. If we notice breaches of the laws of reality that science has established, our world might not be genuine.

Do we exist as entertainment? And is there a script? Can we explain phenomena ranging from UFOs, ghosts, reincarnation, the paranormal, and meaningful coincidences? It seems possible. The sceptics may have been overzealous. They failed to give some of the most meaningful evidence a fair judgement.

What we can imagine depends on the state of our technology. In the Middle Ages, no one guessed this world could be a computer simulation. Thus, the argument may suffer from limited comprehension due to the state of technology. But at least the current state of technology allows for a plausible explanation.

June 2021 – May 2024,

Version: 04.05.24

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So there must be something more

Numerous strange incidents occurred in my life. The following happened in December 2010. My wife and I were sitting at the kitchen table. She was discussing her late mother and father. Her mother had outlived her father for more than three decades. Her mother had asked her father to contact her as a spirit if he was to die first. She then recalled her mother later saying he had never made himself noticed, 'not even by stopping a clock.'

Just after my wife had finished speaking, a gust of wind blew a flower pot over the balcony. It made a loud noise. Even though it was windy, the blow came out of nowhere. It was a bit eerie. The next day, my wife noticed that both a clock and an alarm clock were back one hour. One was connected to the power grid, while the other ran on a battery. So, did her late father make himself noticed?

Perhaps you also have experienced something you can't explain, an incredible coincidence or something else, for instance, a near-death experience. Or maybe you know someone who did. You can't reason it away. And so you believe there must be something more. That can be comforting. Perhaps there is a God, and maybe your life has a purpose.

Why do people believe in an afterlife or God? Is it because they fear death or want their life to have meaning? Would it be so bad if our existence is just the result of mere chance and evolution and that we exist for no particular reason? Is that so much worse than playing a small part in the grand scheme of a Supreme Puppet Master? And eternal life? I would bore myself to death. For a long time, I believed that I would die one day and that it would all be over by then. And that was a comforting thought.

Let's end this on a lighter note. In 2014, my wife, son and I visited the monkey zoo Apenheul in Apeldoorn. We had been walking around watching monkeys for hours. A long-tailed monkey came down from a tree to sit near me. I could have touched its tail if I wanted to. And so I said to my wife jokingly, 'Well, if I pull the tail, a bell will go off, saying ding-dong.' Within a second, a loud ding-dong came from the speakers all over the zoo. An announcement followed. There had not been an announcement all day, nor did one follow later on. The monkey zoo is in Apeldoorn. That is also peculiar as this name refers to the word ape. Indeed, there may be more about this universe than science can explain.

Is there a plan?



Gräf and Stift Double Phaeton ridden by Archduke Franz Ferdinand at the time of his assassination. OlliFoolish (CC BY 3.0). Box with licence plate number added.

On 28 June 1914, the Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip shot Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie in their open car in Sarajevo. It kicked off a sequence of events that led to World War I. Austria held Serbia responsible and declared war. The conflict soon escalated and became the first world war. The war ended four years later with the Armistice of 11 November 1918. The date 11 November (11/11) is remarkable. But there is something far more peculiar about this event. The car in which Franz Ferdinand died bore licence plate number AIII 118, possibly referring to Armistice 11-11-18.

The assassination succeeded after a series of setbacks. Two conspirators failed to act. A third threw a bomb that exploded below the next car. Franz Ferdinand then changed his plan to visit the wounded from the bombing at the hospital. After learning that the plot had failed, Princip positioned himself on the route to the hospital. There, Franz Ferdinand's open car reversed after taking a wrong turn. The engine stalled, and the gears locked in front of the only person still prepared to kill Franz Ferdinand.

Surrounded by a crowd, Princip was unable to activate the bomb he was carrying. He had to use his handgun instead but failed to aim it. He said, possibly in a baffled voice, 'Where I aimed, I don't know.' Princip added that he turned his head off when firing the shots. Even considering the close range, it is odd that he fired only two bullets, killing both the Archduke and his wife.¹

Franz Ferdinand had premonitions of early death. One relative recalled him telling a few friends a month earlier that he knew that he was about to be murdered. Another account notes that the Archduke had shot a white stag a year earlier. According to folklore, a hunter who had killed such an animal would die soon. While hunting, Franz Ferdinand killed over 270,000 animals. And so it may have happened. Only no reliable source confirms it.¹

Indeed, remarkable coincidences surrounded the assassination. The car stopped just in front of Princip. And two poorly aimed shots proved to be fatal. But the licence plate adds a very peculiar suggestion to it. Did someone know beforehand that this car would play a crucial role in the assassination of Franz Ferdinand? And that this event was about to ignite a war that would end on 11 November 1918? The assassination could have gone wrong, or it might not have triggered a war, or the war could have proceeded differently to end on another day. And so you may ask yourself, 'Is all that happens part of a plan?'

Wake up call

In the autumn of 2008, the financial system was in jeopardy. I had just discovered how negative interest rates can prevent economic crises in the future. It seemed an epic find. Interest charges cause wealth inequality and financial instability. So far, interest-free money has been impossible because negative interest rates have been impossible. The famous economist Keynes already saw the potential. And I found the solution. The design, Natural Money, could stabilise the financial system and end financial crises. It could work forever because a similar arrangement existed in ancient Egypt for over 1,000 years.

This money might allow for a new era with a sustainable economy and more equality. I soon realised respectable economists would not consider it. And perhaps I was wrong. So, I planned to give up and go on with my life. Then, strangeness crept in. Every time I woke up at night and looked at the clock, it showed times like 2:22, 3:33, 4:44 or 5:55. Then, out of the blue, my wife told me she also was waking up at night and seeing these times again and again. I had not mentioned this to anyone, so she could not have known I also had it. This episode lasted for several weeks.



11:11 on a clock

On the Internet, you can find stories of people haunted by time prompts like 11:11. They call it the 11-phenomenon or 11:11-phenomenon. World War I ended on 11 November 1918. The licence plate number of Franz Ferdinand's car might refer to this date. What does that signify? Could there be a connection? Or is there nothing to it?

Our minds trick us in different ways, for instance, selective remembrance. Remarkable things we remember best. Maybe you have experienced a few strange incidents. They stick to your memory while you may not remember thousands of mundane events that also transpired because there was nothing special about them. Often, I see a number, and within a second or so, I see the same number again somewhere else, usually on licence plates. But when I look out for recurring numbers, I rarely see them. Perhaps repeating numbers triggers my brain. Recording them then becomes a conscious process, so for each remarkable combination, countless others remain unnoticed.

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My waking up at night and seeing these time prompts was different. There were no exceptions, as far as I remember. And my wife had the same at the same time. That was not my mind tricking me. Something made me wake up and look at the clock at these times. It looked like mind control. There is a connection with the licence plate number of Franz Ferdinand's car. Only large-scale mind control could make the assassination succeed, trigger a war, and end that war on 11 November 1918. That was creepy. A tin foil hat will not save you. There might be a plan. Is Natural Money part of that plan? And it was just the beginning. Things were about to get a lot stranger yet.

Virtual worlds

A virtual world is a computer-simulated environment. Virtual worlds can have many users who might create personal avatars, participate in activities and communicate with others. If you are familiar with computer games, you know what an avatar is. Once you enter a game, you become a character inside that game, your avatar, and you have an existence apart from your regular life. Inside the game, you are your avatar, not yourself. Alternatively, you could start a virtual world where you are God and make your dreams come true. In this world, you can also become someone else, a character in your story.

Virtual worlds have rules that may draw from reality or fantasy worlds. Rules can be gravity, ways of procreation, and sorts of communication. In virtual reality, you can change the rules. You can do away with planets and stars and create a flat surface. Or there is no surface at all. You can eliminate gravity and let everyone float. You can do away with procreation and let individuals emerge out of thin air. You can invent species that communicate via light signals or not have species but individuals with random features.

Our reality limits our imagination or what we consider. Individuals with random features do not have meaningful social interactions and will bore us to death after a few seconds. If we make stories and films, most are about humans and their interactions, and a few are about animals, and the animals we imagine in our tales are like humans. Ed, the talking horse, is not horsy at all. Tales and motion pictures about imaginary beings like Avatar, the Lord of the Rings or the series Star Trek are rare compared to series about, for instance, lawyers and court proceedings, which are not amusing but keep us occupied nonetheless. And the fictitious beings in our stories also look and act like humans.

The Holodeck is a virtual reality room that appears in Star Trek. It uses holograms to create a realistic, interactive simulation of the physical world. Participants can create a personal reality with objects and characters, interact with them, or write a story and play it. With the help of artificial intelligence, we might soon create simulations of human civilisations and worlds. If the technology becomes cheap, we could make billions of virtual universes. If we can do that, it could have happened long ago, and we could live inside a virtual world ourselves.² It might explain the licence plate number of Franz Ferdinand's car and my waking up at night and seeing those time prompts.

It could also explain why I might have found out who the current avatar of God is. But can we determine that we live inside a simulation? That is a tricky question. To do that, we first need to ascertain what we can know and investigate the foundations of knowledge. That is the domain of a branch of philosophy called knowledge theory.

Knowledge theory

What is knowledge theory?

What is truth, and what is knowledge? Philosophers have been discussing these questions for thousands of years. Knowledge theory is also called *epistemology*. It is about the nature of knowledge. It deals with truth, belief, and the justification of beliefs. It aims to answer questions such as: What do we know? What does it mean that we know something? And what makes beliefs justified? We usually acquire knowledge in two ways:

- by *induction*, which is using observations to formulate general rules or theories and
- by *deduction*, which is applying those rules and theories to specific situations.

For instance, after carefully observing the available records of all the people who have lived and still live, you arrive with the help of induction at a general rule that people die before they turn 120 years old. Then, using this rule and deduction, you infer that you will die before the age of 120. That seems straightforward, but there are pitfalls. That is why philosophers are still discussing these issues.

There is a difference between rules and theories. A *rule* is that if A occurs, B happens. A *theory* is that A causes B. And if we cannot observe A, a theory can assume the existence of A. A then exists in our imagination. For instance, an explanation of electricity assumes the existence of electrons and their supposed behaviour. We cannot see electrons, not even with a powerful microscope. But we can do experiments to see how electricity behaves. We presume the conduct of electricity proves the existence of electrons.

We are imaginative beings. Much of our knowledge involves imagination. For instance, we imagine electrons. Dogs can't imagine electrons, so they can't build an electric car. This discussion of knowledge theory is a historical account. New ideas usually build upon previous thoughts. This treatise discusses Western philosophy. It is the most straightforward way to tackle the relevant topics. Western thinkers have been the most inquiring. As a result, the scientific revolution started in Europe. Science is the result of thinking but has also greatly influenced thinking.

Classical philosophy

The ancient Greek philosophers speculated about the nature of reality. Some believed everything consisted of fire, water, earth and air. Later on, a few philosophers argued that the building blocks of reality are small particles called atoms. These atoms differ in size and shape. The objects we see are groups of atoms stuck together. Democritus argued the universe merely consisted of atoms in the void. That was already close to the modern scientific understanding of reality. This kind of speculation is called metaphysics.

Metaphysics is about how we see reality. We connect the dots in a particular way. It is our imagination. We can believe that everything consists of fire, water, earth and air, or we can think that atoms are the building blocks of everything around us. It is speculation because these atoms are invisible, and the Greeks had no microscopes. By assuming they exist and have different shapes and sizes, you can explain the presence of various substances. You can also do that by presuming everything consists of fire, water, earth and air, even though we find the idea of atoms more convincing.

There were other issues the ancient Greeks were pondering. Some figured that the earth is a sphere. They inferred it by looking at the sea. The sea horizon is slightly curved, while boats disappear in the distance before their sails do. A philosopher named Xenophanes doubted religion. He realised that people believed that the gods were like themselves. For instance, black people thought the gods were black, while red-haired people believed the gods were red-haired. Xenophanes claimed it was impossible to know the gods and how they looked. It was an early form of scepticism.

And why would you worship the Greek gods if the Persians and the Egyptians have other gods? If your place of birth determines what you believe, your beliefs probably are false. The sophists were philosophers who had come into contact with other cultures. They claimed absolute knowledge is impossible. Everything is subjective, they argued. This view is called relativism. Socrates is known for his dialogues in which he debated the sophists.

According to Socrates, there is absolute truth even though we do not know it. His pupil Plato later claimed that ideas are the basis of knowledge and that ideas, not objects, are the building blocks of reality. His view is called *idealism*. It relates to deduction. Plato's pupil Aristotle asserted that knowledge comes from observations. His approach is called *empiricism*. It relates to induction. Both methods come with problems. If you imagine a unicorn, you have the idea of a unicorn, and the idealist could claim unicorns exist. On the other hand, if you see a unicorn after eating some mushrooms, the empiricist could also say unicorns exist.

And so, knowledge can always be called into question. If no one has ever seen a unicorn, this still is not definite proof of their non-existence. These creatures could still be hiding deep down in the forests. And perhaps the eating of mushrooms improves your perception. It is for that reason that scepticism emerged. There were two groups of sceptics. The first claimed nothing is certain. They aimed to refute the claims of other philosophers. The second argued it is better to postpone judgment until the matter is sufficiently clarified.

These ideas revived in Europe in the late Middle Ages after the texts of the classical philosophers had turned up in Arab libraries. European philosophers like Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham were also theologians. They believed that there was no difference between theology and science. Over time, science and religion had a divorce. Their paths separated. Today, science requires empirical evidence. Until now, religion did not.

William of Ockham is known for his simplicity principle named Ockham's Razor. It states that if several hypotheses can explain a phenomenon equally, the one with the fewest assumptions is the best. Assumptions must all be correct. Ockham's Razor argues for minimalism in reasoning or preferring obvious explanations if they suffice. For example, if you have ten assumptions with a 50% probability each, the likelihood of all being correct is

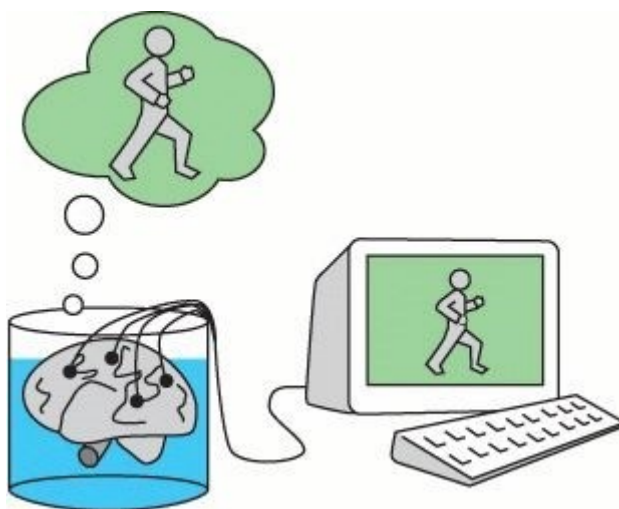
only 0.1%. The more assumptions you need, the weaker your argument becomes. The argument for this universe being a virtual reality is more potent than this virtual reality being used to entertain an individual we call God, as the first argument comes with fewer assumptions. After all, the latter also requires the assumptions of the former.

Modern philosophy

In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed to America. Nothing in the Bible or other ancient sources indicates that America exists. Nicolaus Copernicus came up with a theory saying the Earth revolves around the Sun rather than the other way around, which everyone had believed until then. Traditional knowledge had failed dramatically. Copernicus had the luck of dying soon afterwards. A few decades later, Galileo Galilei faced prosecution for claiming Copernicus was right.

At the same time, Protestants began to challenge the authority of the Roman Catholic Church by making religion a personal matter. If you had reason to believe something, it could be correct. That is why we have 45,000 branches of Christianity today. The ensuing religious wars ravaged Europe and ended without a clear winner.

And who was right? There can be only one truth. Merely believing something does not make it the truth. But questioning the existence of God remained out of the question. And so, European philosophers sought a rational foundation for religion and tried to base it on verifiable claims. That failed. The effort is commonly known as deism.



Brain-in-a-vat. Alexander Wivel (CC BY 3.0)

The confusion spurred a renewed scepticism and a new search for the foundations of knowledge. Our senses are deceptive, so only rational thinking can generate knowledge, philosophers from continental Europe like René Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz and Baruch Spinoza argued. This school is called *rationalism*, but it was a refurbished *idealism*.

In a thought experiment similar to the *brain-in-a-vat* scenario, Descartes questioned everything the senses register. Your brain could be inside a vat filled with a life-supporting liquid and connected to a computer that generates the impression you are walking. What is

beyond doubt, according to Descartes, is that you exist, even when you are just a brain-in-a-vat. And you can establish this fact by thinking. 'I think therefore I exist,' he concluded.

Other philosophers from Great Britain, like Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and David Hume, argued that knowledge comes from observations. It was a renewed *empiricism*. A philosophical divide emerged between idealist continental Europe and empiricist Great Britain. Later, the United States followed the British tradition.

In continental Europe, thought tended towards the world as it should be, or idealism, while in the Anglosaxon world, thinkers occupied themselves with the world as it is, or empiricism. It is not a coincidence that Karl Marx grew up in continental Europe, and most Marxists of the Frankfurt School come from Germany. They occupied themselves with the world as it should be. In Great Britain and the United States, pragmatic thinking prevailed.

It was an era marked by advances in the natural sciences. These advances were the result of thought. And the advances, in their turn, spurred thinking. It was the combination of observation and thought that led to scientific progress. You can investigate the effect of gravity on the motion of objects. You can do so by dropping an iron ball from a tower. You can release the ball from different heights and measure how long the ball takes to hit the ground. The table below shows the results of these measurements.

Height (in metres)	Time (in seconds)
0.05	0.10
0.50	0.32
1.00	0.45
5.00	1.01
10.0	1.43
50.0	3.19

It requires considerable thought to get the formula representing the relationship between height and fall time: $\text{fall time} = 9.81 * \sqrt{2 * \text{height}}$. For instance, $3.19 = 9.81 * \sqrt{2 * 50.0}$. If the tower is only 50 metres high, you cannot measure how long it will take for the ball to fall from 100 metres. With the help of the formula, you can calculate the fall time without the need for measuring it: $9.81 * \sqrt{2 * 100} = 4.52$ seconds. It is observation and thinking combined that made this possible.

Finding the mathematical formula that matches the data is like solving a jigsaw puzzle. This way of reasoning is *induction*. It is about producing a general rule with the help of observations. You can never be sure that the outcome is correct. For instance, using your sightings and with the help of induction, you might conclude that all swans are white. And if you go to the Moon to drop an iron ball from a tower over there, you will discover that the relationship between height and fall time is different.

Another way of reasoning is *deduction*. It is working from assumptions to conclusions using logic. If the premises are all justified and the rules of logic are correctly applied, then the inference must be correct. Deduction is applying general rules to specific situations. For example, if all humans are mortal (first premise), and Socrates is a human (second premise), then Socrates is mortal (conclusion). Also, if the relationship between height and fall time is $\text{fall time} = 9.81 * \sqrt{2 * \text{height}}$ (first premise), and the tower is 100 metres (second premise), then the fall time is 4.52 seconds (conclusion).

The scientific method combines thinking, induction and deduction. Simply put, a scientist uses observations and thinking to produce a theory. You need data from those observations to find the formula representing the relationship between height and fall time. Looking at the data alone is not enough. It requires a stroke of brilliance or some puzzling to find the formula. Once you have found the formula, you can use deduction and experiments to check the validity of the formula. For instance, you calculate how long it will take for a ball to fall to the ground from 321 metres. Then, you go to the top of the Eifel tower to drop the ball and measure how long it takes before it hits the ground. If the measurement equals the calculated time, the theory is confirmed.

Kant and Hegel

Immanuel Kant realised that our knowledge arises from observation (*empiricism*), but we cannot know without thinking (*idealism*). We interpret observations. That is in our nature. We can count, recognise differences and think of cause and effect. Our thinking imposes its structure upon these observations. If we see a tree, we see branches and leaves. We see that these leaves are green, and those branches are brown. The concept of a tree requires other ideas like branches, leaves, greenness, and brownness. But we view the world through our framework. We do not know reality or the things in themselves (relativism). We do not see trees. These are categories we attach to our perceptions. If we lack words, we don't observe a tree. Our perspective bends the world. The things themselves remain unknown. Hence, metaphysical speculation about the nature of reality is pointless, for instance, asking yourself whether or not trees, gravity or electrons exist.

Idealist philosophers disagreed. They believed absolute knowledge is possible because the mind creates reality. Reality is subject to our thinking, so our reason can uncover it. For instance, the fall of a ball is subject to mathematical laws invented by the human mind. Thus, you can claim that gravity causes the ball to fall even though gravity exists only in our imagination. The most notable philosopher of this strain was Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. He argued that we increase our knowledge over time, so there is progress. If we do more research, we can learn more about trees, for instance, how they grow. The more we know, the closer we come to absolute truth. There must be an ultimate answer to the ultimate question of our existence. By decomposing reality into parts and analysing them, you lose the essence of the whole. We are part of reality and interact with it, so we are one with everything around us and history. We can comprehend reality only in this way. And in doing so, we might find the ultimate answer, which is why we exist.

Our understanding begins with observations from the senses. We categorise them into universal concepts like trees, branches, greenness and brownness. We do the observing and the categorising. We usually miss a lot, for instance, the relations with other objects and their history. The tree may have survived a terrible storm, and a pair of doves may use it for their courting and nesting. Hence, our knowledge is incomplete. And, our ideas about objects relate to different objects, so a tree is green because other things are also green. And there are causes. The tree could be there because a squirrel dropped an acorn when it fled for a fox. By reflecting on our thoughts, we can challenge them. Or reality challenges our beliefs. Something might happen that changes your mind.

Hegel called it dialectic. You can ask yourself, 'Is the way I look at the object, or a category of objects, correct or adequate?' After we arrive at conclusions, our experiences and thoughts continue. We can come to a different belief later. Hegel saw dialectic as a process. Our knowledge increases. It pushes forward, leading to progress. Hegel's dialectic has three phases:

- 1 the initial thought or assertion (*thesis*),
- 2 a contradicting or supplementing argument (*antithesis, negation*),
- 3 and the integration of the two into an improved insight (*synthesis*).

Contemporary philosophy

Kant ended the idea that metaphysics can give us knowledge. Philosophers became less ambitious from then on. One reaction was *pragmatism*. Evolution theory suggests we hold beliefs to survive and reproduce. American thinkers like Charles Sanders Peirce and William James viewed thinking as a means of solving problems. They were not interested in truth or the nature of reality. Another approach, *hermeneutics*, with thinkers like Wilhelm Dilthey and Martin Heidegger, concerns human communication. Dilthey argued that natural sciences are about interpreting observations while humanities are about understanding meaning. And, Heidegger's ravings concern the essence of being.

Others embarked upon a renewed search for the foundations of knowledge. Analytical philosophers like Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein believed the main tools of philosophers are language and logic. They aimed to develop a new method to gather knowledge. There is an outside world, and language expresses facts about that reality, or so they argued. This view is called *realism*, which is related to empiricism. They claimed there are *justified true beliefs*. For instance, Jane might think that something is true. If this is indeed the case, then her belief is justified.

Karl Popper came up with the idea of *falsification*. You can never prove that a hypothesis is correct, but you can prove it is wrong when you find contradicting evidence. For instance, you might presume that all swans are white. Once you spot a black swan, your theory is proven wrong. From then on, you assume most swans are white while some are black. It is the way knowledge progresses. The belief that most swans are white and some are black is closer to the truth than all swans are white. It may still be incorrect, as there could still be a red swan somewhere out there no one has ever seen.

Scientific theories are falsifiable. They allow us to make predictions that we can check. For instance, you can go out and look for swans and check their colour. You can use the mathematical formula reflecting the relationship between height and fall time to calculate the fall time from 100 metres. If you do an experiment and the outcome differs from the calculation with the formula, the theory is wrong unless your measurement or computation is in error.

Edmund Gettier criticised the notion of justified true beliefs. You can be correct for the wrong reasons. For instance, Jane looks at her watch. It says it is two o'clock. She believes it. She does not know the timepiece stopped exactly twelve hours earlier. Her belief is thus not justified. The watch accidentally gives the correct time, so her belief is

true nonetheless. Likewise, Chief Inspector Clouseau solved his cases by being accidentally correct.

As our knowledge increases over time, our understanding of reality also changes. Scientific discoveries drive these changes. It also applies to science itself. Thomas Kuhn noted there is a succession of paradigms in science. A paradigm is a theory or system of ideas dominating a field in science. Usually, it is not possible to explain everything. The theories that clarify the most phenomena and leave the fewest unexplained are the best and form the paradigm in the field. For instance, the paradigm prevalent in the science of swanology that swans can be black or white is better than the theory that they are all white, even if red swans exist.

If you compare reality to a jigsaw puzzle, the paradigm is the solution that makes the most pieces fit. Unexplained phenomena are pieces without a place in the solution, for instance, unexpected readings on instruments. These readings might indicate that the paradigm is incorrect. When there is no better explanation, most scientists attribute them to errors. At some point, the evidence piles up that the theory is wrong. Then, a scientist comes up with a better hypothesis, and out of the confusion, a new paradigm rises like a phoenix from the dust of confusion.

Paradigms in science affect how we see the world. Only 500 years ago, most people in Europe believed that the Earth was flat, a few thousand years old, and at the centre of the universe. The ancient Greek discovery that the Earth could be a sphere was only known to a few educated people. When Columbus set sail to the West, he expected to end up in Indonesia. Despite the efforts of flat-earthers and creationists, most people today believe the Earth is a sphere, billions of years old, and an insignificant dot in the universe.

The evidence contradicting existing religions and the failure of ideologies gave rise to *post-modernism*. Post-modernists claim that great stories like religions and ideologies are dead and absolute knowledge is impossible. Words like reality and truth are totalitarian concepts, they argue. There is only room for small stories, lived experiences, and perspectives. A great source of inspiration was Friedrich Nietzsche. He proclaimed the death of God and heralded the end of the Christian story of God's people on the road to Paradise, which gives meaning to our existence. And suddenly, we were out there, without God, condemned to give meaning to our petty existences ourselves. Post-modernism is relativism with a new marketing campaign. This view was, not surprisingly, criticised by those who claimed the truth is out there somewhere lurking.

And so we are more or less back at the point where Socrates refuted the sophists. With the *simulation hypothesis*, speculation about the nature of reality or metaphysics re-emerged. That lurking truth might surprise us still. We could all live inside a computer simulation run by an advanced post-human civilisation. It seems that knowledge theory has gone nowhere. At least, it is clear that while our knowledge grew dramatically during the last 2,500 years, knowledge theory did not progress accordingly.

Data, information, knowledge and wisdom

There is a difference between data, information, knowledge and wisdom. Data refers to signals or symbols like letters or numbers. Data does not need to have meaning. A noise you hear is data. The sequence Q&7nn?9Y is also data. Information refers to what data means. You have information if you know the noise you hear comes from a car engine. There is a car with a running engine nearby. Characters together can form words and sentences that can have meaning if you know the context. So, if you read sales were up 25% last month, this can be information, but only if you know the corporation it applies to.

To acquire knowledge, you need information, and it needs to be correct. You may read sales are up by 25%, but it does not have to be true. And the noise you hear might come from a television set. Wisdom refers to understanding. Knowledge itself does not always lead to better insights and decisions. It can be hard to discern between the important and the insignificant. You may turn indecisive when information appears to conflict. Alternatively, you might ignore information to become decisive.

The amount of data used and stored is growing fast. Most data is not information but entertainment, for instance, cat videos on YouTube. A small portion may be information like sales data. Whether or not data is information depends on your objective. If you are looking for the meaning of life, sales data is not information. For any investigation, only a fragment of the available data is relevant. It requires wisdom to understand which data is helpful and what it means for the inquiry. The amount of data increases faster than the amount of information. The amount of information increases faster than knowledge. And wisdom can't be measured at all.

Proof and evidence

There is a difference between proof and evidence, even though we use these words interchangeably. The definition of *proof* is a final verdict that removes all doubt, whereas *evidence* supports a particular explanation. Proving is usually done by deduction, while induction works with evidence. Proof requires the premises to be correct, which is problematic because the premises used in deductive reasoning, for instance, the relationship between height and fall time, are often attained by induction. In mathematics, proving is possible. It is pure deductive reasoning without applying it to reality. For instance, $1 + 1 = 2$ is always true. But if you think you see two trees, someone else may not agree. Perhaps, the other person sees three trees or only bushes.

The concept of evidence relates to empiricism. Only, you may not have all the information. With a limited sample of swans and induction, you could conclude that all swans are white. We support claims about reality with evidence, for instance, experiments, but we cannot be sure that relationships like those between height and fall time are always the same. Hence, there is no proof in reality, not even in science, but scientific evidence meets specified quality standards. The scientific method involves careful observation and rigorous scepticism because observations involve our fallible senses. It further includes formulating hypotheses via induction based on the observances. It is followed by testing deductions made with the theses using experiments and measurements.

The words *establish* and *conclude* can bridge the gap between proof and evidence. They denote achieving the best explanation for the observations. The observations need to be

reliable. However, it may be impossible to use a theory like this universe being a simulation to make testable predictions. A hypothesis needs evidence and must explain the observations better than the alternatives. Assuming this universe is a simulation, we can explain paranormal events. Rigorous scepticism would be filtering out paranormal events that do not have multiple credible witnesses or have other plausible explanations.

Excessive scepticism could be ignoring evidence of paranormal events or giving implausible explanations like delusion in the case of multiple credible witnesses. The simulation hypothesis can explain the supernatural in cases where claims of fraud and delusion fail to be convincing. However, the simulation hypothesis does not allow us to make predictions we can subsequently test in experiments. Paranormal phenomena are unpredictable, so the simulation hypothesis is not science but metaphysical speculation. But in the end, the simulation hypothesis, like the existence of electrons, is a human imagination that requires evidence to be a plausible belief.

Takeaways

Science cannot prove this universe is a virtual reality. It may still be possible to establish that we do with the help of metaphysical speculation. That requires understanding the nature of our knowledge, hence knowledge theory. So, here are the takeaways from the previous discussion:

- We can always question assertions because the methods to arrive at knowledge, thus induction and deduction, can lead to wrong conclusions.
- The validity of a statement depends on whether it accurately describes (some part of) reality. With the help of empiricism and induction, you might arrive at better conclusions.
- The truth or falsity of a system of statements depends on its logical consistency. Contradictions are evidence of errors. With the help of idealism and deduction, you might arrive at better conclusions.
- An assertion is plausible when sufficient evidence supports it while no evidence contradicts it. In science, it means no one has falsified the theory yet.
- Pragmatism implies usefulness is more important than truth. For instance, religions make large-scale cooperation possible.
- Minimalism argues for using as few assumptions as possible to establish a point. Assumptions are always questionable. It prompts us not to engage in unnecessary speculation or to use irrelevant data. That is why this booklet is thin.
- There can be progress in thought. Contradicting arguments can be correct in their own right as there could be a higher level of truth or synthesis resolving the contradiction. For instance, the simulation hypothesis may resolve the contradiction between the religious idea of creation versus the Big Bang and evolution theories.
- Proof means the absence of doubt, which is impossible in dealing with reality. Evidence can only support a particular explanation or theory. Without proof, one can look for the best explanation for the observations.

Quality of the evidence

I have verified the materials presented as evidence and tried to ensure my sources are reliable, but there may still be errors. Recently I discovered that a 1994 Vice Magazine issue featuring Beavis and Butthead dressed as Al Qaeda operatives flying planes around the Twin Towers was a prank. It would have been an eerie coincidence otherwise. You can expect a magazine named Vice to make such jokes.

Explaining the unexplained

The paranormal has been a subject of controversy. The evidence is often problematic. Take, for instance, psychics. Scientists have investigated their abilities. In experiments, psychics fail to do better than guessing. Scientists isolate a psychic so others cannot supply this person with information. Sometimes, psychics make stunning guesses, but not in these experiments. That may often be due to fraud or manipulation, but perhaps not in every case. The same is true for the paranormal in general. Many paranormal incidents could be natural phenomena or the result of fraud or delusion.

Still, a large number of paranormal incidents remain without explanation. Few scientists dare to investigate them as it could make them a laughing stock for their peers. And what can be worse than getting zero publications in respectable scientific magazines because you take reincarnation stories seriously? That is groupthink and intellectual cowardice on a grandiose scale. Apart from that, there is little science that can say about the paranormal because there likely is no such thing as the Third Law of Paranormal Activity that explains it all neatly in an elegant mathematical formula.

Thinking science will one day give all the answers is also a belief. It can become like a religion once you discard evidence to the contrary. Evidence for the paranormal does not meet scientific criteria. Science requires that we use a theory like the existence of psychic abilities to make predictions that we can subsequently check. If a psychic does not do better than mere guessing during an experiment, he has no psychic abilities from a scientific perspective. But there is more to the world than science can prove.

Countless times, witnesses have seen things happening that science cannot explain. The total number of these incidents is impossible to guess. It could be billions. In the early twentieth century, Charles Fort collected 40,000 notes on paranormal experiences. They were about strange events reported in magazines and newspapers such as *The Times* and scientific journals such as *Scientific American*, *Nature* and *Science*. Millions more might exist in other journals and diaries.

So, did my wife's father make himself noticed from the other side? Or were the wind gust and the clocks being back just bizarre coincidences caused by natural phenomena? Or did my wife make it up to have a good story to tell at birthday parties? I know her better than you do, and I do not think she did. There were many strange incidents in my life. And so I also don't think she was mistaken. She could only have noticed that these clocks were back by looking at other timepieces. Even if she had been wrong and did not find out about it, it still would have been a remarkable coincidence.

In virtual reality, the laws of nature do not have to apply. So clocks can stop for an hour, and elephants can fly. So far, we haven't seen elephants fly, but it is possible in virtual reality. Psychic abilities may exist, even when the scientific method cannot certify them. Jesus could have walked over water and revived dead people, even though there is no proof he did. Alternatively, the laws of nature could apply in a way suggesting someone is

pulling the strings. The wind gust was already peculiar. The incident with the clocks made it even more mysterious.

Simulation hypothesis

This is not a pipe either



Inspired by Treachery of Images

In ancient times, philosophers already realised that we cannot tell whether the world around us is genuine or that other people also have minds. Perhaps I am the only one who does exist while the rest of the world is my imagination. It could all be a dream. Some religions claim that gods created this universe and that we are like them. According to the Bible, God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.'

For a long time, we could not tell why this world might not be authentic or how the gods could have created it. That changed with recent advances in information technology. This universe could be a simulation. We are inclined to think that our senses register an outside reality, so we tend to ignore evidence to the contrary. For instance, you may think you see a pipe when watching an image of a tobacco pipe. The caption of the famous painting named *The Treachery of Images* of René Magritte makes you notice: this is not a pipe.

In 1977 science fiction writer Philip K. Dick was the first to claim that our reality is computer-generated. Today, we call that the *simulation hypothesis*. Dick came to this insight after experiencing a psychosis. If that is true, his name suggests that our creators like to joke around. Professor Nick Bostrom later explored the probability of the simulation hypothesis being correct in the *simulation argument*.

According to Bostrom, there could be many different human civilisations. The humans in those civilisations may at some point enhance themselves with biotechnology and information technology, live very long and acquire capabilities ordinary humans do not have. For that reason, these beings are not humans anymore and are called post-humans.

A post-human might be a biological creature, a humanlike artificial intelligence or a combination of both. They might be brains-in-vats or have no physical body.

These post-humans might run simulations of their *human ancestor civilisations*, and we could be living in one of those simulations. Bostrom argues that at least one of the following options must be true:

- Nearly all human civilisations end before becoming post-human.
- In any of those post-human civilisations, only a negligible number of individuals are interested in running simulations of humans.
- We almost certainly live inside a computer simulation.³

Bostrom's simulation argument comes with the following assumptions that seem plausible but are not proven:

- The computing power of post-human civilisations suffices to run many simulations of human ancestor civilisations.
- It is possible to simulate human consciousnesses in a computer.³

Bostrom concludes that if you think our civilisation will one day become post-human and run many simulations of human ancestor civilisations, you must believe we already live inside one.³ It is a matter of probability. If we invent this technology in the next 10, 100 or 1,000 years, it will not happen later than that. By then, we will have done it. But millions of years have passed when it could have happened, so it probably did. If we do it within 100 years, and it could have happened a million years ago, the chance it already happened might be $(1,000,000 - 100) / 1,000,000 = 0.9999$ or 99.99%.

Non-humanoid civilisations are probably not interested in running large quantities of simulations of humans. They might run a few for research, but it seems unlikely that our emotions and history entertain beings entirely different from us. And so, most simulations of human civilisations are likely to be run by post-humans.

There are uncertainties. The computing power of the post-humans might not be sufficient. Or nearly all human civilisations die out before building these simulations. Or perhaps post-humans will differ from us and have no interest in running simulations of humans. We may only know that once we have become post-humans and can do this too. Bostrom does not try to guess the likelihood of the options. He thinks we have no information as to whether this universe is real. But he may be wrong.

Simulation argument II: adding information

Will we create simulations of humans? For instance, when we invent a Holodeck like in Star Trek? Nick Bostrom dares not to assess the likelihood of that. But do not have to look far for answers. Imagine a world where you can be king or queen. You can even make the world as you like and create your paradise. You can write your life's story and make your life the way you want it to be. You can have the ideal spouse who fulfils your deepest romantic and sexual desires. And no one frustrates your ambitions.

Your dream can be your life. And you don't have to wake up. It is simply too tempting to resist. Your life is not great. Your spouse is not perfect and does not fulfil your deepest desires. Your job is mediocre or worse. Others make you feel miserable. Your boss ignores your brilliant ideas. You think you deserve better. Likely, at least one of those options applies to you. If we could make our dreams come true, we would. So many of us would spend a lot of time there if we ever invented something like the Holodeck from Star Trek. Scott Adams, the author of Dilbert, believed he would never leave.³

What you just read is information, in this case, insights into human nature. We will make our dreams a reality if we can. Alternatively, we can look at the advances in artificial intelligence, extrapolate them, and demonstrate that simulations of humans will be feasible at some point. Hence, we might live in a simulation and be someone's fantasy. But showing it is possible or likely doesn't prove it. How can we do that?

Simulations could be realistic in many ways and unrealistic in some aspects. If we notice that, we might live inside a simulation. Instead of speculating about us living in a simulation by guessing the probability of post-humans existing and their abilities, resources, and possible motivations, we can look at what we know about our universe. That is also information. Perhaps we can establish that we live in a simulation as follows:

- 1 If this universe is genuine, we can't be sure it is. A simulation can be realistic and come with authentic laws of reality.
- 2 This universe may have fake properties, but we can't establish this because we don't know the properties of an authentic universe.
- 3 Breaching the laws of reality is unrealistic in any case. If it happens, we have evidence of this universe being virtual.

Science can establish the laws of reality or the properties of this universe. However, science can't determine whether they are real or fake. Perhaps there is no gravity in a genuine world, even though we deem it unlikely. But the breaching of these laws suggests we live in a simulation. If we believe science is correct, breaching its laws proves the simulation. We have a body of evidence for the scientifically established laws of reality. Breaches of these laws of reality are pieces of information about our universe. Science has established, among others, the following:

- The laws of physics always apply inside their realms. Newton's third law of motion states there is an equal opposite for every action.
- The universe started with a big bang. Life on this planet emerged from chemical processes, and evolution shaped it. There is no evidence of a creator.
- We are biological organisms made of carbon and water, and our consciousnesses reside in our bodies. There is no spirit or soul.

Evidence to the contrary indicates this world is fake. Meaningful coincidences suggest there could be an intelligent force directing events. The paranormal defies the laws of physics. A ghost pushing you breaches Newton's laws of motion. Credible reincarnation stories upset the claim we are biological organisms. But meaningful coincidences can materialise by chance. There may be laws of reality we do not know. The sceptics may be unconvinced. There is plenty of evidence of the consciousness residing in the body, while only a few people remember a previous life. And ghosts, have you seen them? Perhaps it is time to take your pills. But if the accounts of breaches of the established laws of reality are credible, we live inside a simulation.

The mystery of being

Why is there something rather than nothing? Most likely, we can never answer that question. Perhaps gods created us, and maybe we learn one day why, but also, in that case, we don't know why the gods exist, and we still don't know why there is something rather than nothing. And there is a good chance the gods don't know either. If this world is a simulation, it could be a replica of a genuine world where life emerged by accident and evolution shaped it. And so, accident and evolution are the best explanations for human existence.

We are self-centred beings and see ourselves as unique and wonderful. The odds appear stacked against us being here, so our existence could seem a miracle. And so we might think this universe is there for us and has a Creator who cares about us. But if humans had never arrived on the scene, all the other species would still have roamed the Earth, and no cat or fern would have wondered why it exists.

Once you reverse the argument, you can see what is wrong with it. My existence depends on my parents having met each other. My mother could have missed the party where she met my father. My parents, in their turn, depend on the many generations before them. According to chaos theory, small changes can dramatically impact the future. For instance, a butterfly flapping its wings in Texas might cause a hurricane in China.

Think of it. A tree might be there because a squirrel dropped an acorn while fleeing for a fox. But that can't be the only reason. There are many. Years later, a beaver passed by, contemplating whether it would gnaw down the tree for a dam, but it decided to take the next one. Then Joe the logger came along with his axe. But a furious bear chased Joe out of the woods because a beehive was in the tree. Had the bees not been there, Joe would have wielded his axe to the detriment of the tree.

So many things could have prevented the tree from being there, like fungus killing the old acorn tree before it dropped that acorn. An eagle might have flown over just when the squirrel was about to find the acorn, and the squirrel went into hiding and found another acorn later on and did not run into the fox, and the tree would not be on that spot. And it may not have grown if a deer had eaten the sapling. The possibilities are endless. And still, the tree is there. Is it a miracle? If you are the tree, you might think so.

So, if one of my forebears had done only one small thing differently, for instance, getting up ten minutes earlier on 17 September 1462, I might not be here. The number of incidents that could have prevented my existence is infinite. Despite the odds, I exist. That might seem like a miracle, but only if I believe myself to be the purpose of this universe. And that is the problem with this thinking. Similarly, the chances of humans appearing when dinosaurs were still roaming and living creatures on Earth appearing when the galaxy was emerging were also negligible.

In a similar vein, people argue that it is unlikely that this universe emerged by chance. The laws of physics and the values of physical constants seem made for life to exist. It is the

same type of error. If the universe did not support life, we would not be there to notice it. And how do we know the physical constants and natural laws that support life? And how does that rule out chance? There could be an infinite number of universes with different laws and constants. And this universe might support life by accident.

Intelligent design proponents claim that evolutionary processes don't have the intelligence to design something as complex as a human being. And so, life on Earth requires an intelligent Creator. Indeed, the chance of life to emerge in the way it did was close to zero from the outset, and still, we are here, as are giraffes and octopuses. Scientific findings indicate life on this planet had four billion years to develop. Given ample time, the possibilities are endless, and anything could happen. Competition, or the struggle for survival, is an organising force that promotes complexity and requires no intelligence.

The mystery of being is not much of a mystery. If the possibilities are infinite, everything that ever happened once had a near-zero chance of happening. But something had to happen, and that is what happened. If there is no God, this world would still make perfect sense. In other words, human existence is not a miracle that does require a Creator.

Post-human motivations

We may find out that we live inside a simulation if we notice that reality is not realistic, at least in some aspects. We also can look at the possible motives for post-humans to run simulations of human civilisations to see why. Even though it is not certain, post-humans likely have similar motivations as we have. Modern humans attach great value to their inner selves, so we may not change our human essence once we can. Hence, the motives of post-humans likely are similar to ours. They might run simulations of human civilisations for research or entertainment.

Research could be about running what-if scenarios. So what if a giant meteor hits the surface of the planet? What if China never became unified? Alternatively, what if there never were religions such as Christianity and Islam? Or what if a deadly infectious disease breaks out? Countless scenarios are possible. Post-humans might be interested in running them to see how we will cope. These simulations are likely to be realistic.

Possible entertainment applications are games or dream worlds to make your imagination come true. Such a simulation may not be realistic in some aspects as it reflects the rules of a game or someone's imagination. Minor changes can have a dramatic impact on future developments. And simulations of civilisations are complex. If you desire to make your imagination come true, you need control over everything that happens. That does not apply to games. Unpredictable developments make games more interesting.

Our understanding of human nature suggests the number of simulations for entertainment likely vastly outstrip those run for research, at least if sufficient resources are available. That is how we use computers. If we live inside a simulation, we should expect its purpose to be entertainment. The owner or owners may use avatars and appear like ordinary human beings to us. If reality is unrealistic in some aspects, this suggests that our purpose is entertainment as a simulation run for research is more likely to be realistic. Furthermore, evidence of control further indicates that the purpose of this simulation is not a game but to implement someone's imagination.

If the beings inside the simulation are sentient, that might raise ethical questions like whether or not they have rights the creators should respect. Considering how humans treat each other, it is not a given that these rights would be respected even when the creators acknowledge them. In a realistic simulation, bad things happen to people all the time. In the case of control, the beings inside the simulation are not sentient. They do not think and have no independent will. That is how we look at computer-generated game characters. Hence, we might be mere toys to our creators.

Properties of this universe

There is an ongoing argument about whether this universe is a simulation. Often, people argue we can find out by examining the properties of this universe. But we can't know whether these properties, reflected in the established laws of reality, are real or fake. Even when a property of our universe appears strange or consistent with simulation, it doesn't prove this universe is a simulation. It can be a property of a real universe. That is why science can't evaluate whether we live inside a simulation.

Science aims to establish the properties of this universe reflected in the laws of reality. But science cannot determine whether or not these laws themselves are real. Hence, any argument for this universe being a simulation based on the properties of this universe is a dead-end. In its simplest form, the reasoning goes like this. The universe could be a simulation because the underlying properties are digital. At the lowest level, everything is just numbers that can exist in computer memory.

How does that work? A digital television screen consists of more than a million tiny coloured dots. Every single spot on the screen has a unique number. Also, every colour has a unique number. From a distance, you may see a person or a mountain. At the lowest level, the screen is just numbers. And you can store numbers in computer memory. You can represent an entire universe in this way.

Real universes could also be digital. We don't know. Being digital is a property, not a cause of existence. Another argument based on quantum physics states that our reality is a sequence of states. Nothing exists or happens between them. Like the dots on a television screen, we can represent these states as numbers. Again, this could mean that our universe exists inside a computer. Also, in this case, there is no way of knowing whether or not this applies to a universe that is not computer-generated.

Quantum entanglement means that particles interact directly with each other regardless of the distance between them. If one particle is at one end of the universe while the other is at the other, they might still interact directly, as if there is no distance between them. This phenomenon mocks our idea of distance. It can raise questions about the age of this universe as estimates of its age relate to its size. But then again, we do not know whether this behaviour is also present in a real universe that is billions of years old.

Intelligent extraterrestrials must exist, many believe. So far, there is no material evidence of their presence. There are UFO encounters, but no extraterrestrial revealed itself. The physicist Enrico Fermi once asked, 'Where is everybody?' Perhaps humankind is the only advanced civilisation in the entire universe. If we live inside a simulation, there may be no point in simulating other beings on remote planets. But that is not the only possibility. Perhaps civilisations tend to die out before becoming advanced. Or maybe we overestimate the probability of advanced civilisations contacting us.

Several types of small particles do not exist most of the time. They only come into being when someone observes them. It is called the observer effect. If this universe is a

simulation, it would be a waste of memory and processing power to represent them all the time. If this universe is real, these particles might, or even should, always exist even when no one is watching. The argument is the result of a misconception. These particles do not disappear when not being observed. They become waves instead. There is no way of knowing whether this kind of observer effect exists in real universes. And why are we able to notice this? It should not be that hard to conceal the non-existence of unobserved particles in a simulation.

The weird universe

The license plate number on Franz Ferdinand's car was just one of countless bizarre incidents and experiences that are on record. In many cases, we can establish the relevant facts to the point there is little doubt that something unusual has happened. We have no evidence suggesting someone has changed the licence plate. Perhaps science will explain these things in the future as this universe may have properties we do not yet know. Some people already have tried to come up with explanations. Many let go of our understanding of time and cause and effect.

Our usual way of perceiving events is that something happens in a particular place at a specific time. We see a place as a constant as time passes. Events in the past caused events happening now. And events in the present cause events in the future. The invasion of the Allies took place in Normandy on 6 June 1944. Normandy is still there, but 6 June 1944 is history. The liberation of Western Europe from German occupation is a consequence of D-Day. If D-Day had not happened, history would have taken a different turn. In this way, cause and effect work. That makes sense to us.

Imaginative minds have argued that events connect in other ways than causality and time. The psychiatrist Karl Jung proposed a collective consciousness that connects all events via meaning. That can explain a few things, such as reincarnation accounts and psychic abilities. Perhaps the collective consciousness puts memories of a deceased person into someone else or gives you premonitions that come true. But according to science, this is gibberish. It contradicts established laws of science.

Others think of time as a dimension so you can travel to a time like you can travel to a place, even though nobody ever succeeded in doing that as far as we know. These ideas counter our traditional notion of cause and effect over time. But so does the theory of relativity. And the theory of relativity proved to be helpful, so we consider it to be true. And perhaps physics might one day come up with an explanation for premonitions.

A reference to the end date of World War I could thus have ended up on the licence plate of Franz Ferdinand's car because of some connection we do not yet know. No plausible explanation is available for that connection, but perhaps some property of this universe is still unexplained. And maybe both are true. All points in time might be connected in another way, while causality also applies. Physicists have to work with queer phenomena that are hard to explain. For example, light behaves like particles but also like waves, but waves cannot be particles.

Alternatively, a time traveller could have put AIII 118 on the licence plate, even though the theory of relativity does not allow for that. Time travel to the future may be possible, but going back in time creates logical problems. It would alter future events. Insignificant disturbances can have dramatic consequences. If I could go back to 1914 to screw a license plate with the combination AIII 118 on the car, that may derail the events that were about to occur, and World War I would start a day later and end a week earlier.

Recent measurements confirmed the electron's roundness to a record level of exactness. It deepened the mystery of why the universe consists of matter rather than antimatter. Any asymmetry in the electron's shape would point to a related asymmetry in the laws of nature, one that could explain this feature of the cosmos.⁴ Scientists were baffled. Perhaps, metaphysical speculation has also crept into science.

Maybe we should let our imagination run free. Anything is possible if we can think of it and corroborate it with experiments. That is how science progresses. A piece of fruit could be an apple for as long as you look at it. And it can turn into a banana once you look the other way. Scientists believe things like that if experiments confirm it. Some particles turn into waves when you do not observe them. Scientists might even base their theories on things that are impossible but do happen because we live inside a simulation. We don't know that because we don't know the properties of a real universe.

Some laws of this universe appear weird to us. Only why should they make sense? It is not so that nature exists to make sense to us. If we prefer to avoid logical difficulties, we can suppose that this universe is a simulation. It makes more sense than apples turning into bananas. Assuming the obvious can be dangerous. You may hurt yourself while employing Ockam's razor. Perhaps apples do turn into bananas when you don't look. Of course, when you place a camera to observe them, they don't. And maybe one plus one doesn't equal two if you do not solve the equation. And perhaps faith can indeed move mountains, and this universe is genuine as long as you believe it is.

Death: the final frontier

Quite a few people have had a near-death experience (NDE). Usually, they saw a bright light at the end of a tunnel and experienced absolute peace. Others travelled outside their own body while hearing doctors discussing what to do. These are out-of-body experiences (OBE). Some say this is proof of an afterlife. Scientists are unconvinced. NDEs and OBEs could be hallucinations of a dying brain lacking oxygen. Drugs can cause similar effects. Some psychologists claim people believe in an afterlife to cope with their fear of dying.

People who have had an OBE claimed they were fully aware of it. Their memories were vivid. Is this a hallucination of a dying brain? Those who have gone through the experience differ. Scientists claim our consciousnesses are just chemical processes in our brains. That is why pills can cure depression or psychosis. And research indicates that brain chemistry induces OBEs. But that doesn't explain the evidence suggestive of reincarnation.

A psychiatrist named Ian Stevenson researched reincarnation accounts. Stevenson started in 1960 when he learned of a child in Sri Lanka who remembered a previous life. He questioned the child, his parents and the people the child named as his parents in his former life. Stevenson worked through thousands of similar cases, interviewing the people involved. In many cases, no one close to these children knew about the deceased person the child claimed to have been in the previous life. It is possible to plant fake memories in someone's brain. But these memories were spontaneous.

Stevenson's work generated criticism, but his integrity remains beyond doubt. He carefully collected the data and investigated the possibility of fraud. Stevenson's former assistant, however, claimed that in only 11 of the 1,111 cases he checked, there had been no contact between the families of the deceased and the child before the interview.⁵ There is irony in those numbers. This kind of contact is difficult to avoid in real-life situations. Parents want to check their child's story before going public about it.

But why are there only a few thousand credible reincarnation cases on record? Why are not billions of people remembering previous lives? If we do reincarnate, one might expect this. And why do most cases occur in areas where people believe in reincarnation? And why is there evidence of our consciousness being chemical processes inside the body? These questions are legitimate, but so is the evidence.

The cause may not be reincarnation as such but a joke of our creators. We like to believe there is life after death. Why not play into that? In a simulation, you do not have a soul, but your consciousness exists in computer memory. Someone else can receive your memories and even your personality after you die. Minds may be chemical processes inside the body in the real world. In a realistic simulation, it only appears so, and the reincarnation stories are the evidence.

Ghost stories

The first thing I learned about ghosts was that they are fake. Ghosts are fairy tales, at least, so they told me. Then, I went on a school trip and visited the Singraven Estate near Denekamp. The custodian told us a spook dwelled inside the manor, upsetting things, but he added that we should not fear it when entering. He seemed dead-serious. Still, it is better not to put too much faith in spook stories about venues that depend on tourist income. The facts that are beyond doubt are not spectacular.

As a teenager, I also visited Twickel Castle in Delden, which is not far from Denekamp. I learned recently that this castle also features a ghost. The castle doesn't advertise itself as a ghostly venue, which could make the claim believable. Only one source on the Internet mentions it. If it is true, the laws of physics went out of the window, at least temporarily. The author preferred me to quote her work. She wrote,

Recently, I heard a strange tale from the phlegmatic steward of Twickel Castle in Delden. An English restorer, who had come to restore some antique cupboards, was given permission by her to stay overnight in an attic room of the castle. After he had been there for a few days, she saw that he had put his mattress on the floor.

*She asked him why he slept on the floor and not in the bedstead. He answered her unmoved that he had been pushed out of bed for three consecutive nights. To prevent it from happening again, he had decided to sleep on the floor from then on. He had not been bothered since then. The steward asked him if he did not find that creepy. His answer was calm and clear: 'No, I'm from England.'*⁶

That is what the stiff upper lip is about. I have seen similar things occurring in my house, so I am inclined to believe it. There are plenty of ghost tales that go around. Most are hearsay. On the Internet, you can find lists of ghost tales like 10 Eerie Real-Life Paranormal Encounters to Creep You Out on Listverse.com.⁷ The list is fact-checked, which means the stories happened. You are about to read two stories from that list.

The first is about Nina De Santo. She was closing her New Jersey hair salon one Saturday evening in 2001 when she saw Michael, one of her customers, standing outside the shop's window. He had become a good friend of hers over the years. He had been going through a tough time after his wife left him. Nina had tried her best to cheer Michael up whenever he came to the salon. When she opened the door to him, Michael seemed happy and transformed. He smiled at her and said he wanted to thank Nina for everything she had done for him. They chatted and each went their way. The following day, Nina received a call from one of her employees. Michael's body had been found the previous morning, nine hours before Nina had spoken to him at the salon. He had committed suicide.⁷

The second story concerns Redditor tooabstract788. He was home alone one night, playing games. His dog started barking at the closet. He got up to see what was upsetting the dog when he heard scratching sounds coming from the inside. As he got closer, the scratching stopped. Then he heard a loud crash followed by the sound of falling items. He

ran outside at once and only returned inside when his friend came over. Inside the closet, they found clothes and hangers scattered over the floor.⁷

In 2014, a couple named the Simpsons asked the regional news channel Fox43 in the United States to visit their haunted house in Hanover, York County. The wife, DeAnna Simpson, mentioned that entities were haunting the home. She and her husband had lived there for seven years. She caught 'ghosts' on film. They had scratched guests or even attacked them. She had invited priests, paranormal researchers, and the crew of the TV show *The Dead Files* into her home, who then uncovered 'evidence' of 'grisly deaths' that had occurred there.⁸ When the Fox43 staff came in, something invisible scratched their photographer.

In March 2018, my wife woke me up in the middle of the night. She said, 'The bathroom door is locked, and our son is sleeping in his bed.' You can only lock the door from the inside. The lock needs force, so this cannot happen by accident. My wife feared that a burglar was hiding inside. I took a knife from the kitchen to unlock the door while she was standing behind me, holding a heavy object to smash into the head of the burglar. Only, I never believed there was a burglar. So many unusual things had happened already. And I was right. There was no burglar.

So what to make of this? The goings-on at Twickel Castle and the house in Hanover are undoubtedly peculiar. Nina De Santo's story boggles the mind. In my house, the laws of physics do not always apply either. Is this evidence of ghosts? Not necessarily. If we live in a simulation built for entertainment, it can play into our imaginations and fears. Indeed, there may not be more to it than that.

The UFO mysteries

In April 2020, the Pentagon declassified videos showing pilots running into unidentified flying objects (UFOs). These disclosures vindicated those who believe extraterrestrials visit us. Former Senator Harry Reid tweeted that the videos only scratch the surface of research and materials available. Now, think of crop circles. Not all of them may have been the work of pranksters trying to poke fun at the UFO crowd. But the Pentagon claims it does not have evidence of UFOs being extraterrestrial. A few months later, Netflix revived the once-popular documentary series *Unsolved Mysteries*. Most episodes are not so mysterious, and many so-called mysteries cannot be dubbed unsolved. But one particular creepy story is keeping people awake at night. It is about the Berkshire UFO encounters of 1 September 1969.

Four unrelated families claim to have been picked up by a UFO and moved by a ray of light on that fateful day. Apart from a few personal accounts, there hardly is any recorded evidence this happened. Not even a local newspaper reported it. The documentary compensates for the omission. Indeed, this is a mystery worthy of being labelled unsolved. The stories of the people involved appear credible because they confirm each other. Thomas Reed, who was nine when it happened, claimed he and his family missed more than two hours of their lives while driving in their car. Reed said his family saw an amber glow on both sides of the road. Then everything got calm. After that, they found themselves back inside the car, but his mother and grandmother had changed places.⁹

Reed also noted that he saw the then-14-year-old Melanie Kirchdorfer aboard the UFO. She confirms his story. Tommy Warner was a child when it happened. He also claimed to have been abducted that evening. His babysitter, Debbie, confirms his account, saying that she saw him vanish into a bright ray of light. The people involved were not eager to tell their stories. That could turn them into a laughing stock. This *Unsolved Mysteries* episode has left many viewers feeling anxious.¹⁰ Is it safe to go outside?

On 16 September 1994, 62 schoolchildren aged between six and twelve saw a UFO outside Ruwa, Zimbabwe. Some children saw aliens dressed in black and claimed these aliens gave them a telepathic message saying we should respect the planet and not depend too much on technology. Dozens of other children who were also present stated they had not seen a UFO or anything unusual. Sceptics argue it was a mass delusion. However, the children who saw the UFO consistently told the same story and only differed on the details. Many children believed the beings were not aliens but *tikoloshes*, creatures of local folklore.¹¹ You can only have a delusion about aliens if you know they exist. And if it was not a delusion, there is no objective reality, as many children saw a UFO and many did not. And that should make you think. This world might not be genuine.

For five months after October 2007, hundreds of people saw UFOs over Texas. On 8 January 2008, 19 witnesses saw a massive UFO speeding from Dublin to Stephenville, pursued by F16 fighter jets. One witness guessed the object was 1,600 metres (a mile) long and 800 metres (half a mile) wide. It hovered and then speeded away at 5,000 kilometres per hour without causing any disturbance like a gust of wind, suggesting the

object was not material. But radar data confirmed what witnesses had said, indicating the object was material. Again, this should make you wonder. The local newspaper Empire-Tribune (ET) was the first to write about the object. Steven Spielberg, the director of ET, made a documentary about it.¹² That is a noteworthy coincidence.

The psychiatrist John Edward Mack investigated the mental state of those who claimed to have been abducted by aliens. He initially suspected these persons had mental illnesses. Mack interviewed them and came to believe that was not the case. Many of those he interviewed said their encounters had affected their views, creating a sense of spirituality and environmental concern. Mack was cautious about explaining these experiences but believed there was a powerful phenomenon. There is a worldwide history of visionary experiences. And alien abduction accounts can be part of this tradition, Mack noted.¹³

Many UFO sightings lack a credible explanation. In other words, they are not evidence of aliens visiting us. A few people claimed to have seen aliens. What is suspicious about these aliens is that they often resemble humans. They stand upright and have arms, legs, and heads with eyes. Alien life, if it exists, likely differs from Earth life, and aliens could take any form, for instance, jellyfish or plants, or, more likely, something we cannot think of, suggesting human imagination created the aliens people saw. And an advanced species warning us of advanced technology? They could share it with us. Perhaps the aliens don't have a high opinion of us. And what about telepathy if we are beings made of carbon and water, and our minds are just brain chemistry? That is most peculiar.

Unidentified flying objects can be anything. Another US government report claims many UFO sightings are weather balloons, surveillance drones, airborne clutter, or optical illusions. Still, many sightings remain unexplained. The UFO incidents in Berkshire, Zimbabwe and Texas are mysterious. They are not mere delusions, nor can a weather balloon be 1600 metres long and 800 metres wide and hare off at 5,000 kilometres per hour, leaving the F16 pilots chasing them biting the dust. UFOs and alien abduction stories are part of an array of mysteries, including evidence suggesting reincarnation, ghosts, meaningful coincidences, and premonitions. And there is an explanation that doesn't involve aliens. This universe could be a simulation created by an advanced civilisation, and that civilisation likely is humanoid rather than alien.

The curse of The Omen

Rumours go that some films, such as *The Poltergeist*, *Superman*, and *Rosemary's Baby*, have been cursed. Numerous accidents have happened, making people think these films come with a jinx.¹⁴ Not all of them are particularly convincing because accidents happen all the time. They usually have no relation to a movie, even when several actors of the same cast have had bad luck. Still, the curse of *The Omen* stands out.

Danny Harkins wrote on *Cracked.com*: 'No film in history has had worse luck than *The Omen*. Hell, nothing in history has had worse luck than *The Omen*.'¹⁵ *The Omen* came with billboards featuring a 666-logo inside the title and the uplifting slogan, 'You have been warned. If something frightening happens to you today, think about it. It may be *The Omen*.' Added to that is the cheery notice, 'Good morning, you are one day closer to the end of the world,' and a conclusion, 'Remember, you have been warned.'

In the script of *The Omen*, the wife of the American ambassador to Italy gave birth to a son. The child died almost immediately. A priest then convinced him to switch his son with an orphan without telling his wife. Mysterious events soon started to haunt them. The child turned out to be the Antichrist. *The Omen* was first released on 6 June 1976 (6/6). The date refers to the number 666, as the last digit of 1976 is also a 6. The length of the film is 111 minutes.

It made *The Omen* an ideal candidate for a hefty curse. Two months before the filming started, the son of lead actor Gregory Peck committed suicide. In the film, he is the father of the child that died. When Peck went to the film set of *The Omen*, lightning struck his plane. A few weeks later, lightning struck executive producer Mace Neufeld's flight. A lightning bolt in Rome just missed producer Harvey Bernhard. Later, the IRA bombed the hotel in which Neufeld was staying.¹⁴

A plane hired by the studio to take aerial shots was switched at the last moment by the airline. The people who took the original aeroplane were all killed when it crashed on take-off. You cannot call that bad luck, but rather the opposite. Only if you think there is a curse is it eerie nonetheless. An animal handler who worked on the film set died two weeks after working on the film when he was eaten alive by a tiger.¹⁴

Stuntman Alf Joint was seriously injured and hospitalised when a stunt went wrong on the set of *A Bridge Too Far* in Arnhem in the Netherlands, less than a year after the production of *The Omen*. He jumped off a building and missed the inflatable safety bags. It nearly killed him. Joint said he felt a push even though there was nobody near him.¹⁴ The combination of these accidents was not exceptional. These things happen all the time.

But the following could make you wonder. On Friday 13 August 1976, special effects consultant John Richardson drove through the Netherlands with Liz Moore. Both were working on *A Bridge Too Far*. They became involved in a car accident that killed Moore. The scene is said to have been eerily similar to a gruesome scene Richardson had designed for *The Omen*. The story goes that the accident happened near a road sign

stating a distance of 66.6 kilometres to the town of Ommen, a name very similar to Omen. And it happened on Friday the thirteenth.¹⁴

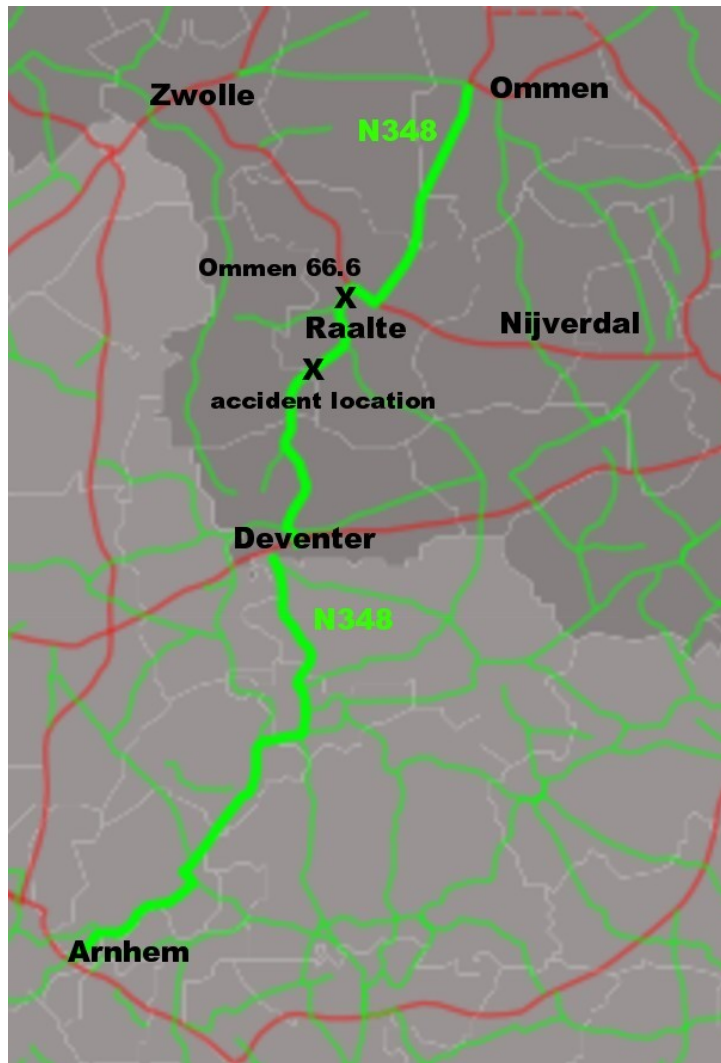
That caught my attention. Road signs in the Netherlands don't give distances in fractions of kilometres. Only kilometre markers come with fractions. Near Raalte is a junction where Route N348 to Ommen joins Route N35 to Nijverdal. This location corresponds with kilometre marker 66.6 on Route N348. Road signs stating the direction towards Ommen are close to this marker. I am familiar with the area because I lived nearby, in Nijverdal, as a child. It appeared to me that this junction was the crash location.

And so I came to investigate the curse. In 2015, I started an inquiry. A journalist from the local newspaper, De Stentor, helped me. He did some research and emailed me on 14 April. He had managed to find a former police officer from the area. According to the police officer, the accident indeed occurred near Raalte on Route N348, but between Raalte and Deventer near Heeten, where Route N348 passes the Overmeenweg. This location corresponds with the kilometre marker 60.0. The police officer told the journalist he remembered the car crash very well.¹⁶

According to the police officer, the accident happened when he was on service. A man and a woman had parked their car on a parking lot alongside Route N348. When they drove away in the direction of Deventer, they entered the wrong lane and collided head-on into an oncoming vehicle driven by a resident of Nijverdal. The view was somewhat limited because of two gentle curves in the road. He added there was no road sign with Ommen near the crash site.¹⁶

The woman died on the spot. The car was destroyed and disposed of at a fire station. It turned out that the couple were foreigners involved in the production of *A Bridge Too Far*, the police officer told the journalist. He suspected that Richardson, accustomed to driving on the left side of the road, was not paying attention.¹⁶

On television, Richardson said, 'It was certainly very odd because it happened on Friday the thirteenth.' He added, 'Right opposite the point where the accident happened, was an old mile-post with nothing but sixes on it.' He also noted, 'What spooked me even more, was when I discovered it was on a road to a place called Ommen.'¹⁷ It appears that Richardson has misread kilometre marker 60.0 and has taken the zeroes for sixes. The numbers might have been worn out if it was an old post, like Richardson said.



Route N348 Arnhem to Ommen. Dre Odz. CC-SA 3.0. Wikimedia Commons.

Alan Tyler, who made a documentary about the curse of The Omen, noticed odd things while working on it. The strangest thing was that he had two different camera crews filming in separate locations, but all the footage showed the same fault. It did not seem satanic to him, but it made him wonder.¹⁴ It is at least remarkable that kilometre marker 66.6 is near a road sign stating the direction to Ommen on the same road that was the scene of the car crash, so I came to investigate the curse, most notably because of what happened next.

When I compiled my findings after receiving the email from the journalist, a few curious events transpired. After reading the email, I took a glance at my stock portfolio. Apart from a few mutual funds, I owned stocks in three corporations. One was Heymans, a constructor. It came with a quote of € 13.13. Another was Macintosh, a retail company. I owned 500 of these, and the price was € 2.626. Hence, the total value was € 1,313. It was noteworthy as the car crashed on a Friday the thirteenth. Meanwhile, Macintosh is bankrupt. And Heymans stock went down 60% after the company ran into trouble.

That seems a bit of a curse already, and it suggests poor stock-picking skills on my part. But there was more to come. That evening, I had an appointment with a contractor who came to make a tender for renovating my bathroom. He came from Almelo while I live in

Sneek. He cancelled because his van had broken down earlier that day. He could have taken two routes from Almelo to Sneek: via Nijverdal, crossing Route N348 near kilometre marker 66.6, or the alternative route via Ommen.

My Google search for 'Ommen 666' linked to the Hondentrainingsneek.nl website. At first glance, it looked like a site for dog training in Sneek, but it was a bit fishy. Somehow, 'Ommen 666' had been inserted into topic titles such as 'Dog Training Terry Ommen 66.6km'.¹⁸ The texts on the website were incoherent, with a few references to Ommen 66.6. It is noteworthy as I currently live in Sneek and previously lived in Nijverdal while my enquiry uncovered that Richardson crashed into the car of a resident of Nijverdal.

A final titbit is that my wife has a heart condition that made her visit the hospital in Sneek around the same time I began investigating the curse. Her doctor's name was Oomen, which sounds like the word omen. She had an operation in 2018 and visited Dr Oomen several times for a few years. There is something odd about The Omen, or perhaps this universe, where strange incidents happen.

Meaningful coincidences

On 15 July 2011, two television towers in the Netherlands caught fire. One collapsed spectacularly. There had never been a fire in a television tower in the Netherlands. These television towers had been there for over fifty years. And there were only twenty-four of them. A few people speculated about these incidents having a common cause.¹⁹ The towers are in different areas, making it unlikely unless there is intent. After all, what is the chance of two aeroplanes crashing into both towers of the World Trade Center in New York on the same day? Only there was no evidence suggesting intent.

Consider this coincidence from Bermuda, which is near the mysterious Bermuda Triangle. In 1975, a 17-year-old boy had a deadly accident while riding his moped. He died exactly a year after his 17-year-old brother died in an accident while riding the same moped in the same intersection and collided with the same taxi with the same driver, carrying the same passenger.²⁰ Repeating patterns may have contributed to the incident. Perhaps it was a dangerous point where accidents occurred daily. The passenger may have visited Bermuda once a year and taken a taxi from the airport to the same destination. Incidents like this one are rare but also incredible.

In 1992, I was biking in Groningen, where I lived back then. While I was on my way, a car door suddenly opened just before me. I could barely avoid a collision. About ten minutes later, on the same trip, it happened again with another car on another road. Never before or after this trip had a car door just opened in front of me, even though I made bike trips nearly every day for several decades. It is odd. But what are the odds?

Those incidents might be random events. So many things happen all the time that bizarre accidents occur by chance. It does not require a Supreme Puppet Master to make them happen. It may be hard to calculate the chance of an event like two television towers catching fire in one country in one day, but the probability is very low. But the number of possible strange incidents that can happen at any time is very high.

But how low and how high? That matters. If there are a million possible events, and the chance of one of them happening on any day is one in a million, we should not be surprised to see such an event happening. On average, an event like that should happen every day. But if it is one in a trillion, and such an event occurs quite often, we may be on to something because, on average, it should happen once during a million days.

The number of possible strange coincidences is close to infinite, so it should not surprise us that simple coincidences, such as a car door opening in front of me twice on a single bike trip, happen from time to time. It is, however, odd that it happened twice on one trip and never on any other. But coincidences come in different types. The more intricate a coincidence is, the more unlikely it happens. Indeed, some complicated coincidences are far less likely to occur than two car doors opening on one bike trip.

The following is most peculiar. Once, I entered a do-it-yourself store. There was a couch near the entrance. Because of the meaningful coincidences happening in my life, the price

tag of € 389 caught my attention. As a student, I once lived in dormitory 389 on the campus of the University of Twente. Price tags often end with a nine, so there was nothing suspicious about it, I concluded. I realised it would be far more curious to find a price tag of € 401 as I also had lived in building 401, and price tags rarely end with a 1.

A few seconds later, I ran into a pile of bags of potting soil. These bags had a conspicuous lettering 40l, indicating they contained 40 litres of potting soil. That was close enough to 401 to be intriguing. There were no other types of bags on the spot. Potting soil comes in 10, 20, 25, 40 and 50 litres. Sacks of 40 litres also come with markings like 40L and 40 litres. Hence, the 40l was indeed remarkable.

Two years later, I returned to the same store. These bags of potting soil with the 40l marking were conspicuously stacked near the entrance. That reminded me of the previous incident. There was no couch, and I did not see a price tag of € 389 there. And that I contemplated on my way to fetch the item I planned to buy. Its price tag turned out to be € 3.89. And I had gone there to get that one item.

That is less likely to happen than two car doors opening before me on the same bike trip. The events interacted with my thoughts, and the sequel made it even more improbable. The car doors opening could be a coincidence, but supposing the do-it-yourself-store incident is just a coincidence requires some imagination. In dormitory 401, I met a most peculiar Lady. Since then, a few noteworthy coincidences have reminded me of Her. And it fits into that, too, so that it could be a part of an even more elaborate plan.

If it is not just a coincidence, something controls our thoughts, and there might be a Supreme Puppet Master. To make it happen, the bags of potting soil had to be in place so I would run into them just after thinking of 401. And later, I had to go there to buy an item for € 3.89. And it goes much further than that. Like that item having a price of € 3.89 and me having lived in dormitories 389 and 401. That is most peculiar indeed. It requires control of all that happens. So much can go wrong. Imagine the content of the bags being 50 litres, the lettering being different, or me visiting another do-it-yourself store or buying another item, and the whole scheme would fall apart.

Numerology, 11, and 11:11

If you intend to give your critics a field day, mention astrology or numerology in your argument, and they will have a good laugh. Numerology is a way to give meaning to events using numbers. Numbers are meaningless except for the number itself. When you give numbers meaning, you may find the occurrence of specific numbers meaningful. If your lucky number is twenty-six, and you happen to see that number, you might feel this is your lucky day. There is, however, no rational argument to support that idea. Conspiracy theorists think along similar lines. They believe coincidences indicate that secretive occult groups gather in secret societies like Skull and Bones to coordinate world events. To illustrate what people can see in numbers, I took a quote from a conspiracy website. An anonymous poster wrote the following:

This year is the 192nd anniversary of the Skull and Bones Society. Matthew Perry died 14 days (2 weeks) after eclipse in October. Sonic (boom) = 192. Obama = 192. Leave the World Behind = 192. Eclipse = 192. Deer – 192. Matthew Perry's birthday is August 19th. 19 seen in Leave the World Behind. April 8th Chandler's Birthday from Friends, played by Perry. Next Eclipse April 8th. March Twenty Five = 192. One Nine Two is 804 in English Gematria. That's April 8th backwards, folks. Solar Eclipse is 804. At the very beginning of the movie, three 6s surround the bed. 666 There were 666 months between Chandler's birthday and Matthew Perry's death day. Julia Roberts played Chandler's girlfriend on Friends for a very short time. They were also a couple in real life at the time. Matthew Perry died the same day Julia Roberts celebrated her birthday. At his funeral was a song played Don't Give Up where the music video has an eclipse in it. Don't give up – 133. Forty Eight – 133. Gematria for Moloch, Baal, and Mammon are all matched up with this movie.

That has no meaning to me. It looks like a collection of events cherry-picked to fit a scheme. So, if something remotely relates to Matthew Perry and adds up to 192, the poster added it to the list. And that supposedly proves that members of Skull and Bones are behind these events? I do something similar, so what is the difference? The connections I see can be meaningless to you. These connections are about the meaning we give. The more people see the same connection, the less subjective it becomes, but that doesn't mean someone made it happen. Meaningful coincidences can occur by chance. That is why numerologists get other people's eyes rolling.

So, what about the licence plate of Franz Ferdinand's doom car referring to the end date or World War I? The end date of the war being 11 November (11-11) makes it somewhat strange. But plenty of events didn't make it to my list because they didn't fit the supposed scheme. That is also cherry-picking. Whether I did that right is subjective and depends on meaning. I did a thorough investigation and believe there is a script. You may have a different view because you didn't investigate it thoroughly. Or perhaps you think it is impossible to draw such conclusions from massive amounts of contradictory data of unclear significance, which most of history is.

Many see 11:11 turning up on clocks again and again. So what about the number eleven? Is it special? Numerologists claim eleven is a Master Number. Other people believe 11:11

is a sign from angels. If you see it, the angels have a purpose for you, they claim. Well, angels, tell me more. Some explanations make more sense. Eleven is the first double-digit number, and double-digit numbers attract attention. You may see other numbers while you don't notice them because they do not draw attention. And so it seems you see eleven more often than other numbers. This phenomenon is called selective remembrance. If you see a number, again and again, it is either that or mind control.

Eleven forms a pair. Coincidences are often pairs of similar events. That is why eleven symbolises coincidence to me. It is my interpretation. If you take this to the next level, you get 11:11. 11:11 thus represents a pair of coincidences like the do-it-yourself-store incident. Eleven is the fool's number in the Netherlands and is associated with oddity. And so I think of 11:11 coincidences as the weird happening. But then again, this is my personal view. Quran verse 36:36 states that God created everything in pairs. 36:36 is like 11:11 as $36 = 6 * 6$. A Muslim might say, 'It is a miracle of the Quran.'

Remote Site:						
Filename	Filesize	Filetype	Date	Time	Permissions	
..						
logs		Bestandsmap	22-02-2010	01:54	drwxrwxr-x	
tmp		Bestandsmap	06-05-2009		drwxrwxr-x	
11coincidencegallery.html	4148	HTML Docu...	28-01-2010	11:11	-rw-rw-r--	
11phenomenon.html	8420	HTML Docu...	01-01-2010	06:27	-rw-rw-r--	
2012nottheend.html	9254	HTML Docu...	02-11-2009		-rw-rw-r--	
adironack.png	24291	PNG-afbeel...	09-02-2010	11:00	-rw-rw-r--	
af447crash.html	6032	HTML Docu...	03-09-2009		-rw-rw-r--	

And the extremely weird has happened to me. Take, for example, the following incident. I investigated eleven related coincidences and dedicated a webpage to them on the *Natural Money* website. I later removed it and focused that website on research on the financial system. The page had links to other websites at about eleven and 11:11. After uploading the page to the server, I noticed something odd had transpired. The upload timestamp of the 11coincidencegallery.html file was 11:11. I didn't intend to make that happen.

Remote Site: /trafoc/						
Filename	Filesize	Filetype	Date	Time	Permissions	
..						
images		Bestandsmap	06-04-2011	11:03	drwxrwxr-x	
logs		Bestandsmap	10-04-2011	20:12	drwxrwxr-x	
tmp		Bestandsmap	06-05-2009		drwxrwxr-x	
010910_erin.gif	252874	GIF-afbeel...	01-04-2011	03:29	-rw-rw-r--	
1111prompt.jpg	1214	JPEG-afbee...	30-12-2010		-rw-rw-r--	
11coincidencegallery.html	5370	HTML-docu...	11-09-2010		-rw-rw-r--	
11mystery.html	32824	HTML-docu...	21-12-2010		-rw-rw-r--	
11phenomenon.html	8420	HTML-docu...	01-01-2010		-rw-rw-r--	
12665matrix22jpgn18.jpg	63001	JPEG-afbee...	01-04-2011	03:29	-rw-rw-r--	
2001.html	747664	HTML-docu...	11-04-2011	09:11	-rw-rw-r--	
2002.html	331903	HTML-docu...	11-04-2011	09:11	-rw-rw-r--	
2003.html	253514	HTML-docu...	11-04-2011	09:11	-rw-rw-r--	
2004.html	449538	HTML-docu...	11-04-2011	09:11	-rw-rw-r--	
2005.html	483057	HTML-docu...	11-04-2011	09:11	-rwxrwxr-x	
2006.html	140978	HTML-docu...	11-04-2011	09:11	-rwxrwxr-x	
2012nottheend.html	9254	HTML-docu...	02-11-2009		-rw-rw-r--	
911.html	603307	HTML-docu...	11-04-2011	09:11	-rw-rw-r--	
911_coup_cd.jpg	9567	JPEG-afbee...	01-04-2011	03:29	-rw-rw-r--	
AAACross1.inn	21858	JPEG-afbee...	04-04-2011	10:45	-rw-rw-r--	

Even more remarkable was a discovery I made more than a year later because it was closely related. I was researching the coincidences surrounding the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. After uploading excerpts from Killtown's 9/11 coincidences website (files 2001.html to 2006.html), I found out their upload time was 11 April 2011 at 9:11 AM. Also, the file 911.html, which contained my findings regarding the subject, has this timestamp. At the time, page 11coincidencegallery.html had an upload date of 11 September 2010, also 9/11. I did not make any effort to make this happen either. I discovered it seven months later. It is a pair of closely related coincidences. That is what 11:11 is about for me. If that happens to you, it might make you wonder. Much more happened to me, and also far stranger things. Lacking better explanations, I see the hand of God in all this.

An exercise often used by numerologists is *compressing numbers*. It is adding up the digits of a number until you get a single digit. For example 1589 is $1 + 5 + 8 + 9 = 23$. You then iterate this process until you get a single-digit number. 23 adds up to $2 + 3 = 5$. And then you stop. There is one exception. You do not perform this on eleven, so 911 adds up to 11 as $9 + 1 + 1 = 11$. You stop there. You do not go any further by doing $1 + 1 = 2$. Why? Perhaps eleven is too beautiful a number to break down any further.

Many people see 11:11 on clocks again and again. Perhaps you remember the fuss about the winter solstice of 21 December 2012. The world would end on that day, the Mayans allegedly predicted. The estimated time for the solstice was 11:11 GMT, while the digits of 21 December 2012 (21-12-2012) add up to 11 ($2 + 1 + 1 + 2 + 2 + 0 + 1 + 2$). That freaked out a few people, including me. Because of what had happened to me, I saw it as a sign that the End Times could be near. But nothing spectacular transpired on that date .

Coincidences with numbers can be meaningful to us because we attribute meaning to numbers. For instance, the Dutch National Route 666 leads to Borssele. It is the site of the only remaining Dutch nuclear power plant. I first came on this route after visiting the village Kwadendamme, which means Evildam. Then, I noticed a road sign to Borssele on Route

N666. The only other Dutch nuclear power plant was in Dodewaard, which means Death Holm. The former municipality of Dodewaard was 66.5 square kilometres in size, close enough to 66.6 to attract my attention. But why was that size 0.1 square kilometre off? Was someone not paying attention? Or is it a decoy to make it harder to guess? The meaning we attach to 666 plays into my feelings about nuclear energy. It is a fuzzy picture. But if I had had a weird-o-meter, its reading would probably have been above zero.

Weird things also happened in the stock markets. The S&P500 hit a low of 666 on 6 March 2009 (date 6/3, while 666 is three sixes). The exact low was 666.79, so to be fair, that is closer to 667, but it is peculiar nonetheless. The FED stemmed the crisis by committing \$7.77 trillion to rescue the financial system. Perhaps for that reason, IMF Chief Christine Lagarde made some frisky numerological comments on the Magic Seven in 2014 at the US National Press Club following the IMF's annual review of the US economy.²¹

Then, on 24 June 2016, the stock markets had a correction after the results of the Brexit vote came out. In the United States, the Dow was down 610, the NASDAQ 202, and the S&P 500 was down 76, a total loss of 888 points.²² That happened exactly seven years, seven months, seven weeks and seven days after the Dow crashed 777.7 points at the height of the financial crisis on 29 September 2008.²³ It didn't take long before people on the Internet picked up Lagarde's remarks about the Magic Seven.

Another method used in numerology is translating letters to numbers via the following scheme: A = 1, B = 2, C = 3, D = 4, and so on. In this way, the letters AD represent the number 14. In the same fashion, A5 represents 15. Something will fit some scheme most of the time. You can cherry-pick events and claim they are part of a scheme proving members of Skull and Bones are behind it. That is why numerology attracts criticism. Probability, meaning and significance are hard to estimate, and the critics don't venture into making such evaluations. But peculiar numerical coincidences happen, and some stretch the imagination. And so, you might ask yourself, 'Is this really just coincidence?'

Psychics, mediums and premonition

Our intuition processes a lot of information, much more than we realise. Sometimes, it seems like magic. When you drive your car, you may suddenly discover you have travelled a long distance without realising it. That is more likely to happen when you are a frequent driver using the same route. Research has demonstrated we can train specific abilities to the point that they become a subconscious process. An important domain of our intuition is social information. Unless you are autistic, you intuitively read body language and facial expressions and adapt your actions to the clues others give. Mediums might be so good at asking the right questions to influence minds and reading body language and facial expressions that they appear psychic.

Between 2002 and 2010, a medium named Char appeared regularly on a Dutch television show. She did readings and claimed to contact the dead. Sometimes, she seemed to retrieve specific information that only the person receiving that reading and the deceased could have known. In 2008, journalists from the Dutch television programme Zembla investigated her performances. People wanted to hear that their deceased loved ones were doing fine. And guess what: they were always doing fine up there somewhere.

Zembla claimed the television show aired only the best parts of her readings. Her performance on television appeared better than it was in reality. Char was often wrong, but the programme didn't air it. James Randi was kind enough to weigh in. Randi is sceptical of paranormal claims. He argued that Char could have extracted the information from the people receiving the reading.

The name Char equals the first four characters of the word charlatan. Notice the mention of characters in the previous sentence because this word starts with the same four characters. Interestingly, Zembla was discussing Char's character, so this is indeed a funny coincidence. Yet, I still remember a few guesses she made that defy conventional explanation and left everyone on the scene dumbfounded. It seemed impossible to obtain this information from the people receiving the reading. Zembla didn't delve into these cases. If there had been fraud, like using actors, Zembla would have mentioned it.

So, can mediums do better than guessing? That must be possible if we live in a simulation running a script. A so-called gift can be an array of accurate guesses that are not coincidences. It can make a medium believe he or she has a gift. An incident in my life showed how premonitions can come true. Coincidence seems unlikely. On 9 February 2009, a severe storm struck Northern France. A storm of this force happens only once or twice in a decade. I predicted such a storm on this exact date two months earlier. Only I feared that it would be more severe and strike the Netherlands. It was a miss of 400 kilometres (250 miles), but that is still remarkable, most notably because of the events that made me make the prediction.

On 19 December 2008, I posted a warning on an internet message board. On 9 February 2009, Charles De Gaulle Airport in Paris had to be closed because of the storm.

Somehow, I did get a hunch that a superstorm might strike the Netherlands on 9 February 2009, flooding large parts of the Netherlands.

It began with an article on an alternative website about the web bot, a piece of computer software that allegedly had previously made accurate predictions. In the autumn of 2008, the web bot predicted that in the first half of 2009, large areas of land would suffer permanent flooding. The article did not mention a location or a date, but the word permanently suggests this area is below sea level. That narrowed it down to the Netherlands.

The date 9 February came up as I believed it was the birthday of this most peculiar Lady I learned to know as a student at a dormitory on the campus of the University of Twente. In the following decades, a few coincidences had reminded me of Her. It is not so remarkable that I recall Her birthday. She made quite an impression, and some of the coincidences were intriguing as if She was stalking me with these incidents. My memory for dates can be accurate. I remember the birthdays of some of my former schoolmates from secondary school and the exact date my father quit smoking. But a genealogy site states Her birthday is 7 February. Nevertheless, this possible mistake made me think of 9 February. It is like slipping on a banana peel to find a valuable clue.

And I found more clues. For instance, a blogger on the website Sargasso.nl had written on 2 September 2008 (2/9) about a storm that was to strike the Netherlands on 9 February 2009 (9/2), flooding large parts of the Netherlands. The numerical coincidence of the dates was also a bit peculiar. Compressing numbers makes them refer to 11:11 as $9 + 2 = 11$. That frightened me even more. A flood of this kind would put millions of lives in danger.²⁴

The article on Sargasso.nl featured animated graphics showing the flooding of parts of the Netherlands on 9 February 2009, intended as a what-if scenario, not as a prediction. As I had already suspected an epic storm would hit the Netherlands on this specific date, I saw this as an eerie warning sign. How could it match my guess so precisely? And I didn't come across this blog before. I found it as a result of looking for clues confirming my hunch. If you have a suspicion, you look for clues reinforcing it. But you wouldn't expect to find this. And it was about to get stranger yet.



Iconic church tower in pond on university campus (Public Domain)

On 13 December 2008, I went to Enschede with my son. We visited the University of Twente. My son didn't know of my foreboding. I hadn't discussed it with anyone yet. On the campus was a work of art, a church tower in a pond. It seems to refer to flooded land. It was evening. It was dark, the moon was shining, and a thin layer of ice had settled on the pond. Suddenly, my son told me he saw the coastline of the Netherlands reflected in the moonlight on the ice surface. I didn't see it, but he kept pointing at the ice until I saw it, too, and clearly. The Dutch coastline has a peculiar shape that is unlikely to be mimicked by some random incident. That was as eerie as it can get.

That freaked me out as the church tower in the pond refers to flooded land while this terrible storm threatened the coastline of the Netherlands. A lunar eclipse was to occur on 9 February 2009, another eerie coincidence. There were a few more strange things. The Dutch singer Boudewijn de Groot had made an album named Lage Landen (Low Countries). The 11th track, Lage Landen, is about a superstorm hitting the Netherlands. The song suggests that the storm will hit on a Monday, while 9 February 2009 was a

Monday. Monday is the day dedicated to the Moon (Moon-day), which is noteworthy because of the lunar eclipse and the coastline of the Netherlands reflected in the moonlight.

The song was the 11th track and lasted 5:55 minutes, which was peculiar as the date 9 February 2009 refers to 11:11 after compressing the numbers. It can be rewritten as 9-2-2009 while $9 + 2 = 11$ and $2 + 0 + 0 + 9 = 11$. When I first came to the campus during the introduction weeks, I stayed at Club 9-2, the most notorious residence hall. This address refers to 9 February, Club 9-2 being the most notorious residence hall, the campus being the venue where I met the Lady from the dormitory, me believing Her birthday is 9 February, and the peculiar coincidences referring to Her, made an intriguing combination.

On 18 December 2008, I issued a warning, even though I expected everyone would ignore it, except a few nutters perhaps. Most of the time, I do not have prophetic visions. Only this unique long-term weather forecast was more accurate than chance allows. The events that caused me to make the prediction make it an incredible story. As a prediction, it was pretty useless, and luckily, no one took it seriously. Imagine that a large-scale evacuation had taken place. That is why I do not venture into making predictions. Still, the incident sheds some light on why mediums like Char can be more accurate than chance allows while making many misses.

Getting used to strangeness

Eleven is the fool's number in the Netherlands. 11 November (11-11) is when the Councils of Eleven are elected. It marks the beginning of the carnival season, ending in the celebrations of carnival in February. In the former Roman Catholic areas of the Netherlands, the south, forty days of fasting ended with a feast of excessive eating and drinking, in which people dressed in costumes. Nowadays, people only opt for the feasting and the excess. Fasting and contemplation are bad for business. In any case, in the Netherlands, eleven is associated with oddity.

Eleven is also the first double-digit number. To me, eleven symbolises a strange event. After all, it is the fool's number. It stands for oddity. 11:11 symbolises a repeating of such an event or two related peculiar incidents. That is the nature of coincidences. Something unusual might happen. That can make you wonder, but if something similar or related happens again shortly afterwards for unexplained reasons, that could be amazing.

Several incidents of this kind occurred in my life. When I was in Nijverdal visiting my father, I drove on a narrow road in the vicinity. An oncoming car hit the rear-view mirror, and it broke off. A few weeks later, my father had the same type of accident in his car. As far as I know, never before or after had anyone I knew had an accident of this kind. You might call that noteworthy.

My son Rob had two biking accidents that injured him. The first was near our home, just before the home of a retired physician who could help him with his injuries. The second accident occurred on our holidays in Ameland, also just before the home of a retired physician who could help him. That is odd, even more so because these were the two only biking accidents he ever had.

In the Autumn of 2008, a strange accident occurred before our house in Sneek. A car had crashed on a lamppost. The lamppost broke off. Two men stepped out and hared away. A few years later, I realised the accident may have been a prelude to the deluge of strange events that came later on. That day, I biked towards IJlst, a village near home. Near IJlst, I found the remains of a broken-off lamppost. That was remarkable, even more so because our home is on the road to IJlst, so it is the same road.

My wife and I had one specific person with whom we could not get along. They both have the same last name. In my wife's case, the person had been a friend previously. She had unreasonable demands, so at some point, my wife decided not to see her again. In my case, it was the lawyer living next door. He wanted me to cut down the trees in my garden, which I did not. That displeased him. He believed he could order me. For several years, I avoided him so the conflict would not escalate.

In August 2014, we were waiting for a traffic light near home in Sneek. In the car before us sat a guy who looked like my cousin. And so I told my wife about that. My cousin and I had been best friends for over a decade. We made a funny newspaper together. Immediately after I finished speaking, four trucks from the transport company Leemans came from the

right. My cousin had once decorated a truck of Leemans. When I was eighteen, I went with him on holiday, hitchhiking in Scandinavia. A truck driver from Leemans brought us to Sweden.

I hadn't seen a Leemans truck in my hometown before. They were there because of railroad construction work. My cousin came from Haaksbergen, a village near Enschede. In June 2015, we left Nijverdal after visiting my father. Haaksbergen was in the news because of a shooting incident.²⁵ Haaksbergen had been on the news a few times because of electricity failures,²⁶ ²⁷ skating contests, and a monster truck accident.²⁸ I told my wife, 'Haaksbergen is often in the news.' Just after I had finished speaking, we passed a truck of Leemans parked by the side of the road.

In 2014, a woman rang our doorbell. Her father was about to turn eighty. He had lived in our house during the 1950s. She wanted to give him a tour around his old home as a birthday present. She made an appointment to visit us the following Saturday. She showed up with her sister and father. I gave them a tour around the house. A few hours later, the doorbell rang again. My wife opened the door to an elderly lady with her daughter and son-in-law. They asked if they could see the house because she had lived there in the 1960s. Both groups had taken up this idea independently and hadn't spoken to each other.

In July 2014, we went on holiday to Sweden and Norway. My son Rob wanted to visit Hessdalen Valley in Norway. People have spotted mysterious lights there. Those lights look like orbs and are known as the Hessdalen orbs. Some people have claimed they were UFOs. When we were in Hessdalen, we went to a viewing point on a hilltop. A few Norwegian guys had been there already for hours, hoping to photograph a UFO. We did not see anything unusual. We took some pictures of the environment. After we had returned home, we noticed orbs on one of the photos we had taken there. Orbs on photographs are a phenomenon unrelated to the Hessdalen orbs, so this is remarkable.



History's oddities

Thomas Jefferson and John Adams

US Presidents Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were both involved in drafting the US Declaration of Independence, signed on 4 July 1776. Hence, 4 July became Independence Day. Jefferson was Adam's Vice President until he became President in 1800. They were the last surviving members of the revolutionaries. Both died on 4 July 1826, fifty years after the Declaration of Independence.²⁹ Independence Day is 4 July (4/7) as $4 + 7 = 11$. This date occurring two times is a noteworthy coincidence and relates to 11:11.

Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler

Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler both conquered nearly all of Europe. There is a series of parallels between them. Both came to power by a coup that ended an unstable republic. Napoleon and Hitler both turned Europe into a battlefield. They both ventured into Africa and faced defeat in Egypt. They both waged war on two fronts. Both attacked Russia while not having defeated Great Britain.

Napoleon was born on Corsica, an independent island that became part of France. Napoleon became the leader of France. Hitler was born in Austria, an independent country that became part of Germany. Hitler became the leader of Germany. On 9 November 1799, Napoleon came to power after a coup to overthrow the government. Hitler was involved in a failed coup on 9 November 1923.

The Titanic

The supposedly unsinkable Titanic had sealable compartments. In 1912, it sank on its maiden voyage after having a close encounter with an iceberg. In 1898, Morgan Robertson wrote the novel *Futility*, describing the maiden voyage of a transatlantic luxury liner named the Titan. Although touted as unsinkable, it met with an iceberg and sank with much loss of life. In the book, the month of the wreck was April, the same month the Titanic sank. The similarities are striking:

- The ships had similar names.
- Both were the largest craft afloat and seen as the greatest of the works of men.
- The sizes were roughly the same: the Titan was 45,000 tons, and the Titanic was 46,000 tons.
- Both ships were deemed unsinkable.

- Both had a triple screw (propeller).
- Both vessels had a shortage of lifeboats.
- Both struck an iceberg: the Titan, moving at 25 knots, struck an iceberg on the starboard side on a night in April in the North Atlantic, 400 nautical miles from Newfoundland, while the Titanic, moving at 22½ knots, struck an iceberg on the starboard side on the night of 14 April 1912 in the North Atlantic, 400 nautical miles from Newfoundland.
- Both ships sank with much loss of life.

After the demise of the Titanic, Robertson's apparent clairvoyance drew attention. He claimed the similarities were the result of his shipbuilding knowledge. That can explain the similarity in technical details but not the sinking and the similar names. And the story was to get a sequel.

In April 1935, the cargo vessel Titanian sailed in the North Atlantic. A sailor claimed he felt uncomfortable as the ship's name was similar to Titanic. For that reason, he sounded a warning. He claimed to have done this before an iceberg was in sight. He added that the vessel stopped just in front of an iceberg. According to reports, the Titanian had run into some damage during the voyage.³⁰

One hundred years later, the luxurious Italian cruise liner Costa Concordia sank after hitting a rock. The accident happened on Friday, 13 January 2012. The ship had thirteen decks. Some passengers claimed the Titanic theme 'My Heart Will Go On' played in a restaurant when the accident happened.³¹ Shortly afterwards, on 27 February 2012, another cruise liner of the same parent company, the Costa Allegra, ran into trouble near Seychelles.³² This repetition within a short timeframe makes the incident noteworthy.

Franz Ferdinand assassination and Armistice Day

On 28 June 1914, the Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip shot and killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand in his car in Sarajevo. His act triggered World War I. World War I ended with the Armistice of 11 November 1918. 11 November is a peculiar date as it is 11-11. A few strange coincidences relate to the assassination. Franz Ferdinand had premonitions of an early death, and the assassination succeeded after a series of mishaps. But the most peculiar coincidence was the licence plate number A III 118 of the car that drove Franz Ferdinand to his appointment with destiny. It contains a possible reference to the Armistice of 11 November 1918 (11-11-18).¹

D-Day

D-Day happened on 6 June 1944 (6/6/44). That date has double digits, like 11 November (11-11). The Allies had selected 5 June 1944 for their invasion because there was a full moon that night. They postponed it one day because of the weather. There was no agreement on the start date of World War II, while the Battle of Stalingrad took more than two months, so D-Day was the most important single day in World War II. D-Day means

Decision Day. D is the fourth letter of the alphabet, so Decision Day (DD) can refer to (19)44, the year D-Day happened.

Normandy invaded England in 1066 AD, while D-Day was on 6 June or 6/6. In the ensuing Battle of Hastings on 14 October 1066, King Harold II of England died while trying to repel the invasion. That happened a few days after his forces had killed King Harold III of Norway, who also had invaded England. On 14 October 1944, the German General Rommel committed suicide after having overseen the construction of the German coastal defences intended to repel the Allied invasion.

Roman de Rou is a chronicle written around 1170. It covers the history of the Dukes of Normandy. It mentions that Roger the Great de Montgomery commanded parts of the invading forces in 1066. Other sources do not confirm this account.³³ During the 1944 invasion, Bernard Montgomery commanded portions of the invading army. That is most peculiar indeed, and there is more.

On 11 March 2010, the founder of the Dutch political party D66, Hans van Mierlo, died. The name D66 stands for Democrats 66, and refers to the year 1966 because the party was founded on 14 October 1966 by 44 people.³⁴ The name can refer to D-Day, making the founding date and the number of people involved in establishing the party rather intriguing. D-Day was on 6-6-44, so D66 could mean D-Day 6-6. Van Mierlo died in 2010, 44 years after starting D66 and 66 years after D-Day. Van Mierlo had just married on 11 November 2009 (11-11-11 after compressing numbers).

The numbers 66 and 44 and the date 14 October repeatedly turn up in this scheme. And 11-11 is part of it too. It was the day Hans van Mierlo married. 11 November is the date of the Armistice ending World War I. And the Vikings founded Normandy in the year 911. This number is closely related to the fall of the Berlin Wall and 9/11. On 9 November 1989 (9/11 European notation), the Berlin Wall fell. On 11 September 2001 (9/11 American notation), the terrorist attacks took place.

The assassination of Martin Luther King was on 4 April 1968, one year after he spoke out against the Vietnam War on 4 April 1967. Both dates are 4 April (4/4). On 5 June 1968, another high-profile political assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy took place in the United States. He died the next day, on 6 June (6/6). Both incidents happened in the United States in 1968 and point to the digits of D-Day (6/6/44). 6 June was also the release date of *The Omen*, the most 'cursed' film in history.

John F. Kennedy's assassination

'We're heading into nut country today,' said President John F. Kennedy to his wife on the morning of 22 November 1963. She had just seen an advertisement from the John Birch Society in the Dallas Morning News suggesting that he was a communist. The border of the advert was in the black of a funeral announcement. 'But, Jackie, if somebody wants to shoot me from a window with a rifle, nobody can stop it, so why worry about it?'³⁵

A few hours later, somebody shot him from a window with a rifle. The assassination date, 22 November (22/11), consists of two multiples of eleven, which is a bit odd, like the date

of D-Day and the date of the Armistice ending World War I. And there are parallels between John F. Kennedy and Abraham Lincoln:

- Both concerned themselves with Civil Rights.
- Both did get a bullet in the back of their heads in the presence of their wives.
- Lincoln was shot in the Ford Theatre, and Kennedy in a Ford Lincoln.
- They were both murdered on a Friday.
- In both cases, an assassin assassinated the assassin before he could face trial.
- Lincoln entered Congress in 1846 and Kennedy in 1946.
- Lincoln became President in 1860 and Kennedy in 1960.
- Lincoln's successor was Andrew Johnson, born in 1808, while Kennedy's successor was Lyndon Johnson, born in 1908.³⁶

Longer lists are circulating with some false claims. Sceptics have argued that these similarities are mere coincidences and that similar parallels exist between other US presidents. Wikipedia even named it an urban legend, while it is not, as that means the story is false. That both murders took place on a Friday is indeed not remarkable. But the murder of Lincoln taking place in the Ford Theatre and the assassination of Kennedy happening in a Ford Lincoln is noteworthy, as is the time difference of precisely one century that recurs three times. And there are links with other peculiar coincidences .

Kennedy's brother, Senator Robert F. Kennedy, was shot a few years later. He died in 1968 on 6 June (6/6), just after the murder of Martin Luther King on 4 April (4/4). That is odd because of the coincidences surrounding D-Day (6/6/44). These incidents are part of a series of premature deaths, accidents, and other calamities involving members of the Kennedy family called the Kennedy Curse.

The son of President Lincoln, Robert Todd Lincoln, also had his share of remarkable coincidences. A few months before John Wilkes Booth murdered his father, Edwin Booth, the brother of John Wilkes, saved him when he was travelling by train. During a stop, he stepped back on the crowded platform to let others pass, pressing his back against a stopped train. When the train began to move, Lincoln fell onto the tracks. Booth hauled him back onto the platform. The Booth family and the Lincoln family were not neighbours, which makes the incident even more remarkable. Robert Lincoln was in the vicinity when the murder of his father occurred. He was also present at the assassination of President Garfield in 1881 and the assassination of President McKinley in 1901.³⁷

The Kennedy assassination took part in a series of premature deaths in office of American presidents elected in years starting with a zero, called the Curse of Tippecanoe or Zero-Year Curse. From William Henry Harrison to John Kennedy, every President elected in a year ending in zero died in office. It ended with Ronald Reagan, elected in 1980, who survived an assassination attempt. First Lady Nancy Reagan reportedly had hired psychics and astrologers to protect her husband from the curse.³⁸ George W. Bush, elected in 2000, also survived an assassination attempt. It seems the curse has seen its best days.

Houston, we have a problem

We associate the number 13 with bad luck. Bad luck haunted the voyage of Apollo 13. The launch was on 11 April 1970 at 13:13 CST from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. The departure time combined with the mission number looks like a daring attempt to challenge fate. Possibly, the people at NASA thought, 'We are scientists and don't believe in this superstitious nonsense.' And bingo! Fate took vengeance. On 13 April, an oxygen tank exploded. The event enriched the annals of history with the famous quote, 'Houston, we have a problem.' Mission control aborted the lunar landing. The crew made it back alive.³⁹ That finally was a stroke of luck.

The fall of the Berlin Wall

The fall of the Berlin Wall was the pivotal event marking the end of the Soviet Empire and the Cold War. The dismantling of this wall began on 9 November 1989 (9/11 European notation). On 11 September 2001 (9/11 American notation), a terrorist attack was another pivotal event in the war on terror. It ended the period of relative peace after the fall of the Soviet Empire. On 11 September 1989, thousands of East Germans started to cross the Austrian-Hungarian border to emigrate to West Germany. That eventually meant the end of the Berlin Wall. This date, also being 11 September, is noteworthy.

The historian James P. O'Donnell unwittingly predicted the year the Berlin Wall would fall. In the German edition of Reader's Digest, he wrote ten years before it happened, 'Not long ago I dreamed of Berlin. The year was 1989. The wall was coming down. Along its hideous 165 kilometres, East and West Berliners were pouring out to dismantle it. [...] Canny merchants were weaving through the happy crowd selling souvenir bricks.'⁴⁰

That may not be as remarkable as it may seem at first glance. O'Donnell made his prediction in 1979. If you were thinking in 1979 about the Berlin Wall falling and were guessing when it might happen, 1989 is a year you could easily pick. The end of a decade can be a moment to think of the next decade's ending. A 1979 ABBA does the same in a song named Happy New Year. But then again, O'Donnell thought of it in 1979, so he likely picked 1989. He could have thought of it in many other years.

There is another peculiar twist. O'Donnell became Newsweek Magazine's German bureau chief in 1945. He came to Berlin on 4 July 1945 to investigate Hitler's death and gather information about his wife, Eva Braun.⁴¹ Braun died at the age of 33, and Hitler died at the age of 56, while $33 + 56 = 89$. Hitler was born in 1889. And the erection of the Berlin Wall was a consequence of Hitler's defeat. And it fell in 1989. There is more to say about Eva Braun. And in 1989, I met this most peculiar Lady.

11 September coincidences

A fact hidden in plain sight

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 (9/11) were the first major geopolitical event in the Internet era. The Internet made it easier for conspiracy theories to spread. And 9/11 proved a real treasure trove if you have a suspicious mind. Nowadays, 9/11 conspiracy theories are a bit outdated, like those regarding the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Most people moved on, and crazier beliefs emerged. That obscured a remarkable fact. No other event in history came with so many peculiar coincidences.

The perpetrators were a secret group within the deep state, maybe Jews, conspiracy theorists claim. Perhaps they were not paranoid enough. Osama Bin Laden and the terrorists believed they were executing the will of God. And they may have been right. What might strike you about these coincidences is that many seem inconsequential. However, the combination of these incidents appears improbable. And it is beyond the competence of possible deep-state conspirators to pull this off.

The Berlin Wall fell on 9 November 1989. Hence, the hallmark events of the end of communism and the war on terror were on 11/9 and 9/11 (American notation). That is peculiar. The Cold War and the War on Terror were amongst the most important geopolitical developments after World War II. A historian predicted the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, a decade before it happened. That might also not be a coincidence.

Emergency

The US emergency services telephone number is 911, while 11 September is more commonly known as 9/11. Emergency services played an important role on that day. Starting with 11 September, the remainder of the year lasts 112 days. And 112 is the emergency telephone number of the European Union.

On 11 September 2002, exactly one year after the 9/11 attacks, the winning numbers in the New York State Lottery were 9-1-1.⁴² Because there were two draws, the chance of drawing these numbers in this order were about one in 500.

The total number of FDNY personnel killed was 343,⁴³ which is $7 * 7 * 7$. On 7 July 2005 (7/7/7 considering that $2+0+0+5=7$), the terrorist attacks in London took place.

The flight number with the most accidents is 191. Five planes with that flight number have crashed. The best-known accident was the crash of American Airlines Flight 191 on 25 May 1979.⁴⁴ The digits of 191 are the same as those of 911.

Popular culture

In popular culture, references to the destruction of the World Trade Center appeared before they happened. That is not as remarkable as it seems. The building was an iconic symbol representing capitalism and, for that reason, an obvious target. Terrorists had already attacked the World Trade Center in 1993, so it was not far-fetched to think it could happen again. Despite that, some incidents are a bit peculiar.

On 23 December 1998, an artist formerly known as Prince was on stage in the Jaarbeurs in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Later that night, he did an extra performance in Tivoli. A local journalist noted that the Artist spontaneously started rapping, but not about his usual themes, love, sex, and the Second Coming of Jesus. Instead, he began repeating the words, 'Get ready to bomb Osama bin Laden,' and 'America, watch out in 2001.'⁴⁵

Nosebleed, a Jackie Chan action-comedy scheduled for release in 2001, was cancelled because it featured an attack on the World Trade Center. The original script likely included the lines, 'It represents capitalism. It represents freedom. It represents everything America is about. And to bring those two buildings down would bring America to its knees.'⁴⁶

The 2000 computer game Deus Ex came without the Twin Towers in the New York skyline. In the game's fiction, terrorists had destroyed them. Deus Ex refers to God coming out of nowhere to interfere with the plot (Deus Ex Machina). The main character's initials are JC, the same as Jesus Christ. Somewhere in the game, JC wakes up in a secret mansion of the Illuminati. JC can discover the code to a blast door if he makes the right choices. Behind it is an artificial intelligence called Morpheus.⁴⁷

In July 2001, the band I Am the World Trade Center released the album Out of the Loop. The 11th track on their album is titled September.⁴⁸ That makes an advance reference to 11 September combined with the World Trade Center in 2001.

The rap duo The Coup had published an advance graphic of their late 2001 album Party Music months before 9/11. It depicted explosions in the Twin Towers near the points hit by the planes. The detonation device held by MC Boots Riley is labelled Covert Labs. Pam, the Funkstress, was holding the conductor's batons.⁴⁹

Live Scenes From New York was an album of rock group Dream Theater released on 11 September 2001. The cover artwork depicted the skyline of New York, including the twin towers of the World Trade Center, in flames. The album was recalled and re-released with a different cover.⁵⁰ Issuing an album named Live Scenes From New York featuring a burning apple representing New York on 11 September 2001 is an eerie coincidence.

A 1997 episode of The Simpsons about a trip to New York showed a guidebook with the number nine, followed by the Twin Towers, seemingly referring to 9/11.⁵¹

In March 2001, Fox TV network aired a pilot episode of The Lone Gunmen in the United States. It is about a plan by rogue elements in the United States government to hijack a jet aircraft by remote control and crash it into the World Trade Center to justify an increase in military spending and a war on terror.⁴⁵

In early 2001, the simulator game Trade Center Defender came out. Players had to gun down planes that were heading towards the Twin Towers.⁵²

The 1999 film The Matrix features a reference to 11 September 2001. About 17 minutes into the film, a file folder appears containing an image of the passport of the main character, Neo. The expiry date is 11 September 2001. That is remarkable because the coincidences surrounding the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 suggest that this universe is a virtual reality like The Matrix.⁴⁵

Predictions

Linda and Terry Jamison, known as The Psychic Twins, predicted in 1999 that there would be terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and federal buildings in South Carolina or Georgia in 2002.⁵³ The prediction was not accurate. But it was made on 2 November (11/2 American notation), while 112 is the European emergency services telephone number. Furthermore, Linda and Terry Jamison were identical twins like the Twin Towers.

The BBC was more accurate in predicting the destruction of the Twin Towers as well as Building Seven. The BBC never intended to make these predictions. A BBC Scotland article from 5 April 2001 headlined, 'Twin towers to be demolished.'⁵⁴ The article was about the two chimneys at Kincardine Power Station in Scotland, but the choice of words is remarkable.

On 11 September 2001, a British television reporter for BBC reported that World Trade Center Building Seven had collapsed. Subtitles accompanied his words. Building Seven was still standing and crumbled 26 minutes after the reported news.⁵⁵ The BBC thus 'predicted' the collapse of Building Seven and the Twin Towers, which makes a pair of closely related peculiar coincidences.

New World Order

On 11 September 1990, exactly 11 years before 11 September 2001, President George Bush Sr held a memorable speech. An important theme was Saddam Hussein. The first Gulf War against Iraq was about to begin.⁵⁶ The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 became a pretext to start the Second Gulf War against Iraq and Saddam Hussein. Another President named George Bush ordered it. That is indeed remarkable.

George Bush Sr stated the developments presented an opportunity for a New World Order of cooperation between nations to emerge.⁵² One year later, on 11 September 1991, he made similar statements. Remarkably, both dates are 11 September. The same is true for the recurring conflict between Saddam Hussein and two Presidents named George Bush. It is another pair of closely related peculiar coincidences.

In September 2000, a group of neoconservatives published a study named Rebuilding America's Defences. Their report stated it would be difficult to rebuild the military unless

some catastrophic event like a new Pearl Harbor occurred.⁵⁷

A few months before 11 September 2001, the plans for a secret operation named Operation Northwoods were declassified. America's top military leaders drafted them in the early 1960s. They included hijacking planes and orchestrating violent terrorism inside U.S. cities to provoke a war with Cuba.⁵⁸ The declassification of these plans occurring just before the attacks is noteworthy.

On 11 September 2001, the North American Aerospace Defense Command conducted a military exercise, Global Guardian. One of the simulated scenarios was the hijacking of planes.⁵⁹ And so, the attacks caused more confusion than they would have done otherwise.

On 11 September 2001, the official Bin Laden family's website domain www.saudi-binladin-group.com expired.⁶⁰ On the same day, a defence contractor, the Carlyle Group, hosted a business conference in Washington. Osama Bin Laden's brother was an honoured guest. The Bush and Bin Laden families were both involved in the Carlyle Group. Members of the Bin Laden family secretly flew out of the United States shortly after the attacks when air travel was still forbidden.⁶¹

Numerology, 11, and 11:11

Bloggers on the Internet noticed coincidences surrounding the attacks of 11 September 2001 that they believed to be spooky. Several places, items, and persons had names consisting of eleven letters. Emails have circulated, urging us to be scared because Afghanistan and George W. Bush have eleven letters, like some other names and words linked to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

A few things are indeed a bit peculiar. The US emergency telephone number 911 compresses to 11 as $9 + 1 + 1 = 11$. The European emergency telephone number 112 is also interesting. First, $112 = 56 + 56$. It can refer to 11:11 as $5 + 6 = 11$. And $112 + 911 = 1023$, which is 1111111111 binary. Many countries have emergency telephone numbers 999 and $112 + 999 = 1111$.

Two of the four flights used by the terrorists on 11 September 2001 were from American Airlines.⁶² American Airlines uses AA for its flight codes. After transforming the characters of the flight codes to digits using the scheme A=1, B=2, and C=3, they resolve to 11. It is like 11:11 happening. Both American Airlines flights had a flight number that was a multiple of 11 (11 and 77).

Aftermath of the 11 September terror attacks

Pim Fortuyn and Theo Van Gogh assassinations

There were exactly 911 days between two recent political killings in the Netherlands. That is remarkable as both incidents relate to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. On 6 May 2002, a left-wing extremist assassinated the Dutch populist politician Pim Fortuyn. Fortuyn gained popularity after the attacks of 11 September 2001 because of his stance against Islam and immigration.⁶³

On 2 November 2004, an Islamic fanatic killed the Dutch film producer Theo Van Gogh for insulting the prophet Muhammad. The last film Van Gogh completed before his death, 06/05, was about the assassination of Fortuyn.⁶⁴ The date 2 November can be rewritten as 11/2 (American notation), while 112 is the European emergency telephone number. It is noteworthy in combination with the 911 days between both assassinations.

11 March 2004 Madrid train bombings

On 11 March 2004, the Madrid train bombings took place. It was the deadliest terrorist attack after 11 September 2001. There were 912 calendar days between 11 September 2001 and 11 March 2004. Due to the different time zones Spain and the United States are in, there were 911 full days between the events. For a long time, the death toll assessment had been 191,⁶⁵ a number with the same digits as 911. The figure currently stands at 193.

7 July 2005 London suicide bombings

The number seven appears to be behind the London suicide bombings of 7 July 2005. 7 July can be rewritten as 7/7, while the numbers of 2005 add up to make 7, making three sevens or 7-7-7. The number of people killed, including the four suicide bombers, was 56,⁶⁶ also a multiple of seven. Two weeks later (which is two times seven days), on 21 July 2005, another attack on London took place, while 21 is three times seven or three sevens.

During the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, 343 FNDY personnel died while $7 * 7 * 7 = 343$. On 11 September 2001, the North American Aerospace Defense Command conducted a military exercise, Global Guardian. One of the simulated scenarios was the hijacking of planes.⁵⁵ The London Police completed a terror training exercise that envisaged an attack on London's transport network days before the 7/7 terrorist attacks.⁶⁷

Benghazi attack and China riots

On 11 September 2012, exactly 11 years after 11 September 2001, an angry mob attacked the US consulate in Benghazi and killed the ambassador and three others.⁶⁸ On the same day, a territorial dispute between China and Japan over a group of islands in the East China Sea intensified. Anti-Japanese riots broke out in China, and protesters gathered outside the Japanese embassy in Beijing.⁶⁹ Japan's ambassador-designate to China then fell ill and died in a Tokyo hospital a few days later.⁷⁰

That day, President Obama was 18,666 days old, while $18 = 6 + 6 + 6$. He was born on 4 August 1961. 4 August is the 216th day of the year, while $216 = 6 * 6 * 6$, which is curious as many people believed President Obama was the Antichrist. And so, it is noteworthy that Satan's character in the History Channel's Bible series resembled President Obama.⁷¹

It happened eleven years after 11 September 2001, making it 11:11 related. Both incidents featured violence near embassies. In both instances, an ambassador died. The relationship between Obama and 666 is remarkable, as he was born on the 216th day of the year. But that was not all that happened that day.

The Hague and Eindhoven public transport accidents

On 11 September 2012, trams 9 and 11 collided near the Holland Spoor Station in The Hague, causing 36 people to be wounded.⁷² The Dutch news website RTL Nieuws noted, 'Pure coincidence? During the collision between two trams near Hollands Spoor station in The Hague, tram 9 collided with line 11 on September 11 (9/11).'⁷³

Perhaps not. A few days earlier, a report had come into the news that Al-Qaeda had recruited two Somali men to carry out a suicide attack in The Hague.⁷⁴ That makes another link with the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 and The Hague.

That same day, a bus accident occurred in Eindhoven, causing 27 wounded,⁷⁵ while $27 = 9 + 9 + 9$ and 999 is the emergency telephone number in Great Britain and Ireland. The bus accident in Eindhoven took place 11 years after the terrorist attacks. Two emergency landings happened in one day at Eindhoven Airport on 11 September 2010, 9 years after the terrorist attacks,⁷⁶ with 9 and 11 years referring to 9/11.

A few more oddities

Ten years after the attacks, on 11 September 2011, a blogger using undisclosed sources noted the estimated death toll in Iraq and Afghanistan amounted to 911,911. 'An interesting number', he added.⁷⁷ Such accuracy is indeed rare. The number itself can also raise a few eyebrows.

On 29 November 2011, American Airlines filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. 29 November 2011 can be read as 29/11/11 or 29/11/2011, while $2 + 9 = 11$ and $20 = 9 + 11$.

Filing for Chapter 11 on this date is remarkable because the terrorists used American Airlines flights and because AA in the flight code translates to 11.

On 8 August 2012, about 100 firemen responded to what the FDNY called an equipment fire likely sparked by welding on the 88th floor of 1 World Trade Center under construction.⁷⁸ The date 8 August (8/8) and the 88th floor make an 11:11 related coincidence because of the double digits in the numbers. It is also related to the World Trade Center and emergency services.

On 11 September 2015, a powerful storm toppled a construction crane at the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, Islam's holiest site. In the accident, 111 people died. The Saudi Binladin Group, founded by the father of Osama Bin Laden, operated the crane, while most hijackers of the 11 September 2001 attacks came from Saudi Arabia. An engineer for the Binladin Group aptly commented the accident was an act of God.⁷⁹

Predetermination issues

Whether or not we have free will is an ancient philosophical question. Ancient Greek philosophers already reasoned, 'This happens because of that. Everything that happens could be an endless sequence of causes and effects.' We feel we make our own choices. If I went out to buy a garden gnome yesterday, I am inclined to think I could as well have decided not to go out or to buy something more useful instead, like an inflatable Santa Claus. So, if I could go back in time, I might have done something different, or so I believe. But if I had felt an uncontrollable urge to buy that garden gnome, I would have considered myself subjected to forces beyond my control.

And some things are beyond our control or to a large degree. Our biology and culture limit our options. For instance, you cannot simply stop breathing or run faster than the speed of sound. Those who have tried failed. And it is hard to do things that go against the prevailing will of society or your family and friends unless you do not care about other people's opinions, which might be something you have no control over. But it appears you still have options. Other choices, for instance, buying a garden gnome, do not raise controversy, and you appear free to make them.

Recent advances in neuroscience allow scientists to observe brain activity associated with making decisions. And that was quite revealing. Our choices originate in our brains several milliseconds or even longer before we become aware of them.⁸⁰ There is no free will in the sense we traditionally believe it to exist.

This traditional idea of our will is that the will is a force of its own. Nothing else causes it. It is rooted in the belief that we have a mind, a spirit or a soul that is separable from our bodies. This idea is at odds with scientific findings that our minds are chemical brain processes. Not having a will is not the same as predestination, as it does not rule out that we can make different choices if we go back in time. Our choices could still be random, like the throw of a dice. And a dice does not have free will either.

At least we experience making choices. These choices might be illusions, but the feelings that accompany them are not. It is the experience of choice that ordinary people understand as free will. When you go through an emotional struggle before buying a garden gnome, the emotions are real, even if they are chemical processes in the body. And so, free will as experience exists. And it is pointless to argue that even if you could go back in time, you could not have done otherwise. You can't go back in time.

Predetermination raises several questions. One is about punishing criminals as retribution rather than to protect the public. A desire for reprisal is a human emotion. But it seems unjust to hold people responsible for actions they cannot control. Often, criminals lack a proper upbringing or have psychological issues. And punishing offenders rather than addressing the underlying causes increases the likelihood of recidivism. In our experience, moral rules and punishment matter, just like free will, and we experience choice. That is the point of punishing criminals. And it can deter calculating individuals. It is good to address social problems and prevent crime from happening when possible, but not

catering for feelings of justice and the desire for reprisal can undermine the moral fabric of society.

Compatibilism asserts we have free will, even when our choices are predetermined. It is like the Christian idea of having a moral choice while God knows what you will choose. It becomes logically consistent if you introduce two levels: one level of daily experience and another level of the underlying reality. It is a practical approach. It allows us to make moral choices. The idea of morality depends on freedom of choice.

The second question deals with fate. If you are going to die on a preset day, then what is the point of seeing a doctor? Alternatively, you could opt for a dangerous hobby like mountaineering, for you will live until a specific date. Only you do not know that date. So, if you go to a doctor who cures you of an illness that would otherwise have been fatal, that would be predetermined. If you choose not to go to the doctor and you die, that would also be predestination. The same applies to abandoning a hobby such as mountaineering versus the alternative of perishing on the slopes of Mount Everest.

The third deals with premonitions and accurate predictions insofar as they are not attributable to fraud or chance. Why can fortune-tellers sometimes make accurate predictions? And why are their predictions unreliable at the same time? The answer is that it is impossible to know the future. If I know I will have a car accident tomorrow, I will remain at home, and the accident will not happen. Predictions can influence the future unless they are vague or hidden. In 1914, no one could have guessed that the licence plate number on Franz Ferdinand's car referred to the end date of the upcoming world war.

Premonitions and accurate predictions require more than predestination. They presuppose foreknowledge of future events, but not necessarily with the persons having premonitions or making predictions. Some might argue that the future makes itself known to the present, which requires that epoch to have the urge to do so. Attributing a desire to an era is too far out for a rational thinker. More likely, someone knows and wants us to know. 'Coincidence is God's way of remaining anonymous,' claimed Albert Einstein.

And by the way, this is also how voodoo works. The practitioner of voodoo puts needles in a doll, and the targeted subject suffers intense pains simultaneously, but there is no causal relationship. The underlying cause is a scripted coincidence. And the author of the script wants people to believe in voodoo.

Predetermination allows for more accurate predictions than mere guessing allows. Actions taken to prevent these predictions from being fulfilled must fail, which requires a lack of precise information on the actors involved. Oedipus fulfilled the prophecy he would kill his father and marry his mother. He didn't know the couple he believed to be his parents were not his true parents. Fearing the prediction, he fled, leading to a sequence of events that made the prediction come true. The prophecies of ancient Greek oracles only made sense in hindsight.

What are the odds?

The law of large numbers

On 11 November 2017 (11-11), I went to Groningen with my wife and son. While driving, I noticed the date and time on the clock in the car. The date was 11-11, and the time was 10:35. It made me think, 'Wouldn't it be nice to look at the clock at exactly 11:11 today because it is 11 November (11-11).' Within a second, I noticed the distance recorder standing at 111.1. It had been 111.1 kilometres since I last filled up. Peculiar coincidences can occur by chance. With eight billion people on this planet and so many things transpiring, these things happen.

An example can illustrate this. Imagine you have five dice and make a throw. A remarkable incident is throwing five sixes. If you roll the five dice only once, it probably does not happen. On average, it only occurs once every 7,776 times. But if you throw the dice a million times, you should not be surprised to see it happen 120 to 140 times.

The chance of 111.1 kilometres appearing on the distance recorder is one in 5,000 if there is a reset every 500 kilometres. So once the thought about 11:11 had popped up, the probability of this happening thus was 0.02%. And the distance recorder was not far from the clock. The likelihood of the thought coming up on 11 November is hard to establish. In my case, it was not low.

The birthday problem demonstrates that strange coincidences happen more often than we think. If you share a birthday with another person in a small group, it might strike you as odd, but the chance of someone sharing a birthday with another person is already 50% in a group of 23. But two people sharing a birthday is not a mind-blowing coincidence. It is not as remarkable as the incident with the distance recorder.

And when you are a member of this group, the probability of you being one of the persons sharing a birthday is much smaller, namely 6%. And if you randomly pick two people, the odds of them having the same birthday is only 0.3%. Meaningful coincidences are likely to happen but less likely to you. And taking a small sample of events can seriously reduce the likelihood of meaningful coincidences. Furthermore, the more elaborate a scheme, the less likely it is to occur. The probability of three people sharing a birthday in a group of 23 is 1.3%, and for five, it is only 0.0002%.

Possible ways around the law of large numbers

Perhaps there is a way to find out there is no such thing as coincidence. If some of the most significant historical events come with peculiar coincidences, that might be more telling for two reasons. First, there are only a few, so the law of large numbers does not

apply. After all, it is a small sample. If no intelligence is coordinating events in this universe, it is not so likely that meaningful coincidences turn up in this sample, and elaborate schemes are unlikely to occur. Second, if the most significant historical events come with peculiar coincidences, it more likely suggests history is scripted than when it happens in someone's personal life.

To make the argument, you need to answer questions like, what are the most important historical events, and what are peculiar coincidences? Events such as the sinking of the Titanic or the Kennedy assassination might not qualify, even though the coincidences surrounding them form a strange and elaborate scheme. The extent of these schemes might compensate for that, but it is hard to tell. The beginning and the end of World War I meet the requirements. D-Day, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 are also historic events.

And what must I think of the number of meaningful coincidences in my life? It is not possible to establish the likelihood of that happening. You can make assumptions to get an idea. A highly unusual coincidence like the do-it-yourself store incident could be like throwing five sixes. Hence, the chance of such an event happening in any year in any life could be one in 7,776. If the same transpires again, it is like throwing five sixes twice in a row. The chance of that happening would be one in 60,000,000. On average, 100 people would experience something similar each year. But what if many more similar incidents occurred in one life? That boggles the mind.

Still, the number of possible unusual events is infinite, so the chance of something strange happening, such as the do-it-yourself store incident, could be higher than we intuitively think. It seems impossible to estimate the odds, but without intelligence coordinating events in this universe, we should at least expect these incidents to be distributed more or less evenly across all people and time frames.

Even then, significant deviations from the average are possible. Lightning strikes only a few people. It happens to some people twice, which might seem odd, but there is nothing suspicious about that. If lightning strikes one in 10,000 people once, then one in 100,000,000 get hit twice. But if one person runs into lightning ten times, and there is nothing unusual about this person and what he did. How would you explain that? Statistically, it can happen, but another cause is more likely, like living in a dangerous spot.

The limits of our minds

We are good at attributing causes but bad at guessing the likelihood of an event. The psychologist Daniel Kahneman came up with an example. It is a study of the incidence of kidney cancer in the counties of the United States. The research revealed a remarkable pattern. The incidence of kidney cancer was the lowest in rural, sparsely populated counties in traditionally Republican states in the Midwest, the South, and the West.⁸¹ So what do you make of that?

You probably came up with reasons why kidney cancer is less likely to occur in these counties, such as a healthy rural lifestyle or low pollution levels. You probably did not think of randomness. Consider then the counties in which the incidence of kidney cancer is the

highest. These counties were also rural, sparsely populated, and in traditionally Republican states in the Midwest, the South, and the West.⁷⁸

How can that be? Those counties all had small populations. And with smaller samples come more sizeable deviations from the average. Our intuition makes connections of causality, but our reason does not verify whether it could just be randomness. We like to think some cause makes unusual things happen, while they might be random accidents.

We might run into this if we consider the most significant historical events and use this small sample to establish that someone is 'writing history'. On the other hand, a comparison with a sparsely populated rural county may not be apt. Perhaps it is better to compare this sample to a royal family, for it consists of the most significant events in history. If a high incidence of kidney cancer were to turn up in the royal family, an experienced physician would tell you that coincidence is an unlikely cause.

I am a single individual, the smallest possible sample. Some people ran into a lightning bolt twice. It could even happen three or four times, but the chance of it happening ten times is so insignificant no one will ever have that. It suggests a cause rather than randomness. So, is it possible to establish that the number of meaningful coincidences in my life is so high that it is like being struck by lightning ten times? I wrote down what I still remember, and those incidents could fill a booklet like this one. Many people have experienced meaningful coincidences, but as far as I know, not close to the number and strangeness I have witnessed.



ball on 26 black

The things that could have happened

In 1913, the ball fell on a black number twenty-six times in a row at the roulette wheel at the Casino de Monte-Carlo. Some people lost a fortune by betting the ball would fall on red the next time. They didn't realise the chance of the ball choosing a red number never changed. The ball doesn't remember where it went to rest the previous times. A ball has no memory, nor does the roulette wheel. If we represent black with a B and red with an R and assume, for simplicity's sake, there is no zero, we can write down falling twenty-six times on black like so:

B B

The probability of the ball falling on black the next twenty-six times is one in 67,108,864. That is a long shot. What might surprise you is that the following combination of black and red numbers is precisely as likely to occur:

R B B R B R R B R B B R R B R R B R B B R R B B R B

You wouldn't be thrilled if that happened unless you became a millionaire by betting on this particular series of twenty-six. And even then, you wouldn't think of the 67,108,863 sequences that did not materialise. We tend to consider only the things that did happen, but we rarely think of all the things that could have transpired but didn't. Events such as the ball falling on black twenty-six times in a row impress us. And I am even more impressed because twenty-six happens to be my lucky number.

This argument applies to meaningful coincidences but not to a prediction materialising as such a feat may imply that all the other things could not have happened. If I say with conviction that the coming sequence of black and red would be R B B R B R R B R B B R R B R R B R B B R R B B R B and it happens as I predicted, I might have the gift of prophecy. The chance of me being accidentally right is one in 67,108,864.

Imagine the probability of you sitting here reading this page on a tablet or a mobile phone but as a prediction from 3,600 years ago. Imagine Joseph telling the Pharaoh: 'I see (your name comes here) reading a pile of papyrus pages, not real papyrus pages, but papyrus pages appearing on something that looks like a clay tablet. Do not be afraid, dear Pharaoh, for it will happen 3,600 years from now. But if we do not set up this grain storage, it will not happen, so we must do it. And by the way, Egypt will starve otherwise.'

The chance of this prediction to come true was not one in 67,108,864, and also not one in 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 either. It doesn't help to add more zeroes to that number. The chance is far smaller. It is so close to zero that no one can tell. Nevertheless, you sit here reading this text, perhaps even on a tablet. How could this happen? The answer to this mystery is that so many things could have occurred but did not, but something had to happen, and that is what transpired. In any case, Joseph couldn't have made such a prediction by accident.

The licence plate number

So what about the possible reference to the end date of World War I on the licence plate on Franz Ferdinand's car? Few historical events equal the importance of the start and end of World War I. The law of large numbers does not apply here. It is one of the most important historical events, a sample comparable to the royal family. And so mere accident seems unlikely. The assassination could have gone wrong, or cooler heads could have prevailed, or the war could have proceeded differently to end on another date.

It might have been possible to guess the end date of World War I once it had started. If you presumed that the war would not take more than twenty years, a random guess of the

end date could be correct one in every 7,305 times. But something does not add up here. Hardly anyone expected the war to last longer than a few months. And the licence plate originates from before the war. The assassination succeeded after a series of mishaps. If the licence plate number contained a prediction, it would include the assassination succeeding, Franz Ferdinand dying in this particular car, and this event being the trigger for the war.

That is hard to do unless you wrote the script. And so Mike Dash in the *Smithsonian* noted, 'This coincidence is so incredible that I initially suspected that it might be a hoax.'¹ And because it is not a hoax, investigative minds could have probed other options, but they did not. Conspiracy theorists also ignored it, even though this incident perfectly agrees with their beliefs.

There is a story about a Freemason named Alfred Pike, who allegedly disclosed a secretive plan of the Freemasons to bring about the New World Order. He supposedly predicted both world wars with uncanny precision in 1871. Nobody had ever heard of this plan before 1959. Contrary to the licence plate number, this is a hoax. In the Netherlands, they would call it a monkey sandwich story. The licence plate number could have added some credibility to it.

Seeing meaning

Authors often use symbolism, hidden meanings, themes, and style figures and are influenced by events or other authors. Literature critics look for those meanings in writings. For example, you can check out what experts wrote about the poem *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot. Writers often marvel at what literature critics discover in their works. Apart from intention, there can be unconscious influence. And so, seeing meaning is more like an art than a science. A scientist would argue there is no proof.

Nevertheless, meaning in literature is often intentional. If there is a script running the events in this world, the author might do what other authors do and use hidden messages. The licence plate number on Franz Ferdinand's car could signal foreknowledge of future events or even control over the events. The sceptics argue from a scientific perspective, while those who see meaning act like literature critics. Ultimately, who is right about the meaning of AIII 118 depends on whether there is a script.

Sceptics might claim that AIII 118 is a random sequence of characters, but we see a reference to the end date of World War I. That is how our minds work. The argument is a bit odd. If you take it to the extreme, this text is also a random array of characters, as is any book or report. And still, you read words and sentences that have meaning to you. Indeed, the licence plate number would have remained unnoticed if the war had not ended on 11 November 1918.

But the war ended on 11 November 1918. AIII 118 is the car's licence plate number that drove Franz Ferdinand to his appointment with his destiny. And destiny is the message the licence plate number radiates. It suggests premeditation concerning the assassination, the start of the war and its end on 11 November 1918. That is a meaning we can plausibly see without too much imagination. There are many times and locations where this sequence of

characters could have turned up so that their appearance on this particular spot is noteworthy. AIII 118 on a fish barrel in Vienna would not have attracted that attention. Ditto for the licence plate number ABII 117 on that particular car.

Sceptics can also be fanciful. Austrians speak German. Armistice in German is Waffenstillstand. So why does it not read WIII 118? Or even better, W1111 1918? If someone sends you a message, you do not quibble about such detail. If I said 'hello' to you, you don't ask me why I didn't use the word 'hi' instead. That is unless you are a philosopher with a lot of idle time and have a hobby of questioning everything. Great Britain, the United States and France were all major participants in the war. These countries all use the word armistice.

Instead, it may be a good idea to ask yourself: which licence plate numbers were available in the Austrian-Hungarian Empire? Then, you could check which combinations fit the purpose. I do not know, but I suppose there are not many options. Perhaps, you end up with just one match: AIII 118. That makes it harder to believe that this sequence of characters is meaningless. This scheme became even more inconceivable because the war ended on 11 November (11-11), such a particular number.

Only a few historical events are as important as the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the Armistice of 11 November 1918, for instance, D-Day, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and 9/11. The scheme coincidences surrounding D-Day are even more puzzling. A historian correctly predicted the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, while the coincidences surrounding the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 are dumbfounding. In other words, this incident doesn't stand on its own.

Such strong signals do not appear everywhere. Other events of importance are the American, French, Chinese and Russian revolutions. A few peculiar coincidences relate to the American Revolution and the French Revolution. At best, they are circumstantial evidence for a script. The Independence Day coincidence and the parallels between Napoleon and Hitler are not particularly elaborate.

The Chinese Revolution of 1911 started on 10 October 1911. It ended 2,000 years of imperial rule in China. The date being 10 October (10/10) is not as remarkable as 11 November (11/11), even more so because there are no related coincidences. The Russian Revolution started a communist empire that lasted for seven decades. A bad omen marked the coronation of the last Czar of Russia, Nicholas II. The communists later murdered him and his family. But these incidents do not take part in a more elaborate scheme unless you dig into less relevant detail. The start and end of World War I, at least, are historic events.

Hindsight bias

Then there is the benefit of hindsight. Countless strange coincidences could have happened but did not occur. We notice only things that did happen and do not think of those that did not. That is *hindsight bias*. The sample of the most significant historical events comes with hindsight. With hindsight, you may know things you cannot learn in advance. Hindsight knowledge is a favourite tool of critics when something goes wrong.

But when you use hindsight, your critics argue you are biased. You can never beat your critics, so I will not try.

Using hindsight may be the only way of doing this investigation because we cannot predict the occurrence of meaningful coincidences. We may never establish that this universe is real, but perhaps we can discover that it is a simulation. So, if there is meaning, we must look for it to find it. But we should be careful as we are inclined to see intent when it could have happened accidentally. Nevertheless, it seems plausible that:

- The meaningful coincidences related to the most important historical events are not mere accidents.
- There have been too many meaningful coincidences in my life for it to be just coincidence.

The nature of reality

We might live inside a simulation created by an advanced post-human civilisation. Science has established several laws of reality with sufficient certainty. If breaches in these laws occur, it is evidence of this world being fake. With the help of observations, we can ascertain that these laws of reality do not always apply. The argument for us living inside a simulation thus hinges upon the following assumptions:

- Science has sufficiently established some laws of reality.
- The breaching of these laws is evidence of us living in a simulation.
- There is evidence of breaches in these laws.

We consider ourselves unique and superb creatures, the apex of all that roams this planet. Many of us attach great value to our inner selves and moral values. If we had the technology, we would run simulations of human civilisations for research and entertainment. We probably will not alter our human essence once we can, so post-humans could have similar motivations as we have.

These post-humans might run simulations of human civilisations for entertainment and research. If the technology becomes cheap, the number of simulations for amusement likely vastly outstrips those for research. Our purpose likely is entertainment. The breaching of the laws of reality also suggests so. Simulations run for research more likely are realistic. Signs of a script our universe is not a game but someone's imaginary world.

prepare yourself for a surprise

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What if God is one of us? This universe may have a post-human owner we can call God. And God may use avatars in this simulation to play the role of an ordinary human being. Evidence of control indicates we are not sentient beings. We don't think for ourselves. We have no intrinsic value to our creators, so God can make us suffer and kill us without rem. An individual can't build this world alone or write the script in detail. That might require artificial intelligence.

The simulation hypothesis sheds light on things that would otherwise remain unexplained. The strength of the evidence outweighs the issues, such as a lack of scientific evidence for the paranormal, the limits of the human mind like attributing causes where randomness applies or seeing meaning when there is none, hindsight bias and the difficulties in establishing probabilities. In other words, we may live in scripted virtual reality.



Mary Magdalene with Christ, West Nave, Kilmore Church, Isle of Mull, made by Stephen Adam. Photographer: B. Galbraith. Victorian Web.

Who is God?

The next question is, who is God? Until now, this question has remained unresolved. As we could live in a simulation to entertain God, and God might have played the roles of ordinary persons, we might identify these individuals. Several people who changed history could have been God in disguise. Some think Jesus was God.

But what about the Jewish deity Yahweh? Its worship spread via Christianity and Islam. Half the people in the world now believe that Yahweh, also known as the Father or Allah, is the all-powerful owner of this universe. In a simulation, this is not a mere accident. This deity could be the veil God hides behind.

Mary Magdalene could have been God. She may have made Jesus believe that She was Eve reincarnated while Jesus was Adam reincarnated and that Eve did not come from Adam's rib but that Adam was Eve's son, so Adam, and therefore, Jesus was the Son of God who lived eternally. God also married Muhammad, but he did not know.

The Hebrew Bible is a collection of myths and historical events. The stories about Creation, the Fall, Noah, Abraham and Moses are fiction. The history of the Jews began in the era of the Judges. Deborah was the first person in the Bible who might have lived. Possibly, She founded the Jewish nation and could have been God in disguise.

The book *God Is A Woman* addresses the following topics:

- Why are humans religious, and how did religions develop?
- Why could this universe be virtual?
- Why are our faiths incorrect even God exists?
- How did the Jewish religion emerge and evolve?
- Who was the historical Jesus?
- What was the relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus?
- Was Eve the mother of Adam?
- What is the role of the Virgin Mary?
- Why is Jesus the Last Adam?
- Did Jewish patriarchs, prophets, and kings marry God?
- Did Muhammad marry God?
- What could be the hidden message in the Quran regarding the number 19?
- Why are Christians born of God?
- What is the meaning of God's love?
- What was Paul's role in defining Christianity?
- How did Christians turn Jesus into God?
- Why is the Gospel of John so different from the other Gospels?
- Which historical persons could have been God in disguise?
- Has Jesus already returned, and what lessons can we learn from it?
- Do we live in the end times?

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