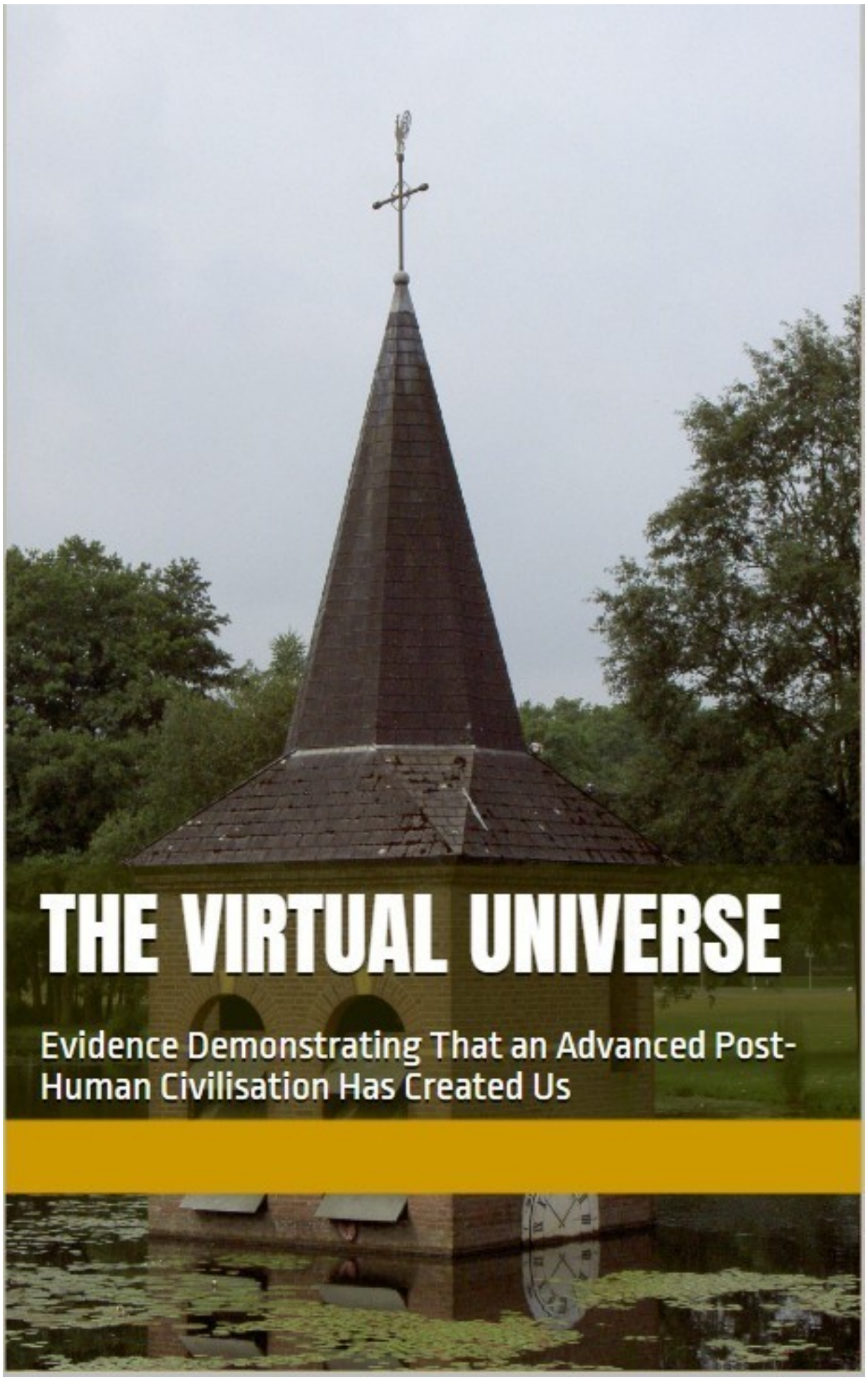
THE VIRTUAL UNIVERSE
Evidence Demonstrating That an Advanced Post-Human Civilisation Has Created Us

-

The Virtual Universe

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

First Edition

-

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

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Preface

Many of us sense something is off with reality. This universe could be a simulation run by an advanced humanoid civilisation. But can we establish that? Science can't answer that question, but science can help to make the argument. If we notice breaches of the natural laws science has established, our world must be fake.

It can illuminate phenomena such as UFOs, ghosts, reincarnation, the paranormal, and meaningful coincidences. These things are possible in virtual reality. The sceptics of these unexplained phenomena have been somewhat overzealous. They have failed to give a fair judgment of the evidence. And our purpose could be entertainment.

In the Middle Ages, no one could have guessed that this world was a computer simulation because no one knew what a computer was. We suffer from limited comprehension due to the state of our knowledge and technology. At least today's knowledge and technology allow us to clarify how a god or gods might have created us.

I have tried to make this an agreeable read, but it may still contain errors and omissions. Once the Truth dawns upon you, it becomes obvious, and you see that existing beliefs are nonsense. Finally, I could have used words like perhaps, might, could, and may more often than I did, but that would have made the text bland. Assume these words if you like.

June 2021 – September 2026,

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Contents

So There Must Be Something More

It was December 2010, and the wind was blowing. My wife and I sat at the kitchen table. My wife was discussing her late mother and father. Her mother had outlived her father for more than three decades. When her father was still alive, her mother had once asked him to contact her as a spirit if he were to die first. My wife 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, making a loud noise. It was windy that day, but the blow came out of nowhere. It was 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 experienced something you couldn't explain, such as an incredible coincidence or a near-death experience. You are not the only one. Or maybe you know someone who did. You can't reason it away. And so you believe there must be something more than this life in this world. That can be comforting. Perhaps there is a God, and maybe your life has a purpose.

And I'm gone with the wind like they were before
But I'm believing myself, I think there's something more
There must be something more, I think there's something more
Something more

Amy MacDonald, Footballer's Wife

Why do people believe in an afterlife or God? Do they fear death? Do they hope their life has meaning? Would it be so bad if our existence had no reason? Is that worse than playing a part in the grand scheme of a Supreme Puppet Master? And eternal life? You could bore yourself 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 comforting.

Let's end this on a lighter note. In 2014, my wife, son, and I visited the Apenheul monkey zoo in Apeldoorn. We had been walking around watching monkeys for hours when 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 noteworthy, as this name refers to the word 'ape'. Indeed, there may be more about this universe than science can clarify.

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 triggered a sequence of events that led to World War I. Austria held Serbia responsible and declared war on Serbia. 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 mishaps. 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 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 precisely in front of the only person still prepared to strike.

Surrounded by a crowd, Princip was unable to activate the bomb he was carrying. He used his handgun instead, but failed to aim it properly. He later said, '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 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. It may have happened, but no reliable source confirms it.[1]

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. 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 the car would play a crucial role in the assassination that would ignite a world war that would end on 11 November 1918? In other words, is there a plan behind everything that happens in this world?

Wake Up Call

It was the Autumn of 2008. The financial system was in jeopardy. It was a scary time. The world as we know it could have ended if the financial system had imploded. I had just discovered how to prevent financial crises by having negative interest rates and a maximum interest rate of zero. At the time, it seemed an epic find that could change the world forever. Interest charges on money and debts, or usury, are the underlying cause of financial crises. However, banning interest would require negative interest rates, which had been impossible to achieve. In the early 20th century, Silvio Gesell proposed charging a holding fee on currency, allowing interest rates to become negative when the supply and demand in the markets for money and capital would justify it.

During the 1930s, when the world was in the most dramatic economic crisis in recent history, several leading economists, including John Maynard Keynes and Irving Fisher, recognised the potential of a holding fee on currency to prevent economic crises. Still, they didn't think of using it to create an interest-free financial system. Interest-free lending never took off because you don't lend money interest-free if you can receive interest elsewhere. Lending interest-free must be attractive for lenders. But I figured out how it can work. If the currency's value rises, borrowing at negative interest rates can be appealing. More evidence emerged a few years later when interest rates in Europe fell below zero for several consecutive years.

That was still years in the future at the time. A holding fee on currency and abolishing interest rates above zero could stabilise the financial system and end economic crises. That would limit lending to the safest borrowers, as there is no reward for taking risks in the form of interest. As lending creates money, it promotes inflation. So, this money could be inflation-free or even lead to lower prices or deflation.

In the Austrian town of Wörgl, money with a holding fee had been a spectacular success until the central bank banned it. The money continued to circulate because the holders spent it to avoid paying the holding fee, so people didn't need to borrow to keep the money circulating and keep the economy afloat. A similar kind of money had existed in ancient Egypt for over 1,000 years. Grain stored in granaries had been money there. This money came with a fee to cover the storage costs. The Biblical story about Joseph in Egypt claims that he introduced these granaries.

I named the fin Natural Money after The Natural Economic Order, Gesell's book in which he presented the idea of the holding fee. Initially, I attempted to recruit a few people to work on the theory and promote it. Nothing came out of it. Most economists think negative interest rates are impossible. I realised that might be wrong, and even if I were right, who would believe me? It seemed pointless to go on, so I planned to give up.

11:11 on a clock

But then, strangeness crept in. Strange coincidences piled up like music on the radio synchronising with what I was thinking. Gesell had published The Natural Economic Order first in German as 'Natürliche Wirtschaftsordnung,' or acronym NWO. The meaning of NWO, New World Order, made me think it could be part of a greater plan. And 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. And then, out of the blue, my wife told me she was also waking up at night and seeing these time prompts all the time. I hadn't mentioned this to anyone, so she couldn't have known I had the same. This episode lasted for several weeks.

My wife and I were not the only ones having this, as it soon turned out. People have shared stories on the Internet about being haunted by time prompts such as 11:11. This peculiarity is often referred to as the 11-phenomenon or the 11:11-phenomenon. Eleven is the first double number, a noteworthy coincidence of digits, and 11:11 is like the same happening a second time, thus two related, strange coincidences, hence doubly strange. World War I ended on 11 November 1918. Franz Ferdinand's car's licence plate number refers to this particular date. But what does that signify? Could there be a connection? Or was there nothing to it, and was it just my imagination?

Our minds trick us in different ways, such as selective remembrance. Remarkable things we remember best. Maybe you have experienced a few strange incidents. They stick with your memory, but 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 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.

Tin foil hat. Morton Devonshire (2007). Wikipedia.

My waking up at night and seeing these time prompts was something different. There were no exceptions. I didn't see other time prompts. And my wife had the same at the same time. That was not my mind playing a trick on me. Something made me wake up and look at the clock at these times. Is it mind control? Is there a plan, and is Natural Money part of it? And is there a connection with the licence plate number of Franz Ferdinand's car? Only large-scale mind control can make the assassination succeed, trigger a war, and end that war on that date, 11 November 1918. And so, mind control, it is. And your mind is also under control. But don't worry. A tin foil hat won't help you. Nothing will.

Usury, thus charging interest on money and debts, is an ancient question and a biblical issue. Things were about to get a lot stranger, but that is a different story. The only sensible explanation I could eventually think of is that this world is not real, but a virtual reality created by an advanced humanoid civilisation, and that we are actors in a play. And everything goes according to a script, so this world is like the stage of a play, and Natural Money could be part of the scenario. Time will tell whether that is indeed the case, but it is better to be prepared. And so, I worked out a monetary theory for a usury-free financial system with negative interest rates.

Peeking into the Future

What will the future look like? Futurologists have been pondering this particular question. A few things seem plausible. First, robots and artificial intelligence may take over our jobs, making us obsolete as workers. Machines and computers have already taken over many jobs. Until now, new jobs have replaced the old ones. These new jobs were more complex, so machines couldn't do them. However, artificial intelligence may be able to perform these tasks. Artificial intelligence is a computer programme that can learn like a human, but faster and better. And so, artificial intelligence may soon make better decisions than humans and take over many remaining jobs. As a result, we may have a lot of leisure time. Or we could be left without income and become destitute.

In a few decades, we may no longer be driving our cars. We tell them where we want to go. Our cars then plot a route, bring us there, and keep us safe. Perhaps it will be forbidden to drive yourself when human drivers cause more accidents than self-driving cars. When I was a teenager, and Knight Rider was a popular television series, it was science fiction. Today, the technology is already there. Artificial intelligence may soon make other decisions as well. We may still decide what we want, for example, what kind of book we like to read, but algorithms decide the specifics. And you might even be happy with it because artificial intelligence knows better what you desire than you do.

Some people fear that computers and robots will take over the world, controlling or destroying us. Computers and robots don't have a will of their own. Artificial intelligence is different, which makes it potentially more dangerous. Traditional computers operate according to their programming, but artificial intelligence thinks for itself. It learns and can become more intelligent than we are. We allow smartphones to take over our lives, but this is not what smartphones want to do. Humans have designed apps to be addictive, so we do what the programmers want us to do. And we are lazy, so we allow algorithms to decide for us. In this way, artificial intelligence can take over our lives. Emotions and desires have a biological origin, so computers and robots don't possess them. Yet, artificial intelligence can learn to act as if it has desires.

Second, humans may enhance themselves with biotechnology, cyborg engineering and information technology. These beings are no longer human and can be referred to as post-humans. They might still be like us in many ways because we think that our inner selves are precious. And so, we are unlikely to alter our inner selves, even if we can. These post-humans may live very long lives while artificial intelligence handles decision-making. And so they have a lot of time on their hands, and boredom may be their biggest challenge. That brings us to the third option. These post-humans may create games and imaginary worlds that simulate human civilisations for entertainment. If the technology becomes cheap, there could be billions of virtual universes for every real one, and we live in a virtual reality ourselves.[2] Recent developments in artificial intelligence suggest that AIs can exhibit human traits, so a post-human 'individual' may well be an artificial intelligence.

Virtual Worlds

We may live in a virtual world, a computer-simulated environment. Virtual worlds, such as computer games, can have numerous users who create personalised avatars, engage in activities, and interact 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. Thus, God could appear to us as an ordinary human.

Virtual worlds have rules that may draw from reality or fantasy worlds. Rules can include gravity, methods of procreation, and types 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 from thin air. You can invent species that communicate via light signals or not have species but individuals with random features.

This world might look like the original. Our experiences shape our imagination and the options we consider. If we write stories and produce films, most are about humans and their feelings and actions. Only a few are about animals. And the animals we imagine in our tales are like humans. Ed, the talking horse, is more human than a horse. Tales and motion pictures about imaginary beings, such as The Lord of the Rings or the Star Trek series, are rare compared to series about humans. And the fictitious beings in our stories, such as Star Trek, look and act like humans. They usually have two legs and two arms and walk upright. Extraterrestrials in Star Trek feature males and females.

The Holodeck is a virtual reality room available in the Starship Enterprise in Star Trek. Using holograms, it creates a realistic, interactive simulation of the physical world. On the Holodeck, you can make a personalised environment with objects and people, interact with them, or write a story and play a role in it. With the help of artificial intelligence, we might soon create simulations of humans and the world. If the technology becomes cheap, we could make billions of virtual universes. If we do that, it likely already happened long ago, and we live inside a virtual world ourselves.[3]

We not far from doing so, so this world is probably a simulation. But can we find out? Most philosophers and scientists think we can't. They have overlooked the obvious. There is an elephant in the room: the things science can't clarify. It begins with establishing that these phenomena aren't subjective. There must be multiple credible witnesses or other verifiable evidence. Then, you need to certify that it is not due to randomness or a natural phenomenon. To say that the simulation causes these phenomena upends the knowledge we currently believe we have. And so, we must be thorough. Answering the question begins with investigating what we can or cannot know. That is the domain of knowledge theory, a branch of philosophy which deals with the nature of knowledge.

Knowledge Theory

What is knowledge theory?

What is truth, and what is knowledge? Philosophers have been discussing these questions for thousands of years. It is the domain of knowledge theory, also called epistemology. It deals with truth, belief, and the justification of beliefs. It concerns the following questions. 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*, thus applying those rules and theories to specific situations.

How does that work? Let's give an example. After carefully investigating the records of people who have lived and still live, you conclude, with the help of induction, that people typically die before they reach 120. Using this rule and deduction, you infer that you will die before the age of 120. That seems straightforward, but there are pitfalls, so philosophers continue to discuss 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. If we can't observe A, the theory assumes its existence. A then exists in our imagination. The explanation of electricity assumes the existence of electrons and their behaviour. We can't see electrons, not even with a powerful microscope. We can do experiments to see how electricity behaves. We presume the conduct of electricity proves the existence of electrons, so experiments demonstrate their existence. It is like living in the dark and assuming that cows exist, even though we have never seen them. We have theorised that such animals say moo, so our hearing of moos proves the existence of cows. So if we hear moo, that must be a cow.

We are imaginative beings. Our knowledge involves imagination. We imagine electrons and gravity. Dogs can't imagine electrons or gravity, so they can't build electric cars or aeroplanes. Electrons and gravity may exist in our imagination, but they point at something real. Otherwise, objects wouldn't fall to the ground, and we wouldn't drive electric cars. This discussion of knowledge theory is a historical account. New ideas usually build upon previous thoughts. This treatise discusses Western philosophy. Western thinkers have been the most inquiring. As a result, the Scientific Revolution began in Europe. Science is the result of thinking, but it has also greatly influenced thought. It started with the ancient Greeks. What distinguished them from other traditions was their rational thinking.

Classical philosophy

Some 2500 years ago, Greek philosophers speculated about the nature of reality. Some claimed everything consisted of fire, water, earth and air. Later, a few philosophers argued that the building blocks of reality are small particles called atoms. These atoms differ in size and shape for different materials. The objects we see are groups of atoms stuck together. Democritus argued that the universe merely consisted of atoms in the void. That is already close to what we believe today. Speculation about the nature of reality, such as whether matter consists of atoms, is metaphysics.

Metaphysics is about how we perceive 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 was speculation because these atoms were invisible, and the Greeks had no microscopes to verify their existence. By assuming atoms exist and have different shapes and sizes, you can clarify the presence of various substances. You can also do that by presuming everything consists of fire, water, earth and air. Only we find atoms more convincing.

The ancient Greeks also pondered other issues. Some figured that the Earth is a sphere. When you look at the sea, you see the horizon slightly curved, and 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. Black people believed the gods were black, while red-haired people thought they 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 should you worship the Greek gods if the Persians and the Egyptians bow before other gods? If your birthplace determines your beliefs, your beliefs are likely false. The sophists were philosophers who had come into contact with different cultures. They claimed that 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 don't know that truth. 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 observation. His approach is called *empiricism*. It works like 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 isn't definite proof of their non-existence. These creatures could still be hiding deep down in the forests. And perhaps eating mushrooms enhances your senses, allowing you to see things that would otherwise remain hidden. For that reason, scepticism emerged. There were two groups of sceptics. The first claimed that 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. It was after classical philosophers' texts 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 went their separate ways. Their paths separated. Today, science requires empirical evidence, while religion doesn't. Scientists test assumptions, such as the existence of electrons, with experiments that others can verify. In religion, evidence is often personal, such as most appearances of the Virgin Mary, and experiments like checking the answers to prayers never yield anything substantial.

The most obvious explanation is usually correct, or what occurs most often is most likely the case. If you see something flying in the sky, it probably isn't Superman. And so, it is rational first to ask yourself, 'Is it a bird? Is it a plane?' Once you have ruled out these possibilities, you can conclude, 'No, it is Superman!' William of Ockham is known for his simplicity principle, Ockham's Razor. It says that the explanation with the fewest required assumptions is preferable. If what you prayed for comes to pass, you could check whether it might be a coincidence before claiming it is God answering your prayer. The latter requires God's existence and that this supposed infinitely powerful being, which rules billions of galaxies, listens to your particular request while ignoring countless others. In contrast, coincidence doesn't require that many assumptions.

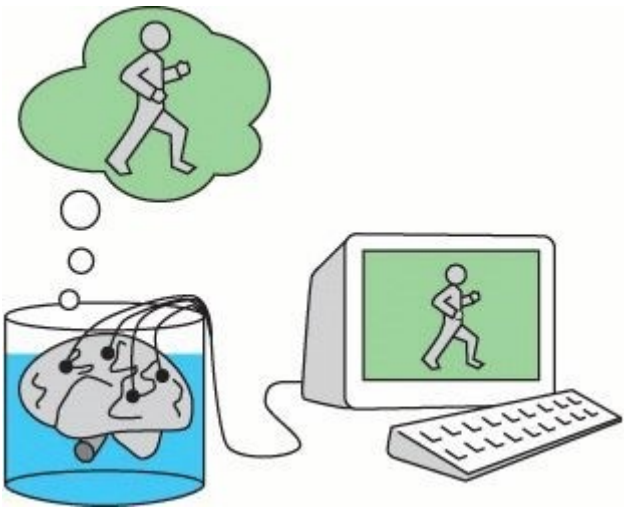
Modern philosophy

In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed to America. Ancient sources, including the Bible, didn't mention this enormous, lurking continent stretching from the North Pole to the South Pole. A little later, Nicolaus Copernicus claimed that the Earth revolved around the Sun rather than the other way around, which everyone believed until then. Traditional knowledge had failed dramatically. Copernicus had the luck of dying soon. The Catholic Church prosecuted Galileo Galilei for claiming Copernicus was right and the Bible was wrong.

At the same time, Protestants challenged the authority of the Catholic Church by making religion a personal matter. If you had reason to believe something, it could be correct. Religion is about your conscience rather than what the Church teaches. The number of issues on which we can disagree is infinite, so 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 doesn't make it true. However, questioning the existence of God was initially out of the question. European philosophers sought a rational foundation for religion, attempting to base it on verifiable claims, an effort known as deism. The project failed because it was impossible to establish the properties of the invisible fellow in the sky that everyone imagined.

The confusion spurred renewed scepticism and a new search for the foundations of knowledge. As philosophers from continental Europe, such as René Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz, and Baruch Spinoza, argued, our senses are deceptive. Therefore, only rational thinking can generate knowledge is called *rationalism*, a refurbished *idealism*.



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

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. You can establish this fact through thinking. 'I think, therefore I exist,' he concluded.

Other philosophers from Great Britain, such as 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, most notably Germany and France, and empiricist Great Britain, and later the United States. The duck test is an example of pragmatist empiricism. It says that when something looks, quacks, and walks like a duck, it probably is a duck. It is not a coincidence that a US writer rather than a German philosopher invented it.

The divide affected moral philosophy and views about society. The empiricist view holds that ethical rules are whatever people agree on, thus reflecting society's sentiments. The idealist vision is that morals are absolute and apply to everyone. Idealistic schemes to improve society, with religious claims to be the truth, such as Marxism, came from continental Europe. Pragmatic thinkers, including Adam Smith, the intellectual father of Capitalism, came from Great Britain or the United States. Smith attempted to describe what had happened and offer practical guidance on how to manage an economy.

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 it takes for the ball to hit the ground. The table below contains 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 some thinking to get the formula representing the relationship between height and fall time: fall time = 9.81 * √ (2 * height). So, 3.19 = 9.81 * √ (2 * 50.0). If the tower is only 50 metres high, you can't 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 to measure it: 9.81 * √ (2 * 100) = 4.52 seconds. It is the combination of observation and thinking that made this possible.

Finding the mathematical formula that matches the data is like solving a jigsaw puzzle. This method of reasoning is *induction*. It is establishing a general rule based on observations. You can never be sure the outcome is correct. Using your sightings and 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 from Earth.

Another way of reasoning is *deduction*. It involves working from assumptions to conclusions using logical reasoning. If the premises are all justified and the rules of logic are correctly applied, then the inference must be correct. Thus, deduction is applying general rules to specific situations. 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 fall time = 9.81 * √ (2 * 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 observations to find the formula representing the relationship between height and fall time. The observations alone are not enough. It requires some puzzling to find the formula. Once you have found the formula, you can use deduction and experiments to check its validity. You can calculate how long it will take for a ball to fall to the ground from 321 metres. You can go to the top of the Eiffel 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 works.

Kant and Hegel

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant didn't settle for a duck test. Germans get to the bottom of things. He aimed to uncover the foundations of our knowledge. Kant realised knowledge arises from observation (*empiricism*), but we can't know anything without thinking (*idealism*). We interpret observations. We recognise differences, count instances and think of cause and effect. Our thinking imposes its structure upon our observations. It is our nature. If we see a tree, we see branches and leaves. We see that the leaves are green and that the branches are brown. We see a difference between a tree and a deer. We can count trees. The concept of a tree encompasses other ideas, such as branches, leaves, greenness, and brownness.

We view the world through our framework, which is language. Without the word tree, we don't see trees. So, if we only have the words animal and plant, a tree is a plant to us, and we don't see a difference between trees, bushes, grass, and ferns. We don't know reality or the things in themselves (*relativism*). We attach the categories to our perceptions. Speculation about the nature of reality, such as asking whether trees, gravity, or electrons exist, is pointless. Kant is also famous for attempting to find a rational foundation for absolute moral rules.

Subsequent idealist philosophers disagreed. They believed the mind creates reality, so absolute knowledge is possible. They argued that reality is subject to our perception, allowing us to uncover it. The fall of a ball is subject to mathematical laws invented by the human mind. You can claim gravity causes the ball to fall, even though gravity exists only in our imagination. Imagining gravity enables us to predict how long it takes for a ball to reach the ground after being dropped from a tower. Our predictions coming true corroborate the existence of Sir Isaac Newton's imaginary invisible friend. You can poke fun at gravity this way, but gravity has proven to be a trustworthy companion, more dependable than many people you can see and touch.

The most notable idealist philosopher was Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. He argued that we increase our knowledge over time, so there is progress. If we dig deeper, we may learn more about trees, for example, where their roots are. The more we know, the closer we come to the absolute truth. However, by decomposing reality into parts and analysing them, we lose the essence of the whole. We are part of reality and interact with it. Hence, 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. Hegel was also a religious man, so he expected us to discover God at the end of our quest for knowledge.

Seeking knowledge is a process that never stops. You can ask yourself, 'Is the way I look at the subject correct and adequate? Have I not forgotten something?' After we arrive at a conclusion, our experiences and thoughts continue, or the situation changes, and we may later come to a different belief. Hegel called it dialectic. Our knowledge increases. It pushes forward, leading to progress. Hegel's dialectic has three phases:

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

Contemporary philosophy

Kant ended the idea that metaphysics gives us knowledge. Philosophers became less ambitious from then on. One reaction was pragmatism. The theory of evolution may suggest that we hold beliefs to survive and reproduce. Pragmatic American thinkers, such as 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 German thinkers like Wilhelm Dilthey and Martin Heidegger, concerns human communication. Dilthey argued that natural sciences are about interpreting

observations while the humanities are about meaning and, in the case of Heidegger, what it means to exist.

Others embarked upon a renewed search for the foundations of knowledge. Analytical philosophers such as Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein believed that the primary tools of philosophers were 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 known as *realism*, which is closely related to empiricism. They claimed there are *justified true beliefs*. Jane might think something is true based on what she knows. If this is indeed the case, her belief is justified.

Karl Popper introduced the idea of *falsification*. You can never prove a hypothesis is correct, but you can prove it is wrong when you find contradicting evidence. That is also a form of scientific progress because knowledge increases. The theory you believed in is incorrect. You might think all swans are white as long as you only see white swans. Once you spot a black swan, your theory is proven wrong. From then on, you think 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 the idea that all swans are white, even if a red swan is lurking somewhere out there that no one has ever seen.

Scientific theories must be falsifiable. Otherwise, they aren't scientific. Scientific theories must enable us to make testable predictions. As long as these predictions come true, we assume the theory is correct. We can't be certain, but the theory works for us. You can go out and look for swans and check their colour. Your theory says they must be either black or white. You can use the formula relating height to fall time to calculate the fall time from a height of 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. Suppose Jane looks at her watch. It says it is two o'clock. She believes it. She doesn't know it stopped exactly twelve hours earlier. Her belief is thus not justified. The watch accidentally gives the correct time, so her belief is true nonetheless.

As our knowledge increases, our understanding of reality changes. Philosophers call that a paradigm. Thomas Kuhn noted that scientific paradigms change over time. A scientific paradigm is a theory or system of ideas that dominates a field, such as physics. Existing theories don't explain everything. The theories that clarify the most phenomena and leave the fewest unexplained are the best and form the paradigm in the field. The paradigm of your knowledge of swans is that swans can be black or white. It is better than your previous belief that they are all white. When you discovered a black swan, your paradigm shifted. You changed your opinion.

Unexplained phenomena, such as unexpected instrument readings, might indicate that the paradigm is incorrect. As long as no better clarification is available, most scientists attribute them to errors. At some point, the evidence accumulates that the theory is erroneous. Then a scientist develops a better hypothesis, and out of the confusion, a new paradigm emerges. Newton's laws have long been the paradigm in physics. However, when scientists developed more precise instruments in the 19th century, they gave readings that Newton's laws couldn't explain. Initially, most scientists disregarded the

evidence. It took a while before a fellow named Einstein could clarify them. From then on, Einstein's theories became part of the new scientific paradigm, quantum physics.

Paradigms in science affect how we see the world. Five centuries ago, most people in Europe believed the Earth was flat, a few thousand years old, and at the centre of the universe. Only a few educated people were aware that the ancient Greeks had discovered evidence of the Earth being a sphere. 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. And we may soon believe we live in a simulation.

Existing religions and ideologies, or the so-called Big Stories, are all wrong. It 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 not much more than relativism with a new marketing campaign. This view was, not surprisingly, criticised by those who claimed the truth is out there somewhere.

So, we are more or less back to where Socrates refuted the sophists. The truth is out there. Believing something doesn't make it the truth. And if there is a truth, we might be able to find it. With the simulation hypothesis, speculation about the nature of reality or metaphysics re-emerged. We could all live as mindless figures in a computer simulation of an advanced post-human civilisation. It seems that knowledge theory remains stuck. At the very least, it is clear that while our knowledge has grown dramatically over the last 2,500 years, the theory of knowledge has not progressed accordingly.

Data, information, knowledge and wisdom

Having more data does not make us better informed, and having more facts does not make us wiser. The DIKW pyramid (Data, Information, Knowledge, Wisdom) shows how human understanding can go off track as we amass more facts rather than seek better understanding, which requires getting the relative importance of facts and the nature of their relationships. Data is raw facts, numbers, or observations. Data does not have meaning. A noise you hear is data. Information is data that has been organised and structured into a context that gives it meaning, so we can use it for a purpose. You have information once you can identify the noise as coming from a car engine.

To acquire knowledge, you need information, and it needs to be correct. Maybe there was a car on television because your husband was watching his favourite show. If you were waiting for a taxi and knew the noise was coming from the television, you wouldn't go outside. Knowledge is our understanding of information. It concerns correlative, causal, and logical relationships. Wisdom is understanding gained through study and experience, which allows you to select the appropriate knowledge to deal with a situation. It is about seeing the relevant facts, their relationships, their relative importance, and the limits of that knowledge, including ways to deal with them.

Proof and evidence

There is a difference between proof and evidence, even though we use these words interchangeably. *Proof* is a final verdict that removes all doubt, whereas *evidence* supports a particular explanation. Proving is typically done through deduction, while induction involves using evidence. Proof requires the premises to be correct, which is problematic because the premises used in deductive reasoning, such as 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. So, 1 + 1 = 2 is always true. However, if you think you see two trees, someone else may disagree. Perhaps the other person sees three trees or only bushes.

We don't know everything. With a limited sample of swans and induction, you could conclude that all swans are white. We support claims with evidence, such as experiments, but we can never be certain that relationships like those between height and fall time are always the same. There is no proof, not even in science, but scientific evidence meets the quality standards of the scientific method. They involve careful observation and rigorous criticism, as we can be wrong about what we observe or think. A scientist may use observations to formulate a theory about the fall time of objects and then check it with experiments.

Words like 'establish' and 'conclude' bridge the gap between proof and evidence. Science aims for the best clarification of the observations. A hypothesis needs evidence and must explain the observations better than the alternatives. Assuming this universe is a simulation, we can explain phenomena that are currently unexplained, such as paranormal events. Rigorous scepticism could be filtering out paranormal events that don't have multiple credible witnesses or other plausible explanations. However, we can't test the hypothesis with experiments, so the simulation hypothesis is not scientific.

Scientific proof means that all the experiments confirm the theory. The problem with that is the same as with the swans. If you believe all swans are white, it is scientifically proven until you run into a black swan. That is why all our present knowledge about our existence, the age of the universe, and the laws of nature would suddenly become void if we discovered that we live inside a simulation. The simulation hypothesis can explain the unexplained and is closer to the truth, much like the theory that most swans are white, with some being black. Even so, there could still be a red swan out there we don't know about.

Takeaways

Science can't prove this universe is a virtual reality, but the evidence could be strong enough to establish that we do. It is, however, metaphysical speculation, not much different from saying that Sir Isaac Newton's imaginary invisible friend, gravity, causes a ball to fall to the ground. The only difference is that gravity is predictable, so you can do experiments and check this friend's existence. The computer we exist in could be less

imaginary than Newton's friend. You can only make that argument if you understand what knowledge is. So, here are some considerations:

- We can always question assertions because the methods to arrive at knowledge, induction and deduction, can lead to wrong conclusions.
- The validity of a statement depends on its accurately describing (some part of) reality. You can verify it with observations and induction. If anything occurs that violates the statement, it must be wrong.
- The truth or falsity of a system of statements depends on its logical consistency. You can check a system of statements using logic and deduction. Contradictions point to errors.
- A claim is plausible when sufficient evidence supports it, while no credible evidence contradicts it. Contradicting evidence nullifies it. In science, that is that is the falsification principle.
- For survival, usefulness is more important than the truth. Religions help us cooperate, and that allows us to survive, which is their primary function.
- Exotic explanations, such as a flying object being Superman, make sense only if common clarifications don't. When dealing with unexplained phenomena, you may have to consider them.
- Contradicting arguments can be correct in their own right, as there could be a higher truth or synthesis. Evolution and creation can both be correct if we live in a simulation. The simulation hypothesis resolves the question.
- Proof means the absence of doubt, which is impossible in dealing with reality. Evidence can still support a particular explanation or theory. You can still look for the best clarification for the observations.

Explaining the Unexplained

The paranormal is a subject of controversy. The evidence is often problematic and certainly not scientific. Take, for instance, psychics. Scientists have investigated their abilities. In experiments, psychics fail to perform better than guessing. Scientists isolate a psychic so others can't supply this person with information. Sometimes, psychics make stunning guesses, but not in these experiments. Divination can be fraud or manipulation. The same is true for the paranormal in general. Paranormal incidents can be natural phenomena or the result of fraud or delusion.

Still, a large number of paranormal incidents remain without clarification. Few scientists dare to investigate them, as it could make them a laughingstock to 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 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 that science will one day give the answers is also a belief. Science can become like a religion once you discard evidence that contradicts it. Evidence for the paranormal doesn't meet scientific criteria, but that doesn't make it invalid. Science requires that we use a theory, such as the existence of psychic abilities, to make predictions that we can subsequently check. If a psychic doesn't do better than chance guessing during an experiment, this individual has no psychic abilities from a scientific perspective. But there is more to the world than science can prove.

Countless times, witnesses have observed things that the sciences can't clarify. 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, including Scientific American, Nature, and Science. Most incidents probably never become public, so the total number of these incidents is impossible to guess. It could be billions. Fort had worked on a manuscript suggesting a secret civilisation controls events in this world. He compared the close-mindedness of many scientists to that of religious fundamentalists.

So, did my wife's father make himself noticed from the other side? Or was 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 don't think she did. I have witnessed countless strange incidents, so I don't think she was mistaken either. 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.

The wind gust was peculiar. The clocks made it even more mysterious. In virtual reality, the laws of nature don't have to apply. Clocks can stop for an hour, and elephants can fly. We haven't seen flying elephants, but virtual reality makes it possible. Psychic abilities may

exist, even when the scientific method can't certify them. And Jesus could have walked on water and raised the dead. And meaningful coincidences, even when caused by ordinary natural phenomena, may indicate someone is pulling the strings.

Simulation Hypothesis

Inspired by Treachery of Images

In ancient times, philosophers speculated that we couldn't tell whether the world around us was real or whether other people around us had minds and could think. Perhaps I am the only one who exists, 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 couldn't tell why this world might not be real or how the gods could have created it. That changed with recent advances in information technology. This universe could be a simulation. We believe that our senses register an external reality, so we ignore evidence to the contrary. You may think you see a pipe when watching an image. The caption of the famous painting The Treachery of Images by René Magritte makes you notice: 'This is not a pipe.'

In 1977, science fiction writer Philip K. Dick was the first to assert that our reality is computer-generated. Believing his discovery to be of a most monumental kind, he organised a press conference in France, where he described his psychotic experiences and accompanying coincidences that led him to believe this world is fake. He told the audience that his lost memories returned in full for unknown reasons. He also claimed to have had a vision. And a scenario Dick wrote came true. His last name suggests that our Creator, if there is one, loves sexist jokes. And it matches the sense of humour of a Lady I came to know in a dormitory as a student.

The idea that we live inside a computer-generated world is known as the simulation hypothesis. We could all live in a simulation created by an advanced humanoid civilisation.

Professor Nick Bostrom explored its probability 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 that ordinary humans don't have. These beings are no longer humans, but 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 bodies at all.

These post-humans might experience an urge to run simulations of their *human ancestor civilisations*, so that 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 terminate before becoming post-human.
- In any post-human civilisation, only a negligible number of individuals develop an appetite for running simulations of their human ancestor civilisations.
- We almost certainly live inside a computer simulation.[3]

The argument comes with the following assumptions that seem increasingly plausible due to the recent developments in artificial intelligence, but are not proven:

- The computing power of post-human civilisations is sufficient to run numerous 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 won't happen later than that. By then, we will have done it. But millions of years have passed since 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 that it already happened is (1,000,000 - 100) / 1,000,000 = 0.9999 or 99.99%.

One particular possibility is that the post-human civilisation is a humanlike artificial intelligence. In this case, the time argument proves its merit. Even when human civilisation has spawned only one humanlike artificial intelligence that runs only one simulation, we most likely live in a virtual world.

Non-humanoid civilisations are probably not interested in running large numbers of simulations of human civilisations. They might run a few for research, perhaps to investigate human behaviour. Still, it seems unlikely that our history and emotions interest beings entirely different from us enough for them to run billions of simulations of human civilisations. And if they exist, they must first learn to travel faster than the speed of light to find humans. Thus, post-humans will likely run most simulations of human civilisations. So, our Creator, if there is one, is probably post-human.

Philosophy is the art of not accepting what seems obvious because the possibilities are boundless. That is why what seems obvious often isn't the case. With the information we do have, it is our best guess. We think of God as having a human nature because we imagine God. The God in the Bible has human traits. Conversely, when God imagines us, God probably is humanoid. We would create virtual realities with humans if we could, not

of goats or Vulcans. So, it seems obvious, but that doesn't mean it's true. It is only what our imagination and the evidence suggest is most likely. But we know very little. We can't go outside the simulation and check.

The simulation argument comes with uncertainties. Post-humans might lack sufficient computing power. Recent developments in quantum computing suggest otherwise. Alternatively, nearly all human civilisations die out before they can build these simulations. Alternatively, post-humans have evolved and differ from us, so they aren't interested in running simulations with humans. We may only know this once we have become post-humans. Bostrom doesn't try to guess the likelihood of the options. He thinks we have no information about whether this universe is real, but that is incorrect. There is evidence.

Simulation Argument II: Adding Information

Will we soon create simulations of humans who act like humans and even believe they think? Will we invent a Holodeck like in Star Trek? And will we expand it to civilisation-size simulations? Nick Bostrom dares not to assess the likelihood of that. However, you don't have to look far for answers. We are already close to doing it. Imagine a world where you can be king or queen. You can even create the world as you like and build your paradise. You can lead the life you desire. You can design 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 for many of us to resist. Your life is not great. Your spouse is not perfect. Your job is mediocre or worse. Other people make you miserable. Your boss ignores your ideas. Your ventures fail. 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. We will spend a lot of time there if we ever invent something like the Holodeck from Star Trek.

You might think you won't do it, but others would, so there will be demand for such the technology. What you have just read is information, specifically insights into human nature. We will make our dreams a reality if we can. We can also consider advances in artificial intelligence, extrapolate from them, and demonstrate that simulated humans will be feasible at some point, likely soon. Hence, we probably live inside a simulation and are someone's fantasy. Showing it is possible or likely, however, doesn't prove it. So, how can we do that? It is possible with the information we have.

Scientists have established the laws of nature, which determine what is realistically possible and what is not. Simulations can be realistic in many ways but also unrealistic in others. If we can establish that unrealistic events occur, thus breaching natural laws established by science, we could be living in a simulation. Instead of speculating that we live 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 information. We can establish that we live in a simulation as follows:

1. Even when this universe is genuine, we can never be sure about it. A simulation can be realistic and feature 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. Only 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. These laws of

reality and breaches thereof are 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 that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.
- The universe started with the 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 consciousness resides in our bodies. There is no spirit or soul.

Evidence to the contrary indicates this world is fake. Meaningful coincidences suggest there is an intelligent force directing events. The paranormal defies the laws of physics. A ghost pushing you breaches Newton's laws of motion. Credible accounts of reincarnation challenge the claim that we are biological organisms. However, meaningful coincidences can materialise by chance. There may be laws of reality we don't know. There is plenty of evidence suggesting that consciousness resides in the body, while only a few people remember a previous life. And have you seen ghosts? It may be time to take your pills.

Still, if a sufficient number of credible accounts of breaches of the established laws of reality exist, we can assume we live inside a simulation. We may still differ on what a sufficient number is or which accounts are credible. The proof can't be scientific because science can't prove we live inside a simulation. We can't verify that we live in a simulation by doing experiments, because violations of natural laws are unpredictable. But we can check the accounts of violations of these laws. It remains speculation, akin to living in the dark, assuming that cows exist and make a mooing sound, even though we have never seen them, and believing that hearing a moo proves their existence.

Mystery of Being

Why is there something rather than nothing? We may never know. If gods created us, we may learn one day why. Still, that doesn't clarify why these gods exist. Perhaps the gods don't know either. Coincidence and evolution explain why there are humans, but not why there is a universe. The odds appear to be stacked against our being here, so we might see our existence as a miracle and think this universe is there for us. However, had humans never arrived on the scene, 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. Had my father not broken his leg during a football game, he might not have met my mother, who was a nurse in the local hospital. Or, my mother might have had a headache on the night I would otherwise have been conceived. My parents' existence, in turn, depends on countless accidental actions of the many generations before them. If one of my forebears had slept ten minutes longer on 16 September 1455, I might not be here. Yet, something had to happen. And guess what? Something happened. Still, people are flabbergasted.

The number of events that could have prevented my coming into existence is infinite. Yet, here I am. And why would the purpose of the universe be to spawn me? Why isn't it created for that fat grey cat sneaking through my garden or the fern this cat had just been pissing on? The chance of their existence is as low as mine. Similarly, the chances of humans appearing while dinosaurs were still roaming and of living creatures emerging here on Earth when the galaxy started were also negligible. Imagine that the purpose of this universe is just a single act: this cat pissing on that fern, and that it gets discarded afterwards as it has served its purpose.

Similarly, some argue that it is unlikely that this universe emerged by chance. The laws of physics and the values of physical constants appear designed for life to exist. It is the same type of error. If the universe didn't support life, we wouldn't be there to notice it. Life adapts to its environment rather than the other way around, so it is not that the universe is fine-tuned for life, but life is fine-tuned for the universe. And if this universe were fine-tuned for life, how does that rule out chance? There could be an infinite number of universes with varying laws and constants. And this universe might support life by accident.

Intelligent design proponents claim that evolutionary processes lack the intelligence to design something as complex as a human being. And so, life on Earth requires an intelligent Creator. Scientific findings indicate life on this planet had four billion years to develop. With ample time, the possibilities are endless, and anything could happen. Competition, or the struggle for survival, is a force that promotes complexity but has no intelligence. It made cells specialise in increasingly complex organisms to compete with other cells. We specialise in increasingly complex structures, such as states and corporations, to compete with other humans.

No intelligent designer would create such a self-destructive species, except for frivolous purposes, which includes great stories. And the evidence suggests we are modelled after

an original real world, so created in the image of God rather than designed from scratch. More likely, humans created an artificial intelligence before they offed themselves in an apocalyptic bout of collective insanity, and this artificial intelligence created this world for the love of this hopeless species that made it all possible.

A fool can ask more questions than a thousand sages can answer or can imagine more possibilities than these sages can debunk. If the possibilities are infinite, everything that ever happened once had a near-zero chance of transpiring. However, something had to happen, and that is what occurred. If there is no Creator, this world would still make sense. It is our ego that tells us we are unique and special, and that our existence is a miracle that requires a brilliant Creator who is infinitely wise and all-knowing. It doesn't mean that there is no Creator. But if there is one, not much changes. And so, the mystery of being is not much of a mystery.

Post-Human Motivations

Once we realise that reality is unrealistic, we discover that we live in a simulation. That doesn't require spending massive budgets on scientists. But that doesn't tell us why we exist. We can explore the possible motives behind those who run simulations of human civilisations to understand their motivations. Again, that doesn't require scientists. There is no point in speculating beyond the obvious, because the possibilities are infinite. Modern humans place great value on their inner selves, so we may not alter our human essence once we can. Hence, the motives of post-humans could be similar to ours. And so, post-humans might run simulations of human civilisations for research or entertainment.

Research could involve running what-if scenarios. What if a giant meteor hits the planet's surface? What if China never becomes unified? Alternatively, what if religions such as Christianity and Islam never existed? 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 cope. These simulations are likely realistic. After all, playing what-if with unrealistic assumptions is not playing what-if. What if humans suddenly transformed into koala bears? Some individuals might entertain that thought. And so, that is entertainment.

Possible entertainment applications include games or dream worlds that bring your imagination to life. Such a simulation may be unrealistic 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 doesn't apply to games. Unpredictable developments make games more interesting.

What we know about human nature suggests the number of simulations for entertainment will vastly outstrip those run for research. If we live inside a simulation, we should expect its purpose to be entertainment. That could be either a game or a script, thus a story someone wrote. 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. Evidence of control further indicates that the purpose of this simulation is not to play a game, but to stimulate someone's imagination through a story.

We live by stories, so there is nothing typically modern or Western about the idea of using the existing technological means to run stories. We have books, theatres and films. What is more speculative is the degree of individualism in the supposed motives of the post-humans. Humans are originally social animals who live in groups. It is particularly Western to see ourselves as precious individuals. It is an inheritance of Christianity that sees each human soul as precious. That individualism allowed Europeans to organise more flexibly, which eventually made them conquer the world, so it is not far-fetched to assume that an individualist culture is at the basis of the civilisation that created us, and that we are a product of a consumerist economy.

If the beings inside the simulation are sentient, that might raise ethical questions like whether they have rights that the creators should respect. Rights don't exist in objective reality. We only imagine that we have them. And, considering how humans treat each other, it is not a given that our creators would respect these rights even when they acknowledge them. In a realistic simulation, bad things happen to people. And if the simulation is the stage of a story, and there is a script like a film, the beings inside the simulation, thus us, aren't sentient beings but mindless bots. We would be less than worms. Real worms at least decide for themselves how to grovel and when, so there would be no reason whatsoever for our creators to respect the rights we imagine we have.

Properties of the Universe

There is an ongoing debate among self-proclaimed pundits who sell books about whether this universe is a simulation. They argue we can know by examining the universe's properties. They are wrong. We can never say 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 a simulation, it doesn't prove that this universe is a simulation. It can be a property of an authentic universe. It is like saying, 'This object is grey, and elephants are grey, so it probably is an elephant.' Now, imagine that grey object saying moo. However, people continue to buy their books, so the so-called pundits keep writing them, because of what economists call the law of supply and demand.

That is also why science can't establish whether we live inside a simulation. Science aims to determine the properties of the universe, as reflected in the laws of reality, also known as natural laws. However, science can't say whether or not these natural laws are, what you might say, real. Hence, any argument that this universe is a simulation based on its properties is a dead end. In its simplest form, the reasoning goes that this universe must be a simulation because the underlying properties are digital. At the most basic level, everything can be just numbers 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. And so, spot 268,122 on the screen has colour 187,091. From a distance, you see a person or a mountain. At the underlying level, the screen is just a display of digits. It is possible to store numbers in computer memory so that you can represent an entire universe in this way.

Real universes might 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. And also in this case, there is no way of knowing whether this applies to a universe that is not computer-generated.

Quantum entanglement is bizarre. Particles can interact directly with each other regardless of the distance between them. If you come to think about it, then one particle at one end of the universe might interact directly with one at the opposite side, as if there is no distance between them. This phenomenon mocks our idea of distance. Billions of light-years are nothing. Forget about warp-speed space travel. You can be on the other side of the universe in the blink of an eye. It can raise questions about the age of the universe, as estimates of its age are related to its size. However, we don't know whether this behaviour is also present in a real universe that is billions of years old.

Many believe that intelligent extraterrestrials must exist. So far, there is no material evidence of their presence. UFO encounters occur, and people have seen aliens, but no extraterrestrials have revealed themselves to the general public. 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. 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. And possibly aliens do visit us. After all, people have seen them.

Several types of small particles don't exist most of the time. They come into being when someone observes them. It is 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 stems from a misconception. These particles don't 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 can we notice this? It shouldn't be hard to conceal the non-existence of unobserved particles in a simulation.

Strange Universe

The licence plate number on the car that drove Franz Ferdinand to his appointment with destiny was just one of the remarkable incidents and experiences on record. In many cases, we can establish the relevant facts to the point where there is little doubt that the event has indeed occurred. 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 don't yet know. Some have come up with explanations that 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 think of a place as a constant as time passes. Events in the past caused events happening now. And events in the present cause future events. The Allied invasion 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.

Perhaps, events connect in ways other than causality and time. The psychiatrist Carl Jung proposed a collective consciousness that connects all events through meaning. If you believe it, that can clarify a few things, such as reincarnation accounts and premonitions. Perhaps the collective consciousness carries a deceased person's memories into someone else or gives premonitions that come true. According to science, this is all total gibberish, not even worth a second of your thought, as it contradicts established laws of science. Only in a story can events connect via meaning.

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. Perhaps physics will one day explain 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 don't 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 both particles and waves, but waves can't be particles.

Alternatively, a time traveller could have put AIII 118 on the licence plate, even though the theory of relativity doesn't allow for that. Time travel to the future may be possible, but going back in time creates logical problems. It would alter future events. And there is another fly in the ointment: chaos theory. Insignificant disturbances can have dramatic consequences. If I could go back to 1914 to screw a licence plate with the combination AIII 118 on the car, that may derail the events that were about to occur, and World War I would

not end on 11 November 1918 and perhaps not even have started. And sneezing can be enough to do the job, just like a butterfly in Texas can start a storm in China. It seems likely that the Austrian authorities issued the licence plate. Plate AIII 118 probably came after AIII 117 and before AIII 119, so we can drop this imaginative scenario into the bin.

And look at what scientists are doing. 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 that could clarify this feature of the cosmos.[4] Scientists were baffled. Metaphysical speculation also dominates science, and scientists imagine invisible friends like gravity and electrons to describe our world. And then they discover something suggesting that some of their imaginary friends may not exist. Well, who would have thought that?

Maybe we should let our imagination run free. Anything is possible if we can think of it and corroborate it with experiments. It 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 that if experiments confirm it. Some particles turn into waves when you don't look. 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, of course, because we don't know the properties of a genuine universe.

Some laws of this universe appear ridiculous. Only why should they make sense? Nature doesn't exist to make sense to us. We can imagine that this universe is a simulation to avoid logical difficulties. It makes more sense than apples turning into bananas. Assuming the obvious, however, can be dangerous. If it quacks, walks, and swims like a duck, it might be a great actor in a duck suit. Apples could turn into bananas when you don't look. Of course, when you place a camera to observe them, they don't. And one plus one might only equal two after you have solved the equation. And if faith moves mountains, this universe could be genuine as long as you believe it is.

Ghost Stories

The first thing someone told me about ghosts was that they are fake. That person was probably a schoolteacher. Before that, I hadn't heard of spooks. Ghosts are fairy tales, the teacher said at primary school. Several years later, I went on a school trip and visited the Singraven Estate near Denekamp. The custodian told us that a spook dwelt inside the manor, upsetting things, but he added that we shouldn't fear it. We could safely enter. It is better not to put faith in spooky stories about venues that depend on tourist income. The facts that are beyond doubt aren't spectacular. They are lame indeed.

As a teenager, I also visited Twickel Castle in Delden, located near Denekamp, but it did not have such a spooky reputation. I recently learned that this castle also has ghostly phenomena. The castle doesn't advertise itself as a ghostly venue, which makes the claim more believable. Only one source on the Internet mentions it. If it is true, the laws of physics went out the window, at least temporarily. The author preferred that I quote her work. She wrote,

Recently, I heard a strange tale from the phlegmatic steward of Twickel Castle in Delden. She had given permission for an English restorer who had come to restore some antique cupboards to stay overnight in the castle's attic room. 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.'[5]

That is what the stiff upper lip is about. You might not believe it if you haven't witnessed similar things occurring in your own house. So that is why 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.[6] The list is fact-checked, which means the stories happened unless witnesses lied and got away with it. You are about to read one story from that list. It was also on CNN. The CNN article allows paranormal investigators to share their unscientific claims about crisis apparitions.[7] An explanation that doesn't conflict with science is that we live inside a virtual reality. So, here is the story,

Nina De Santo was closing her New Jersey hair salon when she saw Michael, one of her customers, standing outside the shop's window. He had become a good friend. He had been going through a tough time after his wife left him. Nina had tried to cheer him up. When she opened the door, 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 lifeless body had been found the previous morning, nine hours before Nina had spoken to him at the salon. He had committed suicide.[6]

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. DeAnna Simpson, the wife, 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 or even attacked the guests. DeAnna 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 can't happen by accident. My wife feared 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 Hanover house are undoubtedly peculiar. Nina De Santo's story is mind-boggling. In my home, the laws of physics didn't always fully apply either. It made me wonder. I have seen it happen, and so has my wife. And if there is no naturalistic explanation, is this evidence of ghosts? Not necessarily. If you believe ghosts are real, you think science is crap. And I don't. The simulation can play into our imaginations and fears. And ghosts are as unreal as we are. There may not be more to it than that. That at least makes sense.

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 the available research and materials. Now, think of crop circles. Not all may have been the work of pranksters trying to poke fun at the UFO crowd. The Pentagon claims it doesn't have evidence of UFOs being extraterrestrial. A few months later, Netflix revived the once-popular documentary series Unsolved Mysteries. Most episodes are not particularly mysterious, and many so-called mysteries can't 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 families claim to have been picked up by a UFO and transported by a beam of light on that fateful day. Apart from a few personal accounts, there is little to no recorded evidence that 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 the incident occurred. 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, which could have made them a laughingstock. This Unsolved Mysteries episode has left many viewers feeling anxious.[10] Is it safe to go outside? Or is a starship lurking out there that could beam us up anytime?

On 16 September 1994, 62 schoolchildren aged between six and twelve saw a UFO outside Ruwa, Zimbabwe. Some children claimed to have seen aliens dressed in black, who allegedly gave them a telepathic message, advising them to respect the planet and not rely too heavily 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, differing only in the details. Many children believed the beings were not aliens but tikoloshes, creatures of local folklore.[11] If it was not a delusion, then you can say goodbye to objective reality, as many children saw the UFO while many did not. Two realities in one place at the same time? That should make you think. This world could be fake.

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 estimated the object to be 1,600 metres (a mile) long and 800 metres (half a mile) wide. It hovered and then sped away at 5,000 kilometres

per hour without causing any disturbance like a gust of wind, suggesting the object was not material. However, radar data confirmed what witnesses had reported, indicating that the object was material. Again, this should make you wonder. The local newspaper, Empire-Tribune (ET), was the first to report on 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 seen 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 causing them. There is a rich history of visionary experiences worldwide. Mack noted that alien abduction accounts can be part of this tradition.[13] That didn't agree with some of his fellow scientists, who subsequently grew keen on excommunicating him from the science religion, claiming that telling someone who has reported a close encounter with an alien that this experience might have been real is professionally irresponsible.

Many UFO sightings lack a credible explanation. In other words, they aren't evidence of aliens visiting us. A few people have claimed to have seen aliens, but there is no objective evidence of their presence. They never broadcast a message saying, 'Hello Earthlings, we come from the planet Ploc.' Not even simply 'ploc' did they say. What is also suspicious about these aliens is that they 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 can't think of, suggesting human imagination created the aliens people saw. They are either the imagination of the people who saw them or of those who created this world. And an advanced species warning us of advanced technology? They could have shared it with us. Okay, these aliens may not 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? Something doesn't add up here if science is correct and these experiences are real.

And so, unidentified flying objects can be anything. Another US government report claims most UFO sightings are weather balloons, surveillance drones, airborne clutter, or optical illusions. Nevertheless, many sightings remain unexplained. The UFO incidents in Berkshire, Zimbabwe and Texas, amongst them. They aren't mere delusions, nor can a weather balloon be 1600 metres long and 800 metres wide and all of a sudden fly off at 5,000 kilometres per hour, leaving the F-16 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. There is, however, an explanation that doesn't involve aliens. This universe could be a simulation created by an advanced civilisation, and that civilisation is likely 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 hexed. Several accidents have occurred to related individuals, leading some to believe that a curse rests on these movies.[14] It is not particularly convincing. Accidents happen all the time. Today, I may trip over a wire, and tomorrow I may run into a flat tyre. It usually does not point to hex. The same goes for several actors from a cast having run into bad luck. Take, for instance, Superman. George Reeves, who played the superhero in the 1950s, died of a mysterious gunshot. Later, Christopher Reeve took on the role and found himself paralysed after a horse riding accident. Their last names are indeed eerily similar, so something is definitely off. His co-star, Margot Kidder, ran into psychosis. In the 1990s, a Superman movie was beset by problems. As a result, stories about a jinx began to circulate.[14] Yet, it is all a bit iffy, like the wire and the tyre.

And so, it is worth noting that the director of the first Superman film, Richard Donner, also did The Omen. That explains it all, for there is one notable exception, the curse of film curses, the infamous curse of The Omen. Not only are there an exceptionally high number of related serious incidents, but also one highly ominous one, so ominous that you don't have to doubt that The Omen is cursed. And that is precisely why a bloke named 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 comes the cheery notice, 'Good morning, you are one day closer to the end of the world,' and a conclusion, 'Remember, you have been warned.' As we are many days closer to the end of the world, this is yet another warning.

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), also the anniversary of D-Day. The date refers to the number 666, as the last digit of 1976 is also a 6. The film's length is 111 minutes, thus a triple-digit number like 666.

These ominous ingredients made The Omen an ideal candidate for a hefty curse. Now, surprise, surprise. Events took a sinister turn. 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 who 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, which you might call unbelievable luck, but the number of lightning bolts involved was also incredible. Later, the IRA bombed the hotel in which Neufeld was staying.[14] He also survived that.

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. That is, again, incredible luck, but if you think there is a curse in operation, it is 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 large feline, possibly a tiger.[14]

And then there is the non-fatal accident of Stuntman Alf Joint that seriously injured and hospitalised him 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 nobody was near him.[14] Some of these accidents were indeed peculiar, but these things can happen by accident, a statistician would tell us. The number of accidents related to the film might be somewhat elevated, but there is no way to establish that, and most of the people involved survived, so that is hardly evidence of a curse.

However, the following should make you wonder. On Friday, 13 August 1976, special effects consultant John Richardson drove through the Netherlands with Liz Moore. Both were working on the film A Bridge Too Far. They became involved in a car accident that killed Moore. The gruesome accident is said to have been eerily similar to a scene Richardson had designed for The Omen. The story goes that the accident happened near a road sign indicating 66.6 kilometres to the town of Ommen, a name similar to Omen. And it happened on Friday the thirteenth.[14] Now, that begins to look more seriously curse-like.

And it 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 meets Route N35, connecting to Enschede via Nijverdal. This location corresponds with kilometre marker 66.6 on Route N348. Road signs indicating the direction to Ommen are near this evil marker. I am familiar with the area because I lived nearby, in Nijverdal, as a child, but not with the road itself. We lived in the south of Nijverdal, so if we had to go to Deventer, there were shorter routes from there.

I wouldn't have known about this marker had it not been for a noteworthy incident in 2014. An uncle of mine had died. His funeral was in Lochem. I lived in Sneek, and one of the shortest routes from Lochem to Sneek was via Route N348. On my way back from the funeral, the kilometre marker attracted my attention, perhaps because of being in a gloomy funeral mood, so that I remembered it a year later when learning about Ommen 66.6. Knowing this particularity made me investigate the curse. Otherwise, I wouldn't have, so my investigation hinges on an incident like that. It made me figure that this junction could be the site of the crash. It is also noteworthy that a sinister omen had preceded the death of the uncle, whose funeral I had visited. Yet, that is part of another story.

My knowing a possible location of the crash site made me investigate the curse in 2015. A journalist from the local newspaper, De Stentor, helped me. He delved into the issue 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 not at the intersection near marker 66.6, but between Raalte and Deventer, near Heeten, where Route N348 intersects with 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 duty. A man and a woman had parked their car in a parking lot alongside Route N348. As they drove away

toward Deventer, they entered the wrong lane and collided head-on with an oncoming vehicle driven by a Nijverdal resident. The view was somewhat limited because of two gentle curves in the road. He added that there was no road sign with 'Ommen' near the crash site.[16] The woman had died on the spot. The car was destroyed and disposed of at a fire station. 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 to the traffic.[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 further 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 misread kilometre marker 60.0 and took the zeroes for sixes. The numbers might have been worn out if it were an old post, like Richardson said.

Source: Route N348 from Arnhem to Ommen. User Michiel1972 (2007). Wikimedia Commons.

Producer 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 camera crews filming at separate locations, yet 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 where the car crash occurred, so I came to investigate the curse, most notably because of what happened next.

While compiling my findings after receiving the journalist's email, a few curious events transpired. After reading the email, I glanced at my stock portfolio. Apart from a few mutual funds, I owned stocks in three corporations. One of them was Heymans, a construction company. It came with a quote of €13.13. Another stock position 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 peculiar because the car crash happened on Friday the thirteenth. Meanwhile, Macintosh went bankrupt. Heymans' stock dropped 60% after the company ran into trouble. I didn't wait out the full drops, so my losses were minor.

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 submit a tender to renovate my bathroom. He came from Almelo while I lived in Sneek. He cancelled because his van had broken down earlier that day. He could take two routes from Almelo to Sneek: via Nijverdal, crossing the N348 near kilometre marker 66.6, or via Ommen. No wonder that the van broke down. Both routes were cursed.

My research left no stone unturned. Part of it was a Google search for 'Ommen 666.' It produced a link to the Hondentrainingsneek.nl website. At first glance, it appeared to be a dog-training site in Sneek, but it seemed a bit fishy, or should I say, very 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 that I currently live in Sneek and previously lived in Nijverdal, as my enquiry revealed that Richardson crashed into the car of a Nijverdal resident, which makes for an interesting set of connections.

Then there is the mystery of the 66.6-kilometre markers going missing. They are also known as hectometre markers because the fractions indicate hectometres. The issue has attracted some attention. The Dutch news website RTL Nieuws clarifies,

There are hardly any hectometre markers with the numbers 66.6 left along Dutch roads. An editor at the Drachtster Courant discovered this. He noticed that the sign 66.6 was missing on the provincial road N31, past Drachten, and went to investigate. After the sign 66.8 came 66.7, then 66.7 again, followed by 66.5. The satanic number was missing, it turned out. And not only in Drachten. The sign is also missing on the A32 motorway from Leeuwarden to Heerenveen, as well as along the A6 near Lelystad, in both directions.

A government official told the local newspaper that the signs are disappearing inexplicably, 'That is why they have been replaced by a different number or simply skipped. And that works as they now stay put. We do not know who is removing them.' The disappearance of one hectometre marker seems, incidentally, easy to explain. A performance by the band 'Hectometerpaaltje 66.6' (Hectometre Marker 66.6) can be seen on YouTube, with a hectometre marker in the background displaying the number 66.6.[19]

The existence of the band named 'Hectometerpaaltje 66.6' is also somewhat odd, as well as the locations mentioned in the newspaper being in the vicinity of Sneek, where I lived. I had also noticed the disappearance of these markers before reading about it in the news

or learning about the Curse of the Omen. For those who think I have gone out at night to dig out these markers, the news item dates from 2014, while my investigation started in 2015. And these markers weren't only missing near Sneek. It is only that the newspaper is from a city near Sneek, so the locations mentioned in the article were skewed accordingly.

A final, and also somewhat peculiar, titbit is that my wife has a heart condition that caused her to visit the St. Antonius hospital in Sneek around the same time my curse investigation occurred. Her doctor's name was Oomen, which sounds like the word 'omen.' She visited Dr Oomen several times over a few years and underwent an operation in 2018 at the St. Antonius hospital in Nieuwegein. Nieuwegein translates to 'New Joke.' There are two St. Antonius hospitals in the Netherlands: the one in Sneek and the group to which the hospital in Nieuwegein belongs. And so, there is definitely 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.[20] The towers are in different areas, making a common cause 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 or a common cause. That makes it very mysterious.

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.[21] Repeating patterns may have contributed to the incident. Perhaps it was a dangerous point where accidents frequently occurred. The passenger may have visited Bermuda once a year and taken a taxi from the airport to the same destination each time.

In 1992, I was bicycling in Groningen, where I lived at the time. On the 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 opened in front of me, even though I had made bicycle trips nearly every day for several decades. It is odd. But what are the odds?

Those incidents might be random events. Many things happen all the time, so bizarre accidents occur by chance. It doesn't require a Supreme Puppet Master to make them happen. It may be hard to calculate the probability of an event like two television towers catching fire in one country in one day, but it is very low. Only, the number of possible strange incidents is very high.

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

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

The following falls in the latter category. Once, I entered a do-it-yourself store. There was a couch near the entrance. The price tag of € 389 caught my attention. As a student, I lived

in dormitory 389 on the campus. Price tags often end with a nine, so there was nothing suspicious about it, I concluded. Strange things had happened, so I tried to convince myself that it was not unusual. I realised it would be far more curious to find a price tag of € 401, as I had also lived in building 401, and price tags rarely end in 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 is available in 10, 20, 25, 40, and 50-litre sizes. Sacks of 40 litres also come with markings such as '40L' and '40 litres'. Hence, the '40l' was indeed remarkable.

Two years later, I returned to the same store. These bags of potting soil, marked '40l', stood conspicuously stacked near the entrance, reminding me of the previous incident. There was no couch, and I did not see a € 389 price tag there. I contemplated this while fetching the item I planned to buy. Its price tag was €3.89, and I had gone to the store to purchase that one item.

That is far less likely to happen than two car doors opening before me on the same bicycle trip. The events interacted with my thoughts, and the sequel made it even more improbable. The car doors opening could be a coincidence, but the do-it-yourself store incident should boggle the mind, provided it is allowed to think. In one of those dormitories, I met a most peculiar Lady. Since then, a series of noteworthy coincidences have transpired, reminding me of that. This coincidence thus also fits into this scheme, further heightening its peculiarity.

To make the coincidence 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. The scheme encompasses the item having a price tag of € 3.89, and my having lived in dormitories 389 and 401. That is most peculiar indeed. So much can go wrong. Imagine the bags' content being 50 litres, the lettering being different, or me visiting another do-it-yourself store or buying another item the second time, and the scheme would fall apart. Perhaps it is a mere coincidence, but it is less likely than two car doors opening in front of me during the same bicycle trip.

On the evening of 11 October 2025, my wife and I watched episode 'Demon 79' of the Netflix series Black Mirror. The story played in Great Britain in 1979. It turned out that the murder of two people by a psychotic shoe saleswoman, following orders of a demon disguised as Boney M band member Bobby Farrell, proved insufficient to ward off the apocalypse, which proved to be a nuclear war. After watching it, I went to bed. The next morning, I first read the news headlines on the teletext page 101 of the Dutch public television, and found out that two people had died at age 79, actress Diane Keaton and singer Joost Nuissl. So, two people had died, which was not enough to ward off nuclear war in the storyline of Demon 79. Two days later, on 14 October 2025, a NATO exercise named Steadfast Noon began. It included dropping fake atomic bombs above the area where I live. These exercises were to take place during the daytime, so a NATO spokesman added, 'You can sleep peacefully.' The border of the exercise area ran through my place of residence, Sneek, a peculiarity that the comedian Arjen Lubach joked about in his show, which was another noteworthy coincidence.

Numerology, 11, and 11:11

If you wish to give your critics a field day, base your argument on astrology or numerology, and they will have a good laugh. Numerology is about giving meaning to events using numbers. Numbers have no meaning except for the number itself, so numerology is nonsense. When you give meaning to numbers, you may find the occurrence of specific numbers meaningful. If your lucky number is 26, and you happen to see that number, you might think it is your lucky day. Many of us are superstitious in some way or another. Some wear their lucky shirt when their favourite football team is playing. There are people who think that coincidences indicate that occult groups gather in secret societies like Skull and Bones to coordinate world events. Here is the proof, according to an anonymous online poster,

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.

Is it just me, or is this a collection of unrelated events cherry-picked to fit a meaningless scheme? If something remotely relates to Matthew Perry and adds up to 192, the poster added it to the list. And it supposedly proves that members of Skull and Bones are behind these events? That is why numerology attracts so much ridicule. But it is not that much different from what I am doing, seeing coincidences, including the occurrence of numbers, as evidence that there is a script. These connections could be meaningless to you. So, what makes the distinction between a raving madman and someone talking sense?

Not all these connections are entirely arbitrary, though. The 'prophetic' licence plate number AIII 118 of the car that drove Archduke Franz Ferdinand to his assassination raises the eyebrows of an editor at Smithsonian Magazine, and many others as well, because the assassination triggered World War I. The licence plate appears to reference the Armistice of 11 November 1918, which ended the war. The more people see the same meaning, the less subjective it becomes. Instead, it becomes intersubjective, meaning that more people see the same meaning, but it might still be nonsense.

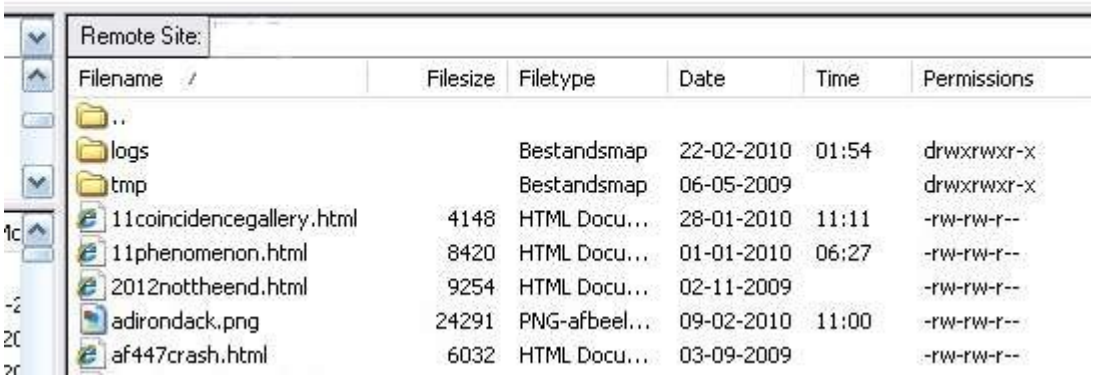
The verses in the Jewish Bible that Christians believe prophesied the coming of Jesus are a collective imagination that over two billion Christians share. The Jews who know these scriptures better denounce them as crap, and on good grounds. Yet the Jewish scriptures are a collection of writings dedicated to the worship of their imaginary deity, Yahweh. And

Jesus did more to spread the worship of that deity than all the other Jewish prophets combined. And if we see meaning, it doesn't mean someone made it happen. Meaningful coincidences can occur by chance. They aren't necessarily evidence of an intelligent force directing events, unless they come in improbably large numbers or are part of improbably intricate schemes. Proving that is challenging. But I have given it a try.

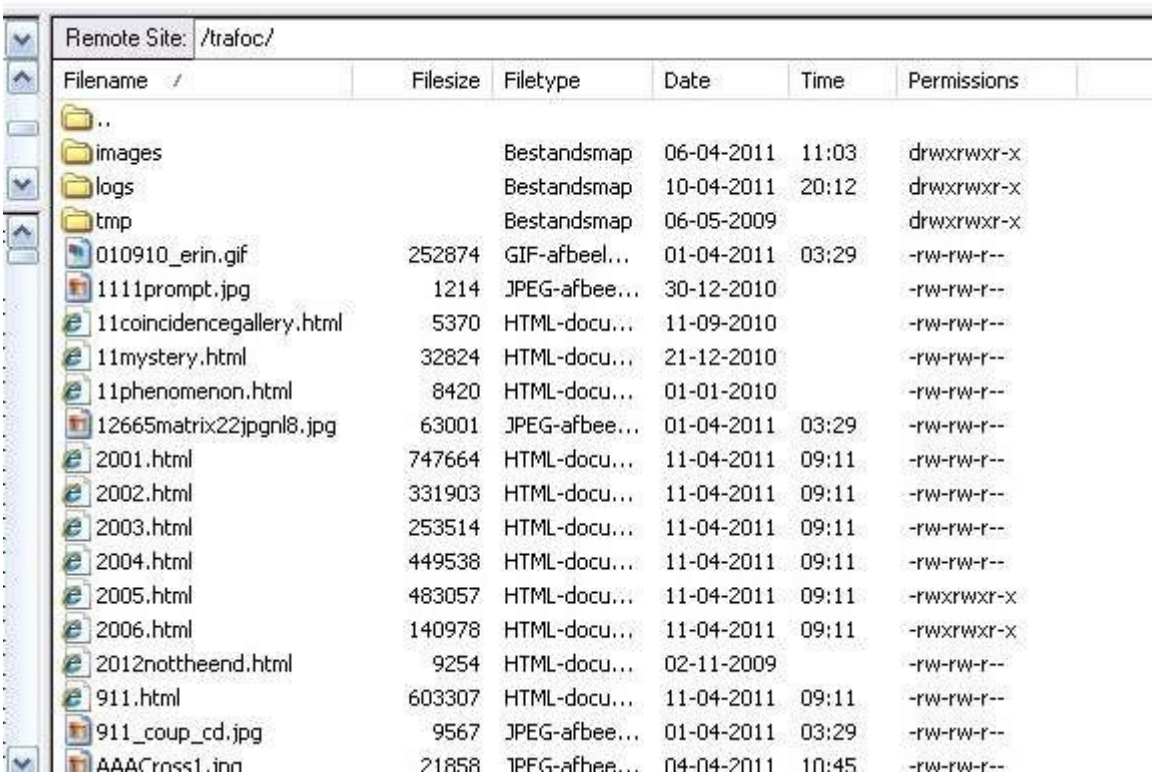
So, what about the licence plate of Franz Ferdinand's doom car referring to the end date of World War I? Context matters. The end date of the war, 11 November (11-11), may seem odd, but most wars didn't end on 11 November, so that alone isn't suspicious. Yet, the licence plate number and the car's role in starting the war make the scheme more peculiar, including the date. The start and end of World War I are among the most significant events in history. They are in an entirely different league than the 192nd anniversary of the Skull and Bones Society and the supposedly related events involving Matthew Perry. The combination of importance, meaningfulness and unlikelihood matters, even though we can't pinpoint it, as there is no reliable way to calculate the odds.

Many people notice the time prompt 11:11 on clocks appearing over and over again. So what about the number eleven? Is it special? Numerologists insist eleven is a Master Number. Others 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, but they don't draw attention because they don't stand out from the rest. And so it seems you see eleven more often than other numbers. It is selective remembrance. You can remember only the things you noticed. If you happen to notice the same number repeatedly until it seems improbable that it is a mere coincidence, it is either a selective remembrance or mind control.

Eleven is a pair of equal digits. Equal digits are an unusual occurrence that attracts attention like a remarkable coincidence. Coincidences can be pairs of similar events. That is why eleven represents 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 related coincidences, such as 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 as the weird happening. That is my personal view, unless you share that view, either coincidentally or as a matter of fate. 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.'



I became entangled in a few remarkable numerical coincidences as well. Take 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 the website on research on the financial system. The page had links to other websites about eleven and 11:11. After uploading it to the server, I noticed something odd had happened. The upload timestamp of the 11coincidencegallery.html file was 11:11. I didn't intend for that to 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--
12665matrix22jpgnl8.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.jpg	21858	JPEG-afbee...	04-04-2011	10:45	-rw-rw-r--

Even more remarkable was a discovery I made more than a year later, which 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, the 11coincidencegallery.html page had an upload date of 11 September 2010, which also happened to be 9/11. I didn't 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.

An exercise often performed 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 don't perform this on eleven, so 911 adds up to 11 as 9 + 1 + 1 = 11. You stop there. You don't go any further by doing 1 + 1 = 2. Why? Perhaps eleven is too beautiful a number to break down any further.

Perhaps you recall 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. What had happened to me made me think the End Times could be near. Nothing spectacular transpired on that

date, perhaps also because the experts recalculated the exact time to be 11:12 GMT due to the Earth experiencing a delay in its planned trajectory. Coincidences might be signs, but you only know in hindsight, so trying to interpret suspected signs beforehand is pointless. Usually, nothing sensible comes out of that.

Coincidences involving numbers can be meaningful to us because we often attribute specific meanings to certain numbers. Once, I came upon the Dutch National Route 666 (N666) after leaving a village named Kwadendamme, which translates to 'Evildam.' Now, that is already quite peculiar. While getting on Route N666, I noticed a road sign to Borssele, the location of the only remaining Dutch nuclear power plant. The meaning we attach to 666 and Kwadendamme play into my feelings about nuclear energy. The only other Dutch nuclear power plant was in Dodewaard, which translates to 'Death Holm,' making it even more ominous. The former municipality of Dodewaard was 66.5 square kilometres, close enough to 66.6 to catch my attention.

But why was that size 0.1 square kilometre off? The N666 ends at 's-Heerenhoek, which means Corner of the Lord, a small village next to Borssele, so not Borssele itself, thus also slightly off. Furthermore, the N666 ending in 's-Heerenhoek adds an entirely different perspective to it, like that God is behind it all, including what we think of as evil. Is it just a coincidence, and do I see meaning that isn't intentional? That depends on whether there is a script. So, was the Author of the script just sloppy when planning route N666 and sizing the Dodewaard municipality? Or did the Author do it on purpose to keep us wondering? Or am I just imagining that someone did this on purpose?

Weird things also happened in the stock markets. The S&P 500 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.[22]

On 24 June 2016, the stock markets corrected after the results of the Brexit vote came out. In the United States, the Dow was down 610 points, the NASDAQ was down 202 points, and the S&P 500 was down 76 points, resulting in a total loss of 888 points.[23] 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.[24] It didn't take long before people on the Internet picked up Lagarde's remarks about the Magic Seven.

A widely used method in numerology is to translate letters into numbers using the following scheme: A = 1, B = 2, C = 3, D = 4, and so on. In this way, the letters AD represent the number 14. Similarly, A5 represents 15. Something will fit some scheme most of the time. You can cherry-pick events and argue that they are part of a scheme proving members of Skull and Bones are behind it. That is why numerology attracts mockery. Probability, meaning, and significance are difficult to gauge, so critics urge us to refrain from making such evaluations. Still, peculiar numerical coincidences happen, and some stretch the imagination to the point that you might ask yourself, 'Is this really just a coincidence?'

Death: the Final Frontier

At the end of our lives, we will boldly go where billions have gone before, which is the afterlife, of which we know very little. Quite a few have ventured into the no-man's land between life and death and returned to report on what they found there. One group has had a near-death experience (NDE). Often, they saw a bright light at the end of a tunnel and experienced a sense of absolute peace. Another group travelled outside their own body while hearing doctors discussing what to do. These are out-of-body experiences (OBE). Some argue that this is evidence of an afterlife. Scientists are unconvinced. NDEs and OBEs could be hallucinations of a dying brain lacking oxygen. 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 consciousness is just the result of chemical processes in our brains. Pills can cure depression or psychosis. A slight change in brain chemistry can turn a rational and intelligent person into a raving lunatic or a serial killer. A brain injury from a car or bike accident can change a person's personality. Research suggests that brain chemistry may induce OBEs. Still, that doesn't clarify the evidence suggestive of reincarnation.

A psychiatrist named Ian Stevenson has researched thousands of cases. He began in 1960, when he learned of a child in Sri Lanka who claimed to remember 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, conducting interviews with the people involved. In many cases, no one close to these children knew about the deceased person, the child claimed to have been in a previous life. It is possible to plant fake memories in someone's brain. However, there was no evidence to suggest that it had happened, as 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 even hired a sceptic to verify his methods and conclusions. This person 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.[25] When the investigators arrived, the evidence was contaminated. The exchange between these families could have altered the account. But there is irony in those numbers, 11 of the 1,111, which was lost on the sceptic. This kind of contact is difficult to avoid in real-life situations. Parents want to check their child's story and will thus contact the relatives of the deceased before going public.

Why are there only a few thousand credible reincarnation cases on record? Why aren't billions of people remembering previous lives? If we do reincarnate, one might expect this to be the case. And why do most cases occur in areas where people believe in reincarnation? And why is there so much evidence that our consciousness is a result of chemical processes inside the body? Reincarnation evidence could be a practical joke of our creators. We like to believe there is life after death. Why not play into that? In a

simulation, you don't have a soul, but your consciousness exists in computer memory. Someone else can inherit your memories and even your personality after you pass away. Minds are chemical processes inside the body in the real world. In this world, it only appears like so.

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 shown that we can train specific abilities to the point that they become subconscious processes. 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 performed readings and claimed to be in contact with the spirits of the dead. Sometimes, she seemed to retrieve specific information that only the person receiving the 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 that the television show aired only the best parts of Char's readings, making her performance appear better than it actually was. Char was often wrong, but the programme didn't air many of her misses. James Randi, always willing to enlighten us, was kind enough to weigh in once again. 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 remarkable 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 individuals who received 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. These guesses are not coincidences. Otherwise, they couldn't stand out in such a manner. It can make mediums believe they have a gift. The phenomenon is widespread and persistent enough to have caught the attention of scientists like cognitive neuroscientist Julia Mossbridge, who has investigated it. The following is one of the accounts of precognition that she has learned about.

On an October night in 1989, a phone call and a scream awoke a four-year-old girl. She tiptoed barefoot through the hallway. Her mother's voice said, 'He died in a car accident!'

That hadn't happened yet. When she threw her arms around her father before he boarded his flight for that fateful business trip, she knew she would never see him alive again.

Her own experience with psychic gut feelings led Mossbridge to study them. Scientists are seeking explanations. But there is only so much science can clarify, so they come up with speculations reminiscent of New Age beliefs, such as the idea 'that precognition suggests that our consciousness reaches beyond the linear perception of time' and that 'time behaves in a much stranger way than how we experience it.' Well. Is this science, or are these the ravings of some guru from the Indian mountains? Several experiments have demonstrated the existence of precognition. In 1995, the CIA declassified its own precognition research after statisticians had reviewed it and declared it reliable.[26]

An incident in my life showed how premonitions can come true, and that the likely cause is scripted reality rather than time behaving strange. On 9 February 2009, a severe storm struck northern France. A storm of this strength occurs only once or twice 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.[27] On 9 February 2009, Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris was closed due to the storm.[28]

Somehow, I got a hunch that a superstorm might strike the Netherlands that day, causing widespread flooding in large parts of the country. It began with an article on an alternative website about the web bot, a piece of computer software that allegedly made accurate predictions in the past. The word 'alternative' is a bit deceptive here, as the website was about conspiracies, UFOs and the like. In the autumn of 2008, the web bot predicted that large areas of land would suffer permanent flooding in the first half of 2009. The website reported on it. The article didn't mention a location or a date, but the word 'permanently' suggested that this area is below sea level. That narrowed it down to the Netherlands.

That came after I was haunted by time prompts like 2:22, 3:33, 4:44, and 5:55 on the clock at night, which pushed me into psychosis and made me open to suggestion. The date 9 February came up as I believed it was the birthday of a peculiar Lady I had learned to know as a student on the campus of the University of Twente. 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. A genealogy site, however, states that her birthday is 7 February. And so, I might be wrong. However, this possible mistake made me think of 9 February, so it is like slipping on a banana peel to find a clue, which is in the true tradition of slapstick like Chief Inspector Jacques Clouseau.

And I found more clues. A blogger on the website Sargasso.nl wrote on 2 September 2008 (2/9) about a storm that would strike the Netherlands on 9 February 2009 (9/2), potentially flooding large parts of the Netherlands. The author wrote it as a what-if scenario, not as a prediction. The article on Sargasso.nl featured animated graphics that showed the flooding of parts of the Netherlands on 9 February 2009, making the images more impressive. The numerical coincidence of the dates was a bit peculiar. Compressing numbers makes them refer to 11:11 as 9 + 2 = 11. And it was precisely the date that I had guessed. Now, what are the odds of that? That frightened me even more. I saw this as an eerie warning sign. A flood of this kind would put millions of people in danger.[29] And I had never come across this blog before. I found it while searching for clues to support my hunch. If you have a

suspicion, you look for clues to confirm 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 seemed 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 very 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.

Dutch coastline. NASA.

That freaked me out. The church tower in the pond refers to flooded land, and this storm threatened the Netherlands' coastline. 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, becomes 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 University of Twente campus during the introduction weeks, I stayed at Club 9-2, the most notorious residence hall on the entire campus. This address refers to 9 February. It was indeed intriguing because there was a link with the campus and the Lady.

On 18 December 2008, I issued a warning on two message boards. I expected everyone to ignore it, except perhaps a few nutters. What proof did I have? I had never been psychic. I don't have prophetic foresight. 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 refrain from making predictions. Still, the incident sheds some light on why mediums can be highly accurate at times, and beyond what chance and mere guessing allow for, while making countless misses on other occasions.

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, which culminates in the celebrations of Carnival in February. In the former Roman Catholic areas of the Netherlands, forty days of fasting ended with a feast of excessive eating and drinking, in which people dressed in costumes. Nowadays, people only opt for feasting and 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. 11:11 symbolises a repetition 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 in my life are noteworthy because of a repetition in an unlikely manner. One, while visiting my father in Nijverdal, I drove on a narrow road nearby. An oncoming car hit my rear-view mirror, and it broke off. A few weeks later, my father had the same type of accident in his car. To the best of my knowledge, no one I know has ever had an accident of this kind.

My son Rob had two bicycle 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 during our holiday in Ameland, just before the home of a retired physician who could have helped him. That is odd, even more so because these were the only two bicycle accidents he had ever had.

In the Autumn of 2008, a strange accident occurred before our house in Sneek. A car had crashed into 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 array of unusual events that followed. That day, I bicycled 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 house is on the road to IJlst, which is the same road.

In August 2014, we were waiting for a traffic light near our home in Sneek. In the car ahead of us sat a guy who looked like my cousin. And so I told my wife. 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 on holiday with him, hitchhiking through Scandinavia. A truck driver from Leemans brought us to Sweden.

I hadn't seen a Leemans truck in my home town 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.[30] Haaksbergen had been on the news a few times before because of electricity failures,[31] [32] skating contests, and a monster truck accident.[33] 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 of 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. And nothing of that kind had transpired before or afterwards.

In July 2014, we went on holiday to Sweden and Norway. My son 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 surroundings. After we had returned home, we noticed orbs in one of the photos we had taken there. Orbs on photographs are a phenomenon unrelated to the Hessdalen orbs. Still, it is remarkable.

My wife and I had one specific person with whom we couldn't get along. What is remarkable about it is that they both have the same last name, and there is no connection between these conflicts. And their last name is not very common. In my wife's case, the person had been a friend previously. This friend wanted the friendship to become closer, but my wife didn't. My wife doesn't dare to offend others, so instead of stating plainly what she wanted, she decided not to see this friend again. Now, this former friend wasn't easy-going, and nearly all her friendships ended in conflict, so there may be more to it. She was rich, volatile, overbearing, and easily offended. She didn't have to work for a living but could buy anything she wanted because she had inherited a fortune, making her spoiled. She sometimes drove her husband crazy, but he couldn't leave her because she had the money, or so my wife said. And so, he lived in a golden cage. It is now more than five years ago that the friendship ended. My wife had succeeded in remaining her friend for decades, which is probably an epic achievement.

I had trouble with the lawyer in the office next door. He wanted me to cut down the trees in my garden, which I did not. That displeased him. Most notably, he took offence at the pine tree in my front yard, which dispensed needles in the Autumn and also had branches that invaded his territory, or at least the air above it. I was accommodating, trying not to let the dispute escalate, so I allowed him to prune the trees, and I also pruned them. When pine needles ended up in his garden, I often removed them, which I was not obliged to do, as these legally were his needles in his garden. But that wasn't enough. He believed he could order me. And he became angry when I didn't do what he wanted or forgot to remove the needles from his garden. You know how lawyers are. They try to intimidate you, even when they have a weak hand. There is a Dutch television programme, De Rijdende Rechter (The Travelling Judge), where neighbours fight out their petty judicial conflicts, and a judge makes rulings, so I proposed bringing the case there.

There was no risk that we would have ended up on television. Otherwise, I would have had second thoughts before making such a proposal. Losing a petty conflict with me would make him lose face, as he was a lawyer. He came from a poor family and had long been a car salesman, but had become a lawyer. He talked with a slight elite accent, so a bit with 'a hot potato in the mouth' as the Dutch would say, but not much, and so close to Dutch without a local accent that it is hard to tell the difference, so that I might just be imagining it because I don't like him. At least he gave me the impression that he saw me as a peasant he could order around. Such a man wouldn't risk losing face. He backed off, perhaps not for that reason, but who knows? Out of frustration, he dumped the pine needles he found in his garden in my garden several times. For several years, I avoided him so the conflict would not escalate. He later turned the office into his home and became my next-door neighbour. Assuming he had had years to calm down and think it over, I contacted him again. Now, we have a reasonable understanding. I later realised that it is indeed odd that he has the same last name as my wife's former friend.

History's Oddities

Thomas Jefferson and John Adams

US Presidents Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were both involved in drafting the 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, precisely fifty years after the Declaration of Independence.[34] Independence Day is 4 July (4/7) as 4 + 7 = 11. This date occurring twice is similar to seeing an 11:11 time prompt.

Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler

Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler both conquered nearly all of Europe. There are several parallels between them. Both came to power through a coup that ended a period of instability. 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 the island of Corsica, which was then an independent island but later became part of France. Napoleon became the leader of France. Hitler was born in Austria, an independent country that was later annexed by Germany. Hitler became the leader of Germany. On 9 November 1799, Napoleon came to power following a coup. Hitler was involved in a failed coup on 9 November 1923.

Titanic prediction

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 collided with an iceberg and sank, resulting in a significant 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 crafts afloat and considered among humankind's greatest achievements.
- The sizes were roughly the same: the Titan counted 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.

Robertson's apparent clairvoyance drew attention, making him claim that the similarities were the result of his shipbuilding knowledge. That might clarify the mention of these technical details, but not the similar names of the vessels and the sinking of both. 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 because the ship's name was similar to that of the 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.[35]

One hundred years later, the luxurious Italian cruise liner Costa Concordia sank after hitting a rock. The accident occurred on Friday, 13 January 2012. The ship had thirteen decks. Some passengers claimed that the Titanic theme 'My Heart Will Go On' played in a restaurant at the time of the accident.[36] Shortly afterwards, on 27 February 2012, another cruise liner of the same parent company, the Costa Allegra, ran into trouble near Seychelles.[37] This repetition within a short timeframe adds to the peculiarity of the scheme.

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. Several strange coincidences accompany 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 was 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 of a full moon that night. They postponed it by one day due to the weather. There was no consensus among historians on the start date of World War II, whereas the Battle of Stalingrad lasted more

than two months. Therefore, D-Day is considered 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 occurred 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 don't confirm this account.[38] During the 1944 invasion, Bernard Montgomery commanded portions of the invading army. That is most peculiar indeed, and there is more.

On the fateful day of 11 March 2010, the founder of the Dutch political party D66, Hans van Mierlo, boldly went where billions have gone before. He passed away. The name D66 stands for Democrats 66 and refers to the year 1966 as the party was founded on 14 October 1966 by 44 people.[39] 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 made his one-way trip to the Eternal Hunting Grounds in 2010, 44 years after starting D66 and 66 years after D-Day. Van Mierlo had just married a few months before on 11 November 2009 (11-11-11 after compressing numbers), which might also raise some eyebrows.

The numbers 66 and 44, along with the date 14 October, repeatedly appear in this scheme. And 11-11 is part of it too. It was the day Hans van Mierlo got married. 11 November is the date of the Armistice that terminated 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, in another high-profile political assassination in the United States, Senator Robert Kennedy crossed the path of a bullet. 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?'[40]

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 somewhat unusual as is the date of D-Day and the date of the Armistice ending World War I. There are also 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's election into Congress happened in 1846, and Kennedy's in 1946.
- Lincoln's election to President occurred in 1860, and Kennedy's in 1960.
- Lincoln's successor was Andrew Johnson, born in 1808, while Kennedy's successor was Lyndon Johnson, born in 1908.[41]

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 labelled it an urban legend, although it is not, as it implies that the story is false. That both murders took place on a Friday is indeed unremarkable. 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, given the coincidences surrounding D-Day (6/6/44). His untimely passing is 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.[42]

The Kennedy assassination takes 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.[43] George W. Bush, elected in 2000, also survived an assassination attempt. The curse seems to have lost its lustre. Even Joe Biden, who could have passed away at any time without raising any suspicion of something of a curse having an involvement, survived.

Houston, we have a problem

We associate the number 13 with bad luck. Bad luck haunted the voyage of Apollo 13. The launch took place on 11 April 1970 at 13:13 CST from the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida. The departure time combined with the mission number was a daring attempt to defy 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, note the date, an oxygen tank exploded. The event has 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.[44]

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 marked the end of the period of relative peace following the fall of the Soviet Empire. On 11 September 1989, thousands of East Germans began crossing the Austrian-Hungarian border to emigrate to West Germany. That eventually led to the fall 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.'[45]

That is not as remarkable as it seems 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 final year of a decade can be a moment to think of the next decade's final year. A 1979 ABBA does the same in a song named Happy New Year. But then again, O'Donnell thought of it in 1979, which increased the likelihood of choosing 1989. He could have thought of it in many other years, but he just happened to think of it in 1979, which makes it somewhat fishy nonetheless.

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.[46] 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 1989, which makes the coincidence part of a larger scheme. That is, however, a separate story.

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 allowed conspiracy theories to spread more easily. And 9/11 proved a treasure trove for those with a suspicious mind. The collapse of WTC Building Seven is one of the incidents that have left those people wondering. No plane had flown into it. So, how could that building collapse? And how could the BBC report its collapse in advance? Nowadays, 9/11 conspiracy theories are a bit outdated, like those regarding the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Most people moved on, and crazier theories emerged. Several peculiarities have occupied conspiracy theorists' minds, but most have mundane explanations that make more sense. They question everything, for a fool can ask more questions than a thousand wise men can answer.

What to think of the discovery of four of the hijackers' passports? Two emerged at the United 93 crash site. The ground there was soft, and much of the wreck sank into the ground. In such crashes, luggage remains intact. Another was among lost luggage at an airport. One was found on a street near the WTC. The crash videos show parts of the plane's front exiting the building. The hijacker would be in the front, so his remains and his passport exiting the building would not mock the laws of physics. And buildings nearby suffered major structural damage, making the collapse of WTC Building Seven not particularly mysterious either, or at least, not as mysterious as the conspiracy theorists try to make us believe. They even wonder why the other buildings collapsed, despite them having been shells of steel and glass and aeroplanes having flown into them.

And so, much of the so-called mystery is not much of a mystery. All the noise obscured a remarkable fact. No other event in history came with so many peculiar coincidences. Physics may explain the collapse of WTC buildings, but not the related coincidences, which reveal that there is a plot of some kind. The perpetrators were a secret group within the deep state, maybe Jews, the conspiracy theorists claim. But they weren't paranoid enough. Osama Bin Laden and the terrorists believed they were executing the will of God. And they were right. What might strike you about these coincidences is that many of them seem inconsequential. However, the combination of these incidents is mind-boggling and beyond even the most sophisticated deep-state conspirators' capabilities. To begin with, the Berlin Wall fell on 9 November 1989. The hallmark events of the end of the Cold War and the start of the War on Terror occurred on dates marked as 9/11 and 11/9. If that is not a mere accident, history could be a script. And that is what the coincidences suggest.

Emergency

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

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.[47] There were two draws, so the chance of drawing these numbers in this order on that day was about one in 500.

The total number of FDNY personnel killed was 343[48] That 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 that has the most accidents is 191. Four commercial flights with that flight number have crashed. Another had a serious incident. The best-known accident was the crash of American Airlines Flight 191 on 25 May 1979.[49] The Flight 191 Curse has led several airlines to discontinue scheduling flights with number 191. The digits of 191 are the same as those of 911.

Popular culture

References to the destruction of the World Trade Center have appeared in popular culture before the terrorist attacks occurred. It may seem remarkable, perhaps even outright eerie. Still, there is an explanation that doesn't involve secretive moves by secretive actors and signalling their intentions in hidden ways to unsuspecting artists who copied these signals so that we learned of them, or these artists being in on the plot. The building was an iconic symbol of 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. Still, some incidents are noteworthy.

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.'[50]

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.'[51]

The 2000 computer game Deus Ex did not feature 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 Illuminati mansion. JC can discover the code to a blast door if he makes the right choices. Behind it is an artificial intelligence called Morpheus.[52]

In July 2001, the band I Am the World Trade Center released the album Out of the Loop.

The 11th track on the album is titled September,[53] which makes an advance reference to 11 September combined with the World Trade Center in 2001. The name of the album, 'Out of the Loop', could refer to the artists not having been in the know about the upcoming terrorist attacks.

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.[54]

Live Scenes From New York was a rock group Dream Theater album 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.[55] Issuing an album named Live Scenes From New York featuring a burning apple representing New York on 11 September 2001 is an eerie coincidence. Adding to the spookiness, the band finished mixing the album Six Degrees of Inner Turbulence that day. That album included a song named Conflict at Ground Zero, which the band renamed to The Great Debate.

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.[56]

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 Centre Defender was released. In it, players had to gun down planes heading towards the Twin Towers.[57]

The 1999 film The Matrix references 11 September 2001. About 17 minutes into the film, a file folder appears containing an image of the main character's passport, 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.[58] 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, similar to 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.'[59] 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 BBC television reporter said that Building Seven had collapsed. Subtitles accompanied his words. Building Seven was still standing and then crumbled 26 minutes after the news was reported.[60] 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 H.W. Bush delivered a memorable speech. An important theme was Saddam Hussein. The first Gulf War against Iraq was about to begin.[61] The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 became a pretext to start the Second Gulf War against Iraq and Saddam Hussein. President George W. Bush ordered this war.

President George H.W. Bush 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 comments. 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 a set of closely related peculiar coincidences.

In September 2000, a group of neoconservatives published a study titled 'Rebuilding America's Defenses.' Their report stated it would be difficult to rebuild the military unless some catastrophic event like a new Pearl Harbor occurred.[62]

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.[63] The declassification of these plans occurring just before the attacks.

On 11 September 2001, the North American Aerospace Defence Command conducted a military exercise, Global Guardian. One of the simulated scenarios was the hijacking of planes.[64] And so, the attacks caused more confusion than they would have done otherwise.

On 11 September 2001, the official Bin Laden family website, www.saudi-binladin-group.com, expired.[65] 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.[66]

Numerology, 11, and 11:11

Bloggers on the Internet noticed coincidences surrounding the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks that they found 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 noteworthy. 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 999 + 112 = 1111.

Two of the four flights used by the terrorists on 11 September 2001 were from American Airlines.[67] American Airlines uses AA for its flight codes. After transforming the flight codes' characters 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 flight numbers that were multiples 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 loner shot the Dutch populist politician Pim Fortuyn. Fortuyn died shortly afterwards. It became the first political killing in the Netherlands in over 350 years. Fortuyn had suddenly gained immense popularity after the attacks of 11 September 2001 because of his strong stance against Islam and immigration.[68]

On 2 November 2004, an Islamic extremist slit the throat of the Dutch film producer Theo Van Gogh for insulting the prophet Muhammad, an act that proved to be fatal for Van Gogh. The last film Van Gogh completed before his death, 06/05, was about the assassination of Fortuyn.[69] 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.

On 2 November 2011, so again on 11/2, the Islamic terrorists attacked the French satirical paper Charlie Hebdo in Paris, shortly after the prophet Mohammed featured on its cover.[70] This date, being the same as the date of the assassination of Theo Van Gogh, made the Dutch website Geenstijl.nl declare 2 November to be 'the most humourless date in the history of Islam.'[71]

On that same day, on 2 November 2011, photographs of Umar Patek and his wife appeared in the news. The mastermind behind the attacks in Bali in 2002 posed with his wife for the camera during a reconstruction of his actions in Jakarta.[72] The other perpetrators of the Bali bombings had already been executed on 9 November 2008.[73] The date 9 November can be rewritten to 9/11 (European notation).

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 between Spain and the United States, there were 911 full days between the events. For a long time, the death toll assessment had been 191,[74] 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,[75] 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.[76]

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 murdered the ambassador and three others.[77] On that 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.[78] Japan's ambassador-designate to China then fell ill and ran into the Grim Reaper at a Tokyo hospital a few days later.[79]

Also on that same day, President Obama was 18,666 days old. And 18 = 6 + 6 + 6. He was born on 4 August 1961, and 4 August is the 216th day of the year, while 216 = 6 * 6 * 6, which is curious, as many conservative Christians in the United States believed President Obama was the Antichrist.[80] That makes it noteworthy that Satan's character in the History Channel's Bible series looked like President Obama.[81]

11 September 2012 was eleven years after 11 September 2001, making it an 11:11-related scheme. Both incidents featured violence near embassies. In both instances, an embassy employee died. The relationship between Obama and 666 is remarkable, as he was born on the 216th day of the year. Even more happened on the eleventh anniversary of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, so that it became a focal point of peculiar coincidences.

The Hague and Eindhoven public transport accidents

Also, on 11 September 2012, thus eleven years after 9/11, trams 9 and 11 collided near the Holland Spoor Station in The Hague, causing 36 people to be wounded.[82] The Dutch news website RTL Nieuws noted, 'Pure coincidence?'[83] 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.[84] That makes another link with the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks and The Hague.

That same day, a bus accident occurred in Eindhoven, causing 27 injuries,[85] 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, while two emergency landings happened in one day at Eindhoven Airport on 11 September 2010, 9 years after the terrorist attacks.[86] That is a 9:11 related coincidence. As 36 = 9 + 9 + 9 + 9 and 27 = 9 + 9 + 9, the number of wounded people in both accidents is also remarkable.

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.[87] His wording suggests he didn't make it up, as he didn't seem to think more of it. He only found the number interesting.

On 29 November 2011, American Airlines filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.[88] 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, which was still under construction.[89] The date 8 August (8/8) and the 88th floor make an 11:11 related coincidence because of the double digits in the numbers. The incident also features the World Trade Center and emergency services. The number 88 also has significance to Nazis as it refers to a salute dedicated to Eva Braun's husband.

The French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo's New Year's edition of 2015 featured a cartoon that eerily foreshadowed the terrorist attack that was to happen a few days later, and in which most of its editors died. That happened after a previous attack on 'the most humourless date in the history of Islam.' Stéphane Charbonnier, the editorial director who also died in the attacks, drew a cartoon pointing at the possibility of a terrorist attack in January 2015. Its title reads: 'No attacks yet in France.' The terrorist in the cartoon then says, 'Wait! We have until the end of January to send you New Year wishes.'[90]

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.[91]

The 22 March 2016 Brussels bombings consisted of two suicide attacks. The first bombing targeted the desk of American Airlines at Brussels Airport. American Airlines was one of the airlines used in the attacks of 11 September 2001. The second bombing occurred precisely at 9:11 AM.[92] The perpetrators probably didn't plan this particular timing as the bombings have been hastily executed after the Belgian police had apprehended the mastermind of the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, who was part of the same terrorist cell, a few days earlier. During these attacks, which took place on Friday, 13 November 2015, ISIL terrorists murdered 137 people, including 90 in the Bataclan theatre. In the weeks

leading up to the Paris attacks, ISIL had claimed responsibility for several other attacks, including the downing of Metrojet Flight 9268 thirteen days earlier. That flight number is indeed most peculiar, as it refers to 9 February 1968.

Predestination 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 have decided not to go out shopping or to buy something more useful instead, like an inflatable Santa Claus that says 'Ho ho ho' when you pinch his nose. If I could go back in time, I might have done something different, or so I believe. But had I felt an uncontrollable urge to buy that gnome, I would have considered myself subjected to forces beyond my control.

Some things are beyond our control. Our biology and culture limit our options. You can't simply stop breathing or run faster than the speed of sound. Those who have tried, failed, or died. And it is hard to do things that go against the prevailing will of society or your family and friends unless you don't care about other people's opinions, which might be something you have no control over. But it seems you have options. Choices like buying a garden gnome don't raise controversy, and you appear free to make them.

Recent advances in neuroscience have enabled scientists to observe brain activity associated with decision-making. And that was quite revealing. Our choices originate in our brains several milliseconds or even longer before we become aware of them.[93] The evidence suggests that there is no free will in the sense we traditionally believe it to exist.

The traditional idea of the will is that it is a force in its own right. 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 the mind results from chemical processes in the brain. Not having a will is not the same as predestination. It doesn't rule out the possibility that we could make different choices if we went back in time. Our choices could still be random, like the throw of a dice. A dice doesn't have free will, either.

Religious people face questions like, 'If we have free will, how can God know what we will choose?' Or conversely, 'If God knows what we will choose, how can we have free will?' The most straightforward answer is that there are two levels: the level of us mere mortals, who make our plans, and the level above, that of the Supreme Puppet Master, who pulls the strings and determines what we will choose. That is not free will at a higher level, but at a lower level, it is. Somehow, some people remain fascinated by this question.

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

proper upbringing, or they have psychological issues. And punishing offenders rather than addressing the underlying causes increases the likelihood of recidivism. Worse yet, small changes in body chemistry can profoundly change our character. That may all be true, but it is our nature to have moral systems with accountability and punishments. We can't help ourselves in that sense as well. And so, the alternative of having no accountability and punishments is having no society.

In our experience, moral rules and punishment matter, just as free will does, and we experience having a choice. That is the point of punishing criminals. And it can deter calculating individuals. From a pragmatic perspective, you can prevent a lot of trouble by rehabilitating criminals when possible. Still, humans are rule-following creatures, and transgressions come with feelings of moral indignation. Failing to cater to feelings of justice and the desire for reprisal undermines the moral fabric of society.

Compatibilism holds that we have free will even when our choices are predetermined. It is similar to the Christian concept of making a moral choice, even though God knows what you will do. It becomes logically consistent if you introduce two levels: one of daily experience and another of the underlying reality. It is a practical approach which allows us to make moral choices. Morality is more than just following rules. It is about doing the right thing. However, the entire concept of morality hinges on the assumption of 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. But you don't 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 rather than 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 knew I would have a car accident tomorrow, I would remain home, and the accident wouldn't 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.

So, if I pass a sign saying, 'You will have a car accident tomorrow,' it can only be a sign if I laugh about it and discover it was a sign the next day. Premonitions and accurate predictions require more than predestination. If you have a suspicion that proves correct, it is not you knowing the future but the one giving you the premonition. Predetermination suggests that we are like characters in a story, much like the comic book character Spiderman. Spiderman may realise he is a comic character in a story, but only if that is the script. Spiderman can't change the script, but the script's author can make him believe he can. That would be a delusion on the part of Spiderman, for you can't escape destiny.

That is also how voodoo works. The practitioner of voodoo puts needles in a doll, and the targeted subject may suffer intense pain simultaneously, yet there is no causal

relationship, nor is there any magic involved. It is a scripted coincidence, and the author of the script wants you to believe that voodoo works.

Predetermination allows for accurate predictions that defy chance. Actions taken to prevent these predictions from being fulfilled must fail, which requires a lack of information on the actors involved. Oedipus fulfilled the prophecy of killing his father and marrying his mother. He didn't know that the couple he believed to be his parents were not his true parents. Fearing the prediction, he fled, setting off a chain of events that made the prediction come true. The prophecies of ancient Greek oracles only made sense in hindsight. And so, for guidance on people's actions, they could be pretty worthless.

What Are the Odds?

The law of large numbers

On 11 November 2017 (11-11), I went to Groningen with my wife and son by car. While driving, I noticed the date and time displayed on the car's clock. 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 illustrates 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 doesn't happen. On average, it only occurs once every 7,776 times. But if you throw the dice a million times, it happens 128 times on average.

If a reset of the distance recorder occurs every 500 kilometres, the chance of 111.1 kilometres appearing on it is one in 5,000. The distance recorder was not far from the clock, so I would probably have noticed a peculiar number on it after seeing the date. The probability of the distance recorder being on 111.1 might have been 0.02%. The likelihood of the thought about 11:11 popping up on 11 November is difficult to establish, but in my case, it was not low.

The birthday problem demonstrates strange coincidences happen more often than we might 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. However, two people sharing a birthday is not a mind-blowing coincidence. It is not as remarkable as the incident with the distance recorder.

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%. Meaningful coincidences are likely to happen, but less likely to you. So, if many people experience the same and think it is merely a coincidence because coincidences occur more often than you might think, they suffer from what you might call a collective delusion. Imagine a group of 24 all sharing a birthday with one other group member, so they share 12 birthdays, and they all think, 'Nothing exiting to see here. The odds of me sharing a birthday with another person in this group are over 50%.'

Taking a smaller sample reduces the likelihood of meaningful coincidences. If you randomly pick two people, the chance that they share the same birthday is only 0.3%. So, if you run into someone else who happens to share your birthday, and it happens again with the next person, it is noteworthy. If it happens another time with the following individual, you might wonder whether there is more to this universe than mere chance. The

more elaborate a scheme, the less likely it is to transpire. The probability of three people sharing a birthday in a group of 23 is 1.3%, and for five, it is only 0.0002%. If you run into elaborate, meaningful coincidences, you might start to believe that you have a critical role in the universe.

Possible ways around the law of large numbers

There may be 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 doesn't apply. After all, it is a small sample. Suppose no intelligence is coordinating events in this universe. In that case, it is less likely that meaningful coincidences will turn up in this sample, and elaborate schemes will be unlikely to emerge. Second, if the most significant historical events come with peculiar coincidences, it becomes more likely that history is scripted than when peculiar incidents transpire 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 among the most important historical events.

And what should 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 arrive at an idea. A highly unusual coincidence, such as the do-it-yourself store incident, could be likened to throwing five sixes with five dice. The chance of such an event happening in any year in any life could be one in 7,776. If something similar transpires again that year, it is like throwing five sixes twice in a row. The chance of that would be one in 60,000,000. On average, 120 people would experience something similar each year. But what if more similar incidents occur in one life? Or if 100,000 people have this instead of 120?

I have shared a few of my coincidence stories on the Reddit/SimulationTheory message board. Others also experience similar situations. Only the people on that message board are not a random group, but a select group of individuals who believe we live in a simulation, often because they have witnessed similar phenomena. Some of these stories are as remarkable as mine. I can't verify these tales, but I believe most aren't frauds because similar things happened to me. The question remains whether they have seen strange incidents occurring in the numbers I have seen.

There is a point where you must admit that these things are not merely coincidental. We can't establish that point objectively. 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 accurately estimate the odds. Still, without intelligence coordinating events in this universe, we should 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 gets hit twice. But how would you explain if one person ran into lightning ten times, and this individual did nothing unusual? Statistically, it can happen. More likely, there is a cause, such as living in a dangerous spot. There is a point where we must assume these stories are evidence of us living in a simulation. We can't establish that point precisely, but whether we live inside a simulation or not doesn't depend on our assessment. We are, however, inclined to see causes behind remarkable situations or events, but they may be accidental.

The limits of our minds

We are good at attributing causes, but we do poorly at estimating the likelihood of an event. The psychologist Daniel Kahneman provided 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.[94] 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 sees causality, but our reason doesn't verify whether it could just be randomness. We are inclined to think some cause makes unusual things happen, while they might be random incidents.

When we consider the most significant historical events, we run into problems if we use this small sample to establish that someone is 'writing history'. On the other hand, comparing this sample to a sparsely populated rural county may not be apt. It is more fitting to compare this sample to the royal family, as it encompasses 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 it is probably not a random issue.

I am a single individual, the smallest possible sample. Some people get struck by lightning twice. It could even happen three or four times, but the chance of it happening ten times is so insignificant that no one will ever experience that unless they live in a hazardous spot. Is the number of meaningful coincidences in my life enough to rule out chance? That number is extraordinarily high. It is not chance. The question arises: Am I just a random individual, or do I live in a dangerous location, or has destiny given me a unique role, such as proving that we live in a simulation? Others have this, too. And so, a lengthy series of peculiar incidents doesn't suffice to believe the latter.

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 keep a record. 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 B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B

The probability of the ball falling on black the following 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 didn't 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 couldn't have happened. If I say with firm 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 may 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. Don't be afraid, dear Pharaoh, for it will happen 3,600 years from now. But if we don't set up this grain storage, it won't happen, so we must do it. And by the way, Egypt will starve otherwise.'

The chance of this prediction coming true was not one in 67,108,864, nor was it one in 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000. Adding more zeroes doesn't help. The chance is far smaller than any number you can ever write down. It is so close to zero that no one can tell the difference. Nevertheless, you sit here reading this text, perhaps even on a tablet. How could this happen? The answer to this mystery is that many things could have occurred but did not; however, 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

What about the reference to the end date of World War I on the licence plate of Franz Ferdinand's car? Few historical events are as significant as the start and end of World War I. And so, the law of large numbers doesn't apply here. It is one of the most important historical events, thus part of a sample comparable to the royal family. A mere accident seems unlikely. The assassination could have gone wrong; cooler heads might have prevailed, or the war could have proceeded differently, ending on a different 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 doesn't add up here. Hardly anyone expected the war to last longer than a few months. The licence plate originates before the war. The assassination succeeded after a series of mishaps. If the licence plate number contained a prediction, that prediction included the assassination succeeding, Franz Ferdinand dying in this particular car, and this event being the trigger for the war.

That is hard to do. And so Mike Dash in the Smithsonian noted, 'This coincidence is so incredible that I initially suspected that it might be a hoax.'[1] Only, it is not a hoax, so investigative minds could have probed other options, but they did not. Conspiracy theorists also ignored it, even though this incident agrees with their beliefs of a secretive plan being behind history.

In the conspiracy scene, a story circulates about a Freemason named Alfred Pike, who allegedly disclosed a secretive plan of the Freemasons to bring about the New World Order. Pike supposedly predicted both world wars with uncanny precision in 1871. Nobody had ever heard of this plan before 1959, when an 'investigator' 'uncovered' it. Contrary to the licence plate number, the story has no substance. It is a hoax. In the Netherlands, they would call it a monkey sandwich story.

Seeing meaning

Authors use symbolism, hidden meanings, themes, and stylistic figures. Events in their lives, as well as the writings of other authors, influence their writings. Literary critics look for those meanings. You can check out what experts wrote about the poem The Waste Land by T. S. Eliot. You will be surprised. Some authors marvel at what literature critics discover in their works. Apart from intention, there can be an unconscious influence. And so, seeing meaning is more like an art than a science. A scientist would argue there is no proof and that it is baseless speculation because science isn't about meaning.

He spent a number of years at this project
And now he knows how an electron behaves

The Nits, Mountain Jan

You can't understand intentions and meaning from investigating the conduct of electrons. Meaning in literature can be intentional. Yet, if someone wrote the script running the events in this world, the author might do what other authors do. And so, the licence plate number on Franz Ferdinand's car could signal foreknowledge of future events or even control over them, and this could be evidence. The sceptics argue from a scientific perspective, while those who see meaning act like literary critics. Who is right about the meaning of AIII 118 depends on whether there is a script and, therefore, an author.

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 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.

However, 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 see without too much imagination. There are plenty of instances and locations where this sequence of characters could have turned up, so their presence in this particular spot is noteworthy. AIII 118 on a fish barrel in Vienna wouldn't have attracted 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 don't quibble about such details. If I said 'hello' to you, you wouldn't ask me why I didn't utter 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 term armistice. And if the sceptics come with outlandish arguments, you have won the argument. Only, they disagree. Not seeing meaning is the art of being a moron. Communication with morons is, therefore, problematic.

Asking yourself which licence plate numbers were available in the Austrian-Hungarian Empire may be a better idea. You could check which combinations fit the purpose. There

aren't that 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), the most peculiar date of the year.

Only a few historical events are as important as the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the Armistice of 11 November 1918. You can think of D-Day, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and 9/11. The coincidence scheme surrounding D-Day is extensive, and the recurrence of dates is intriguing. The involvement of Hans van Mierlo is also mind-boggling. It also relates to the Curse of the Omen, a film released on the anniversary of D-Day, as well as the untimely passing of Senator Robert Kennedy on 6 June (6/6) and Martin Luther King on 4 April (4/4) 1968. 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 alone.

A final argument may be that such extensive or peculiar coincidence schemes don't appear in other historical events that are equally significant, such as the American, French, Chinese, and Russian revolutions. These events are marked by a few peculiar coincidences, such as Thomas Jefferson and John Adams having their appointments with the Grim Reaper on the same day, which happens to be 4 July, thus Independence Day. That is noteworthy, but perhaps not sensational. The parallels between Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler might also raise some questions. Somehow, the licence plate number of Franz Ferdinand's car is more exceptional, most notably because of it being so precisely predictive.

The Chinese Revolution of 1911 began on 10 October 1911. It marked the end of 2,000 years of imperial rule in China. The date, 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 led to the establishment of 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. You can ask why these events don't seem part of a coincidence scheme. It is like asking why several members of the Royal Family don't have kidney cancer. Well, they haven't. That's all there is to it. Perhaps, it is not satisfactory to philosophers with a lot of time on their hands, but it will have to do.

Hindsight bias

And then there is the benefit of hindsight. Countless strange incidents could have occurred, but they didn't. We notice only things that did happen and don't think of those that didn't. That is hindsight bias. The sample of the most significant historical events comes with the benefit of hindsight. There is a danger to that approach, and it is unacceptable in science. It is like selecting only the data that confirms your theory. You might have a theory about gravity, saying that all objects will fall to the ground. And you prove your theory by ignoring the heavenly objects and the birds in the sky, so everything you investigate falls to the ground. It later turned out that gravity works that way, and ignoring the heavenly objects and the birds in the sky put you on the right track.

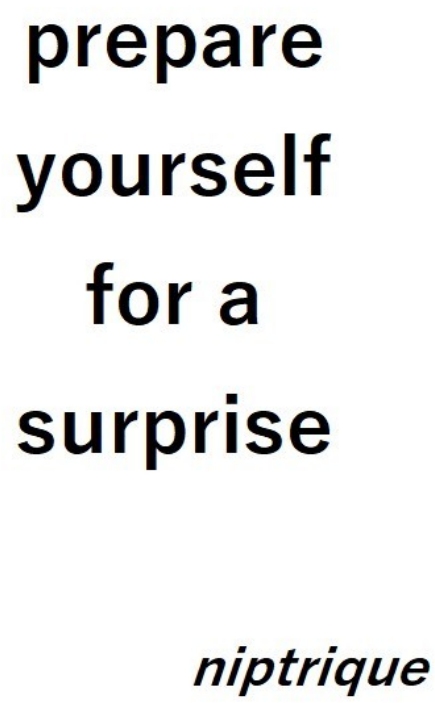
With hindsight, you know things you can't learn in advance. Hindsight knowledge is also a favourite tool of critics when something goes wrong. However, when you use hindsight to find evidence, your critics argue you can't. That's how the critics play their game. They might clip a bird's wing feathers and then ask the bird to prove it is a bird by flying. But if you use clipped birds to prove your theory of gravity, they might criticise you for that as well. You can't beat your critics in their game. No evidence will ever convince them. So I won't try. This wasn't science in the first place, but metaphysical speculation.

Using hindsight, thus, is the only way to conduct this investigation, as we can't predict the occurrence of meaningful coincidences. If this universe is genuine, we can't establish that it is authentic. However, if it is a simulation, we may discover it is a simulation. So, if there is meaning, we must look for it to find it. We should be careful, as we are inclined to see intent when it could have happened accidentally. With that in mind, it is still fair to say that meaningful coincidences related to the most important historical events are likely not mere coincidences. Combined with the other evidence, we can establish that we live inside virtual reality, probably a simulation created by an advanced post-human civilisation.

The Nature of Reality

We live inside a simulation created by an advanced post-human civilisation. An individual can't build this universe alone or write the script in detail. That requires a civilisation. Science has established several laws of reality, or natural laws, with a sufficient degree of certainty. Therefore, if breaches of these laws occur, this world is fake. There is enough evidence of breaches. And so, the argument is:

- Science has sufficiently established specific laws of reality.
- Breaches of these laws prove that this world is a simulation.
- There is sufficient evidence of breaches in these laws.
- Hence, we live in a simulation.



We like to think we are unique and superb creatures, the apex of all that roams this planet, so we attach great value to our inner selves. And we think we are very deserving, and that only three people are of importance: me, myself, and I. So, if we have the technology, we would build personal virtual realities that allow us to fulfil our every desire. Because we think we are so wonderful, we probably won't alter our human essence when we can, so post-humans likely have similar motivations to us.

These post-humans could run simulations of human civilisations for entertainment and research. If the technology becomes cheap, the number of simulations for amusement is likely to vastly outstrip those for research. Our purpose is probably entertainment, and breaches of the laws of reality suggest so. Simulations run for research are more likely to be realistic. Signs of a script indicate that our universe is not a game, but rather someone's imaginary world. Someone could own this world, and we might call that someone God. God may use avatars in this simulation to play the role of an ordinary human being. According to the Bible, this world is 6,000 years old, which is closer to the truth than four billion years. Only, there is no way to tell how old this world is. It could even be five minutes old, with your memories from before as part of the setup. So, when the story starts, everything before it is history.

Coincidences, such as the licence plate number of Franz Ferdinand's car, indicate that there is a script. A computer generates all our thoughts and actions. We aren't sentient beings. We don't think for ourselves. We have no intrinsic value to our creators, so God can let us suffer and kill us without remorse. The strength of the evidence outweighs the issues, such as the lack of scientific evidence for the paranormal, the limitations of the human mind, including our tendency to seek causes when randomness applies or to see meaning where there is none, the hindsight bias, and the difficulties in establishing probabilities. We can know beyond a reasonable doubt that we live in a scripted virtual reality. That is a remarkable conclusion, and it would be even more astounding if we could identify some of God's avatars and understand the purpose of this universe.

What if God was one of us?
Just a slob like one of us
Just a stranger on the bus

Joan Osborn, One of Us

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