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THE A.I.P.R. NEWS

The Many Faces of Coincidence Book Launch by Laurence Browne

September 4, 2017 at The Avid Reader, Brisbane, Queensland

THE *Many Faces of Coincidence* book launch took place at The Avid Reader bookshop in Brisbane's West End, and was attended by about seventy people. An old friend from childhood, Adam Williams, who lives in Beijing and was fortuitously passing through Brisbane, was the MC and set the tone for a memorable evening with a very amusing introduction. He is also a writer and has had many coincidences of his own, so we were able to bounce off one another rather well.

It was very heartening indeed to have so many people attend—and even the bookshop staff were impressed; also with the book sales, especially considering the event was very much a 'one-off'. Before we started, drinks and snacks were served and the audience was able to mingle, allowing for a good energy right from the start.

The photographs of Adam and myself are from the Q&A session, and were taken by Gail Browne. The whole event was filmed by Stephen Browne (Gail's husband

and my brother).

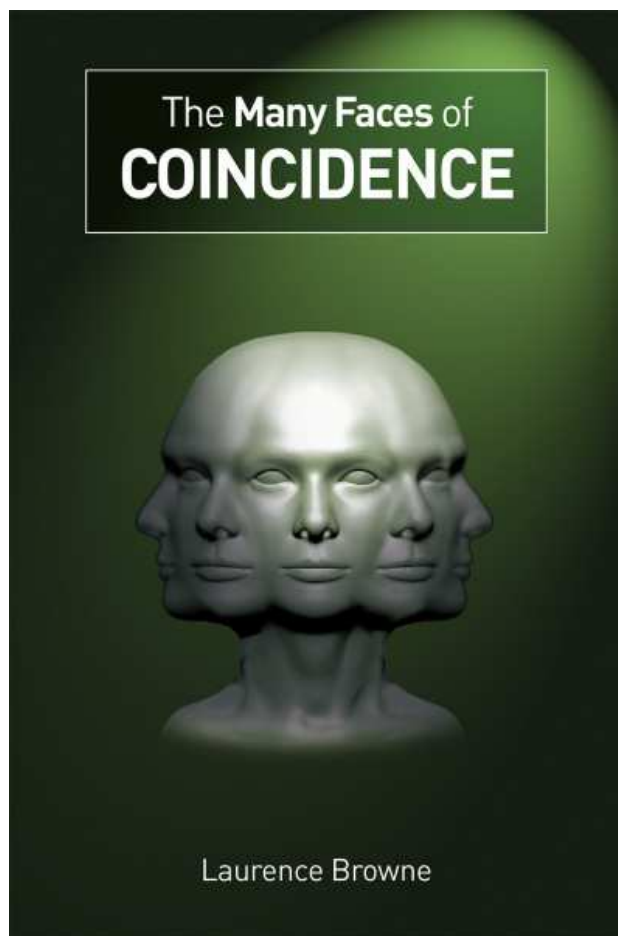
Many good questions came from the audience, including one from Victor

of *kensho* in Zen. I had never considered this but it struck me immediately that it is; *kensho* meaning

momentarily looked up over the line of the overhanging roof, I was suddenly hit by the full moon beaming down at me. I had no idea there was a full moon that night and, because of the way the chairs were set up, only Adam and I could see it.

Whether that would count as a coincidence or not is debatable, and in any case it should be emphasised that coincidences come in all shapes and sizes. A broad definition might be something like 'a notable co-occurrence of events'. While some coincidences have discernible causal connections, though these may be quite subtle and complex, others are clearly attributable to the random play of chance or luck. At the same time, certain ostensibly random coincidences can be distinguished by the numinosity and meaning they hold for the individual involved.

C. G. Jung coined the term 'synchronicity' for such coincidences. However, there is currently no generally accepted overarching theoretical framework that deals compre-



Marsh (author of *Mr Isherwood Changes Trains*) as to whether a full blown meaningful coincidence is similar to the experience

a sudden insight or awakening. Indeed, I had a brief taste of this during the Q&A when I leaned back in my chair and as I

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hensively and inclusively with the several disparate categories under which different sorts of coincidences might be appropriately classified. A primary aim of *The Many Faces of Coincidence* is to remedy that omission. Given the limited space for this account, I won't try to summarise the chapters except to say that each one really did take its own shape, in a similar way that novelists sometimes talk about their characters having a mind of their own.

Around the time of the launch I was reading Gabriel Garcia Marquez's autobiography, *Living to Tell the Tale*, and only a few days earlier had found this passage about his development as a writer, which I quoted during the presentation:

"... my happiest experience occurred one afternoon when I saw from a passing bus a simple



sign on the door of a house: 'Funeral palms for sale'. My first im-

pulse was to knock at the door in order to ascertain the facts of that discovery, but shyness vanquished me. And so

life itself taught me that one of the most useful secrets for writing is to

"... learn to read the hieroglyphs of reality ..."

pulse was to knock at the door in order to ascertain the facts of that discovery, but shyness vanquished me. And so

learn to read the hieroglyphs of reality without knocking or asking anything."

To be able to read the hieroglyphs of reality is indeed an important skill, and one that is considerably enhanced by paying attention to coincidences, sensing what they might mean or indicate, and avoiding the projection of one's own wishful thinking onto a particular set of circumstances.

These and other issues are addressed in the book, which I hope is an enjoyable read for those who decide to get hold of a copy—or perhaps coincidentally find that one comes their way ... Ψ

Author Note:
Laurence Browne was awarded an M.A. in Religious Education (1987) from London University, U.K.; an M.A. in Applied Linguistics (1995) from Griffith University, Queensland; and a PhD in Philosophy (2014) from The University of Queensland.

