

## PRECOGNITION

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### READING

This story is quoted directly from Larry Dossey's 2010 book titled "The Science of Premonitions". Dossey is a physician, an internist, who became an author.

*Amanda, a young mother living in Washington State, awoke one night at 2:30 AM from a nightmare. She dreamed that a large chandelier that hung above the baby's bed in the next room fell into the crib and crushed the infant. In the dream, as she and her husband stood amid the wreckage, she saw that a clock on the baby's dresser read 4:35 AM. The weather in the dream was violent; rain hammered on the window and the wind was blowing a gale. The dream was so terrifying she roused her husband and told him about it. He laughed, told her the dream was silly, and urged her to go back to sleep, which he promptly did. But the dream was so frightening that Amanda went to the baby's room and brought the child back to bed with her. She noted that the weather was calm, not stormy as in the dream.*

*Amanda felt foolish – until about two hours later, when she and her husband were awakened by a loud crash. They dashed into the nursery and found the crib demolished by the chandelier, which had fallen directly into it. Amanda noted that the clock on the dresser read 4:35 AM and that the weather had changed. Now there was a howling wind and rain. This time her husband was not laughing.*

### PRESENTATION

I'm an amateur writer. Like most writers, I need a date on a calendar to collect my thoughts and put them on paper. So I appreciate the opportunity to stand here and talk about things I think are important – and your willingness to listen to them.

What's important to me is the same as what's important to you. Why am I here? What happens when I die? How is our world put together? Today I'm mostly talking about the last one.

My particular path is a curiosity about anomalies – observations that don't fit the elaborate models we have constructed to describe our universe, from subatomic particles and cells in our bodies to the cosmos. The diligent pursuit of anomalies has been responsible for many, perhaps most, scientific discoveries to date, and I expect this path will continue to enlarge our understanding. There's always resistance, of course. About a century ago Max Planck remarked that new scientific paradigms do not really become established until all the believers in the old paradigm are dead.

My background is in industrial research and development, so it's probably natural that I love data. Data come in two forms: single or multiple events that have already occurred, and through planned experiments. I'll give examples of both today as we look at some anomalies.

During the last few years I've spoken and written about several related subjects under the heading of extra-sensory perception or ESP. Some I have been close to. Some I report from reliable sources. Some are more speculative. Here's a short list.

- Remote viewing.
- Spiritual healing, near or at a distance.
- Reincarnation and the afterlife.
- Communication with angels.
- Medical intuition.
- Psychic mediums and channelers.
- The basis of morality in universal consciousness.
- Consciousness of animals.
- Consciousness of plants.
- Miracles.
- Near-death experiences.

None of these subjects fit our current model of the world, our paradigm. They are full of anomalies. My belief scale ranges from possible to probable to certain. Note that none of the subjects explicitly deal with time. They concern things that happen now, in present time. This evening I will talk about future time with a discussion of precognition. Precognition is essentially the same as premonition. Premonition means warning in advance, while precognition means knowing in advance. That is, an intuitive knowledge of the future. First, I'll summarize four interesting cases. Then, two specific experiments. Finally, some musing about the meaning of it all.

## CASE EVIDENCE

To most of us, the word premonition implies our sensing of a future bad event, a disaster or tragedy. We rarely consider our fleeting thoughts of a pleasant event in the near future as a premonition; we might think of these thoughts as daydreams, if anything. People who collect, report, and analyze instances of premonitions seem to have the same outlook. So the cases I will summarize are of the disaster variety.

### *Amanda and the Chandelier*

The dramatic story about Amanda and the falling chandelier is rather rare in its specific nature. It is also important because it deals with a very common question about free

will. "If the future is already fixed, why should I bother doing anything?" The answer seems to be that the future is in the form of probable events, not certainty. This is strikingly similar to the reasoning in quantum mechanics that the outcome of a quantum event is a probability, not realized until the event is observed. This similarity may not be just coincidental. A number of scientists are thinking that our familiar macro world is looking more and more like the micro world of the quantum event.

### *The Nebraska Church Explosion*

Wednesday evening at 7:20 was the regular time for choir practice at the West Side Baptist Church in Beatrice, Nebraska. March 1, 1950 was a cold day, so the pastor went to the church early to light the furnace. He then went home, planning to return when the 15 choir members would arrive about 7:15, normally punctually. At 7:25 the church blew up from a gas leak, ignited by the furnace flame, and was totally demolished.

The astonishing fact was that nobody was hurt because nobody was in the church at 7:25. There had never been a total no-show in memory. Members interviewed later gave mundane reasons for being tardy, from "I was feeling a little lazy" to "I had to finish a homework assignment." Nobody mentioned any fear that something bad was going to happen. If premonition was at work, it was a very subtle process that influenced the thinking of 15 different people. It is quite different from Amanda's very specific dream, but life-saving nonetheless.

### *Train Crashes*

Premonitions, like other paranormal phenomena, are fairly easy to dismiss when they represent unique events or one person's viewpoint. So for the last few decades, serious investigators have used statistical analysis of larger numbers of events. If done correctly, this can result in a well defined probability of a certain effect. In recent years, the meta-analysis has come into play, whereby results from many different studies are normalized and compared as a whole to occurrence by chance.

An early use of statistics was the analysis of train wrecks between 1950 and 1955 by William Cox. He compared the passenger loads on trains that crashed with loads on similar trains the previous 7 days and 14, 21, and 28 days before the wreck. He found that in every case, there were fewer passengers on the crashed runs than on all the prior runs. Unless you think that lighter passenger loads caused wrecks, there is a very strong statistical conclusion that some other process was at work.

### *The 9/11 Tragedy*

9/11 brought out a huge number of accounts of prior nightmares and anxieties – after the fact. However, none had specifics – day, location, etc. – that could reasonably alert

authorities to take special measures to avert the tragedy. That is, none were as specific as Amanda's nightmare about the chandelier. Yet there were two aspects that, in retrospect, seriously raise the possibility of foreknowledge.

One was the remarkably low passenger loading of the four planes involved, similar to the 1950s' train-crash data. The unoccupied seats constituted 74 to 84% of the planes' capacities; that is, about 21% were occupied overall, including the hijackers. None of the ticketed non-fliers has come forward to say they feared hijacking or a crash. At most, a few have stated they felt uneasy that day. As of two years ago, neither United nor American Airlines has released normal load numbers at that time, so we cannot know for certain how dramatic 21% full is; it certainly seems quite low.

The other aspect of 9/11 to consider is the behavior of random number generators (RNG) on 9/11. Starting in the late 1990's, computerized RNG's were set up at several locations around the world. The objective was a probe into the nature of global consciousness, that is, to see if the randomness of the endless strings of zeroes and ones would be affected by world news events that entered the consciousness of large numbers of people. The answer is yes. New Year celebrations, the change of millennium at Y2K, the funeral of Pope John Paul II in 2005, sports events, deaths of celebrities, and many other events registered an effect in the RNG's.

9/11 also showed a significant effect on the RNG's, not only after the crashes, but up to six hours before. Consider that for a moment before we move on to some experimental data. How could a computer in South America or Malaysia sense the intentions of some men waiting to board planes in Boston? If you work that out, I've got some tougher questions for you.

## EXPERIMENTS

### *Presentiment*

Dean Radin, now at the Institute of Noetic Sciences in California, has conducted a series of presentiment trials with volunteers over ten years now. Presentiment is having an emotional response prior to an emotional stimulus, that is, in anticipation. The basic experiment has the volunteer watching a computer screen; he is wired to record skin conductance or other measures of emotional response. The computer is loaded with equal numbers of calm, pleasant pictures and violent, unpleasant pictures. When the volunteer is ready, he pushes a button to start a trial; that is time zero. Six seconds later, the computer randomly selects a picture and shows it on the screen. Skin conductance then shows a large change if a violent picture is shown, no change if a calm one is shown, as expected. However, the experimental focus is on the period 0 - 6 seconds before the computer selects the picture. Results show that the volunteer begins to react

to the violent pictures 2 or 3 seconds before the picture is selected. The reaction is small but statistically significant.

Radin's experiment has been performed with many variations at many labs by many investigators. Most, but not all of these experiments have been statistically significant. One contributing factor that was not accounted for in some trials is personality type of the volunteer. We do respond to emotional stimuli differently. Another factor is boredom. After seeing a long series of pictures, one can get weary of the experiment. The so-called "decline effect" sets in, as it does in other types of psychology experiments.

### *Silver Futures*

It may have occurred to you that if you can reliably forecast the future, there are many ways to profit from it. In fact, our whole financial market system could become obsolete. Russell Targ and associates gave it a try in 1982. Targ was a laser physicist who became one of the leaders of the government-sponsored remote viewing program at Stanford for twenty years. Remote viewing is a technique for mentally discovering specific characteristics of a target site unknown to the viewer. Military examples include an underground nuclear installation in the Soviet Union, a lost submarine, and a downed airplane.

Targ's experiment in financial forecasting was to predict the movement of silver futures prices in the commodities market, four days ahead. On successive Mondays, an experienced remote viewer would report his impression of the market price change for the week. A broker then entered buy or sell orders for Friday action accordingly, and money would be gained or lost. Targ and associates made \$120,000 over nine straight weeks of correct forecasts. That was pretty good money in 1982. The predicting technique makes this story even more interesting. Since remote viewing had never done well with words or numbers, a scheme involving symbols was developed. For instance, a light bulb might represent a price rise, a teddy bear a price decrease. Whatever, it appeared to work.

However, the following year, the group tried this again with poor results. Targ thinks it was due to the loss of a scientific focus. About 10 years later, Targ and another associate had a successful run of 11 weeks but no money was involved. Since then, other people have used remote forecasting to bet on sporting events with some alleged success.

### DISCUSSION OF PRECOGNITION DATA

I've presented examples of the two kinds of evidence concerning precognition: analysis of events that happened in the past and the results of planned experiments. Both are

common in social science research. There are books and research papers full of other examples.

There seem to be three main reasons why precognition is far from an accepted feature of our contemporary life. First, it is not consistent with our common-sense belief that tells us the future is simply unknown. Period! Personally, I find it hard to believe myself. The large majority of current physicists do not buy into it, probably for the same reason. A prominent physicist, at a technical meeting, once remarked that he wouldn't believe this stuff even if it were true.

The second reason is the very small size of apparent precognitive effects that emerge from analysis of large amounts of data such as random-number-generator perturbations or tragic events. The presentiment experiments I described show reactions 2 or 3 seconds before the stimulus, a random picture, is selected. 2 or 3 seconds is not much, and is fairly easy to dismiss. However, in all these cases the effects are statistically sound. You do have to have some understanding of statistical analysis, which is not widespread.

The third reason is our stubborn long-held belief that we have free will and the future is not fixed. Period, again! Free will can be dealt with if you accept the probable nature of forecasted events, whether from a dream or a remote-viewing session or a fortune teller. The story of Amanda and the chandelier illustrates this. She did take action and did affect the outcome.

But, as I said at the outset, anomalies are best approached through observation and experiment. For the question whether precognition is a fact of human nature, I believe there are sufficient facts now available to vote yes, it is.

Two final remarks on precognition. First, a specific warning such as Amanda's dream is quite rare. Nonspecific warnings that might keep us from ill-fated trains or planes are much more common.

The second concerns Russell Targ's conclusion that forecasting for financial profit may have failed when it lost its scientific focus, that is, when the outcome became the most important objective. This shows up in other areas also. An example is spiritual healing, where participants may be highly attached to the outcome. Spiritual healing seems to work best when the healer simply concentrates on helping the patient connect with the universe, or greater powers, or whatever belief system is held – rather than focusing on the medical problem.

Before we leave the subject of precognition, we might ask whether it is a desirable trait of human nature. That's certainly debatable. I'm not sure that we are willing, yet, to see our entire financial system overthrown by teams of certified forecasters. Or politics. Or

warfare. Or a hundred other ways we take chances on the future every day. Still, a dream as specific as Amanda's should command our attention.

## IMPLICATIONS

While you are mulling over the possible loss of finance, politics, and daily life as we know it, don't forget to grieve for the gradual demise of the scientific paradigm we have grown to love and depend on. The one where we are each small islands of matter and energy, separate from each other, and where time moves in only one direction. It is on the way out.

Why? Because the 20<sup>th</sup> century scientific paradigm is not consistent with the established evidence of several kinds of extra-sensory perception. To summarize, some people, perhaps all of us with sufficient training and practice, can

- a. Discern present-time information not available through our five senses.
- b. Discern information about future events.
- c. Facilitate medical healing without physical intervention.
- d. Communicate with the world of spirit.

All these abilities have been demonstrated and investigated, and will continue to be.

There is something, yet to be defined empirically, that connects us all to the universe of information about the past and present, and now based on precognition evidence, to future probabilities. Some investigators call it global consciousness, others refer to the ancient idea of Akashic Fields, others to theories arising from modern physics.

In recent months, the big news in physics is the experiment continuing at the large installation in Switzerland and France known as the Hadron Collider. The news was the possible identification of an elementary particle called the Higgs Boson. About 50 years ago, Higgs and others predicted the existence of a universal field which facilitates the creation of matter. The experiment supports this concept. I have no idea whether the Higgs field has anything to do with today's subject, but I do believe that the several phenomena called ESP do function through some kind of field effect, or global consciousness.

How do we get in touch with this field? About ten years ago I brought up the idea of our brains being like radios. We can switch from one frequency or channel to another within a limited range. Some are strong and some are weak. I think experienced meditators are probably better at this than the rest of us. Some frequencies are part of our physiology, for instance the connections between mothers and their children. I still like this notion, but let's simplify it. Our access to this all-encompassing field is what we call our intuition.

Yes, intuition. It's as simple as that. Don't leave home without it.

#### SUGGESTED READING

Larry Dossey, MD, "The Science of Premonitions", (2010)

Dean Radin, PhD, "Entangled Minds", (2006)

Russell Targ, "The Reality of ESP", (2012)