

conspired to foist it on a better-deserving psychiatric and psycho-analytic public. Freud and Stekel were credulous enough to demand serious consideration for telepathy long before them.

5. Would Ellis kindly explain how anyone can make records of telepathic events by phonograph or sound film when in the dream, or in the experience, there is nothing at the time to indicate telepathic correlation and only subsequent investigation can bring this to light?

As far as telepathic experiments are concerned, Ellis has only exhibited woeful lack of information; and he is himself guilty of that lack of care which he advises others to exercise.

The Park Central Hotel  
870 Seventh Avenue  
New York 19, N. Y.

### *Comments on the Discussants' Remarks*

BY ALBERT ELLIS, Ph.D.

Since it would take far more space than is at my disposal to comment adequately on all the points raised by Drs. Eisenbud, Pederson-Krag, and Fodor, and since the greater part of their objections to my paper seems to be highly personalized, circumlocutory, and irrelevant to the main issues, I shall confine my remarks to the most relevant areas of dissent.

1. My standpoint is that the reported "telepathic" dreams *may* have been purely coincidental or chance-based—since there is no indubitable evidence that they were not; but that *if* these dream sequences were not chance-based, their causal determinants are more simply and logically attributable to hypotheses like unconscious analytic suggestion than to the hypothesis of telepathic communication. This hardly seems to be a contradictory or a fence-straddling position.

2. While it is true that, on a chance-basis alone, a coincidental dream sequence like some of those reported by the discussants may normally occur only once in several thousand times, it is also statistically true: (a) that the most improbable event imaginable *will*

occasionally occur over a long enough period of time; and (b) that almost any analyst who patiently matches hundreds and hundreds of his patients' dreams will sooner or later encounter unusual coincidences among them.

3. It is highly questionable whether *more* diversity is found in dream imagery than in conscious thinking. The *work of condensation*, which Freud pointed out is such an important factor in dreams, may easily *reduce* dream diversity and *increase* the possibility of coincidence.

4. The fact that two patients are not known to each other hardly obviates the possibility of the analyst's (quite unconsciously, perhaps) putting them into effective communication with each other through their mutual contacts with him. If the analyst on certain occasions uses the analytic hour to display his own "obviously troubled mein" to two patients, it will hardly be surprising if these patients, in the next day or two, both dream of being caught in a downpour, which to both of them may symbolize gloom or depression.

5. While it is admittedly difficult for an analyst *regularly* to obtain coincidental dream sequences from his patients by (conscious or unconscious) suggestion, his *occasional* success in performing this feat is expectable rather than surprising.

6. While I do not believe that the discussants perpetrated any fraud in the production of the reported "telepathic" sequences, it is possible that, because of their avowed *a priori* enthusiasm for telepathic hypotheses, they unconsciously deluded *themselves* in the obtaining and/or recording of some of their published data. This, of course, *any* scientific observer may do. But it has been empirically shown that experimenters and subjects who are prejudiced at the start in favor of ESP evidence have a definite tendency unconsciously to falsify their findings. John L. Kennedy, a fellow in psychical research at Stanford University, experimented extensively with the standard ESP cards and techniques, but made certain that the scoring procedures of the telepathy-favoring experimenters was double-checked by objective observers. Kennedy reported his findings in the *Journal of Parapsychology*, the official journal of J. B. Rhine and his Duke University associates, as follows: "The direction of the errors appears to lend some support

to the hypothesis that the direction of ESP extra-chance scoring may be influenced to some extent by the expectancy of the recorder who tends to make errors in the direction of his expectancy. . . . The GESP and DT methods as customarily used do not eliminate the possibility that recording errors may, in large measure, be responsible for extra-chance scores.”\*

William L. Reuter, writing a doctoral dissertation at Temple University, also repeated Rhine’s experiments with additional scoring safeguards. As a result of his experimentation, he reported that “the averages of the students’ responses were no better than what would be expected on a chance basis.”†

Not only is there a tendency for prejudiced proponents of telepathy to score telepathic experiments as they *wish* them to be scored, but also, as Kellogg, Gulliksen, Wolfe and other psychological critics have pointed out, there is a concomitant tendency of ESP experimenters to omit the reporting of *negative* results, while they of course rush to report the positive ones. Consequently, even when their studies are not statistically at fault (as they sometimes, in fact, are), the published results are decidedly misleading.

7. The fact that some skeptics have been converted to belief in, and confirmatory experimentation with, telepathic phenomena is hardly proof of the validity of telepathic hypotheses and/or “findings.” Innumerable skeptics have been converted to diversified religious beliefs and have concomitantly claimed to have seen, and talked with, angels, devils, and gods. This hardly constitutes *scientific* proof of the validity of their visions.

8. Informed and responsible criticism of J. B. Rhine’s Duke experiments has by no means disappeared, but was revived only a short time ago by B. F. Skinner in his *New York Times Sunday Book Review* discussion of Rhine’s latest published volume. Dr. Skinner is one of the most distinguished, respected and well-informed psychologists in America.

9. My own fairly extensive search of the organized researches in telepathy, including those done under the auspices of the British Society for Psychical Research during the last three-quarters of a

\*Kennedy, John: Experiments on the nature of extra-sensory perception. *J. Parapsychol.*, 3:206-45, 1939.

†Reuter, William L.: An objective study in extra-sensory perception. Ed. D. Dissertation, Temple University, 1941.

century, has thus far failed to reveal any significant *controlled* research prior to the Duke experiments, or any amount of *adequately controlled recording of the experimental data* up to, including, and beyond the Duke work.

10. It is difficult to understand how telepathy—which the dictionary defines as thought transference or mind-reading—can, if it exists at all, take place with an interval of a day or more between two “telepathic” occurrences. Assuming, however, that this is theoretically possible, the greater the lapse between the coexistence of two supposedly “telepathic” events, the greater is the chance: (a) of there being some actual, direct or indirect, sensory communication between the two minds involved; and (b) of the communication’s being the result of sheer chance factors. Thus, if A and B both dream of a downpour on Monday night, that is an unusual coincidence, and may possibly be telepathic in origin. But if B dreams of it a week later than A, he may have been directly or indirectly influenced by A’s dream through normal sensory channels, and he may have repeated A’s dream by chance-based and *not* so extraordinary coincidence. If B has a dream similar to A’s a *year* later, it could hardly even be called coincidental. The point is that while a lapse of time between two “coincidental” occurrences does not *necessarily* prove them to be non-telepathic, it usually throws considerable *doubt* on their “telepathic” nature.

11. My standpoint was—and still is—not that the evidence presented in the discussants’ original articles is indisputably non-telepathic, but that it is by no means sufficiently clear-cut to rule out all *but* telepathic hypotheses. This evidence is quite inadequate, in other words, to uphold the conclusions that telepathy has indisputably been shown to exist. The burden of proof in such researches rests on the experimenter to demonstrate beyond all reasonable doubt the validity of his hypothesis. This was *not* done in the “telepathic” studies under consideration. The fact that anyone who reads the researcher’s paper is free to disagree with his conclusions is no excuse whatever for this researcher to waste the reader’s (and his own) time presenting inadequately-designed and improperly-concluded experiments.

12. While the scientific safeguards that I suggested would admittedly make it *difficult* to study telepathy psychoanalytically,

they would by no means make it impossible to do so. Such safeguards mean that before a psychological study is performed rigorous controls and a precise experimental design must be employed. But if this is *not* done, the conclusions from the experiment will usually be vague or invalid—which is indeed the case in all psychoanalytic telepathic researches made to date. The discussants seem to believe that *no* psychoanalytic research can be so adequately designed and controlled as to afford data sufficiently objective for accurate hypothesizing and conclusions. This I strongly doubt.

13. I entirely agree that, "Science does not demand that her devotee have no vested interest in what he is trying to prove, but merely that he do his best to take his own prior biases into account and correct for them." My objections to the discussants' studies are that: (a) The *subjects* of the experiments were frequently biased in favor of a certain outcome; (b) the *experimenter*, who was also biased in favor of the same outcome, was sometimes one of the subjects; and (c) the *recording* was done on an entirely subjective basis by the biased experimenter. No safeguards whatever against the subject-experimenter-recorder's "own prior biases" were reported by any of the discussants. While science does not demand a totally unbiased researcher, it certainly demands unbiased research *methods* from him. This demand was not at all satisfied in the discussants' studies.

14. It is difficult to comprehend how unconscious suggestion given by an analyst to his analysand, and resulting in coincidental dreams by the latter, can be taken as *ipso facto* evidence of telepathy. Suppose an analyst feels threatened by some unusual event in his life, and dreams for several nights about, let us say, walls closing in on him. Suppose that, quite unconsciously, *but by his attitudes and words*, he communicates his feeling of being threatened to several of his analysands. Suppose that some of these analysands, becoming aware of the analyst's feeling that he is threatened, also begin to feel threatened; and suppose, finally, that one of these analysands also dreams about walls closing in on him. Where is the *telepathy* involved here? If the analyst, *without any sensory cues*, suggested to the analysand that the latter have a coincidental dream, then telepathy might well be said to exist. But

unconscious suggestion *with plenty of sensory cues*—which is what seems to have taken place in most of the reported “telepathic” dream sequences under discussion—is an entirely different matter.

15. The technique of recording telepathic events by phonograph or sound film can be—and should be—done by the simple process of recording *all* the sessions of an analyst who is experimenting with these phenomena. This would not only assure an accurate transcription of “telepathic” dreams as they were originally recorded, but would also serve as a check on the relative *incidence* of so-called telepathic phenomena. If it is objected that this would be an expensive research procedure, it must be repeated that ease and inexpensiveness of gathering data is no excuse for inefficient and meaningless research.

16. Assuming that an emotional human relationship is “the elementary setting in which telepathic phenomena function”—though this is a highly debatable statement—that is all the more reason why research which is designed to prove the existence of these phenomena should be conducted only within the most objective framework, with every possible scientific safeguard. If the two dreamers, for example, must be emotionally involved with each other, let us, at the very least, have some third objective observer present to record, interpret, and report upon the allegedly “telepathic” dream sequences. But to have *everyone* and *every technique* employed in the research thoroughly suspect of bias and subjectivity—that is only to obtain evidence that will stand up in no scientific court of inquiry.

In conclusion: None of the points raised by the discussants negates the fact that inadequate, uncontrolled research techniques and observational methods were employed in the studies reported by them; and that, in consequence, the hypothesis of telepathic occurrence as an explanation of the reported coincidental dream sequences is only one of several equally (or more) plausible alternative hypotheses. Telepathic dream sequences *may* possibly occur as a result of psychoanalytic therapy; but, thus far, no *scientific* evidence has been offered in support of this hypothesis.

2505 University Avenue  
New York 63, N. Y.