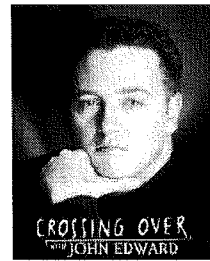


ESP

Extrasensory Perception

Can we perceive only what we sense? Or, without sensory input, are we capable of extrasensory perception?



About half of those adults polled in a North America study say they believe in ESP, a quarter says no and the last quarter is still unsure. The media overflows with reports of psychic wonders: crimes solved, dreams come true, futures foretold. Paranormal television (such as the *Celebrity Ghost Stories*, *Ghost Hunters*, and *Most Haunted*) and movies (such as *The Sixth Sense*, and *Paranormal Activity*) are big business. The dial-a-psychic industry tops \$1 billion a year, much of it from low-income people. The big question remains, are there indeed people who can read minds, see through walls, or foretell the future?

Parapsychologists (those who study paranormal occurrences) have at times been astonished by claims of psychics to know information. However, 96% of psychologists and scientists are skeptical. If ESP is real, we would need to overturn the scientific understanding that we are creatures whose minds are tied to our physical brains and whose perceptual experiences of the world are built of sensations. However, sometimes new evidence does overturn our scientific preconceptions. So what do you think?

CLAIMS OF ESP

Claims of paranormal phenomena include astrological predictions, psychic healing, reincarnation, communication with the dead, and out-of-body experiences. Of these, the most respectable, testable, and –for a chapter on perception and social influence- relevant claims are for three varieties of ESP:

- 1) **TELEPATHY**- or mind-to-mind communication. One person sending thoughts to another or perceiving another's thoughts.
- 2) **CLAIRVOYANCE**- or perceiving remote events, such as sensing that a friend's house is on fire.

- 3) **PRECOGNITION**- or perceiving future events, such as a political leader's death or a sporting event outcome.

** Closely linked with these are claims of *psycho-kinesis* or mind over matter such as levitating a table or influencing a roll of the dice.

Premonitions or Pretensions?

Can a psychic really see the future? The evidence does not prove this either way. Analyses of psychic visions offered to police departments reveal that these too, are no more accurate than guesses made by others. Psychics working with the police do, however, generate dozens or even hundreds of predictions. This increases the odds of an occasional correct guess, which psychics can then report to the media. Moreover, vague predictions can later be interpreted to match events that provide a perceptual set for interpreting them.

Nostradamus, a 16th Century French Psychic, explained in an unguarded moment that his ambiguous prophecies " could not be understood till they were interpreted after the event and by it." An example:

*Beasts ferocious from hunger will swim across rivers:
The greater part of the region will be against the Hister,
The great one will cause it to be dragged in an iron cage,
When the German child will observe nothing.*



So does *Hister* actually refer to Hitler?

An instance of Nostradamus changing letters around?

Is this a reference to Germany during WWII?

Can this be interpreted in any other way? It was written in 1555.

Keep a critical and scientific mind... ☺

Police departments are aware of this and in 1993, 50 of America's largest cities Police Departments were asked if they had ever used psychics. 65% said they never had, and of those that had, not one found it helpful.

One skeptic, magician James Randi, has offered \$1 million to anyone who could demonstrate '*any* paranormal activity' and to anyone "who proves a genuine psychic power under proper observing conditions." So far, no such person has emerged to take the test. Randi' offer has been publicized for three decades and dozens of people have been tested, but still nothing.

PUTTING ESP TO THE TEST: ☺

Read pages 236-238 in your textbook. Do the tests, then discuss the criticisms of each. Check out the following ESP online tests:

- 1) www.milliondollarpsychics.com/esp.html
- 2) www.psychicsdirectory.com/free-esp-test.html
- 3) www.mysticgames.com (self test – list all tests- ESP test)
- 4) www.bored.com/espchecker.esptest.php

