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more on extrasensory
induction of brain waves

Science has published a number of articles that were highly critical of ESP research in the past. I am therefore rather surprised at the publication of Duane and Behrendt's report, "Extrasensory electroencephalographic induction between identical twins" (15 Oct., p. 367). The research described by Duane and Behrendt fails to meet some elementary criteria for parapsychological research, and I am certain that the report would have been rejected on first reading by all of the four reputable parapsychological journals (J).

The reported experiment has three major flaws. First, with only a single wall and 6 meters of space separating the subjects, the "receiving" twin may have been responding (subliminally?) to the experimenter's voice as he instructed the "sending" twin to open and close his eyes. Second, "gross inspection" as a means of scoring data in such a controversial area is obviously unacceptable. Third, the authors do not report even the most basic sort of descriptive data, such as number of trials under various conditions, much less any objective, statistical tests of their results.

Duane and Behrendt note that they will not draw any conclusions "because of the paucity of controlled data, contrasted with the voluminous controversial information available on the subject of extrasensory perception." The authors have not added further controversial data with such an inadequately controlled study, and they overlook the existence of a number of well-controlled studies of psychophysiological responses to ESP (2).

Speaking as a psychologist who is familiar with the reputable ESP literature and who has done some minor studies in the field, I feel the readers of Science should realize that Duane and Behrendt's report is below the usual standards for ESP research... and should not be taken as at all representative.

Charles T. Tart
University of Virginia Hospital, Charlottesville

References

... One unfortunate consequence of the publication by Science of Duane and Behrendt's report is its being selected for emphasis in popularizations of current scientific papers. I heard one science report on a major network radio broadcast in which this paper was singled out, as well it might be. The nonscientific public seems to be constantly on the lookout for evidence that nonphysical forces pervade and influence events. Such reports are eagerly received and their content exaggerated.

George M. Robertson
Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa

A few additional facts about our experiment are hereby provided in answer to questions raised by a number of readers (Letters, 3 Dec.). The twins were not in shielded rooms; conceivably they could have sent coded signals to one another. Neither they nor our technicians knew what we were testing. Induction, when present, occurred in both directions. Irregular eye-opening and closing periods of 5 to 30 seconds were established on command. The command was either a whisper or a tap on the shoulder. The subjects were closely monitored to insure that they were following instructions. The event marker (in the later experiments) was inaudible. In the successful twins transmission seemed to occur always. The first set of twins was tested on only one day, because immediately thereafter.
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