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Follow-Up

Robert Baker Replies to Sheldrake

Robert A. Baker

Sometimes efforts to clarify and explain only lead to further confusion. This seems to be the case in my efforts to answer Sheldrake's questions about my "[Staring](#)" [article](#) (SI March/April 2000).

In my first demonstration Sheldrake argues that the three subjects (Ss) who "stood up, looked around, shifted their positions several times, and appeared to be momentarily distressed . . ." still could have been aware of being stared at. Sheldrake also states "a sensitivity to being stared at does not necessarily imply an awareness of the position of the starrer." True, but "being momentarily distracted, etc." does not prove the Ss knew they were being stared at either! A distraction could have myriad causes. As for the two others (i.e., the "paranoid" and the "psychic") where is the evidence they are "more sensitive than most" to the detection of being stared at? How are "psychics" and "paranoids" identified and evaluated?

In my second demonstration Sheldrake argues there are pairs of unexplained numbers (e.g., 0801, 0802, etc.). By no means are these numbers "unexplained." On page 38 of my SI article a sample subject's time sheet clearly states time in minutes from start at 0800 pm and then lists 0801, 0802, etc. through 0820. Since each S's starting time differed from other Ss, there were different numbers for each S. The time sheet on page 38 was merely an example.

I can unequivocally state that none of the experimental Ss had any difficulty understanding what they were supposed to do and acted appropriately.

Sheldrake was correct however in the fact that on the sample time sheet on page 38 of my SI article the last line of the text states "five times for two minutes each during the experimental period." This, of course, is an error. It should have read "for one minute each. . . ."

Sheldrake's argument that by allowing Ss to change their prior guesses would distract them from their immediate feelings I find totally unconvincing.

Finally, Sheldrake's attempt to shoot down the results of my two demonstrations has failed completely and I stand firmly with my original conclusion that "it is prudent to conclude that people cannot tell when they are being stared at."



See also:

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