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A CHARISMA MODEL OF TELEPATHIC COMMUNICATION

by **James M. Donovan**, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana

Introduction

The perspective offered herein is that of a consumer of parapsychological literature: one who does not conduct such research himself, yet who is concerned to have whatever work he, or she, is doing be receptive to the findings of parapsychologists. Thus far, however, there has been little knowledge to consume. Instead, we are offered a steady diet of intriguing possibilities, tantalizing suggestions, and stimulating hypotheses. But, ultimately, few facts which are acknowledged by all and which can serve as a foundation for the next level of theory. A recent public statement from the National Research Council's report to the Army Research Institute captures this exasperation: "It found 'no scientific justification from research conducted over a period of 130 years for the existence of parapsychological phenomena'" (Holden 1987: 1502).

I cannot in good conscience disagree. However, if clear foundations of parapsychology are few, two causes can be suggested. The first, implied by the NRC, is that proper methods are being used to study nonexistent phenomena; the second is a real phenomenon is being investigated by improper methods. In either case, no results are produced, but depending on the perceived cause, response to this empty set can vary. This paper adopts the second explanation: specifically, parapsychological research can be criticized for lacking external validity and, second, for failure to combine the benefits of individual research with those of collective paradigm building. While discussion of the latter shall be taken up below, the former warrants immediate elaboration.

If every subject in every trial correctly guesses every card via any psi mechanism at all, and likewise causes and/or predicts every fall of every die, what has been accomplished? Ultimately, very little, beyond the documentation of the existence of a phenomenon. But research into existence is only worthy of these many years of investigation because we presume that the phenomenon is not only real but also relevant. The gap, however, between theoretical hypothesis and experimental design obscures absolutely such relevancy.

Within the logic of the field, most evidence for psi offered is of a statistical nature; significant deviations from chance are interpreted to signify the action of psi. But when Schmidt's cockroaches allegedly used PK to shock themselves far more than would have been occurred by chance (and assuming that a shock is sufficiently unpleasant to cockroaches that they would avoid one if they could), he is forced to attribute the findings to a 'psi-missing' *deus ex machina*, "a kind of confusion because the animals have had no evolutionary experience with electric shocks" (Rush 1976:18). The question may then be asked: Are card and die guessing evolutionarily significant? Probably not, so how do they relate to anything that is? Why, for example, does Giesler

(1985) test for PK healing ability by requiring his subjects to light bulbs? He does not justify this leap, as is unfortunately typical of the field. In general, experimental tasks have become so far removed from real-life contexts that, in the frequent absence of any mediating rationale, it no longer matters how the results fall out. The statistics, whatever their significance, lack meaning. At least for consumers.

The following is an attempt to provide an alternative psi model which is high in external validity. Of interest are not psi effects for their own sakes as bizarre display, but rather as variables pertinent to the understanding of the human condition from all disciplinary perspectives: psychological, anthropological, and physical, to name but a few. Research hypotheses and designs should reflect this ultimate goal.

A new approach would not be worth the effort of either construction or communication if the best it could handle are the same problems the old approach is already managing. To merit attention, it should do more. Therefore, the particular phenomenon chosen for analysis below is the one with which traditional parapsychology has had the hardest time dealing: telepathy. Throughout this model-building, the features required of a useful theory as delineated by Roberts (1976), have served as a guide.

Definition

Dr. Rhine, in his 1974 article labeling telepathy as an untestable hypothesis, reviews the original (1882) definition: "the communication of impressions of any kind from one mind to another independently of the recognized channels of sense" (p. 139). His next sentence, though, is more typical of both the common use of the term and implicit assumptions of its study when he said, "This mind-to-mind exchange was the definition that became general for telepathy." The inclusion of the introductory "This" signifies Rhine's belief that the two definitions are semantically equivalent, when in fact they are not. The shift, historically, has been from an initial emphasis on "communication," to an ultimate emphasis on "exchange" or "transference" (cf. Fodor 1966:376). Thus, while the original definition is a statement of effect (communication), the restatement is one of process (transference).

Consequently Troland (1976 [1917]) can claim that "telepathy implies the existence of a physical gap between the activities in the central nervous system of one person and that of another person" (p. 196). His context is that of locating the breaks in continuity in the reflex arc: stimulus from one individual 'leaps' the chasm between his CNS and that of the second person. A telepathic transfer, if you will.

Such emphasis on process leads one to consider medium and mode of transference to be of a particular kind. In a transfer, condition A precedes and influences condition B by exchange of some unknown propagating through some other thing, also unknown. Precluding a physical mode and medium very much by definition, one looks logically at those of energy. Indeed, much research into telepathy has presupposed an energy basis. This assumption has affected the literature in two distinct

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ways.

First, it has proven to be amazingly unproductive. Results, even when statistically significant, are stubbornly irreproducible and depressingly uninterpretable. These observations lead to the second general criticism of parapsychology inferred from above: its knack of beating dead horses. This tendency was recognized by Rhine when he said that

we cannot adhere faithfully to sound methods and hard logic and still continue to be overtolerant of preferred but untenable hypotheses which have been carried along indiscriminately from a period now long outgrown (1974:146).

Energy models of telepathy are an excellent case in point.

In 1951 Carl Jung specified the reasons why energy models are inappropriate: First, because distance has no effect, and second, because time likewise has no effect on psi effects. These observations were sufficient grounds for Jung to dismiss physical cause-and-effect explanations, and in turn to posit 'synchronicity' as the principle behind psi phenomena. Yet parapsychology reveals its collective personality as more of a social than a natural science when, despite these good arguments and others besides -- that no such energy has been detected, and that shielding against energy does not influence psi effects -- despite these, energy models still abound. One need no look no further, for instance, than the December 1985, newsletter of this very organization (i.e., Gayer 1985).

The time has long been upon us to dismiss both energy models and transference-based definitions for telepathy; in their stead we should return to the original effect-centered definition, and allow its implications to lead us down different, hopefully more productive paths.

First Steps

The most impressive evidence for telepathy, if not the most scientific, has always been the innumerable reported spontaneous cases. The goal has ever been to find a way to replicate these spectacular experiences under laboratory conditions. Card experiments were self-consciously devised as a very poor substitute which had as redeeming qualities relatively easy administration and statistical analysis. But the real objective remained unsatisfied.

Once the original definition of telepathy as "communication...from one mind to another independently of the recognized channels of sense" has been reinstated, one may look anew for natural instances of telepathy. The spontaneous case reports are perhaps an extreme of the phenomena, considered worthy of report by virtue of both their power and rarity, resulting in a self-selected database which can skew our conception of the varieties of telepathic communication. Yet if telepathy is a continuum phenomenon, and not a threshold one, and I am unaware of any evidence that forces one interpretation over the other, then perhaps our fascination for the grotesque has caused us to overlook more typical if less impressive manifestations. One such, I propose, is the phenomenon of charisma.

Charisma

The definition of telepathy does not specify at what level communication can occur. At whatever level, there does exist the empirical necessity that the communication be capable of producing an observable effect, a behavior of some sort, otherwise the alleged communication is irrelevant. This effect need not be conscious, nor need it be so ego-dystonic as to 'leap out' at the observers as anomalous. It need only be demonstrable. Charisma does fit within these broad parameters.

For most purposes, charisma may be defined as follows:

The quality of personal magnetism and the ability to appeal to and win the confidence of large numbers of diverse people (Goldman 1984:138).

A charismatic person gathers about himself, whether willfully or not, individuals who come to view the world, or at least an important aspect of it in a similar way. A relevant question here is whether these 'followers' initially share this perspective, or if they adopt it after exposure to the charismatic influence. I assume herein the answer to be, "Both," and the latter cases to be the ones of particular interest.

I am unprepared at this moment to argue empirically that demonstrable changes of world view do occur under charismatic influences. Bountiful anecdotal reports of such changes share both the value and limits of those of spontaneous telepathy. But already one sees an advantage of the former over the latter: there is no traditional telepathic equivalent to the charismatic influence of Hitler in Germany. None would deny the effect; the problem lies in identifying the cause. And while not everyone has experienced instances of telepathy, all have known moments of falling under someone's 'spell,' and of the changes such contact can effect if the influence persists.

Taking, then, as a given that charisma does effect a change, the questions to be asked are: 1) what are these changes; 2) what conditions are conducive to these changes; and 3) how does charisma compare against the definition of telepathy?

Phenomenologically, charisma is experienced as an affectively engaging encounter with another individual. Such encounters are not perceptively neutral; instead, the source of the influence typically is attributed to many of the 'halo effects' known to be associated with variables such as physical attractiveness (e.g., Patzer 1985). Charisma, however, is more than the confluence of positive evaluations attributed to possessors of socially desirable attributes. One does not necessarily subordinate himself to that which he esteems; more often than not such venerated objects are relegated to the periphery, regarded as being too pristine for actual social use.

Individuals are drawn toward, and elevate charismatic others to positions of leadership, both formal and informal. Such elevation is more than would be expected if the leader and follower simply share a common vision. Elevation depends on the leader being perceived to be uniquely endowed to actualize that ideal.

Many people exposed to charismatic influences do not initially share this goal-oriented vision. Instead, continued exposure compels the individual to accept this goal as his or her own. This, then, is the change wrought by charisma: one comes to view the world, or at least one part of it, through the eyes of the charismatic individual. Such source of change is to be discriminated from both intellectual persuasion and brainwashing mechanisms which produce similar effects but non-equivalent results.

Variables known to influence such charismatic encounters have been difficult to ascertain. Most of the literature on charisma has been generated by sociologists more concerned with large political scenarios than with the one-on-one which characterizes more mundane instances of charismatic interaction. From them, though, one component of the charismatic individual becomes apparent: unusually high self-confidence. Schweitzer (1984), for instance, when describing charismatic politicians, is compelled to use such descriptors as "much convinced of his personal destiny," "convinced of his vanguard mission and indispensability as a leader," "supremely confident," etc. (p. 4). This trait in itself serves to contradict temperament or personality type (Dow 1969:315), a claim which, if allowed to stand, would render charisma useless as a construct for laboratory research.

So how does charisma qualify for inclusion under telepathy?

First, as regards "communication": Communication implies the presence of information. The true impact of charisma, however, deals less with the informational content of world view, than with the relational structure of that world view. One is compelled, in other words, to see new things less often than to see old things in new ways. Thus subjects in a charismatic encounter are communicating, albeit at a level few traditional telepathy experiments are sensitive enough to recognize.

The model of charisma accomplishes the remainder of the definition -- "from one mind to another independently of the recognized channels of sense" -- as follows: The sheer power of the charismatic personality, based on extreme measures of self-confidence, attracts and bonds others in a symbiotic rapport (the use of energy terminology here is metaphor only, and should not be construed as explanation). Ideally, communication at this level is one-way only, from the charismatic individual to his followers. Interestingly, as early as 1917 Troland suggested that telepathic 'emission' and 'reception' ("active" and "passive," to use his terms), would be different processes; this model affirms the gist of this suggestion, adding to it the implication that each role in the communication event is best played by a particular type of person.

Significantly, nothing is transferred; instead, in this model, both players attain a state of identity, and the follower thus acquires the relevant relational information, and communication is effected. "Acquisition" is itself perhaps still too active: Once identity is achieved -- when all conditions are initialized -- both parties arrive at the same "thought" by independent extrapolation, and continue to do so until such time as the world views diverge and the extrapolations therefore cease to be equivalent.

Divergence may be a function of the proximity of other facets of the world view where the charismatic's influence does not hold.

Possible Worlds

This model, in addition to predicting that high charismatic persons will be better telepathic senders, also predicts that not all items are equally amenable to telepathic communication. Specifically, communication is achieved primarily in that facet of reality for which the charismatic leader can claim preeminence. Telepathic success will be highest, then, if the sender is asked to communicate items which are both relevant to his personal 'mission' and which pertain more to relations than to data. Giesler (1985) and Eisenberg and Donderi (1979) anticipate such restrictions when the first hypothesizes that PK scores will be higher if the target is a trance-significant symbol for the cult members serving as subjects. The second paper investigates the communication of emotions as opposed to data. Unfortunately, both papers suffer from design flaws which preclude the use of these experimental results as support for the stated hypothesis.

While charisma defines the type of person best suited to be a telepathic sender (contradicting the suggestion by Eisenberg and Donderi 1979:42), the constraints on the content of communication sketched above may be profitably explored via possible world theory as developed by philosophers and applied by linguists (cf. McCawley 1981). Successful communication of any sort entails the possession of common postulates about the world as regards the topic of conversation. This statement approximates the above description of charismatic interactions, and in the hands of competent scholars may provide the vocabulary and concepts necessary to formalize that construct. At this point, however, the picture seems to be one of the charismatic source forcing his or her postulates upon others; once these postulates have been accepted, identity is achieved on that dimension and communication becomes possible.

Once this model has been set in place, its ramifications must also be taken into account during telepathy experimentation. Successful telepathic communication would seem, in this model, to be a function of the number of commonly-held postulates about the world. Any situation or set of circumstances potentially increasing the number of these held postulates should increase instances of telepathic communication. This is a point of special interest and importance for sociologists and anthropologists.

Certainly the cases of spontaneous telepathy indicate an increased probability of communication with someone familiar as opposed to a total stranger, and thus may offer circumstantial support for the possible world articulation of charisma. Yet it should be noted that the database may be skewed in that, typically, only those events involving persons known to us can receive the confirmation needed which elevates a given incident from a vivid but meaningless impression to an instance of telepathic communication.

In this vein also, readiness to accept the postulates of others can be interpreted as an ability, if not a willingness, to disengage, at least temporarily, one's personal

contracts. This suggestion meshes well with that research which finds non-ordinary states of consciousness to be conducive to eliciting psi phenomena.

As an aside, it might be mentioned that if physics provided models for telepathy when it was thought to be an energy phenomena, linguistics should be consulted for the necessary tools when telepathy is understood to be a communication event.

Experimental Hypotheses

The above discussion is a first articulation of thoughts on the subject, and therefore suffers from overbroad generalization and poor representation of the potentially relevant literature. The inevitable confusion at this point might be clarified by an explicit statement of the specific hypotheses generated by the model. Therefore, during telepathy experimentation:

1) Pairs where one member scores higher on tests for charisma-related personality traits, such as the Affective Communication Test (Friedman et al. 1980), will do better than pairs where both persons score poorly;

2) Within any given pair, greater success will be realized when the subject high on charisma traits is sender as opposed to receiver;

3) Pairs where both members are from similar social and cultural backgrounds will test better than those from widely divergent backgrounds; and

4) Emotional states will be more successfully communicated than data items (e.g., ESP card symbols).

A further hypothesis which is related to this discussion, but which has not been directly addressed, may also be offered:

5) All things being equal, subjects scoring higher on empathy-related personality traits will better receive telepathic communications than those scoring lower.

These criteria suggest that telepathy is a communication event whose success is functionally related to the relative ranks of each member of the communicating pair on the relevant personality traits, and is not at all an ability one person possesses in all circumstances unless they are at the extreme end of one of the relevant traits.

The ideal experiment, then, which combines all of the above, would be structured as follows: A high charismatic communicates to a high empathic who shares a similar sociocultural background, on content important to the charismatic. Such experimentation should be considered to be 'successful' not simply if it yields statistically significant results, but only if these results are reliably reproducible and if the effect of communication varies in a consistent manner. It should go without saying that any applicable results obtained from work under earlier paradigms (e.g., the sheep-goat effect) should be carried over during research within this or any other new model to maximize results.

Quantum Models

As stated at the outset, the proposed model is based on observed effects -- communication and the behavioral and affective reactions to that communication -- and neither directly addresses nor presupposes answers to questions on mechanism. For this, I have found Walker's work with quantum mechanics (QM) to be most convincing. Briefly, he concludes that

in QM...(conscious) observation causes state vector collapse. Thus, we are led naturally to the possibility that observation can alter physical systems.

The QM theory of psi phenomena is based on the hypothesis that because state vector collapse can be regarded as arising from the interaction of the observer with the observed system, there exists some correlation between the states of physical systems as they occur and the conscious states of the observer. In this theory, consciousness and state vector collapse are two sides of the same thing, being related much the way action and reaction forces are related in Newtonian physics (1984:278).

In this same article he presents a list of implications of his model. Some profit may be had by comparing his ultimate quantum theory and the proposed proximate charisma model on several points of overlap. The object is to interweave the proposed model with the best results of earlier parapsychological research.

Presently there seems to be little reason to favor one model over the other should they come into conflict, especially as each deals with a different level of explanation. Still, the charisma model may be more amenable to experimentation than one concerned with the inner workings of quantum mechanics. While the failure of this model in such conflicts cannot logically translate into support for Walker's, its success could necessitate the latter's revision on these points.

These points of intersection are as follows:

1) Both models suggest that telepathy and precognition are the same phenomenon given different names. According to Walker,

since the process of state selection has spatial independence as a characteristic, the physical principle of Lorentz invariance in physics requires a corresponding temporal independence. This simply means that the time at which the target configuration within a state is prepared and the time at which the various observer events bring about the state selection do not enter as a physical parameter (1984:318).

The charisma model, on the other hand, asserts only that the relevant condition for telepathic communication is that of identity of shared postulates. Although one could claim that it is easier or more common that such identity occurs co-temporaneously between subjects, this stipulation is not a part of the model.

2) Both theories account for the lack of effect of shielding and of distance on telepathic communication, as in neither case is anything being transferred which can be blocked or which can weaken as it travels.

3) Discrepancy between the two arises when the charisma model requires the telepathic 'sender' and 'receiver' to be demonstrably different personality types playing complimentary roles. As it stands, Walker's quantum model forbids such differences.

4) A potential disjunction between the two models occurs regarding the relationship between PK and ESP. Walker states that

because both processes are explained by the same mechanism of observer state selection, under equivalent conditions of observation subjects should perform as well at one task as they do at another (1984:320).

Since Walker assumes that PK and ESP work according to the same mechanism, he therefore concludes that anyone who can do one can do the other. The charisma model, if it were so bold as to apply a similar initial assumption, requires that PK function by an identification of the subject with an inanimate object (cf. Rush 1976:21). If this is the case -- and I am not presently prepared to champion this extension of the model -- then those who can perform ESP feats will be markedly different from those for PK. Likewise, PK demonstrations should in fact be very much rarer than those of ESP, both conclusions based on the assumption that it is probably more difficult to identify with a ping-pong ball, for instance, than with your brother.

Conclusions

This paper opened by making some general criticisms of the state of parapsychological research: that it suffered from a lack of external validity and from uncritical acceptance of a flawed paradigm. The charisma model was offered as an attempt to rectify these problems. It allows for laboratory experiments to be designed which closely approximate genuine human interactions by shifting the paradigm for telepathy from that of energy transfers to one of communication events.

While it is hoped that the model is of some worth for future research, its principle role here is one of example. Alternative models are available, and are visible even to an uninitiated consumer such as myself. Parapsychologists should be encouraged to cast aside such models as they presently have in hand when they prove to be unproductive, and are deserving of the opprobrium of other scientists when they fail to do so.

The major benefit offered by the suggested charisma model is that it renders far more likely the opportunity of seeing telepathic events "on the hoof." Moreover, it enables experimental hypotheses and designs to be generated which can do all the work of those currently in place without sacrificing external validity. Any model with these features is capable of producing results useful to both parapsychology and anthropology. Experimental mastery of this low-grade case of telepathy should lead to better control and understanding of others, including the

elusive and spectacular spontaneous cases.

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Infinite Boundary: A Psychic Look at Spirit Possession, by D. Scott Rogo, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.), 1987. 317 pages, photos., tables, refs., index. \$17.95. Reviewed by **Ralph B. Allison**, M.D., Psychiatrist, Morrow Bay, California

My attempt to review this book objectively was hampered by finding that I am quoted liberally in Chapter 13 (naturally!). My one interview with Mr. Rogo was for an article in an obscure magazine, and I had no idea he was writing a book of this nature. I told him of some of my weirder cases as a therapist of multiple personality patients, and now I found them listed here for all to read. He quoted me quite correctly, but my major criticism is that I did not have a chance to elaborate and answer questions he raised in the text but not with me. Had I seen these very brief case reports in context in his manuscript, I could have explained my ideas and filled in the gaps in his attempts to understand this very confusing area.

In this attempt to describe a complex history of psychic investigation to a general public, he inevitably had to exclude data which might be helpful to another researcher, but exceeds the publisher's word-count. This editing is what most hampers the story from being told; there is just too much to cover and keep it within 317 pages.

The first part is primarily the story of James H. Hyslop, the primary executive officer of the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) in the early 1900's, and his search for truth when confronted by individuals who felt controlled by the spirits who made them become artists. First comes Ferderic Thompson who feels forced to paint by the deceased Robert Swain Gifford. The main

Margins of Reality: The Role of Consciousness in the Physical World, by Robert G. Jahn and Brenda J. Dunne, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) 1987. 415 pages, \$27.95 hardcover. L.C. 87-10041. ISBN 0-15-157148-1. Reviewed by **Joseph K. Long**, Plymouth State College, Plymouth, N.H.

This is a massive compilation and summary of a decade of experimentation in the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research program and of several centuries of writing in theoretical physics, mechanical and electrical engineering, psychology, and philosophy as they relate to reality and consciousness. It is really several separate books, not all of which I understand well; this review is just a cursory comment on some of the main points.

Jahn is a Professor of Aerospace Sciences and Dean Emeritus of the School of Engineering and Applied Science at Princeton University. Dunne is manager of the Princeton Anomalies Research Laboratory. Hence, the most important research data are those most directly related to statistical interpretations and the mechanical and electrical functioning of machines. For

investigators are professional mediums through whom the spirit communicates with Hyslop. Then we meet S. Henry, who goes psychotic after repeated out-of-body experiences. Next comes Etta De Camp who becomes a so-so writer courtesy of the long gone Frank Stockton.

My favorite story is that of Doris Fischer, with multiple personalities, and her therapist and foster father, Rev. Walter F. Prince. Here I was happy to find so much detail about a case that has only been briefly mentioned in our literature, and her clinical presentation so mimics that of my early cases, I felt that Rev. Prince and I were kindred spirits. The sad part is that the patient could not maintain her improvement after her therapist's death, and that is a lesson for all of us.

The stories of Drs. Titus Bull, Carl Wickland, and Elwood Worcester complete the historical aspects of this book. Next come present day therapists and psychical researchers, such as our friend, Matthew Bronson, Dr. M. Scott Peck, and Dr. Jule Eisenbud. Here he is at his best, since the reporters are or have been actively involved in this work, and Rogo shows his personal reaction to the paradoxes described.

The latter section is the attempt by Rogo to make some sense out of all this material, much of it second and third hand information. He has the good sense to accept one answer for one case and a different answer for another, not dismissing any theory outright as ridiculous, and yet being reasonably skeptical about how any piece of data can be explained. I will not ruin your reading this worthwhile book by telling you his conclusions. He publishes it at a time of popularity of channelers in the public arena, all requesting our attention and belief. *The Infinite Boundary* makes an important contribution to our coping with and understanding these phenomena.

anthropologists familiar with the literature of parapsychology and quantum mechanics the importance of such materials from a pragmatic standpoint (e.g., the functioning of computers, automobiles, movie cameras and projectors, etc.) is obvious. Human interaction with machinery is not "just nuts and bolts." Rather, it is a cooperative venture between machine and person. Functioning of the expert video game player may or may not be a purely "brain" operation, but the frequent saying, "be one with the machine," is an appropriate expression for the probable psychokinetic effects of the human mind on our machines.

The entire first section of the book (pp. 1-85) consists of a ponderous introduction which reads like a Ph.D. dissertation and is certain to discourage scholars who are not already familiar with the materials (and to impress more knowledgeable ones as being trivial and sophomoric).

The second section (pp. 85-148) includes important discussions of the research design and plan (to release results only in completed book form), use of binary