

A PSYCHOLOGY OF TELEPATHY

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On a night in April, 1955, a sixteen year old girl, whom I shall call Luisa, dreamed that the mother of her fiance, Guido, had on her finger a silver ring on which were strange signs resembling hieroglyphics. The ring could be opened and could therefore, as she thought, contain a scent. On awakening Luisa related the dream to her own mother. A few hours later she phoned Guido and began telling him the dream. In great excitement, Guido responded that he had just returned to Rome from Milan where he had bought for his mother a ring perfectly fitting her description.

Luisa and Guido are intimately known to me. The circumstances were told me immediately following the phone call and I took accurate notes. I asked Luisa and Guido to check them, and they were found perfectly correct.

There is little doubt that we have here an unusually well-witnessed case of spontaneous telepathetic communication. The odds against chance can hardly be calculated.

Luisa and Guido are deeply in love, but their engagement has not been made public because of their youth and because Guido has not yet attained a convenient social and financial position. Luisa is eager to become formally engaged and to receive an engagement ring. Her father had died when she was an infant, she was brought up by her mother and three aunts, so that no male had any role in her childhood. Her mother remarried when Luisa was eleven.

It is obvious, in psychoanalytic terms, that Luisa's

Oedipus complex was little elaborated. She is jealous of Guido's attachment for his mother, and his purchase of a ring for the mother, while he bought for Luisa only a pair of earrings, showed his meaningful preference for his mother. At this point their psychological situation presented a typical "dove-tailing," due to the interweaving of their own patterns of relation. The idea of the ring had become the focus of the relation, while distance and psychological obstacles prevented it from being the object of conscious interpersonal communication. Through telepathy these obstacles were somehow overthrown and Luisa was able to establish a temporary syntony between herself and Guido, merging an unconscious, unitary psychic world which comprised them both. So in the dream she was able to express her unsurmounted rivalry toward a motherly figure and possibly a retrospective hostility to her own mother for having experienced engagement and marriage, while Luisa had not. She was thus able to tell Guido and her mother that she was "informed" of the "wrongs" done her.

This confirms work begun before the last war with some contributions by Freud, Istvan Hollos and myself, and more lately pursued by others, including Jan Ehrenwald, Jule Eisenbud and Nandor Fodor. The main theme of this research may be thus summarized: Spontaneous phenomena involving extrasensory perception are much less "spontaneous" than one might have thought, say thirty years ago; so much so, that in several cases it has been possible to ascertain that ESP was "conditioned," if not actually provoked, by the fact that the subjects of the experience had been involved in a very definite pattern of interpersonal relations.

In a paper presented to the International Psycho-Analytical Congress at Geneva in July, 1955, I developed the idea that the main features of such conditioning—what in psychoanalytic terms we call a "transference-countertransference relationship"—should not be considered as

being restricted to the analytical situation. "Transference," as a universal phenomenon underlying human communication, may promote under certain conditions the re-activation of more primitive mechanisms of communication.