

SOME PSI EXPERIMENTS WITH MATTHEW MANNING

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During the last week of May 1977, a number of exploratory psi experiments were undertaken with Mr. Matthew Manning¹ at the University of California, Davis. Generally speaking, these experiments provided little evidence of psi, but there were results in some of the experiments that were suggestive of psi, especially displacement effects. These experiments will be reported in various articles authored by the persons primarily responsible for given segments of the projects. In this report we will discuss those experiments initiated by C.T.T.

COIN SPINNER EXPERIMENT

Matthew, as he prefers to be called, completed three 50-trial runs on a PK device where the subject's task is to make a spinning silver dollar fall either "heads" or "tails". This device is described in detail elsewhere (Tart, *et al*, 1972). Matthew completed two successive runs on 25 May and one run on the 26th. After the third run, he became discouraged and stated that he felt no particular affinity or talent for the device. At this point, the experimenters decided to stop testing with this machine unless Matthew asked to resume such testing, which he never did.

The procedure for all three runs was essentially the same. For each trial, C.T.T. placed the silver dollar in its holder and activated the machine. Matthew stood alongside the machine concentrating on the coin, attempting to make it fall the specified way. A small plexiglass face shield and a shock-absorbing bumper prevented any breath currents or bodily movements affecting the coin-spinning apparatus.

For the first two runs, heads was the target for the first 25 trials and tails for the last 25 trials. This order was reversed for the third run. For the first and third runs, the coin was always placed in the holder

¹ We want to thank Matthew Manning for his generous donation of time and effort that made this research possible.

with the "heads" side straight up and facing C.T.T. This procedure was reversed for the second run.

Matthew obtained 73 hits over the three runs, which is two less than MCE. Thus there was no evidence of psi according to this straightforward measure.

However, there was a secondary effect worthy of note. Prior to Matthew's visit, 16 50-trial control runs were completed on the machine to check for coin bias. These runs were completed by four individuals: eight by Irene Segrest (I.S.), four by C.T.T., two by Steven Goldfinger (S.G.) and two by J.P.² Two additional runs were completed by I.S. about five weeks after Matthew left. Which side of the coin was facing the experimenter was alternated from run to run throughout. The coin showed a consistent tails bias during these control tests of the 18 total runs, the number of tails exceeded the number of heads in 16 of them. The two exceptions were runs completed by I.S. prior to Matthew's visit. Across the 900 trials there were 400 heads and 500 tails, for a 55.6 per cent tails bias, a clearly significant bias compared to the assumption of equiprobability ($CR = -3.30$, corrected for continuity, $p < 0.001$)³. This bias was quite consistent over runs, as is shown by using a t -test with the run as the unit of analysis ($t = 4.31$, $df = 17$, $p < 0.001$). We knew this tails bias existed before beginning the study, but considered it irrelevant in ascertaining Matthew's ability deliberately to influence the spinning coin to fall heads or tails because of our balanced alternation of target faces.

To our surprise, we discovered in retrospect that the coin showed an overall *heads* bias during the three runs where Matthew was trying to influence it. The number of heads on these runs were 31, 25, and 28, respectively, for a total of 84 heads, a 56 per cent heads bias, exactly opposite the 55.6 per cent tails bias we had in control runs. On the (mistaken) assumption of equiprobability of heads and tails, this is a suggestive deviation ($CR = 1.39$, corrected for continuity), not so consistent over runs as to be significant by a t -test ($t = -1.73$, $df = 2$). It is a significant difference from the control runs, however, using either a CR test of the difference ($CRD = 2.62$, $p < 0.02$) or a t -test ($t = -3.35$, $df = 19$, $p < 0.01$).

A runs test was performed on the control sequences to test for dependency biases. Although there were four occasions fairly close together where a given face appeared eight times in succession, the overall runs test was non-significant. Thus there was no significant evidence of dependency bias on the coin spinner.

A possible criticism of our protocol concerns the fact that testing of

² The first 12 trials of one of these runs was completed by C.T.T.

³ All p values in this paper are two-tailed.

Matthew was stopped arbitrarily after three runs. While this technically represents "optimal stopping", we can state unequivocally that the reason for termination of the series was solely the failure to obtain encouraging results in the sense of target hits. At the time the decision to terminate was made, we had not appreciated the implications of the reversal of coin bias, or even that such a reversal had in fact occurred.

In conclusion, it is our interpretation that Matthew's presence and/or efforts somehow resulted in a reversal of the coin's normal tails bias. This would not stem from consciously controlled PK, as the balancing of conditions would have equalized out any effect on overall coin bias. As such overall bias was not the objective of the experiment, we interpret it as an example of displaced PK. Such displaced PK seems consistent with Matthew's background as a focus of poltergeist activity.

ESP FEEDBACK TRAINING

Since our laboratory was set up with equipment for ESP feedback training at the time of Matthew's visit, and since Matthew had expressed some interest in this type of training, we decided to test him on it in an exploratory way. Since we had not seen any evidence that his apparent psychic abilities were of the type that specifically worked well on a repeated guessing procedure, we could not make a definite prediction that his initial talent level would be high enough for us to expect clear learning, in accordance with the requirements of the theory (Tart, 1966; 1976; 1977).

On 25-27 May, Matthew served as percipient for 30 20-trial runs on ADEPT, a machine designed for training of forced-choice ESP. A random event generator selects one of 10 numbers which is presented to an agent on a circular display. The percipient, located in a different room, makes his response on a similar display and receives immediate feedback of the correct target after each trial. Because the automated recording feature of ADEPT was not functioning at this time, targets, responses, and hits had to be recorded by hand. ADEPT is described in detail elsewhere (Redington and Tart, 1976; Tart, Palmer, and Redington, 1979). C. T. T., J.P., and Dana Redington (D.R.) all served as agent for some of the runs.

There was no evidence of overall ESP or of an increase in scoring rate across the 30 runs. Matthew obtained 56 hits overall, where 60 would be expected by chance ($CR = 0.48$). The highest score he obtained on any single run was six.

Matthew served as sender for eight runs during the three-day

testing period. C.T.T., J.P., and D.R. each served as percipients on some runs. The percipients obtained a total of 11 hits where 16 is expected by chance, again a non-significant result.

It might be mentioned that 25 of the 30 runs were conducted on one day, 27 May. Matthew became increasingly frustrated with the machine and would do several runs in rapid succession. At times he became obsessed with the apparent tendency of the machine to be biased toward producing a particular target number. Although the overall target sequence did not depart significantly from randomness, such "local" non-randomicity is a possibility that is difficult either to verify or to refute statistically.

AURA DETECTION PILOT STUDY

Matthew frequently sees auras around people, so after discussion of the issues involved, he and C.T.T. agreed to do a preliminary test along the lines of the "doorway test" described in a methodological article elsewhere (Tart, 1972).

Matthew picked a student assistant, Thom Whitson (T.W.), whom he described as having a large steady, and clearly perceptible aura around him. By having this assistant slowly move through a doorway at the end of a hall, we further ascertained that Matthew was sure he could still see T.W.'s aura sticking out around the edge of the doorway after T.W. was physically out of sight but standing just beyond the edge of the doorway.

We then did an agreed upon run of 10 trials. On half of the 10 trials, according to a random schedule, the target person, T.W., would be standing close to the edge of the doorway, where his aura would presumably extend out into the hall where Matthew could see it. On the other half of the trials he would stay much further in the room where his aura would presumably not extend out far enough to be detectable. While noise was used to mask any sounds from movements, and C.T.T. was stationed at a more advantageous vantage point than that of Matthew to be sure no part of T.W.'s physical body was visible on trials.

In spite of the apparently favourable psychological conditions, Matthew was only correct half the time in identifying T.W.'s position, a chance result. He was discouraged by these results and did not wish to continue. While these results are not totally incompatible with some kind of psychic component to the aura, they certainly argue that Matthew's experience of perceiving an aura around people is not a matter of detecting something that is "objectively" located in the space immediately adjacent to a person's body.

DISCUSSION

The unexpected PK results are the most solid ones in these brief series with Matthew and are psychologically consistent with his reported poltergeist background, that is, a picture of psychic ability which is not directly accessible to conscious control but which can manifest in unexpected fashions. The work with ADEPT was also unusual in that the device seemed to show an enormous variety of transient malfunctions, consistent with a poltergeist type of manifestation, but our observations on this unexpected phenomenon were too unsystematic for us to offer them as more than a casual observation at this time. We believe that further work with Matthew might be profitable in yielding information about psi phenomena, especially if systematic ways of assessing unexpected results are found.

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