Telepathy

Can humans communicate by their thoughts alone? From more than a 100 years ago experiments on telepathy have divided the scientific community. Today it is still a controversy among top scientists.

Since the 1970s, parapsychologists at leading universities and research institutes around the world have been mocked by sceptical colleagues for putting the various claims for telepathy to the test in many rigorous scientific studies. The results and their implications are dividing even the researchers who discovered them.

Some researchers say the results contain strong evidence that telepathy is real. Other parapsychologists believe the field is on the brink of collapse, because they failed to produce definitive scientific evidence. Sceptics and advocates alike do agree on one issue: that the most impressive evidence so far has come from the 'ganzfeld' experiments, a German term that means 'whole field'.

Reports of telepathic experiences experienced by people while meditating lured parapsychologists to suspect that telepathy might involve 'signals' passing between people that were so faint that they were usually lost by normal brain activity. In such cases these signals might be more easily detected by those performing meditation-like tranquillity in a relaxing 'whole field' of light, sound and warmth.

In the ganzfeld experiment, they try to recreate these conditions with participants sitting in soft reclining chairs in a sealed room, listening to relaxing sounds, eyes covered with special filters and letting in only pink light. In the early ganzfeld experiments in 1980, the telepathy experiment involved identifying a picture from a group of 4 taken from a larger group of images. The idea was that a person acting as the 'sender' would attempt to send the image over to the 'receiver' in the sealed room.

After the session, this person was asked to identify which of the 4 images had been used. Random guessing would give a hit-rate of 25%; if telepathy is real, however, the hit-rate would be higher. In 1982, the results from the first ganzfeld studies were analysed by the American parapsychologist Charles Honorton. They pointed to typical hit-rates of more than 30% - a small effect, but one which statistical tests say could not be put down to chance.

Questions 1 - 4

Look at the following Questions 1-4 and the list of the statements below. Match each

statement with the correct one

Write the correct letter A-E on your answer sheet.

NB You may use any letter more than once.

1) Years since the telepathic experiments started

2) Year when first results of ganzfeld experiments were analysed by Charles Honorton

3) Year when early ganzfeld experiments started

4) Year when parapsychologists stated putting claims for telepathy

A) 1970

B) 1980

C) 1982

D) 1970

E) 1992

F) 100