

Of Mice and Mind, or The Sorcerer's Apprentice: A Cautionary Tale

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ABSTRACT: An analysis is made of a series of current events corresponding in interesting ways with a precognitive dream of a patient in psychoanalytic therapy more than 30 years earlier. By way of attempting to account for the coincidences involved, liberal speculative use is made of extended cognitive and kinetic psi hypotheses, including that of telepathic influence on both humans and mice. Conceivable entailments are discussed.

The following is an account of a series of current events relateable to a presumptively psi-influenced dream that took place over 30 years ago. Because of these events I feel behooved to resurrect (a singularly apt term, as it will turn out) the dream and its analysis. The dream was originally reported in my book *Paranormal Foreknowledge: Problems and Perplexities* (Eisenbud, 1982). It opened a chapter titled "Time and Tide," in which the importance of the contexts in which ostensibly precognitive (or what I prefer to call *chronologically extraordinary*) dreams are embedded was emphasized. Also dealt with in the chapter was the significance of a kind of symmetry that I had often observed in psi-conditioned (or psi-influenced) dreams occurring during analysis, that is, the dual reference of information presumed to have been paranormally acquired, one relating to the dreamer's affairs and a second to my own. Because a third reference to events normally inaccessible to both the dreamer and me (e.g., in a newspaper still in press) could also sometimes be related either directly to the first two paranormally acquired dream elements or to the dream's latent content, I termed this three-way manifestation of the all-encompassing transference situation the "triangulation phenomenon." I came to believe that the total context of every dream in the presumptively psi-conditioned category had to be carefully scrutinized for these *double* (or triple) *entendre* "day's residues." In my analysis of such dreams, real time chronology was disregarded to the extent that relevant residues deriving from events occurring *after* the dream were provisionally assigned a dynamic status equal to that of those preceding the dream.

I am fully aware, of course, that dream analysis is not the average parapsychologist's preferred type of reading, any more, for that matter, than is the type of speculative hypothecation I shall pursue. Nevertheless, I

strongly feel that certain features of the events herein recounted make it highly appropriate that I bring them to the attention of the present forum.

Now to the dream, that of an analytic patient in her late thirties, dated 12-2-57. It is reproduced here, together with my analysis of its parapsychologically interesting features, directly from *Paranormal Foreknowledge* (Eisenbud, 1982) as follows, beginning with the dream:

It is as if I am an intern in a hospital. I am in a long white coat and someone tells me that two families are waiting for me. I recall that I have made an appointment to examine a child in each family. I am angry because it is late. One family turns out to be apples, or to have heads like apples. I have to take off the head (which is an apple) of a little girl and put it back on again. Someone helps me by taking the head and carrying it to another place. As he does this he throws me a piece of apple to eat, and I find it very juicy and delicious. Then he dresses the head by patting a cinnamon and pastry mixture on the stump. The other family is composed of small animals or rodents, and I am supposed to autopsy one of the children who is a rodent. I tell somebody that I'll be with them in a few minutes, but I can't see how I'll get through in such a short time.

The multiple references to time in the manifest content of this dream is obviously one of its chief features. People are waiting. The dreamer has made an appointment. She is angry because it is late. She tells someone that she will be with them in a few minutes, but she can't see how she can get through in such a short time. A reference to time somewhere in the manifest content is often found in psi-conditioned dreams of the ordinary (nonprecognitive) variety (Eisenbud, 1970, Chapter 9), but rarely with this urgency. Here one can almost hear a clock ticking away relentlessly in the background. With such an oppressive sense of time in the dream's manifest content, it would be surprising if time in one or more of its many guises did not figure prominently in its latent content.

There was little difficulty in identifying the central problem with which the patient was attempting to deal in her dream. On the day before the dream she had been to dinner at the home of a friend whose plump, rosy-cheeked little children had always reminded her of apples. The patient resented the way in which this friend never seemed to lose an opportunity to point up her own bustling fertility in contrast to the patient's childlessness, and on this occasion, too, by way of excusing the lateness of the dinner, she had said something like, "You know how it is when you have always to run after the little ones." The patient, a divorcee for several years, was getting on toward middle age with (she feared) fast-dwindling prospects of children of her own. ("I am angry because it is too late.") To add to her desperation, a man whom she had once had some hopes of marrying had married someone else the day before.

I suspected that the dream must in some way represent a kind of

mourning for all the children the patient had never had (and had done away with in her unconscious fantasy). In response to my question of when she expected her next period, the patient at first claimed that for several months she had paid little attention to the calendar, but when I pointed out the obvious concern behind this attempt at denial she began to experience premenstrual pains on the spot and estimated that she must be just about due. (She was.)

Then the patient brought up three items that seemed to her to connect with the dream. The first was an incident that happened just after she was married, and brought together the cinnamon and pastry mixture reference in the dream with the question of childlessness (and, in a peculiar way, with the item "head"). She was in the pantry of her family home helping her father, who always did the baking and made the pastries for the family, when she found herself saying musingly to him, "Maybe next year you will have a boy." "Oh," pooh-poohed her father, "not you. You always have your head in a book."

The next two items the patient had seen in the newspaper on the day of the dream. Insofar as these seemed clearly to provide links to the dream's latent thoughts, they bore out my presumption that the dream in some way represented her wish to resurrect magically all the potential children who, in her menses, had gotten away from her.

The first item was in an article on ghost stories. It told of a visitor to a lonely country estate in China a long time ago who awoke one day to find a beautiful woman sitting at the dressing table in his room. Suddenly she lifted her head from her shoulders and set it down on the table. The terrified visitor rushed from the room and told what he had seen to four strangers playing mahjong in the next room. To his horror, each of these then did the same thing.

The second newspaper item was a publicity piece on a movie soon to be released. I later obtained a copy for reference and found that it had been faithfully reported by the patient: "ESP, the initials by which Extra Sensory Perception is known, is coming to the screen. This mysterious power to bridge death, distance, time and all the natural limitations that man is heir to is a force in 20th Century-Fox's 'The Gift of Love.' The movie was reported to deal with the childless marriage of a scientist and a woman who has not long to live, but who conceals this from her husband because of the distress this might cause him. She persuades him to adopt a little girl, as this is 'the gift of love' she wishes to leave him. After her death, the scientist feels cheated and, infuriated by the child's strange imaginings, he takes her back to the orphanage. That night he has a premonition that the child is missing, whereupon he rushes out and manages to rescue her just as she is on the point of drowning.

Both items clearly may be construed as having provided grist for

the milling of the dream's latent thoughts. The ghost story is a macabre link to the children's "decapitation" (as well as an implicit denial of aggression: "Tush, it's nothing but an unbelievable ghost story"), while the piece about the movie provides a complementary theme of undoing and restitution. Significantly, it happens to be in connection with the theme of childlessness (and death).

An additional link between the movie and the dream can be glimpsed in another item the patient brought into association with her dream. Some days before the dream another of the patient's friends, childless because of an early hysterectomy, complained to the patient of the miserable treatment she had received at the hands of an adopted son, who had completely neglected her since his marriage some time before. She had finally decided to sever relations with the ingrate. "Kaput!" she put it to the patient, with a gesture indicating the severance. Here we see links between childlessness, adoption (as in the movie), and "decapitation" (severing heads and relations). We also see the abandonment of an adopted child, as in the movie.

Now comes the dream's precognitive element, which we should not be too surprised to encounter at this juncture, what with the multiple references to time in the dream's manifest content and the representation in one of the basic sources of the dream of "the mysterious power to bridge death, distance, time and all the natural limitations man is heir to." The fulfillment—this time occurring some hours after the dream—came in an incident that, in my experience, provides as elegant a triangulation as can be imagined (as I was happy at this point to announce to the patient).

At about 9:30 on the morning after the patient's dream (and several hours after the latest time the dream could possibly have occurred), I entered my daughter's room to work at her desk. There, lying a bit bloodied on the carpet, I saw a mouse that seemed to have had its back broken in a trap that was lying sprung about three feet away. The mouse, still alive, had apparently managed to crawl to where it lay all hunched up, but it was now unable to move. The line of the trap clamp was perfectly visible on its back. Somewhat upset, I decided to put the creature out of its misery in the only way I could think of. I filled a preserve jar with water, picked up the mouse by its tail and dropped it in, expecting that it would sink immediately. To my dismay it began frantically thrashing about, squeaking piteously. Deciding on the spot to give the thing a second chance (these were my actual thoughts), I quickly poured the water from the jar and took the "wee one" out to the ash pit, thinking that if it had sufficient vitality to escape from the open door of the pit, well and good, whereas if it had not it would probably have expired by night time when the pit was ignited. Thoughts passed through my mind

like "Who am I to dispose of these events? If the Lord is willing to grant this poor thing a second chance, why can't I?"

When I told the patient of this incident, which I did because it so clearly seemed to connect not only with the rodent element in her dream but also with what she had told me about the ESP movie involving a child who, like the mouse, had been given a second chance by being rescued from drowning, the patient reported a source for the "small animal" element in her dream's manifest content that she had up until then not mentioned. Shortly before she left her friend's house after dinner on the evening of the dream, this friend, true to her habit of always managing to make reference to her great maternal instincts (as the patient reported it), recalled a curious incident of a few days earlier. She had been unusually harrassed one morning getting the children off to school and was just about to sit down to collect herself upon her return when the front doorbell rang. On the doorstep, in a little box, she found a scrawny newborn kitten which, apparently, someone had decided to give "the great mother" rather than drown. After some struggle, she finally took the kitten to the Dumb Friend's League with the feeling that she had saved the creature's life after all. She concluded her story, much to the patient's dismay, with "Next I suppose they'll be leaving a baby on my doorstep."

Here, of course, is a missing link between the "small animal" in the dream's manifest content, my "small animal" experience, and the rescue from drowning of the child in the movie who, like the kitten, was a kind of foundling.

Additional confirmation through triangulation of the dream's latent thoughts was provided by an element from my experience which, though not in itself in the precognitive mode, dovetailed dynamically with everything thus far. For purely personal reasons (and since in any case the dream was pretty well understood by this time) I elected not to impart this confirmation to the patient. On the afternoon before the patient's dream my children and I were teasing my wife about propositions she had had made to her the day before on a ski outing, and had jokingly suggested that if a good one turned up she ought to consider it. Laughingly, my wife said that she wasn't interested in making a change at her time of life, that all she was waiting for now (casting a pointed glance at my daughter, just two weeks shy of 20) were grandchildren. My daughter, who had just been given a miserable time by her little brother and was also at the moment fed up with her current boyfriend, snapped that she would never have any children if she could help it. It was on the tip of my tongue to reply that this might be the best choice, and that she couldn't imagine what trouble she would thereby avoid, when I checked myself and said nothing. The thought had come to me that

perhaps my daughter was not too eager for children after all, and that such a remark might just be the thing to reinforce her attitude. Thus, here too, in the form of a second thought, was the idea of a second chance. And the fantasy that I had "rescued" my daughter's child could of course, as a psi-perceived element, have played in with the dream's latent wish that I, like a powerful *Deus ex machina*, could also rescue the patient's children (or at least chances of children).

The final and perhaps indispensable element in the dream's latent thoughts arose out of the patient's dread of the imminent termination of her analysis. Although actual termination was nowhere in sight, she had brought the subject up in the session immediately before the dream. (Her anxiety on this score could have been provoked by several things, not the least of which was envy of her fertile friend: "Will I be dismissed from analysis before having children?") Oddly enough, on the evening of the dream I had been reading Wilhelm Stekel's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1943) and was full of admiration on the one hand for Stekel's brilliance in this area, while critical, on the other, of his custom of terminating analyses by picking quarrels with his patients. (This I recalled from something I had read years before.) Once again, at all events, the theme of abandonment can be seen in the background. It is as if the patient had picked this up and, weaving it together with her other anxieties, was concerned lest I get strange ideas about termination from Stekel. A peculiar link between this and the movie in which the adopted child is sent back to the orphanage (Is not every patient in analysis an adopted child?) is that the name of the actor who played the father who first abandoned and then rescued the child was Stack. Was I, then, going to be a Stekel—or a Stack, the ultimately forgiving father? (pp. 47–52)

The analysis of the dream just given would have to be regarded as incomplete because it was carried only so far as was necessary to elucidate the dream's main theme and its chronologically extraordinary features. It will be noted that in my analysis I made use of an unrestricted psi hypothesis in presupposing that the patient was capable of unconsciously acquiring information extrasensorially from any conceivable source, past, present, or future. I felt that such an approach, which would have obvious advantages from an analytical standpoint, was warranted in view of the fact that nowhere in the mountains of meaningful extrasensorially linked correspondences that support the general psi hypothesis have any restrictive barriers been persuasively demonstrated to exist. Thus, there was no bar to my hypothesizing that the patient was somehow unconsciously aware of my distress over my daughter's statement that she would never have any children if she could help it, and of my having been reading Stekel's (1943) *Interpretation of Dreams* a few hours before the patient's dream. As to the mouse "rescue" that was to take place several hours

after the dream, this was treated simply as a chronologically extraordinary residue of as yet unspecified causal origin since at this point in *Paranormal Foreknowledge* the question of how to deal theoretically with such events had not yet been addressed.

The present paper arises out of a recent set of events that bears a certain correspondence to elements in the latent content of the dream just presented. About 8 p.m. on the evening of January 28, 1989, my wife and I were discussing our latest household problem. For 2 or 3 days we had been catching fleeting glimpses of mice scurrying about on the first floor of our house, a situation that, to the best of our recollection, we had not had to confront for perhaps the past 20 years (or more, since we had moved to our present abode 28 years before without, as far as we could remember, any mice in tow). My wife was disturbed enough to suggest that we immediately set out traps, but I opposed this on the grounds that such a procedure would be cruel and bloody, especially if the trap failed to make a clean and timely strike. I actually had in mind, although I did not mention this to my wife until the following day, the mangled "wee one" (these words were actually in my mind) of the incident of some years earlier described in the dream account just given. Besides, I maintained, instituting traps—of which, in any case, we had not a single one in the house—would deprive our little cat, now a month shy of her 17th birthday, of her rightful due. As it was, Sonya (the cat) had already presented us in the past 2 days with three small specimens, undisturbed except for their lifelessness. She left them, as I have been told cats are wont to do (and as Sonya does with birds in season), in places, such as the foot of the stairs, where her achievement could hardly fail to invite attention. This I reminded my wife, was her "love offering."

The next morning, Sunday, on looking through *TV Guide* I was astonished to see that the movie "The Gift of Love" was to be shown at 1:30 that afternoon. I immediately alerted my wife to the curious coincidence this presented, all the more intriguing in that I had tried for years to find this picture, mentioned in my account of the dream reported in *Paranormal Foreknowledge*, but had never before been successful in spotting one of its performances, either in a movie or on TV, or even in video rental versions. Indeed, I was never sure that the picture, so proudly presented in the publicity release mentioned in my account, had actually been released. And here, now, it was. (I had never tried to ascertain whether the picture had or had not ever been released because the important thing, so far as my account went, was the publicity release, not the picture.)¹

¹ I did not get to see the entire "Gift of Love" on this occasion for I found, when I turned on my TV at 1:30 p.m., that another picture entirely was being shown. By the time I got the matter straightened out (two channel numbers were mixed up in the *TV Guide* listing), a good part of the picture had already been aired. I picked it up just as the husband was told that his wife was incurably ill and before the adoption (of an insufferably "cutie" brat) had occurred. Thus, as far as my quest went, time was irretrievably lost for at least one half an hour.

From the moment I discovered "The Gift of Love" listed in our TV Guide, the question arose of its possible relevance to the coincidentally appearing mouse problem and to the dream of many years before in which these elements had figured. Intuitively, I did not (for reasons I will get to later) consider this a possible influence on the elaboration of that dream, but other hypotheses immediately came flooding into my mind, including, of course, that of chance. However, after putting a bare account of the events in question into my word processor and briefly making note of a few additional thoughts on factors that could conceivably relate to a possible psychological matrix involved in the coincidence, I decided to put the matter aside in order to let it ripen in my mind. I fleetingly considered bringing these new developments to the attention of the patient whose dream had started things off in the first place, but I quickly pushed this idea aside as of questionable value (and dubious propriety).

This, then, is where matters stood when, about 4 p.m. a few days later (February 2), I finally sat down at my word processor to try to conquer what I now suspected to be some deep-lying resistance to getting on with the affair, which I now felt more strongly than ever to have been somehow psi-conditioned. (The detectable presence of mice, by the way, seemed to have ceased with Sonya's third offering, which had occurred on January 28th.) I was barely 10 minutes into this task when I answered my phone to find on the other end, to my complete astonishment, none other than the former patient whose dream had started it all. She was calling, she said, from a small Canadian town, some hundreds of miles distant, where she had been residing for some time. According to both our recollections it had been more than 20 years since I had last heard from her, and I had no inkling of the fact that she no longer lived in Denver. She could not explain her call other than to state that she had just taken it into her head to get in touch with me.

With this dramatic new entry into the situation, it seemed to me more imperative than ever that, for better or worse, I try to overcome my resistance to getting on with a full investigation of as many factors possibly related to the coincidence as I could dredge up.

With regard to the data thus far reported, assuming that my taking note of the series of coincidences under consideration is in itself sufficient to warrant their further investigation, three hypothetical approaches can be entertained: (a) the events were entirely due to chance (of which so-called synchronicity, as I conceive of it, is at the most only a special case);² (b)

² There is virtually no limit to which the chance hypothesis cannot be stretched by those looking for a convenient dustbin for unwelcome hypotheses. As for synchronicity, practically no one, beginning with Jung himself (the originator of the term), has ever attempted to structure events ascribed to this peculiar concept in terms of causal determinants such as those considered in this paper (Eisenbud, 1970, 1975b, 1982, 1985; see also Schwarz, 1971, 1979). If anyone had, utilizing the hypotheses of unconscious motivation, unrestricted psi capacities, and psi influence at a distance—the last two of which ought rightly to be consid-

fraud; the possibilities here are endless but can be boiled down largely to my deliberately misreporting or wholly inventing the data; (c) psi-mediated activity on someone's part.

Although the first approach, in which the events are seen as entirely due to chance, is an obvious option, I chose to bypass it because if it is accorded front-runner status at the start it is an uninteresting and sterile approach. It tends automatically to discourage further investigation and, in so doing, runs the risk of sacrificing potentially significant data.

The second approach, that of fraud, is divisible into two parts: specifiable fraud and fraud in the abstract. The first part can be dealt with if and when testable hypotheses relating to such a possibility arise; it thus does not concern us at this moment. The second part, fraud in the abstract, is merely judgment by fiat and need not be accorded serious consideration. For those, then, who at least provisionally elect not to adopt either of the first two approaches, this leaves the third alternative, namely, psi-influenced behavior on some living entity's part.

At this point it might be helpful to return to the original series of events reported in *Paranormal Foreknowledge*. At the place in the book where these events were reported, I went no further than the bare data, as I have already indicated; nor did I return specifically to the dream's chronologically extraordinary correspondences further on in the book where I considered causal hypotheses that could be applied to data of this type. So I shall take this opportunity to state that these hypotheses, in view of the complete lack of persuasive considerations regarding the possible limits of psi influence, amount to virtually unlimited unconscious cognitive and kinetic psi capacities, along with, insofar as such might be called for as working tools, similarly unlimited data processing powers of the unconscious mind. (See also Braude, 1986, 1987.) I felt compelled to entertain such unusual—but in no way forbidden—hypotheses, the ultimate extension of what is sometimes referred to as the super-psi hypothesis, in view of what I considered to be the warrant for rejecting the unacceptably vague and vacuous notion of retrocausation.³

ered simply psi, not something that has to be called "super psi"—he or she would undoubtedly have found that most of the cases could have been reduced to plain unconscious psi-mediated scenarios. Insofar as the remainder would by definition be acausal, they would have to be put under the rubric of chance, however meaningful they might appear.

From a depth psychological standpoint, synchronicity is merely a defensive cop-out, a way of displacing hidden motivations of the individual to something as mysterious as the cosmos, with the resulting feelings of awe, such as those experienced by couples just falling in love, that "this thing is bigger than we are" (Eisenbud, 1975b, 1980). As to the fatal logical flaws in the concept of synchronicity, see Braude (1979, 1980).

³ In *Paranormal Foreknowledge: Problems and Perplexities* (Eisenbud, 1982) I reject the concept of retrocausation because of serious contradictions that arise when the complex causal contexts of the "pre-recognizing" event (e.g., need-driven dream or premonition [E₁]) incorporating the earlier term of a chronologically extraordinary correspondence, the event ostensibly pre-recognized (E₂), and even the postulated retrocausal process (RP) by which a

With this background, and from this vantage point, let us now consider conceivable scenarios applicable to the events of 1957. One is to regard the dreamer herself as their sole impresario. This would have required, in addition to her dream elaboration of several normally apprehended residues and in accord with the triangulation phenomenon hypothesis, (a) her unconscious psi-awareness of my having at the time of the dream been concerned with my daughter's "threat" of childlessness, (b) her unconscious psi-awareness of my having been occupied with Stekel's (1943) *Interpretation of Dreams* (and the issue of the termination of treatment) a few hours prior to her dream, and (c) her having engineered, through telepathic influence (I see no advantage in entertaining a PK hypothesis here), my mouse rescue of several hours after the dream. She unconsciously could have woven (a) and (b) into her fluidly developing dream in a manner essentially no different from her elaboration of normally (perhaps subliminally) apprehended residues, while she could—again unconsciously, of course—have engineered (c) which, in the guise of ostensible precognition (and to further the illusion of same), she could then have brought into meaningful alignment with the latent content of the rest of her dream.

How might this all have been brought about?

To begin with, we can accept the sadly bungled trapping of the mouse in my daughter's room as a given. The important thing, as far as both the manifest dream and its presumptive latent contents went, was my having come upon the disabled "wee one" several hours after the dream and my having made certain decisions in regard to putting it out of its misery. The question at issue is whether the dreaming patient could unconsciously have masterminded and implemented this behavior on my part in order to bring certain purposefully (if unconsciously) shaped events into confluence with needs expressed in her dream. The answer to this, in my view, is that not only does nothing in the vast amount of data comprising the background of

representation of or allusion or reference to E_2 is supposedly brought about in E_1 are taken into account. There are grounds for presuming, for a typical example, the dream discussed in this paper that necessary for the occurrence of the items in the latent content of the dream out of which its manifest content was presumably elaborated (rescue of a child from drowning in "The Gift of Love," the "mysterious power to bridge death, distance, time," reversible situations such as taking heads off and putting them back on again, a small animal "foundling" being given the gift of life), was a dense network of even proximal influences in the dreamer's experience up to the time of dreaming. Each of the items mentioned (and presumably other pertinent items not picked up) must at the same time have had causal links to items other than E_2 . Now, unless each of these manifoldly branching items were also in the causal background of RP , it would be difficult to see how the RP could come into existence. But this RP is presumed, at the same time, to be in the network of influences causing or influencing the occurrence of E_1 . Such a loop (if not rent) in the fabric of causality—rather like a horse trying to mount itself—is, however, beyond our ability to imagine and certainly to comprehend in intelligible terms.

The inherent contradictions in the concept of retrocausation are discussed from a somewhat similar point of view, but more broadly and in greater depth, by Braude (1986, 1987).

the psi hypothesis forbid such a scenario, but in fact a fair amount of data on telepathic influence⁴ supports the presumption of its workability. Indeed, such a presumption, granting the factuality of telepathic influence at all, requires nothing more than the dreamer having unconsciously programmed me to carry out certain orders much as she might unconsciously program and elaborate her dream itself or direct her computer to perform certain functions, that is, first you do this, then you do that (and finally you sit down and write about it). The steps involved are no more complicated than if the dreamer had phoned me and said: "Would you mind doing something for me, no questions asked? First, go into your daughter's room, then . . . etc." One need not, however, imagine the actual unfolding of events to have occurred in anything like such a discrete series of steps. If anything, the entire sequence, given a certain telltale bizarreness (about which in a moment), could have occurred as fluidly as any bit of human or animal behavior. I could, of course, have declined to follow this script, in which case, presumably, events would have taken a different tack.

Once again, accepting the "wee one's" initial entrapment as a given, an alternative causal scenario would be that my decision to go into my daughter's room, which led to my discovering the mouse and my subsequent behavior in regard to the situation, was largely or wholly dictated by my unconscious awareness of the patient's prior dream (or, at least, the needs that led to the dream) and my determination, for reasons or caprice of my own, to add some overdetermining elements to it. Again, I would not have needed to have been any more aware of the reasons for my impulsive behavior than I would have for any other particular bit of everyday, even if somewhat odd, behavior.

Thus far, either alternative is viable. But before taking up possible factors that might help to discriminate and choose between the two, I would like to draw attention to several singularities in my mouse "rescue" behavior, one or two of which may already have drawn the reader's attention. To begin with, it was decidedly unusual for me to go into my daughter's room to work. In fact, I cannot now recall—with due respect to the fallibility of memory—any other occasion on which I might have done so. Nor can I easily now imagine a reason for my decision to do so on this occasion, other than that my daughter's desk may have been a bit less cluttered than mine at that moment. In any event, the important point is that this was an *elective* action on my part, as there were three other places within an equal distance from my study where I could have had ample desk space on which to work.

The next thing to consider is that my putting the crippled mouse into a preserve jar that I first had to fill with water was strange (if not stupid).

⁴ Summarized briefly below and more fully elsewhere (Eisenbud, 1982, Chap. 10; 1983, Chap. 6).

because I could as easily—and just as humanely—have flushed it down a toilet in an adjacent room. Certainly there was nothing humane about leaving a disabled mouse to be consumed later in flames, save possibly for its own frantic efforts to escape. (I don't recall having followed this up.) But even if my opting to go the preserve jar route was, conceivably, merely my way of rationalizing a latent sadism (and voyeurism—in retrospect neither seems at all out of the question), the significant thing is that, because I had the fantasy in the first place of giving the "wee one" a second chance, my behavior in the matter was, again, elective from first to last and can be viewed as the end result of a series of decisions that could easily have gone differently at any of several points.

These singularities could obviously have fit either scenario, and in both cases my behavior would have to be regarded as sufficiently out of the ordinary to warrant a trial with the psi hypothesis, which in the first case would involve the possibility of telepathic influence by the patient, and in the second case would involve my psi awareness of the manifest and latent content of the patient's already elaborated dream (including the rodent-founding equation and the rescue from drowning in "The Gift of Love" movie) and my geering my actions toward producing material confluent with it. In either case, the unusualness (or let's just call it weirdness) of my behavior is consistent with the likelihood of unconscious motivation, in the first case such motivation having been implanted by someone else and followed as simply as in most posthypnotic behaviors,⁵ in the second, the motivation having developed in a manner no different in principle from that arising out of the dark thickets behind any behavior (granting, that is, the possibility of psi-conditioned behavior at all).

To discriminate between the two hypotheses: There is no basis, to begin with, for imagining that one scenario might have been more difficult, from any standpoint whatsoever, of psi-influenced execution than the other. It might be that one hypothesis would be more unusual and more difficult consciously to conceptualize and entertain than the other, but that is not a question of basic concern here.

Probably the most reasonable basis on which to arrive at a discriminatory evaluation of the two competing alternatives would be in terms of the types and estimated importance of the presumptive needs, conscious and unconscious, of the two protagonists in the events in question: the patient-dreamer, in one case, and I, her therapist, in the other. Here, as I see it, the heaviest weight is far and away on the patient's side. Her scarcely concealed envy of her fertile friend (whose rosy-cheeked children she unconsciously would as soon have done away with) merely highlighted the falseness of the ostensible indifference with which she faced the possibility of her own all too soon irreversible childlessness. This dread had been brought to a head by her anxiety lest her therapy be terminated before her childless state was altered (as if therapy were—as it pathetically so

⁵ For a neat presumptive instance, see Richet (1923), reprinted on pages 160–161 of Eisenbud (1982).

often is—the last hope), and the fact that a potential father of her child had, on the day before the dream, married someone else. All the while, in the background, the hour glass was relentlessly running down. The foreshadowing in her dream of the mouse rescue that had not yet taken place could have served in the dreamer's unconscious fantasy as a magical escape from the tyranny of time and, what with time's reversibility, the return of her youthful bloom and fertility. The unconscious illusion of a psi-implemented last-minute rescue, like that from drowning of the adopted child in "The Gift of Love," could have played in with this theme. In sum, it can fairly be said that whatever concerns I might have had at the time about my own youth and generativity (I was, after all, approaching 50, a well-known red danger light flashing in the unconscious), it was far more likely the patient's conscious and unconscious needs and day's residue experiences, not mine, that had been utilized and elaborated into the patient's dream and waking scenario. (As to this last, I believe it is reasonable, in terms of the type of thinking favored in this analysis, to entertain the possibility of the "waking scenario" being merely an externalized extension of the dream.)

Without going further into these initial events (beyond emphasizing that, to my mind, nothing could better illustrate the value of postulating the fact of unconscious ideation—or reveal, for that matter, the real guts of the unconscious, to risk a perhaps infelicitous metaphor), let us move on to the present coincidence: my discussing the unwanted mouse visitations with my wife on the evening before discovering that "The Gift of Love," which had many years before played such a significant role in the elucidation of my patient's dream, was again on the scene. The reason I was struck with this coincidence, after having shelved the chance hypothesis on the grounds explained earlier, was because I was immediately able to relate the events involved to particular needs and conflicts in my life at the time (at least the ones of which I was consciously aware). For a day or two prior to these events, I had been unusually dissatisfied with what I felt to be the prosaic nature of my day-to-day activities, including the professional ones. It did not help to have just read several articles (in an issue of a journal especially devoted to this subject)⁶ on the sad state into which psychoanalytic theorizing, never too solidly grounded to begin with, had fallen (which, however, though I disliked hearing it from others, merely echoed my own often expressed views of the past more than 40 years). In addition, I was distressed by what seemed to be a widening gap between me and the mainstream of parapsychological thought and activity, a perception apparently shared by a pair of parapsychological pundits who, as I learned from correspondence with them not long before the events under consideration, were then preparing—quite independently, I gathered—strongly critical attacks on my work with Ted Series. (The last letter from one in Europe was dated January 20th. It must have

⁶ Academic Forum, *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis*, 32(4), 1988.

been received shortly before the 28th, the day on which most of my frustrations peaked.) To top it all, a few days before this, two long-time friends and colleagues in other parts of the country had just concluded one stage of a fascinating research adventure in what looked like materialization. I had talked with one on January 24th about the ambiguous results of the project (how familiar this sounds), and I had talked on January 26th with the other about questions still left hanging. It never occurred to me that I might have been harboring rivalrous feelings in the matter, but I could hardly dispute this if someone were to ask what other explanation I might have for sending my friends, just prior to their having embarked on their project, an old published note of mine on possible amino acid "materialization" in a test tube (Eisenbud, 1975a). Indeed, such feelings could still have been simmering in my unconscious on the night of the 28th when the coincidences under consideration were brewing. Thus it was that on this evening, thoroughly frustrated with myself and disappointed in my two great loves, psychoanalysis (warts and all) and parapsychology (ditto), I prepared to address a stack of five unread issues of *Science* on my bedside table for whatever lift and edification I might get from "hard" science.

Alas, my dreams that night only mirrored my state of confusion. In one, I was completely lost while driving in a strange city. I inquired of my whereabouts of an "American Gothic" sort of person, whom I suspect may have represented the hard, disciplined man of science (and a not altogether approving father figure). In a puzzling *non sequitur*, this man referred me to a place that, he said, had plenty of vacancies. I drew from the shadow of a smirk on his stern visage that it was an asylum. In another dream I was vainly searching for a car I had parked somewhere but could no longer remember where. When I asked my elder son if he knew where the lost car was, he replied, to my bewilderment, that I was driving it.

Thus it was that, coming upon "The Gift of Love" the next morning and recalling my discussion about mice with my wife the evening before and the part that the mouse rescue had played in the dream in which it had figured some three decades earlier, the presumptive relevance of my generally disenchanted and dispirited state of the day and evening before, underscored in my dreams of being thoroughly confused as to where I was and where I was heading, seemed eminently reasonable. I intuitively felt, moreover, that I myself could somehow have set things up in order to capitalize on and exploit the extraordinariness of the coincidence that resulted, as if this would provide me not only with the stuff of *really* hard science but also of *real* parapsychology and *real* psychoanalysis (and perhaps of real dream interpretation to boot).⁷ The big question would then be how I might have managed to set the coincidence up to provide this.

⁷ On January 28th, I received a letter (dated, curiously, the 29th) from Marie Coleman Nelson, a psychoanalytic colleague, recounting the story of a foreign trainee whom she had

As to this, I could have become aware of the showing of "The Gift of Love" either normally (perhaps only to do a double take of it on the morning of the 29th) or through psi. In either case, this can be accepted as a given, because it was already in *TV Guide*. The question remaining would be how I might have forced a crisis in the mouse population to ensure that a few of their number would be demonstrably on hand for the denouement of the piece.

Let me state here that it is no trouble at all for me to entertain the idea that I had somehow pulled the mice out of environmental latency by the psychic equivalent of whatever sense or signal would get their population migrating from one place to another under normal circumstances. Apart from reports of "mesmeric" influence at a distance going back well into the 18th century, the work of Janet and others in the 19th century on the carrying out of telepathically communicated posthypnotic commands (Janet, 1886/1968a, 1886/1968b), the seminal experiments of Vasiliev (1963) in Russia, and my own all too few experiments with telepathic influence at a distance (Eisenbud, 1982, 1983), there have been impressive experimental reports on what has usually been termed PK (but which I prefer to regard as telepathic influence) with small animals such as mice and gerbils (to say nothing of ants and wood lice) (Eisenbud, 1983). These reports leave the door open for the application of the hypothesis of telepathic influence in the present instance. In addition, it causes me no great intellectual perturbation to entertain the possibility (if useful or required—or just for the joy of theorizing) that I could perhaps actually (if unconsciously) have materialized these creatures for the big event by anything from so-called spontaneous generation (which is not quite the same as generation without antecedents)⁸ to apportage.

At any rate, it was in terms of such thoughts, raw and unanalyzed as they were, that I immediately began to structure the situation that had presented itself. I envisioned myself as conceivably, if unconsciously, the impresario of a series of events that would immediately give me the psychological lift I so sorely needed. It might also have provided me, I thought, with the fantasied means of equaling the adventure in materialization that my two friends had embarked upon.

Unfortunately, I could not quite make the specter of chance disappear when, after ruminating on these coincidences for a few days, I began to

analyzed, whose paper on dream interpretation given (on the date of the letter) before an Eastern psychoanalytic society was attacked by the invited discussant on the grounds "that the paper didn't demonstrate *real* dream interpretation." (Psychoanalysts are as defensive in respect to the corruption or dilution of their "Wissenschaft" as are parapsychologists.)

⁸ Contrary to a popular misconception, Pasteur did not demonstrate that spontaneous generation was impossible but only that the presence of bacteria might be necessary for its occurrence. The omnipresence of these life forms leaves plenty of room for the generation of organic and possibly even living matter in circumstances that might ordinarily be considered anomalous, such as, for example, those attending the wide variety of paranormal materializations that have been reported.

write the matter up. It was not, as I have emphasized, that chance loomed large in my own mind—justifiably or not, I had a powerful intuitive feeling that these events had somehow been psi-influenced and engineered, but I could not get rid of the feeling that chance would almost automatically be given first place as a hypothesis not only by the completely uninitiated but also by hard-line parapsychologists (who, to borrow a phrase from Freud on the methodologists of science, are always shining their lenses but don't always look through them).

This, then, is where things stood before my ex-patient laid that specter—effectually if not by any means logically—by breaking into my ruminations in such dramatic fashion. With her appearance, two new possibilities arose: (a) that in addition to the coincidence I had possibly engineered myself, I had called this ostensible revenant out of thin air by way of providing an added dimension to the appearance of the miraculous (and to quell my many-sided doubts about where things stood and where I was going); (b) that the patient herself (who incidentally had remained childless) had horned in on the situation and had largely or totally engineered things (including me) for purposes of her own.

As to the first possibility, the data just cited—including, most importantly for me, my own (on telepathic influence at a distance)—leave a clear field ahead (as I view things). As to the second, I feel that the assumption made about the relative needs of my patient and myself in the earlier instance can safely be reversed here in that it can reasonably be presumed that my needs were now greater and my motivations more unconsciously influential than those of the prodigal patient who had returned to pull my chestnuts out of the fire. (Apart from considerations of motivation, however, it matters not who was the psychically active agent.)

To complete the account: About 5 weeks after my patient's unanticipated phone call, I happened to go into an outside garage and storeroom on our property where I came upon strong circumstantial evidence of recent mouse activity—in fact a prime presumptive source of the recent visitations of those tiny stars in our drama. Spread over several square yards of concrete floor were large amounts of dark telltale beads, mixed with bird seed. The background of this situation was that two years earlier I had been given a supposedly squirrel-proof bird feeder, along with three paper bags of different kinds of seed. The bags had been left in the storeroom even after the neighborhood squirrels quickly proved the claims of the feeder's manufacturer to be completely unwarranted. A number of months before the current events described here, I had begun to notice seed—but nothing like mouse droppings—on the floor of the storeroom. At the time I paid little attention to this, beyond thinking that perhaps the bottom of the bags had softened and broken in wet weather, when water would sometimes find its way onto the floor of the structure. (A number of copies of one of my books had become waterlogged this way.) The thought that mice (or possibly squirrels) might have been responsible never occurred to me.

In any event, this circumstance now has to be reckoned with. It is entirely conceivable that at the time of the second coincidence, I and the seed had pulled the mice out of their environmental latency: that, in fact, I had pressed the seed into service as a "come on" whereas it had not earlier played such a role. An analogous concept might be that of so-called somatic compliance, sometimes invoked in instances of bodily malfunction in which psychological factors are thought to play a part. Essentially analogous concepts are also to be found in ecology and evolution, those twin aspects of nature that leave much yet to be explored (Eisenbud, 1976; Hardy, 1965).

I should state here that even though the leaking bags were not moved or removed following my discovery of the depredations just mentioned, there has, at the time of this writing (April 9, 1989), been no further evidence of an active mouse (or conceivably squirrel) population in my storeroom after the mess had once been swept clean.

POSTSCRIPT AS OF APRIL 22, 1989

My wife has just appeared at the door of my study to announce that Sonya had just deposited her fourth love offering at the foot of our bed. Thus, after almost three months, our mouse problem has returned. I was not totally taken by surprise, however, as I had had occasion earlier in the day to put something into our outside storeroom and had noticed a few beads of mouse excrement on the pavement—nothing like the mess of several weeks earlier that had forced me to sweep the place clean, but still ominous. It occurred to me, in fact, that I might yet turn out to be a very unlucky sorcerer's apprentice. I will say, however, that I had been in the storeroom virtually every day for the past week or so (incident to our spring cleaning chores) and that this was the first day since my Herculean cleansing of the place weeks before that I had noticed the signs of ecology manifesting itself in full march on our premises. Whether or not this calls for a major or even appreciable revision of my view of the situation is, in my opinion, moot.

POSTSCRIPT AS OF JUNE 12, 1989

HELP!! By the end of May the fantasy of my becoming a sorcerer's apprentice had become a horrible reality. Whether or not this was something I had conjured up, like Prospero, to meet a complex of psychological needs at or around the end of January last, I can perhaps never know for certain. I do know, however, that by this time our household was struggling hopelessly, it would seem, against an explosion of the mouse population that if allowed to go unchecked would, as I put it in a 1976 paper on "Evolution and Psi" (referring to the unlikelihood of mice utilizing their latent psi abilities in natural, versus laboratory, circumstances), "dwarf everything else in the biosphere." The fact is that every nook, crevice,

and corner of our dining room, kitchen, pantry, and adjoining lavatory, as well as their cupboards, shelves, boxes, and other containers, had been overrun by mice whose "gifts of love," as some incorrigible psychoanalysts might have it, had become nightmarish. Indeed, Disney's celebrated rendition of the fable of "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" would not be too far from what we were now experiencing, as night after night I would set out a half dozen humane traps to deal with a situation that was manifestly beyond our Sonya's best efforts, while day after day, with Dukas's frenzied music to this fable racing through my mind, I would have to clean up an ungodly mess.

One curious (and hopefully last) coincidence presented itself with one of the first mice that fell victim to our "humane" traps. When I opened one trap in the morning I found the incumbent ostensibly dead, presumably of suffocation. Taking it by the tail I dropped it into a toilet bowl where it didn't stir until flushing began, whereupon it came suddenly to life and began madly thrashing about to escape being dragged down. After what seemed like an anxious eternity of my thrashing about to retrieve the reborn "wee one" from the swirling maelstrom, I was able to fish it out to observe that it appeared little the worse for its near-death experience. I put it back in its container and took it, along with others from the night's harvest, to be let out in a more deserving or at any rate, what with several garbage cans within sight, more nourishing neighborhood some distance from my home. A distinct tinge of déjà vu, despite certain differences from the original situation, dogged me every step of the way.

If there is a message or a moral in this story it is that, just as St. Theresa (and Truman Capote) surmised, answered prayers could be more dangerous than unanswered ones. Perhaps humans are not meant to toy with powers beyond their control or to tempt a jealous providence. Perhaps in the general scheme of things, humans are meant to remain mere humans and not get too uppity about their psi abilities. Indeed it does not appear unreasonable to suppose that a by now inherent unconscious fear of this sort of built-in comeuppance might account for a good deal of the seemingly ineradicable resistance and opposition to the psi hypothesis, as well as for the shaman's and witch doctor's need to propitiate the gods and great spirits that control all things before invoking their special powers.

JUNE 21, 1989. FINAL POSTSCRIPT (I TRUST)

We seem finally to be gaining on the Sly One in one of his many guises (as it frequently appears in situations of this sort) but, much chastened, I would hesitate to bet on the ultimate outcome.

And so ends our tale. I can certainly say with Prospero that "we are such stuff as dreams are made of," but I am far from certain that I can say (with Prospero in the same marvelous speech) that "the baseless fabric of this vision/The cloud capp'd [highly speculative] towers/the gorgeous

[conjectural] palaces . . . shall dissolve/and, like this insubstantial pageant [having] faded/Leave not a rack behind."⁹ I hope that more than a rack of my musings will be left behind in some minds and that in our parapsychological inching toward the millenium, we can leave room for an occasional leap beyond the safe and sane. After all, nothing that has been presented here can be ruled out as a possible model for an unknown number of life's events, which in the hurly-burly of everyday experience and the profusion of ever handy cover stories for these, have gone and will go to make up our past, our present, and our future.

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⁹ W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act IV, Scene I, lines 148-156.

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