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The Controversy over Psychic Staring

Very little is known about the nature of the human mind. The mental and social life of humans is based on the mind, yet not much is known about it and the extent to which it can go. In all cultures there is a belief about the mind, the heart, and the soul, with a variety of notions about these parts of the human being. Psyche in its ancient sense is extended to limits that go beyond the human body in many of the existing cultures. Surveys that have been done in most countries of the West, Britain, and the U.S have consistently shown that a significant portion of the populations in these regions believe in the occurrence of psychic phenomenon and more than fifty percent believe that they have at one point or another personally experienced it (Sheldrake 102). Considering these beliefs and experiences, it is senseless to claim that the mind is only restricted to the brain. This makes the advocates of mechanistic orthodoxy make an assertion that since paranormal phenomena lacks a scientific explanation, it is non-existent. According to scientific education, this is regarded as superstition but there still calls for need of more study and research into this widespread phenomenon.

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Psychic staring is considered a paranormal behavior. This phenomenon is studied alongside with its findings to confirm if it is real. Ideally a human being has five senses whereby that of sensing if someone is staring at you is not one. Ideas on psychic staring are antagonistic in the sense that there are those who believe that people have this sense, while on the other hand there

are those who believe that this sense does not exist. Nonetheless in many societies there is an implication that the eye has some power over the person or object being looked or stared at. In most cases the person being stared at is able to feel a tinge of uneasiness and it so happens on looking at a particular direction they come eye to eye with the one staring.

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Rupert Sheldrake argues that people have the ability to know that they are being stared at. He also explains that this ability can be interfered with, for instance if it is occurring in the natural or artificial setting. In the natural setting the subject does not have the presumption of being looked at hence experiments carried out in this setting are to be accurate. If experiments are carried out in artificial settings then the subject knows that they are being observed and this alters the findings. Sheldrake carried out seven experiments to support his argument of the sense of being stared at. His findings have various effects and may or may not be relied on (Sheldrake 119).

Many people may develop this feeling after coming into contact with this information. This is because the facts given by Sheldrake are so real and tangible making them easy to believe. Although I must admit that his findings are very viable due to the fact that they use the daily happenings of a person's life. In his experiments the subjects were not involved in any other activity. They just sat with the task of noting if they were being observed or not. If they were to be engaged in any other thing their attention could be divided and there a great probability that they could miss the feeling of being stared at. Baker used subjects that were engaged in various activities like eating, watching TV, or even reading in the library. He wanted to make an affirmation that subjects undertaking another activity could not respond the sensation of being stared at.

Baker came up with these demonstrations so as to counter attack Sheldrake on his findings. He was intently out to say that Sheldrake's experiments were not bringing out the real outcome. In Baker's first illustration five subjects gave contradicting responses to his initial prediction. So as a result of this he came up with another experiment. On this second one too Baker disagreed with two of his subjects on their responses. Baker was trying hard to avoid responses similar to those of Sheldrake but I am sure that both were headed in the same direction.

The sense of being able to tell when someone is staring at you can also be affected by a person's personality. For instance paranoid people will have that feeling of being stared at always even when nobody is really looking at them. And there are other people who will not have that feeling ever. Basically the point is majority of people can really tell when they are being stared at while others can not. That is why in both Sheldrake's and Baker's finding there were subjects who were able to tell that they were being stared at. Were it to be contrary then Baker could not have encountered such responses from his subjects. (Sheldrake, Research on the Feeling of Being Stared At).

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There are other possible experiments outlined by Sheldrake that are simple to do. They can be done anywhere by groups or pairs of people at home, in lecture halls or even in formal meetings. These experiments do not need a laboratory for them to be carried out. They give room for subjects with talents to be pointed out and in the long run this gives way to discovery of new experiments. In these artificial setting one has several chances to train oneself so as to bring out desired outcome. This is due to the fact that they are made to go through several experiments and through those different experiences they get better in their responses. Most experiments conducted in this manner, people work in pairs as they surpass a set of trials in random sequence. They use intervals

of twenty seconds of either looking at the back of the subject's head or looking away (Sheldrake 121).

Due to the fact that tapping many give the subject an assumption of the observer's result depending on its strength, mechanical or electronic sounds are used to indicate the start of a session. A coin is used to determine what the observer will do, in that it is tossed and the head means they will look at the subject's neck while the tail means they will look away. This experiment has been conducted to a success by Michael Mastrandrea in California. On average this experiment generates a positive response from the subjects. Those that do not give the desired response are put to test again to yield the desired result (Sheldrake 122).

Sheldrake says that vision emanates from the organic structure, in that the person being stared at will feel it first and then look up to see who is looking at them. In our society staring is considered unethical and uncouth. It may be considered offensive to the person being looked at if it is not in the experimental setting. Although staring or just looking may be a means of communicating various feelings and information to the subject. The eyes can talk in the literal meaning of it and that is why some of Sheldrake's subjects claimed to have the ability to trigger a tinge in someone's mind by simply looking at them. Although this may not be the same result given by all the observers (Sheldrake 112).

The thoughts and experiments of these scholars and philosophers may have no scientific support towards them but they are worth giving a thought about. The human mind seems to be limited in a way when the ways in which it works and the potential it holds is taken in consideration. Though just a few scholars, philosophers and scientists have developed interest in this issue over the past few centuries, there is great viability in it and this calls for more and more scholars to carry out studies and experiments to be able to conclusively bring out the truth about

this highly suspicious human behavior. As at now, Sheldrake and all those with a like mind seem to have a point now that most of their experiments get more than fifty percent result in favor of the expected results and so support the hypothesis. The results could be better if a more natural simulation than the laboratory tests could be achieved so as the tests are as natural as the natural occurrences of this phenomenon.

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