March 18th, 1936

Dear Mr Tyrrell,

I can see no objection to treating the subjects of your experiments individually, since from your letter it appears that probabilities of the observed results, having been obtained without telepathy, can be calculated for each separately.

The only point I can see for making a group lies in the possibility that only a slight and widely diffused faculty exists, that individual subjects cannot be treated extensively enough to produce significant scores, but that, none the less, a group of subjects might be significant as a whole.

There is, however, one further point which sometimes arises: suppose I am testing 50 new varieties of sugar beet with the intention of propagating those which excel a standard variety at least up to 5% level of significance. This means that once in 20 trials I shall preserve a new variety which is not more than equal to the standard in performance. If I tested 200 such varieties I should generally preserve about 10 of them. This is quite a convenient working risk for the plant breeder. What he does not do is to pick out the 10 most successful varieties out of 200 after the test has been made, and claim that his new material is significantly better than the old. There is, in fact, a real danger in selecting
subjects after the test has been made.

Yours sincerely,