

## SYSTEMATIC COURSES OR FREE EXPERIMENTAL RE- SEARCH TRAINING

B. ONETTO BACHLER

In what will be a really "condensed" framework I shall try to synthesize my personal experiences in five years of teaching parapsychology courses at the university level. As I have been teaching since 1962, I shall mostly exclude all kinds of conferences, T.V. or radio programs, interviews, other conferences or courses under the aegis of a private parapsychological society and yearly "season" courses, under the direction of the Extension Department of our university. On the contrary, I shall comment here briefly on a postgraduate course which was given in 1971-1972 to a dozen or so of "professionals" and I understand, for the first time in a Latin American university, with the rather ambitious purpose of "producing researchers in parapsychology."

Let me first begin with some general considerations about this experience. From a statistical point of view, the five courses have been given to 330 students with a mean of 66 students per annum and per course. But since the distribution was not homogeneous, we can criticize on a dispersion of 15 to 150, something that may be interesting for the didactic purpose we had in mind, and also of course, for results. We can rule out any course of, say, more than 30 pupils. There is no good way to work with more students, unless we can get an idea on how to handle parapsychological "testing"—which we consider a *conditio sine qua non* matter for every parapsychological course—with a large number of people, since we all know the negative trend in practically all mass experiments. (We shall return to this "psi-missing" of groups when we give a short resume of the results in our protocols of GESP, precognition and clairvoyance).

Our course is subtitled "Introduction to Parapsychology." This covered mainly the so-called "crucial" experiments for psi and PK phenomena. In other words, ours was the type of course that D. Scott Rogo<sup>1</sup> would call his C group of "Parapsychology as an Experimental Science." We have to be aware of course of the "local" varieties due mainly to differences in language, laboratory facilities and perhaps

something we had unconsciously in mind: medical students were rather worried about the value of this new science for a future medical practitioner. We gave therefore, whenever it was possible, examples concerning physiological studies, like those of EEG, GSR, and other types of laboratory measurements; chemicals, drugs etc.

This was important *per se* because it served as a kind of introduction to the experimental point of view. For the same reason, at least one class was devoted to hypnosis, and another two classes were given to explain some of the theories. We actually feel more and more that a very strong emphasis must be given to audiovisual materials, slides or films, and that they certainly should dominate over their theoretical counterparts.

Now some words concerning the distribution of the qualitative versus quantitative approach. We ought to be as eclectic as possible in the way of a synthesis of both approaches, as proposed by C. G. Jung and realized in Tenhaeff's "Anthropological Parapsychology." And we can do that if one can wisely combine the statistical method (which is usually an indigestible nut for younger students), and the certainly more attractive "spontaneous cases." About this most important source of parapsychological information, we still lack thorough epidemiological and demographic studies.

Nonetheless we quote in our classes the only two approximate classifications today available, the five tentative groups of Louisa E. Rhine and the Bender-Hanefeld percentages, although both lack "control groups" for comparison purposes. But in my opinion, students can help here very much and we are actually doing a first approach to a possible 1000 Chilean population<sup>2</sup> pilot study using the only combined possible method of questionnaires and personal interviews (for reasons I shall not enter into here we cannot rely very much in Latin American countries on "mail" cases; we would not get more than a good 15 percent). Another typical and useful (and I should say "lawful") classification we enter into is the one of "sheep-goats." Since in the sixties we encountered Dr. Schmeidler's psychological testing with the Rorschach, etc., using larger groups and after Dr. K. Ramakrishna Rao subdivided in his book<sup>3</sup> the two original groups into six with scientific, emotional and dogmatic subgroups, we try to explain to our students in what sense we can help our young scientific discipline with this illuminating tool. Because of our background in psychology as well as psychiatry, we feel that an important effort must be dedicated to show the inner relationship of parapsychology and psychology. Two chapters in Rao's already mentioned textbook can certainly be recommended here, too.<sup>4</sup> The useful didactic triangle of

experimenter-subject-object can and should also be treated from the point of view of psychological studies. Again, here we lack literature concerning the first and last part of this triangle, a fact that will be a sort of handicap for teachers, but any evolving science may show these trends that slowly begin to disappear.<sup>5</sup>

Allow me, before coming to the most difficult part in a parapsychological course, that of the theories, a small digression about a general position I wish to roughly express as follows: In parapsychology, we have a number of points of view and parallel ways of consideration, usually justified per se, that complement each other, and in my opinion, do not mutually exclude themselves. Therefore we divide some dozen or so possible explanations into mainly three groups: psychological, psychical, and parapsychical or "mixed" theories. We are of course aware of the insufficient background for such "forced" placement of the sometimes very sophisticated points of view of our fellow scientists theorizing on parapsychology. But when we come to explain something like C.G. Jung's synchronicity theory, we expect perhaps a rather optimistic desideratum from our students, but should not a good teacher work only for the most dedicated students and "force" them to the level of science? We are aware of the perhaps difficult pedagogical bridge we have to cross, to be able to arrive at the next one.

One important factor in any course, is the one concerning the bibliography.<sup>6</sup> The only standard textbook available in Spanish is the Rhine-Pratt.<sup>7</sup> You may want to complement the statistical with the "qualitative" approach. And we would like again to underline the word "complement." For this purpose of course, all studies on spontaneous cases would be useful, but perhaps a small study like the one by W.H.C. Tenhaeff<sup>8</sup> now also available in English, and some of his new "Introductions," which we all hope will some day be translated. I feel it a necessity, and also having in mind a sort of "brainwashing" of most conceptions, to give to my students a list of the actual 60 titles we have in Spanish, not with the purpose that they should get "indigestion" trying to read all of them, but with the hygienical intention that they "avoid" occultism and the like. This of course I realize is difficult to achieve, as also pointed out by R. McConnell<sup>9</sup>. I shall not mention here books in other languages, because any thorough parapsychologist knows that we still have no "complete" parapsychological anthology such as Professor Bender's who provides one for German-speaking students. It is already, I guess, in its third edition.<sup>10</sup> We do not mention handbooks for testing, which are as scarce in Spanish as they are in English. Others, like D. Scott Rogo and the already mentioned Dr.

McConnell have devoted some paragraphs to parapsychology as treated in psychological textbooks, but since in Spanish (with the exception of Katz and Eysenck) we have no parallel treatment of equal importance of some of them, we can not comment on this. On the contrary, some parts of the theories are already translated; may we cite here the important book by C. G. Jung<sup>11</sup> and the new physical approaches presented by Arthur Koestler's "Roots of Coincidence." We should add, here, something that of course, any western parapsychologist feels actually as a necessity: a contact with an eastern colleague. Some books such as those of Vasiliev,<sup>12</sup> Martin Ebon,<sup>13</sup> and Ostrander-Schroeder<sup>14</sup> can be very useful. This last one must, of course be handled carefully because of the way the facts are presented, and it will be useful to present at least two parallel criticisms, one pro and one against. Reference to the historical Bechterev experiments with dogs will help to provide our course with a more contemporary approach to the field of anpsi, in which we still await a more comprehensive study such as the one given by Louisa E. Rhine<sup>15</sup> for the experimental developments in PK.

We come now to the problems of drugs and their use with "parapsychological" intention. We believe it is useful for younger students to recognize some common misconceptions. A good presentation will contrast stimulant versus depressive pharmacological agents already known to physicians: e.g., alcohol, beginning with H. J. W. Brugmans, who was one of the first to use it in 1921. We also mention Warcollier, and Rhine-Averill of the middle forties. We still have to wait for a good contribution about ethanol. On the list of stimulants we note at least two more: a) peyote or mescaline; already mentioned in 1886 by the German pharmacologist Ludvig Lewin, but later by the Frenchmen, Alexander Rouhier (1924-1927) and René Desoille (1928). As a kind of digression, the more literary descriptions of Aldous Huxley are sometimes already known to students. b) LSD or the "phantastika" described by the Swiss authors Hoffmann and Stoll (1947), and available in a standard monograph by Emilio Servadio and Roberto Cavanna (1964); still more studies are awaiting publication about the use of so called psychedelic substances. As depressive drugs one can mention the standard study done by Remi Cadoret 1953, with sodium amytal but using placebo and dexedrine for the controls.

We actually consider a "double blind method" a sine qua non condition for any pharmacological study, with any type of drug, be it a stimulant, e.g. Ritalin (which we tried in the sixties with several members of my family as well as with Mr. Arthur Koestler, indeed a very "tolerant" friend of parapsychology); or even hormones. These

last have been very recently studied in connection with anpsi. We mention the Janik-Klocek studies with noradrenalin (1970) in rats, and also with a cocktail of thyroxin and adrenalin or noradrenalin, which gave apparently very good results.

We realize of course that this list of drugs can not pretend to be exhaustive but it has two purposes in mind: first, to teach students a good methodology and the placebo and control factors in science, and second, the knowledge of the so called "double blind" method.

In the same line of thought we consider it necessary to cite some experiments done by Robert Rosenthal to see the possible influence of the experimenter in his experiments, although we are aware of the unavoidable difficulty from the point of view of methodology of applying some of these concepts directly in parapsychological experiments, and this, we believe, is the main reason why we do not have available studies of this type.

Most psychologists and psychiatrists today consider dreams a sort of "royal road" to the unconscious, i.e. parapsychological level. Nobody can actually deny the importance of the dream studies done by the Dream Laboratory of Maimonides Hospital in New York (Ullman-Krippner) and other dream laboratories that sooner or later followed the new trend in the neurophysiology of dreaming that started with Kleitman-Dement in the fifties (few parapsychologists know that the Argentinian Dr. Orlando Canavesio did some preliminary studies with the EEG and some special "trance" states as early as 1951. Unfortunately there are only seven cases in his thesis, which could not be continued later on because of his premature death). The EEG line of research is still at its beginning in parapsychology, but we believe some of the findings in alpha rhythms can be quoted in classes, as well as the limitations and possibilities of this type of "measurement." Also in physiological quantitative methods we mention at least a few more that are important: GSR (Figar and Otani) polygraphic inscriptions for several measurements together, as are done by Charles T. Tart and colleagues (1969), H. Motoyama (1972), etc.

As we come to some special type of altered states of consciousness, we present some of the more specialized studies referring to out-of-the-body experiences by Celia Green, Charles Tart and Karlis Osis, but all these studies are in my opinion in their preliminary state and still not clearly detached from the atavistic "astral body" and the like. One can describe this area of parapsychology as a characteristically neglected one.

We make a brief excursion into so-called anpsi, referring to some of the Remy Chauvin studies, and of course the interesting and

sophisticated but very readable chapters in J. G. Pratt's lucid book.<sup>16</sup> As an historical illustration, one can also note the dog studies by Vladimir Bekhterev whom we do not hesitate to call the father of Russian parapsychology. And last, but not least, we are perhaps not over-stating the case in saying that all parapsychologists still await the publication of Louisa E. Rhine's forthcoming "opus 5"!

While I was writing these lines, two illustrative parapsychological "matters" came to my attention: a) a book for review by Dr. Michael A. Persinger from Laurentian University, Sudbury, Canada.<sup>17</sup> b) Too late perhaps, a curious paper by Dr. R. A. McConnell on the academic future of parapsychology, published last year in the JASPR.<sup>18</sup>

Let me confess that for educational purposes on the actual level of teaching parapsychology in universities and colleges, Persinger's book is a big failure or a premature experimental design for *physical* parapsychology which as every one knows is still in its developmental phase. To be fair in my criticism, I must state here that only Volume II, "Mechanisms and Models," of Dr. Persinger's work has come to me for review. Perhaps his Volume I, "Patterns", is a bit more "parapsychologically" worked out! The experimental hypotheses and proposals of this rather unusual book are too sophisticated for the students in our introductory courses. In my opinion they are mostly appropriate for established experimenters, to stimulate their imagination in the area of "physiological measurements." At any rate, the book mentioned deserves a more detailed review which can not be given here.

Dr. R. A. McConnell, of Pittsburgh University, proposes, under a rich mass of ideas and practical "suggestions" for academic authorities, that old argument against a parapsychological chair which we heard also years ago from J. B. Rhine—they are not worth the effort given to them, etc. He goes even further to propose a professional chair of say 5 years, which is in my opinion a complete misunderstanding of the "status" that is needed at the University level for fully qualified teachers of any particular science. A good balance between research and teaching is always welcomed, but I do not understand how Dr. McConnell intends to give some perspective or "stability" to anyone whom he promises a "skeletal" five year period.

I promised at the beginning of my paper a short comment on graduate courses. This is certainly a very high and ambitious level and according to my understanding this type of course has to be a qualified seminar trying directly to teach research methods and with, if possible, field work with spontaneous cases. Although my own experience is until now very poor, I feel that a very precise lesson can be drawn from it. These are the people who are going to be the future para-

psychologists, although I do not deny the possibility that also some good elements will originate from bigger groups. But in our Chilean team we have, from a group of ten professionals, three who are already joining in a recent research project we are actually signing which we have called "Inter University Psychotronic Area Project." This is being conducted at the University of Chile, Parapsychological Laboratory and the Technical State University, Department of Physics. Actually the total number of academic people involved in the project amounts to seven under my direction. This is of course a high percentage that can be attributed to the fact that these were professionals, mostly "old" friends of parapsychology.

A few final words concerning the results we had with our students using parapsychological *tests* covering the years 1967–1975. The complete analysis of the protocols involved in our experiments will be published later on elsewhere due of course to pressure of time and the amount of material under consideration: about 3,500 protocols! (Some 200 protocols of mass "down through" technique were disregarded in total amount of data given.)

We begin with precognition, a work already partially published.<sup>19</sup> The mass precognition (with lottery digits) has actually a total of 789 protocols with a total of 7,890 trials. Result was negative as expected, but still gives a good 1% of significant subjects (9 with a good level of divination). We shall come in a later communication with a control group using enough "goats" for the possibility of confirming or not Schmeidler's hypothesis, in a sort of indirect way, so to speak. Curiously enough, precognition done at home, using ESP standard cards and protocols gave much better results than we expected. A total of 600 complete standard sheets with 150,000 trials gave an arithmetic mean of 49.35 which is a little bit below chance.

The GESP protocols (in experiments done in classes in which the teacher usually acted as a telepathic agent) also gave very curious results. The total number of 234,750 trials ( $939 \times 250$ ) is here overwhelming and we only give the big times: MCE = 46.95; D = -4.619; M = 45.08.

Pure clairvoyance which was usually done with the STM technique (also with instruction in this type of procedure), gave very poor results. A total of 357 sheets with a MCE of  $5 \times 6$  (=30 hits) gave only a total of 28 hits (2 points below MCE).

PK in a total of 510 protocols (220320 trials) was done with standard procedures: 12 times 2 dice alternating faces; every pupil did 216 times 2 throws or more, which amounts to 432 trials for each complete sheet. Surprisingly enough some subjects got very high results (with CR over 5

and 6 and at least 2 or 3 on the 10 level), and according to this, we highly recommend the PK experiments for use in classes. Sensitive subjects should be "selected" for further experiments to get a real idea of their capacities.

The literature concerning experiments with students is scarce and we can only say that in the small group of students (apparently only 48) used by Timm in his paper<sup>20</sup> we can have only a proportional but significant idea of the sometimes unusually high results that are obtained if students are well motivated to work even with "dry" testing.

Some general ideas concerning the peculiarities of methods and the specificity of areas concerning scientific parapsychology leave no doubt of our negative position concerning the use of too many professors for our courses. We do not pretend to dominate the whole field of this science that has every day more border lines we would like to get rid of, but we also do not need a rather "wild" dispersion of our ideas on a good pedagogical purpose which has to give a somewhat fruitful amount of results and not a group of eclectic "monsters"! In other words, although we feel that at this moment we have no good orthodox assistants yet, we are hardly trying to have "parallel" peers and "complementary" colleagues to help in our classes. As a matter of fact during this present year we have given four of our classes to a specialist in psychotronics (Kirlian photography and the like), and one to a hypnotist (although I still consider them both only on a tentative level until we have a better idea of the real parapsychological factor of these techniques).

Paraphrasing Jaspers, we may tentatively say that "it is dangerous to learn only our matter in parapsychology," we ought not to learn only parapsychology as such, but we rather should observe, we should ask and we should analyze parapsychologically. In other words: we ought to learn *to think* parapsychologically.

#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> D. Scott Rogo: *Methods and Models for Education in Parapsychology*. Monograph No. 14, Parapsychology Foundation Inc. New York, 1973.

<sup>2</sup> We feel it is an impossible task to use in Chile questionnaires like the "Virginia ESP survey" (by J. Palmer et al.) or similar ones because they are too long and of course some of the questions would have to be "locally" adapted.

<sup>3</sup> K. Ramakrishna Rao: *Experimental Parapsychology*. Charles C Thomas Publisher, Springfield, Illinois, 1966.

<sup>4</sup> op cit. Chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>5</sup> It is perhaps useful to mention here some of the uncertainty principles, such as Heisenberg's and the relativity of information and intensity in parapsychology, as was shown in 1940 by the mathematician B. Hoffman.

<sup>6</sup> Rhea A. White and Laura A. Dale: *Parapsychology: Source of Information*. Scarecrow Press Inc. Metuchen, N.J. 1973.



<sup>7</sup> J. B. Rhine and J. G. Pratt: *Parapsychology*. Charles C Thomas Publ. Springfield, Illinois, 1957.

<sup>8</sup> W. H. C. Tenhaeff: *Clairvoyance and Telepathy* (1965, 1973)

<sup>9</sup> R. A. McConnell: *ESP Curriculum Guide*. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1971.

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Hans Bender: ed. *Parapsychologie. Entwicklung, Ergebnisse, Probleme*. Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1971.

<sup>11</sup> C. G. Jung: "On the Nature of the Psyche," in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*. 2nd ed. Princeton University Press, 1969. Collected works, vol. 8.

<sup>12</sup> L. L. Vasiliev: *Mysterious Phenomena of the Human Psyche*. New Hyde Park, New York. University Books, 1965.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Ebon: *Psychic Discoveries by the Russians* New York, New American Library 1971.

<sup>14</sup> Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder: *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain*. Prentice Hall Inc. Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1970 (nine translations available).

<sup>15</sup> L. E. Rhine: *Mind Over Matter*. MacMillan & Co, New York, Toronto, 1970.

<sup>16</sup> J. G. Pratt: *ESP Research Today. A Study of Developments in Parapsychology since 1960*. Scarecrow Press Inc. Metuchen, New Jersey 1973.

<sup>17</sup> Michael A. Persinger: *The Paranormal. Part II Mechanisms and Models*. MSS Information Corporation, New York, 1974.

<sup>18</sup> R. A. McConnell: "Parapsychology. Its Future Organization and Support". *JASPR* 68: 2: 169-181 (April 1974).

<sup>19</sup> B. Onetto-Bächler: "Mass Precognition and Schmeidler's Classification". First International Congress for Parapsychology and Psychotronics, Prague, June 1973 (*Proceedings*, v.I pp. 120-24 edit. by Z. Rejda. Also: *Revista de Parapsicologia* Nr. 4:3-6 (March 1975).

<sup>20</sup> Ulrich Timm: "ASW-Experimente mit Studentengruppen." *Z.f. Parapsychol.* XI 1, 1-22 (1968)

## DISCUSSION

RAO: Dr. Onetto, do you give your course to all medical students or do they elect to take your course? Is it a compulsory course for all medical students? Does every medical student have to take the course to get his degree?

ONETTO: No. In the first semester, they have to elect. They can make an election usually between anthropology, parapsychology and medical history.

RAO: What percentage of your medical students choose parapsychology?

ONETTO: Well, I must say, usually I have a lot of students. I don't know the percentage. I have much more than my two colleagues.

WHITE: You mentioned in PK tasks that you were getting CRs of five and seven for the girls. What happened with the boys? Nothing with the boys?

ONETTO: Well, I don't know. As I said before, I have still to analyze about 3,000 protocols and I didn't have too much time, but I don't think they have negative results.

WHITE: But you specifically mentioned the girls.

ONETTO: . . . Well, I was surprised with the results with the girls. They were really very surprising because some people say that usually PK tests are more difficult to get with them, but this was not the case.

NOVILLO: Were the children, boys and girls, working together in your PK research or was this an individual test, one boy and one girl? How did you conduct these experiments?

ONETTO: I gave them usually the explanation for both together, boys and girls, but then they did it privately at their homes and then they were individually girls apart from boys—not together.

NOVILLO: A group of boys, or one boy?

ONETTO: No, usually two. One was an observer and another was making the test himself. We took that measure because if not you have the possibility that they would cheat too much.

NOVILLO: Do you have the results of the experiments when the boys and girls were working together?

ONETTO: No. Usually they did that in classes, but this was only a few experiments and I couldn't evaluate that.

NOVILLO: Dr. Onetto, what kind of experiments in ESP were you conducting?

ONETTO: Well, telepathy, usually.

NOVILLO: With Zener cards?

ONETTO: ESP cards.

NESTER: Just in passing, about needing audiovisuals, I was wondering what kind of audiovisuals you had in mind, whether it would be tapes or pictures or films or anything that you'd find useful. I would be very interested in that.

ONETTO: I would say all of them.

NESTER: All of them? Are tapes useful to you mixed in with your own speaking?

ONETTO: It depends. I wouldn't think of tapes very much. More on the kind of visual things.

NESTER: Like slides.

ONETTO: Yes, slides, films, and that sort of thing.

NESTER: Showing the kinds of things that are involved in the experiments?

ONETTO: Yes. As a matter of fact, when we speak about PK we usually like to see people acting on PK experiments and things like that.

JAMPOLSKY: Did you discuss the use of clairvoyance in medical diagnosis with your medical students?

ONETTO: Only as a possibility. They usually ask very much about Arigo and healers that have done some diagnoses and we discussed that too as a possibility.

PALMER: Did you find, with your medical students, that they were very concerned with practical applications of psi? Whether something can be applied seems to be a very common concern of medical students in the United States, perhaps more than other kinds of students, and I was wondering whether that was also true in Chile.

ONETTO: Well, they are usually very much concerned about this possibility, but along these lines, they usually ask for EEG or neurophysiological studies and things like that. They are interested in knowing how this field relates to their studies. They ask, "Why do we study parapsychology in medicine?"

BISAHA: I was just wondering what is the attitude of the physician towards parapsychology in your country? Did you meet with opposition when you initiated this course with medical graduates when previous students had never had this?

ONETTO: Well, I believe it's like in other countries. There are physicians pro and con. There were more against, but I wouldn't say that of the last four years generation. There may be more pro.