

these have not been successful as yet. Since its inception, however, members of the Society have been very active in organizing numerous educational activities and seminars at different universities. The seminar offered by the president of the Society, Ramos Perera Molina, at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid in 1975 drew distinguished and prominent figures such as Prince Juan Carlos of Spain and his wife and the minister of education.

Since 1975, the Society has also published a biannual journal, entitled *Psi Comunicación*, which includes English abstracts. The journal covers both the activities of the Society and a wide range of topics in parapsychology, some of which have been mentioned. In addition, their journal includes a section for national and international news on parapsychological activities around the world. Members of the Society have published several books summarizing its research activities. I have already mentioned the books by Fernández Briones (1983). Other books include an anthology, entitled *La Nueva Parapsicología: Introducción a la Parapsicología Científica* [The New Parapsychology: An Introduction to Scientific Parapsychology] edited by Fernández Briones (1981a), a valuable introduction to the field, and Mario Capel's *La Supervivencia Después de la Muerte: Evidencia Espontánea y Experimental* [Survival after Death: Spontaneous and Experimental Evidence] (1981) reviewing some of the research and phenomena related to the issue of survival after death.

Although parapsychology has been negligible in Spain until recent times, it is important to point out that we are now witnessing a boom in parapsychological activities in that country. Unfortunately, even though the Society seems to be the best organized, and to have the most resources in the Ibero-American world, its members have not participated in the broader international parapsychological conferences, such as that of the Parapsychological Association, possibly because of the language barrier. In addition, it is unfortunate and disheartening to find that such a large, productive, and well-organized society has no member in the PA.

### *Brazil*

At the 1990 Parapsychological Association convention, David Hess, who has made several field trips to study Brazilian parapsychology, presented a paper in which he described Brazilian parapsychology in the following terms:

Brazil does not have a coherent community of academic parapsychologists, and there are few if any people in Brazil who research and publish

at the standards of the Parapsychological Association. Instead, what is called "parapsychology" in Brazil is largely defined by rival groups of Catholic and Spiritist (Kardecist) intellectuals. (Hess, 1990)

To understand parapsychology in Brazil, we need to be familiar with the cultural milieu from which it has evolved, one that is dominated by Afro-Brazilian cults and Catholicism. On the one hand, we have the Spiritist tradition that came from France through the teachings of Allan Kardec; Spiritists believe that spiritual progress is effected by a series of compulsory reincarnations. They believe that mediumship provides opportunities to communicate with deceased individuals. Moreover, Spiritism is strongly influenced in Brazil by the Afro-Brazilian cults such as Umbanda and Candomble derived from the African religions brought to Brazil through the slave trade (Bastide, 1971; Giesler, 1985).

This spectrum of Spiritist beliefs and Afro-Brazilian religions has crept in and mixed in Brazilian society (Hess, 1987), creating a variety of belief systems from which Brazilian brands of parapsychology have evolved. There are many interesting combinations of the Kardecist type of Spiritism and all sorts of Brazilian religious movements that essentially accept possession, the influence of spirits of deceased individuals, as well as the belief that divinities can possess individuals and can effect healing (Parra Alvarez, 1981).

On the other hand, there is the Catholic tradition that has developed a system that uses parapsychology as an ideology with which to fight and eventually destroy all the movements the church sees as superstition and threats to the established Catholic dogmas (Hess, 1990). This system has been developed mainly through the work of one of the most influential and respected "parapsychologists" in Ibero-America, Father Oscar González Quevedo, a Spanish-born Jesuit priest living in Brazil. Padre Quevedo (as he is known) and Luis Ferreira da Silva cofounded the Latin American Center of Parapsychology, CLAP, of the Anchieta College of São Paulo in 1970.

The Center, which was closed down in 1982 and reopened in 1989 under reduced circumstances, used to offer clinical counseling for people suffering from psychological problems related to religious experiences and practices (e.g., demonic possession). The Center still has an impressive library<sup>6</sup> of books on parapsychology, which used to be housed in huge facilities that also accommodated an experimental and clinical laboratory and a museum of objects

<sup>6</sup> One of the biggest parapsychology libraries in Latin America with approximately 4,000 volumes.

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related to parapsychological phenomena, Spiritism, miracles, and psychic healing. In addition, the Center offers seminars and short courses in parapsychology during the year.

The stated goal of the Center listed in a publicity leaflet<sup>7</sup> is to disseminate scientific parapsychology in order to clarify the misconceptions and superstitions produced by the lack of understanding of psychic phenomena. The content of their publications, however, seems to indicate that the real objective of the Center has been to destroy Spiritism and its belief system because it contradicts the church's teachings. Consequently, the Center has been ruled by a religious ideology.

Discussion of Brazilian parapsychology must focus essentially on the work of Quevedo, because his work and publications have been the major source of scientific parapsychology not only for Brazil but also for other Ibero-American countries since the 1960s. It is necessary also to emphasize his publications because they are well respected and are considered by many to be representative of the Catholic school in Brazilian parapsychology.<sup>8</sup>

Father Quevedo has published several books on parapsychology, some of which have become best sellers in the Spanish language as well as in Portuguese, reaching a surprising number of editions.<sup>9</sup> Among his books are a general introduction to parapsychology (1969/1973), a discussion of ESP and other mental phenomena (1964/1974), and another about physical mediumship (1969/1971). He has also authored other polemical books on healing (1976/1977) and possession (1989).

According to a well-known Spanish parapsychology journal, Quevedo has offered numerous seminars and courses throughout Ibero-America, often drawing audiences of more than 200,000 people. He has also appeared in over 200 hours of television. Quevedo's impact, spreading what is his version of parapsychology, has been astonishing in its education of the lay person (Fernández Briones, Jiménez Visedo, & Capel, 1975).

Unfortunately, however, what could have been one of the most important contributions to scientific parapsychology in Ibero-America is overshadowed by Quevedo's zealous campaign against Spirit-

ism, in which he explains Spiritist findings as fraud or psi by living organisms, and his equally strong defense of Catholic beliefs. Not only has Quevedo separated himself from the real goals and objectives of the CLAP, but he has also used parapsychology as an ideological weapon in a fight to further his particular conceptual perspective. As Hess (1987) pointed out:

Oscar González Quevedo reinterpreted the parapsychology of the United States and Europe in light of Catholic Church doctrine... to challenge the scientific basis of claims of Spiritism, Umbanda, and the Afro-Brazilian religions. (p. 26)

In fact, to accomplish his goals, Father Quevedo has distorted parapsychology in his books, seeking most of the time to accommodate church dogmas. He sometimes goes to the extreme of making subtle changes in the content of classical writings on parapsychology so as to support his own views (Martínez Taboas, 1978) and to deny any possible explanation that may be close to the Spiritist point of view. In doing this, Quevedo has used investigations conducted for many years by centers around the world, together with numerous references from classical works, including those conducted by the Rhines and others at the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory. As David Hess (1990) has further pointed out:

Both Spiritists and Catholics will still appropriate PA parapsychology and the older studies of psychical research for their own purpose. They like to have the foreigners do the empirical research (the "dirty work"), while they sit back and put it into their own philosophical or theological framework. (p. 110)

The system of parapsychology Quevedo developed has an entirely different conceptualization of the field and completely different goals from those of the parapsychological research done in other parts of the world. For Quevedo, parapsychology helps to establish a dichotomy between what he considers natural phenomena and the supernatural, or phenomena that cannot be explained by any paranormal mechanisms (e.g., the miracles of Lourdes and of various saints). Quevedo divides the causes of parapsychological phenomena into three types. The natural ESP abilities, classified as paranormal, are manifestations of the soul, which was created perfect and possessed unlimited psychic abilities but was restricted when the first man sinned. Such abilities, Quevedo says, are occasionally manifested by people during mental disturbances such as a trance. Another category is those phenomena that are beyond such

<sup>7</sup> A promotional leaflet published by CLAP entitled "O porque do CLAP."

<sup>8</sup> For further discussions of Brazilian parapsychology, see Hess (1990) and Playfair (1975).

<sup>9</sup> In Portuguese alone, 90 editions of 30,000 copies each, and more than 20 editions in Spanish and Italian (Parra & Pedroza, 1991).

human abilities, that is, the phenomena are supernatural. According to Quevedo, when a parapsychological explanation cannot account for the manifestation of certain psychic phenomena, the explanation should be left to the theologian. Quevedo also includes another interesting category that for many would not be considered parapsychology—what he calls “extraordinary normal phenomena,” phenomena that can be explained by normal or unusual psychological and physiological processes. For example, Quevedo uses the term *phantomnesia* (unlimited unconscious memory) as a mechanism that can explain some types of xenoglossy phenomena. When someone manifests this phenomenon, Quevedo believes it means that the person once heard the language and is merely repeating previously learned phrases. Another phenomenon classified under this category is indirect hyperesthesia. According to Quevedo, all our thoughts have an equivalent physiological reaction and are reflected in our bodies. For example, if I am thinking about something, I produce very subtle physical movements or signals that other persons near me can decode unconsciously. The information obtained unconsciously can then be transformed into actual knowledge. Quevedo (1964/1974) uses this concept to explain most of the phenomena exhibited by mental mediums.

Moreover, according to his system, Quevedo (1969/1973) views the excessive manifestation of psychic phenomena in individuals as a pathological problem that should be treated with psychotherapy. Although he considers such manifestations to be natural, an excess of them denotes pathology. Consequently, the manifestation of ESP abilities should never be encouraged or developed. That sets his tradition completely apart from the one that seeks to develop psi and to understand conditions that enhance its manifestation.

Quevedo's conclusions, however interesting, are not derived from empirical research. Rather, his procedure is to review the writings of different authors, especially those from the classical works, and use the material to develop his own conclusions. In a thorough review of three of Quevedo's books, the Puerto Rican psychologist Alfonso Martínez Taboas (1978) identified numerous contradictions, omissions, distortions of the evidence, and dogmatic statements by Quevedo. Quevedo's book *Las Fuerzas Físicas de la Mente* alone had 70 problems of this sort. One example of his exaggerated statements appears on page 289 of his book *El Rostro Oculto de la Mente*. In this passage Quevedo concludes the following about precognition:

Very few established facts about Chemistry and Physics and other branches of science have been so well established as precognition in

parapsychology... And the most important thing is that thousands of laboratory experiments have scientifically proved without any doubt that man possesses this ability. (1964/1974, p. 289)

Without any empirical evidence to support his theory, Quevedo limits the operative range of precognition to two centuries. He does this to prove that man possesses limited temporal abilities, a conclusion supporting the Church dogma that only biblical prophecy is unlimited by time, for it is divine in nature and is the result of God's intervention; that is, it is a miracle.

The CLAP also used to publish a magazine called *Revista de Parapsicologia*, which summarized the activities of the Center and contained mostly theoretical articles. More recently, however, the Center closed down, apparently because of a prohibition imposed by the Church as a result of a polemical book published by Quevedo (1989) entitled *Antes Que Os Demônios Voltem* [Before the Demons Return]. In this book Quevedo, ironically, uses parapsychology to make skeptical commentaries on Catholic dogmas concerning demonic possession; he also tries to explain demonic possession through parapsychological mechanisms. He criticizes the traditional Church use of the *Rituale Romanum* in determining the causes of demonic possession. Essentially, Quevedo points out the shortcomings of the *Rituale Romanum*, which does not include psychic phenomena as an alternative explanation that might account for most of the cases of demonic possession.

There is no doubt that in developing his system Quevedo has extensively surveyed the whole field of parapsychology. In a review of some of his books, George Zorab (1971) states:

These three volumes, comprising nearly 1000 pages, fully inform the reader about all the various aspects of modern parapsychology. It is at the same time a fair and reliable guide. In a sense it is unique in the present day literature of the subject, for since Richet's *Traité de Métapsychique* (1922) and F. Moser's *Okkultismus* (1935) no such comprehensive work covering the whole extensive field of modern parapsychology has been put on the market. (p. 142)

I certainly would agree with Zorab's opinion on the astonishing amount of work carried out by Quevedo, work that certainly deserves recognition. I would not, however, characterize his work as fair and reliable as far as the handling of the evidence is concerned. To a certain extent, Quevedo's position is justified when he tries to fight superstition such as that spread by the psychic healers, who are very popular in Brazil. In a sense he is a minority in a society with

a high concentration of Spiritists whose beliefs threaten the established Catholic dogmas. However, when he uses parapsychological evidence of certain phenomena as a scientific backup to establish facts, when this same evidence is still very controversial for many parapsychologists, his position is untenable. Nonetheless, his work has to be seen in the cultural and ideological background from which he has worked (Alvarado, 1991).

Another dimension of Brazilian psychical research is the work by researchers with Spiritist orientation. One example is that conducted by the engineer and psychical researcher Hernani Guimarães Andrade, who in 1963 founded the Brazilian Institute of Psychobiophysical Research (IBPP). The name was chosen to make it clear that the Institute intended to explore biological and physical as well as purely psychical phenomena. One of the most significant things about this Institute is that it emerged from within the Spiritist movement (Playfair, 1975). Andrade, a Spiritist himself, has conducted well-planned and detailed investigations of reincarnation cases along the lines of Ian Stevenson's work. His poltergeist cases are particularly interesting—for example, the one published in a monograph entitled *O Poltergeist de Guarulhos* (1984). These cases involve very dramatic phenomena: apports, damage to furniture and persons, apparitions of strange creatures, and spontaneous fires. In evaluating and interpreting the cases, Andrade leans toward the incarnate agencies hypothesis, sometimes with possible witchcraft components (Alvarado, 1984b; Andrade, 1984). Also, as Michel-Ange Amorim (1990) has remarked about Andrade's interpretation of the cases:

Andrade interprets the different types of occurrences present in this case [the Guarulhos's case] as supportive of a Spiritist world view in the Umbanda tradition. The Umbanda tradition has several million adherents especially in the bigger cities. It combines African, Catholic, Indian, and Spiritist elements and may be characterized as a relatively extra-ecclesiastic of popular Catholicism with ancient Afro-Brazilian sects. (p. 199)

According to Amorim, not only does Andrade interpret his cases along the Spiritist lines but he also accepts the central beliefs of this religion, such as the existence of all sorts of spirits, like Exus and Umulums. He also believes that the sorcerer is able to practice magic within the terreiros (a place specialized in these procedures) to harass victims according to Quimbanda laws (the black magic side of the Umbanda religion).

Concerning Andrade's interpretation of the aforementioned case of Guarulhos, Amorim (1990) also states:

Thus, he rejects the usual attributions of RSPK outbreaks to a living agency. In defense of his position he points to the fact that a psychological examination of Noêmia [a participant in the case], the most probable RSPK agent, was conducted by two psychologists belonging to the IBPP team. He states, "Mrs. Noêmia didn't display any form of psychological abnormality that could justify viewing her as belonging to the 'psychokinetic agent of a poltergeist' category in conformity with the theoretical patterns suggested by the current hypothesis." . . . He adds that his macro-PK tests . . . of her capacities were also negative. (p. 199)

It is important, however, to point out that to some extent the cases investigated by Andrade and his associates seem to reflect the influence of the beliefs and culture of Brazilian society (Hess, 1990). Andrade has also published one of the first systematic treatises of parapsychology in Portuguese entitled *Parapsicologia Experimental* (1967). A basic introductory manual of the quantitative method used in parapsychology, it includes a detailed description of the statistical model used in experiments with ESP cards.

There are other groups in Brazil who are interested in a more scientific approach to psychical research. One of these groups is the recently established ECLIPSY-Instituto de Investigações Científicas em Parapsicologia. This group aims to pursue a different approach, one separate from the more traditional approaches associated with Spiritist or Catholic orientations typical of most Brazilian research centers. It received support from the University of São Francisco to organize its first conference in parapsychology, held in 1990, which included participants from the University as well as researchers from Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. The group plans to conduct experimental research that will be reported in its new journal, called *Revista Brasileira de Parapsicologia*. According to its president, Wellington Zangari, it will include abstracts in English as well as in Spanish. The journal will also include translations from major experimental and theoretical articles published in the English-language journals.

There are also other groups involved in parapsychology in Brazil that are beyond the scope of this paper because of limitations of space and because of our initial goal of evaluating Brazilian parapsychology from the perspective of its impact on the Ibero-American countries.

For many years Argentina has been the top-ranking country in Ibero-America in terms of experimental parapsychological research.