ESP CURRICULUM GUIDE

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EXCERPTS FROM

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Preface

Although the fact is unknown to most educators, extrasensory perception is receiving increasing but still limited attention in textbooks of general psychology at both high school and college levels.

In our present state of little knowledge it appears that the principal values to be gained by a student who is not going to devote a large amount of time or effort to the subject will be a deepened understanding of scientific method and a renewed sense of wonder toward man and his potentialities. I believe these are among the values essential to a recovery of social morality, and this explains why I think the disciplined study of ESP can be of Importance today.

As one of a small group of university scientists actively engaged in research on ESP, I want to give as many teachers as possible whatever help I can, so that they may teach this subject in a honest, accurate and exciting way. For that reason I have prepared this curriculum guide as a supplementary source of information for those who care to use it.

Recognizing that the most significant aspects of a pioneering science are often conveyed in the outlook of the investigators, I have not tried to avoid expressions of personal attitude where these seemed appropriate to my purpose.

1. How This Presentation is Organized.

This curriculum guide is for secondary-school and college teachers of psychology, biology, and general science who may wish to teach extrasensory perception and related topics, either briefly or as a formal course unit, or who may have occasion to recommend the purchase of library materials for student projects on this subject. The instructor who has only limited time should turn first to the Syllabus to see what can be done in the classroom.

The educational challenge of ESP lies in four topical areas: in the use of scientific method, in the nature of scientific controversy, in the unknown psychological conditions for the production of ESP, and in its philosophic implications.

The presentation and development of these topics in your class will require certain starting information, which this curriculum guide provides as indicated in the table of contents. Attention is called to the comments offered after each item under "Books and Articles Recommended." These are an important part of what you need to know.

I have rejected one commonly used approach to parapsychology, namely, through mathematical statistics. The "binomial distribution" might be studied by having every student in the class throw a coin or a die 500 times. This could lead to the idea of the "null hypothesis." The same method could then be applied to an ESP card-guessing experiment.

The disadvantage of the statistical approach is that it places emphasis where it does not belong. Statistical method, although commonly used in this research, is merely a tool made necessary by the fact that in most ESP experiments the effects are too weak to be recognized by inspection.

In order to evaluate any experiment done in your class it may be necessary to make a probability determination, and this, in turn, will require explaining "probability" and "null hypothesis" if these concepts have not been previously covered. My recommendation is that the time for this be minimized. It would be regrettable if the student were allowed to acquire a misconception about ESP that is common among scientists, namely, that ESP research is a matter of routinized card guessing plus elementary probability theory.

I shall be grateful if those who use this curriculum guide will send me their criticisms and suggestions as outlined in Appendix 7.

2. Important Ideas of Science Illustrated by ESP.

What is to be learned about science in general from the study of ESP? Here are some ideas that seem important to me. You may find others to add to the list.

- The two essential features of scientific method are theory and experiment.
- In its first stage of development a new science is usually unscientific or even antiscientific. as in the case of alchemy, which evolved into chemistry.
- Scientists welcome minor changes in their thinking but vigorously oppose major changes.
- The wide acceptance of a revolutionary scientific idea will depend primarily upon philosophic beliefs or practical applications, but scarcely at all upon laboratory evidence.
- In science, as in every area of human endeavor, the fact that a man has achieved an outstanding reputation does not mean that all of his opinions are correct.
- The research problems one can undertake in a field of science seem limitless, but are restricted as a practical matter by present understanding and technique, upon which we must build.
- Revolutionary research is often slow and unexciting, requiring painstaking attention to detail.
- Worthwhile research does not necessarily require expensive tools.
- To avoid wasting time, before beginning scientific research of any kind, one must study what other people have done in the same area.
- No matter how well intended they may be, descriptions of one person's experiments by another are usually misleading One must go to the original research report to make a definitive evaluation.
- In a scientific sense, we do not know what man is. Our ideas about how man relates to man and to the rest of the universe are too primitive and fragmentary to allow us to distinguish between moral values that are compatible with reality and those that are not.

(The remaining sections of the book, listed below, do not contribute to this essay.)

3. Books and Articles Recommended for the School Library.

4. Syllabus.

Appendices

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