

Joao Claudio Todorov: Remembrances

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We have left back those times in which we were trying to find our way in the midst of the confusion prevailing in psychology. During the late sixties and early seventies of the past century, many then young Latin-American psychologists perceived the need of building a scientific discipline, overcoming psychoanalysis and traditionally mind-oriented approaches. Main attempts in this direction took place in Brazil and México under the influence of Fred S. Keller and of Sidney W. Bijou, respectively. As a result, many of us, additionally to local efforts in each country, left abroad for graduate studies to get experimental training.

I met Joao Claudio for the first time in Brasilia in November 1974. He had been appointed as professor at the Department of Psychology of the University of Brasilia, and I had been invited by a private university to give some lectures on behavior modification with children, before the term 'applied behavior analysis' became dominant. I had visited before the University of Brasilia in 1972 invited by my prior Brazilian students at the University of Veracruz in Xalapa, but at that time Joao Claudio was still in Ribeirão Preto. We had a very pleasant encounter that was promoted by common friends. It was noon and we sat down to drink some Brahma beers on a terrace, talking about the situation of psychology in our countries and universities and exchanging ideas. Incidentally, on that occasion I saw some albino rats moving around the grass by the terrace, and we all laughed about when one of our Brazilian friends told us that lab rats were not sacrificed when they got old, but they were let free. A humane practice that had a secondary positive effect: albino rats drove away gray rats! I am sure that Brasilia was the only one city in the world with wild albino rats in the parks.

My next encounter with Joao Claudio was in 1977-1978 in México City. He was invited to spend a sabbatical year at the experimental analysis of behavior graduate program in the National Autonomous University of México (UNAM). Although at that time I was most of the time in the new UNAM campus at Iztacala, I used to teach and supervise research in the graduate program at least once a week. It was there that Joao Claudio and I had the opportunity to talk again about psychology and many other things. I invited him one or two times to dinner at home in the north section of the metropolitan area. I remember that he found some similarities in the urban design of Brasilia and where I lived (commercial blocks with small shops, circular avenues, and small gardens within housing areas). Regrettably, the distance between the two campuses (20 miles) did not facilitate continuous gatherings between us. In that time Joao Claudio was very productive, running several experiments on concurrent schedules, most of which he published in the Mexican Journal of Behavior Analysis. I also remember him being very open and friendly with students and colleagues. He even recommended some ways to analyze my data with rats under T schedules.

We met again in July 1983, this time in Liege during the European Meeting on Behavior Analysis sponsored and organized by Marc Richelle. It was a magnificent event, with Skinner as the central figure, with a program consisting in a series of lectures covering a diversity of theoretical, experimental, and applied issues in the field. Nights were very pleasant in the city, with a lot of social interaction, enjoying the excellent Belgian beer. I enclose a picture of that meeting in which Joao Claudio and I are together.

I do not remember further encounters with Joao Claudio, although it is very likely that we crossed each other in ABA meetings or some other congress. In 1976, we invited him as guest lecturer to the Mexican Meeting of Behavior Analysis taking place in Veracruz. At the last moment he informed us that he was unable to travel because of duties related to being president of the University of Brasilia. The last time I could exchange a brief talk with him was at the International Meeting of Psychology in 2004 in Beijing. In that occasion his respiratory problems were evident, but he was still energetic and enthusiastic. I remember he stopped our conversation because he had to make a phone call to his wife in Brazil. As often happens, I regret that distance and commitments turn difficult to share time and interests with

persons you enjoy. I am sure this was our case. Nevertheless, I know that Joao Claudio left a deep impression on all the colleagues and students that knew him and, to that extent, Joao Claudio will continue being present among all of us.

Figure 1

European Meeting on Behavior Analysis, Liege, Belgium, 1983



Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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