

THE NORDIC COUNTRIES OF EUROPE

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One of the most interesting questions in parapsychology is: What scientific disciplines are involved in psychical research? Most people interested in the subject, and with enough experience both in parapsychology and science in general, would answer, "Many." It is also quite possible that developments in a variety of scientific disciplines may open the door to further, perhaps even rapid progress in parapsychology.

As far as I understand, parapsychology is more or less concerned with the inexplicable and the unknown. So is also the thinking man since his earliest philosophical searches. Parapsychology deals with the study of certain phenomena that do not fit the pattern of prevalent knowledge, or do not quite correspond to the laws of nature as viewed by present-day science.

But what do we actually know? Almost everything is unknown and it might well be that we are using the wrong methods of research. We do not even know, or to be more precise, understand the instrument for the search, the human mind.

There are such great scientific capacities in man, and yet so much anarchy. This imbalance is a cause of havoc in the world. The intellectuals, who have played with so many theories and ideas, have certainly not found the way out of the greatest difficulties. Not even the most expanded science has helped. It is quite obvious throughout our world of neurotic conflicts and compulsions, and aching misery, that no religion, no law, no social morality, not even all the science of the day have been able to bring about sanity and harmony. Is not the explanation for all this—in the widest meaning—that we do not understand the human mind? Our own mind and, perhaps, at the same time, the mind of man?

The mind, with its extraordinary capacities for scientific discoveries and their implementation, is still so narrow, so petty. And parapsychology has, for sure, very much to do with the mind. Man does not, with all his science, understand the world he is living in. The reali-

ties, or the reality parapsychology is investigating—it may be called ESP, telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, psychokinesis and so on—will probably become, by necessity, more and more a very important science.

The interest of psychical researchers has led to investigations of spontaneous phenomena or seemingly paranormal events that occur outside the laboratory or outside any designed or planned setting, as well as of laboratory experiments. This activity has in turn led to researches of significance to psychology, psychiatry, physics, physiology, medicine, pharmacology (psychopharmacology) and religion.

The position of parapsychology is the direct result of its heritage. It must deal with phenomena that, because of their unusual character, have traditionally aroused a high degree of emotionalism. One readily observes that in many civilizations both past and present, phenomena carrying magical connotations continue to create reactions that range from superstitious total acceptance to some sort of defensive total disbelief. But we also know from the whole history of man that many dreams of the magical have been translated into technological inventions and practical applications.

Parapsychology already offers a challenge to many other scientific disciplines because it so often calls for the services of their most advanced insights and means of exploration. For instance, the fields of parapsychology and psychology always tend to interact upon each other. A good deal of work by people in parapsychology has had psychological significance. At the same time, much of the psychical research in recent years has been undertaken by psychologists. (The same can, at least to some extent, be said about the relations between parapsychology and physiology and parapsychology and psychiatry.)

One of the first discoveries was that phenomena called telepathy, clairvoyance, and so on, were connected with a process that was, more or less, unconscious. It was also noted that unconscious processes do not necessarily operate according to the logic of the conscious ones. A problem many investigators have encountered is that the logical expectations of the conscious reasoning may not be those of the unconscious.

Parapsychological research certainly does not exist in some sort of a vacuum, isolated from other human research. Like any other organized activity, it is a response to needs, individual or social. These needs have in many old cultures connected parapsychology with what we call "pharmacology." A process of seeking has been going on all the time. It is certainly not anything new in the behavior of man. Man has long tried to get a clearer understanding of the world he is

living in. He has had a feeling that his clarity is dimmed—but does not understand how—and when clarity is dimmed, one's own perception is dull. Then life is rather shallow, meaningless and mediocre. Therefore, man has probably tried for thousands of years to get help from all sorts of herbs and mushrooms.

People often believe that, under the influence of such substances as fly-agaric or mescaline, they have had psychological experiences of great value. It has been thought that the knowledge of the senses and the usual processes of thinking hides another, higher knowledge, from us. This higher knowledge has usually been experienced as timeless and spaceless. Also, parapsychology has recently included, by necessity I feel, studies of altered states of consciousness, often with the help of hypnosis or such chemical compounds as LSD-25, mescaline, and psilocybin. Future discoveries in the field of pharmacology may result in the development of drugs more suitable for effecting changes in the mind favorable to parapsychological experimentation. For one reason or other, man is now turning to the "golden drug" that will bring about sanity and harmony, drugs that promise a psychedelic expansion of the mind, great visions and intensity.

Physiological studies in the field of parapsychology may be viewed as part of the effort linking physical and psychological phenomena. The traditions on which physiological studies in parapsychology are based, are part of man's desire to influence the physical events of the world around him. Man has tried to accomplish this with religio-psychological action such as prayer, incantation and all sorts of magic. Scientific work in this area, at least in the West, began only a little more than a century ago. Among the phenomena arousing interest have been such physical manifestations as alleged apparitions, levitations, and poltergeist phenomena, as well as some form of healing. Much experimentation has been carried out in such different but related fields as psychophysiology, electroencephalography, psychopharmacology, and endocrinology.

So many of us have for so long been used to thinking that psychic phenomena are nonphysical. Why must there be some kind of duality? It is not at all necessary to view psi phenomena or the psi-factor as a response to a nonphysical world. Why could not psi be an aspect of the physical world? Many experiences may not at all contradict the world picture of science, as has been thought, but, on the contrary, may support it.

Whether apparently acausal physical phenomena are analogous to parapsychological phenomena of a certain type may be revealed in the future with the help of more research. There are, however, very

many experiences of mystics, yogis, and others, that appear to support the modern world picture of the physical sciences. A lot of people have experienced the disappearance of the borders between the self and the environment and have found that "inner" and "outer" space are basically synonymous.

These experiences must be taken seriously. The world is evidently a whole in spite of its many aspects. The aspects are only the results of our own reactions to what is called "the world." We are, of course, a part of the world; we do not stand outside looking at it. And notably in the area where psychology and physics appear to meet, parapsychology may have much to offer.

In the future—so it appears to me—explorations of the self will be more and more interdisciplinary and will bring together parapsychologists, psychophysicists, physicists, psychologists, biologists, anthropologists, investigators of religious beliefs and also searchers from other professions. After all, has this not happened already? It seems to me quite correct to call parapsychology the "Science of Man," the science of integration of all sciences, and, of course, the science of the integration of the mind of man.

There are many psychical societies in the Nordic countries of Europe. Some of them are very definitely oriented toward the scientific approach. But it is not always so easy for the members of the Board of a society to keep it that way. The spiritualistic press may fight the Board's policy with help from such members as want to believe in their spirits and are seeking comfort, not truth. In the Nordic countries the spiritualists have their own societies, but many of the spiritualists are also members of the psychical societies. In the Scandinavian countries and Finland, I would say, there is a determination to strengthen the ties between parapsychological researchers and centers of education. There is a deep mystical tradition, but also concrete academic accomplishments. Because many of the members of these psychical societies have also been outstanding researchers in the fields of philosophy, medicine, biology, electronics, and so on, it can be said that the societies and scholars in various sciences have long worked hand in hand.

I will try to give a brief overall survey of the developments in the Nordic countries—according to my present knowledge. I will begin with Sweden.

In Stockholm, we have the 25-year-old Sällskapet för Parapsykologisk Forskning (Society for Parapsychological Research). As long as I remember it has been a society with very high standards. It has also been rather active and stands definitely on a scientific ground. A few

years ago the Society went through a process of reorganization involving changes in the members of the Board. The well-known physician Gösta Rodhe was the former president and Mrs. Eva Hellström, a clairvoyant, respected for many years for her energetic activity on behalf of the Society, was the secretary. Some of the members of the Society also published papers which, in my opinion, were of good quality.

Under the new Board, with Dr. Rolf Evjegård (president) and Eric Uggla (secretary), the Swedish Society for Parapsychological Research seems to be very active. Many of the meetings have been of high standard with prominent lecturers from several fields. A group in the Society has carried out experiments in psychometry at the initiative of former secretary Eva Hellström. Eric Uggla, the new secretary, continued the experiments in psychometry and also carried out a series of experiments in precognition. The results obtained in precognition are promising. There were also some experiments in hypnosis. A book about the spontaneous psychical experiences of Eva Hellström, written by Rolf Evjegård, is under way and will probably soon be published in English.

There is very marked increase of interest in parapsychology in general, notably among students and other young people. The conservative scientists in Sweden have not changed their opinions; they are as much against parapsychology as ever. The positive interest among the students, however, shows promise for the future. At this time there is no parapsychological chair to be expected at any Swedish university.

In Ludvika (Sweden) Haakon Forwald, who has for many years been active in parapsychology, continues his well-known psychokinetic experiments. The details of the experiments will be published later, probably in an American journal.

For some years Martin Johnson, perhaps the most active person in parapsychology at this time, has carried out research in Lund; also Nils Olof Jacobson has continued his experiments. Articles about Jacobson's research were published in the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* (January 1969). The Swedish Society for Parapsychological Research possesses a good library. It is now located at the University where it is more easily accessible to students and other interested people.

In Denmark, Aage Slomann was well known for his parapsychological interests and activities. A graduate chemical engineer, Slomann worked in the United States, France and Denmark. At the time of his retirement from the Board of Directors at the Colgate-Palmolive Company in Denmark, he took up full-time parapsychology. He was the

president of the Danish Society for Psychical Research and his activities included the establishment of a good library for the Society. This took him many years. He was a tireless lecturer, in Scandinavia as well as in Finland and many other European countries.

Aage Slomann's wideranging interest in psychical research is illustrated by articles in *Psykisk Forum* and other Danish publications, as well as in the Journals of the American Society for Psychical Research and of the London Society for Psychical Research. At the time of his death at the age of 79, in November 1970, he was still active and at work on several articles in the field of psychical research for an encyclopedia. His death was a great loss for psychical research in Denmark, and at this moment it is difficult to say who will take over his work.

Professor Thorstein Wereide was for many years the leading figure in Norwegian psychical research. When he retired, the well-known psychologist, Professor Harald Schjelderup accepted the Presidency of the Norwegian Society for Psychical Research. Schjelderup is the author of *Det Skulte Menneske: Udbevisste og Ukjente Krefter i Sjelslivet* (The Unknown Man: Unconscious and Unknown Elements of Man), a book that has attracted wide and lasting attention in all Nordic countries. It does not, however, deal with the more modern experiments and accomplishments in the field of parapsychology.

The general atmosphere for psychical research in Finland is good. There are, of course, a lot of people who cannot understand that their own picture of the universe might be incomplete or at least imperfect, or that there might be forces at work they have not experienced or do not understand.

Some found these views reinforced by Gösta Lindholm's thesis on ESP, in the Psychology Department at the University of Helsingfors ("Fehlerquellen der sog. ASW-Versuche," Helsingfors, 1967). Lindholm's concluding statement is: "The ESP researches performed heretofore do not fulfill the requirements set for empirical, psychological experiments. The test procedures in which the sources of error can be exposed in detail are so deficient that from the point of view of science nothing can be said about the phenomena intended to be measured."

Lindholm repeated his statement many times over the radio and on television, and many persons without much knowledge of the field of parapsychology have been influenced by it. But Lindholm's material is so weak, his approach so strongly dogmatic, and his refusal to listen to other people in public discussions so obvious, that intelligent people do not seem to take him seriously. There has been

very strong criticism, not only of his thesis, but also of his inflexible attitude and his refusal to seek proper information.

The lack of funds is the only obstacle to time-consuming experimental projects requiring proper technical equipment. This is a pity, because what really is needed is the kind of investigation that goes on uninterrupted from year to year. But it is a fact that there are no funds for parapsychological research at the moment. It is apparently easier for organizations concerned with spiritism, flying saucers and other such beliefs to obtain funds.

As is the case, for instance in Sweden, the conservative scientists in Finland have certainly not changed their negative attitude; they are as much against parapsychology as before. But there are some young scientists, a great many students, and some of Finland's most outstanding older scientists who not only have an open mind in general but also a genuine interest in psi phenomena and parapsychological research. To mention a few scientists: Sven Segerstråle, professor in biology who devoted many pages to parapsychology in his books *Det Underbara Livet* (The Wonderful Life) and *Elämän Arvoitus* (The Mystery of Life), the latter published in 1968; both are biology textbooks used all over the country; Sven Krohn, professor of philosophy at Turun Yliopisto and former president of Parapsykologinen Tutkimusseura; Professor Väinö Auer, internationally known geologist; and Professor Uno Saarnio, philosopher and mathematician.

A great number of the younger physicians in Finland have a genuine interest in parapsychology. One proof of this is that both my books *Parapsykologia* and *Hypnoosi* got exceptionally positive and lengthy appreciation in reviews printed in the medical journals. Some of the well-known older physicians have publicly revealed their positive interest in psychical research. Also, during recent years, I have been approached by some university students for help with their projects in parapsychology and related subjects.

I feel it safe to state that the increase of genuine interest and research in parapsychological studies among students and other young people is quite remarkable, although language barriers often are a hindrance in obtaining proper information about international research. The students, of course, understand three to five languages, but people without higher education are rather isolated in this respect (the only textbooks in Finnish in the field are my own: *Parapsykologia*, second edition, 1969, and *Hypnoosi*, second edition, 1968. *Hypnoosi*, although a large textbook on hypnosis and the first ever written in the field in Finland, contains much material directly concerned with parapsychology in its relation to hypnosis.

The Society for Psychical Research in Finland is the oldest parapsychological society in the country. It was established in 1907, under the name "Sällskapet för Psykisk Forskning i Finland—Suomen Psykkinen Tutkimusseura." For more than thirty years it was the only society of its kind in Finland. Some of Finland's most outstanding men in science, education and medicine have been its presidents. Many worthwhile experiments were conducted and well-known sensitives in Finland and from other countries were invited to Helsingfors. As early as 1910, a book was published by the then president of the Society, Professor Arvid Grotenfelt, on experiments in psychometry with the well-known English medium, Mr. Peters.

Between the two World Wars, the Society was very active. Numerous experiments were conducted with mediums and other sensitives, as well as long-distance experiments in telepathy. Many books on the paranormal were published by Dr. Uno Stadius, the president at that time. One of the books *Ur själslivets Gåtfulla Värld* (The Mystical World of the Mind), published in 1933, should also be of the greatest interest to persons not understanding Swedish.

I was president of the SPR in Finland for many years. It was a period of great activity, with study groups in meditation, hypnosis, yoga, telepathy, and psychometry. Sensitives and lecturers from other countries were invited to Helsingfors, among them the well-known Swedish clairvoyant and psychometrist Lilly Åkerblom; Dr. John Björkhem, from Sweden; Aage Slomann from Denmark; and some mediums from Denmark and England. I attempted to investigate cases of poltergeists, precognitive dreams and many others. I also published numerous articles on parapsychology and related topics in many papers and magazines. My textbook *Parapsykologia* was written to bridge the gap and give some information about the more modern parapsychological activities. Later on, many more books were published that should interest people with a deeper feeling for the mysterious world we are a part of.

My parapsychological researches at the time I was secretary or president of the SPR in Finland as well as later on, have included experiments with ESP and PK (psychokinesis) at a distance and close at hand; studies of the psychological aspects of ESP in hypnotized subjects; mediumistic predictions under hypnosis with the use of pharmacological substances; and precognitive factors in relation to introspective awareness. I also engaged in a survey of spontaneous cases of psi phenomena in Finland and investigated states of awareness in hypnosis with the aid of mescaline, LSD-25 and psilocybin. Some of the experiments have been published in Swedish, Finnish and English.

The articles in English have for the most part been in the *Journal of Parapsychology*, the *Journal of the ASPR*, and *Tomorrow*; one about ESP in Finland appeared in the *Parapsychology Review*, May-June 1970.

The present president of the Society for Psychical Research in Finland is Stefan Tallqvist, engineer and a specialist in advanced radio-electronics. Under his presidentship, many good lectures have been heard at the meetings of the Society. ESP experiments of an exploratory nature are being conducted; one such series with random numbers and an automatic correlator, invented and constructed by Stefan Tallqvist, is in process; others are being planned.

As the Society's official language is Swedish, although many lecturers have given their talks in Finnish when their knowledge of Swedish is insufficient, it has fewer members than the other parapsychological society in Helsingfors, Parapsykologinen Tutkimusseura, whose official language is Finnish. The relations between the two societies are very good (the former president of the Swedish-speaking Society is also a member of the Board of the Finnish-speaking organization). The Society for Psychical Research in Finland is oriented toward the scientific approach.

In 1938, the Society for Psychical Research, which at that time was bilingual, established the Parapsykologinen Tutkimusseura, with Pentti Vuorenjuuri, engineer by profession, as president, and Orvo Raippamaa (who is also a member of the Board of the Institute of Parapsychology in Finland), as secretary.

Parapsykologinen Tutkimusseura is very active. It has about 400 members, and at the monthly meetings held from September 1970 to May 1971, the attendance numbered between 150 and 200. Qualified lecturers have delivered talks (Sven Krohn, Sven Segerstrale, Uuno Saarnio), but there have also been lecturers on such subjects as flying saucers and astrology.

Some years ago, the majority of the members of Parapsykologinen Tutkimusseura were old. Now, most of the members are young or middle-aged. Many of them are students. Study groups discussing various topics meet two or three times a month. Parapsykologinen Tutkimusseura is, according to its charter, oriented toward the scientific approach. The Society shares the library established and maintained by the Society for Psychical Research.

In 1965, the Institute of Parapsychology in Finland was established in Helsingfors, and I have been its director since that time. It was established to supplement the work of other organizations and to coordinate research activities. According to its charter, the Institute

was set up to encourage the study of the "deepest layers of the mind," specifically the "origin and nature of parapsychological phenomena, to make available the results of such research and to establish and maintain international contacts and communications in the field."

Most of the work of the Institute has been in the area of public information, to satisfy the great need that exists all over the country. That has, indeed, taken a lot of my time. I have also tried to encourage young people to conduct experiments on a scientific basis, and to acquaint themselves with modern work in parapsychology. I am glad to observe some success in this important task, and it seems to me that we can look forward to some interesting results.

In this connection, one more thing is worth mentioning. I am also president of the Society for Hypnosis in Finland. We have a large scale educational program, both for therapeutic and experimental purposes. The Board of this society has decided to include parapsychology in its educational program. And, indeed, many of the members (physicians, dentists, psychologists, teachers, nurses and persons in other professions related to the field of hypnosis) are interested in parapsychology.

There is still one parapsychological society to be mentioned: Tampereen Parapsykologinen Tutkimusseura, in Tammerfors (Finland). This Society, under the presidentship of the architect Gunnar Strömmer, has directed its efforts toward public information about psychical research and related topics. Gunnar Strömmer has also taken part in mediumistic investigations, and has investigated a poltergeist case. It seems to me that this Society leans much toward spiritualism.

What may then, at the end of this short survey, be said about parapsychology in Scandinavia and Finland at the present time? First, that there is a real interest in parapsychology, and because parapsychology touches so many scientific disciplines, it attracts many representatives from those disciplines. Second, the students are more than ever interested in psychical research, but the academic acceptance of parapsychology in the form of one or more possible chairs in Nordic universities is not to be expected.