

## PARAPSYCHOLOGY IN FRANCE

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Parapsychology is not accepted as a scientific discipline in France today, nor is it part of the curriculum of any university in the country. Professors and students are interested in the subject, but they pursue their studies clandestinely. Some investigators who have done considerable research and conducted experiments in parapsychology have requested anonymity for fear that otherwise their academic progress would be jeopardized. A striking example was the 12th Annual McDougall Award to two French researchers whose true names were never revealed, at their request. And yet, the fact is that parapsychology in France today, as in the past, has involved representatives of many scientific disciplines, including physicians, physicists, chemists and engineers among others. It is also noteworthy that in recent years, particularly the past two, more and more students have been meeting in formal and informal groups for the purpose of discussing their studies and experiments.

In 1971, students founded the Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherches en Parapsychologie (G.E.R.P.). Through this organization, they hope to exert the kind of pressure that will result in the acceptance of parapsychology as an integral part of the university curriculum.

Now, I will report briefly on experimental research. Since the results of most research work in France have already been published in the *Revue Métapsychique*, I shall deal with the more recent studies which have not yet been published.

### *Psychokinesis*

1. *Animal Parapsychology.* The G.E.R.P. students have conducted laboratory experiments with white mice in a manner similar to Dr. Helmut Schmidt's work in the U.S.A. to discern possible psychokinesis (PK) effects in these animals. However, it must be pointed out that with the G.E.R.P. students, the generator of randomness was electronic and thus different from the one used by Dr. Schmidt, that was based on radioactive emission. It may be that comparison of the two

types of generators could possibly give a more precise evaluation of the nature and efficiency of the psi phenomena produced.

2. *Vegetal parapsychology.* Dr. and Mrs. Paul Vasse observed the effect of thought on germination and the growth of plants. Eight of their experiments were remarkably significant. However, when these experiments were repeated by others, there were varying degrees of success and sometimes negative results. More recently, Dr. Jean Barry and his collaborators made a statistical and comparative study of the psychokinetic effect on a culture of fungi in vitro.

Experiments in psi missing were conducted in 1965 and 1966. Experimenters were chosen from both sheep and goats. Psychological and physiological states were noted before each trial. There were nine experiments in 1965, and another nine in 1966.

For each trial, the total results were compared with the control fungus by the calculation of variance. The results for some of the experimenters were quite significant.

Among other researches conducted in the Laboratory of Dr. Barry in Bordeaux, I will note the telepathic experiments with the plethysmograph. Some of these were long-distance experiments between Dr. Barry (the sender) in Bordeaux and Professor Douglas Dean (the receiver) in the U.S., at the Newark Engineering College, New Jersey. Statistical results were significant.

### 3. *The PK Effect on Material Systems*

The engineers Mr. De Cressac and Mr. G. Chevalier have constructed equipment for the study of the PK effect. The engineer, Mr. René Pérot constructed a machine for throwing dice. All these experiments were conducted under the same conditions, once a week, utilizing the same target: No. 3. Mrs. Pérot, a subject in her husband's experiments, scored highest with a C.R. of 21 in 1956-57 in a total of 5,568 trials.

### *Discussion*

The notable difference in the scores obtained by Mrs. Pérot and the two other subjects is that her results confirmed those she obtained during ten years of experiments in clairvoyance. These results in turn confirm the original hypothesis offered some years ago by Professor J. B. Rhine in his own well-known experiments. Parenthetically, it should be noted here that Mr. G. Clauzure of the Laboratory of Parapsychology in Bordeaux, headed by Dr. Jean Barry, has also conducted experimental research on the PK energy of the unconscious. The results are noteworthy for they showed that a subject who had scored

33 on 180 throws, scored 48 out of 180 throws after training, the probability actually being 30 for 180 throws.

### *Clairvoyance*

A variety of important experiments in clairvoyance have been undertaken in France in recent years, and they will be noted briefly here. The physicist, Dr. R. Dufour, has engaged in research on clairvoyance and psychometricity. Dr. Dufour worked with a group of about ten persons once a week on his experiments. In his research Dr. Dufour utilized an apparatus which revealed a so-called automatic manifestation, which in turn has great interest for psychoanalysts.

### *Parapsychological phenomena associated with blindness*

For the physiologist Ch. Féré (*Sensation et Mouvement*, 1887) all sensory excitations have comparable physiological effects, of which he has measured the variations. The sharpness of a sense, he believes, can be reinforced by the excitation of another sense. For example, the sound of a tuning fork lowers the level of perception. There is also the possibility that a sound induces a color, as in the phenomenon called "color hearing," which is the most frequent of the "synesthesias." Furthermore, peripheric excitations have repercussions throughout the nervous system by increasing the energy and reinforcing all the psychical activity.

Thus, we have investigated the concentration of the sender on peripheric excitations. Although auditory and olfactory excitations have given some results, the best ones have been induced by the tactile impressions of the sender, for example, when he touched a three-dimensional picture.

We have also conducted experiments with blind subjects. Having no sight, they have developed the sharpness of their other senses and they are very attentive to their internal feelings. Most blind people have a highly developed visual imagination. Some have colored dreams and often they also have "color hearing."

### *GESP and Blindness*

We have been experimenting since 1966 with two blind students and with Mr. Jacques Berthaux who became blind thirty years ago. Since he is a sculptor, we have had an opportunity to investigate the interrelationship of creativity and GESP. (We reported these first experiments at the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association. Our experiments reveal that "inward speaking" is well developed among blind subjects. These subjects are also better senders

than receivers, but it seems difficult for them to synchronize their movement with that of a non-blind person.

*Effects of Light and Colors on Blind Subjects*

The forerunner of research on eyeless vision in France was Jules Romains of the Académie Française. In 1920 his book, entitled *La Vision Extra-Rétinienne et le Sens Paroptique*, was first published, and it was reissued in 1964. Mr. Romains honored us by coming to one of our meetings in Paris at the Centre d'Information de la Couleur in April 1971 and observing our experiments.

In these brief notes I have mentioned the relatively modern experiments in psychical research in France. It is essential that I allude also to the earlier history of this science in France, where parapsychology is actually a division of metaphysical studies and derives from some of the early work of Professor Charles Richet, the Nobel Laureate in Medicine and Physiology in 1913. Richet, as we all know, included in his studies the physical phenomena exhibited by mediums and the manifestation of what we now call psi phenomena. Professor Richet was elected President of the Society for Psychical Research, London, in 1905, and some French correspondents of the SPR in that earlier period included Th. Ribot, H. Taine, Dr. P. Janet, and Ch. Féré. In 1913 Henri Bergson was elected President of the SPR, thus strengthening the ties of French thinkers internationally with psychical research. (See *Parapsychology Review*, May-June 1970, for reprint of the Bergson address.) One of the most significant developments in the advance of psychical research in France was undoubtedly signalled by Jean Meyer's founding of the Institut Métapsychique in 1919. Its first Honorary President was Charles Richet, who became active president in 1930. Other presidents have been Dr. Moutier and René Warcollier, the chemical engineer. He was succeeded in 1934 by Dr. Ch. Roux. Some of the first directors were Drs. G. Geley and E. Osty, and the mediums studied during those early years of the Institut included F. Kluski and J. Guzig. Thus, the studies of the blind, of clairvoyance, of psychokinesis and other phenomena mentioned earlier in these brief observations are a natural historical development which began at the turn of the century. As I conclude, I must note that the founder of the Parapsychology Foundation, Eileen J. Garrett, was one of the pioneer publishers in America who first brought to the attention of the American and international audiences the work of René Warcollier and of the other French pioneers.

## PARAPSYCHOLOGY IN CANADA

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In Toronto, both at the University of Toronto and off-campus, there are now signs that parapsychology will be more energetically and widely studied in the near future than has previously been the case. While I know of no plans to introduce full-blown courses in parapsychology at this institution (unfortunately our students lack opportunity to take the sort of basic course in parapsychology that has lately proved so popular in neighboring Buffalo, under Douglas Dean's tutelage), the Department of Philosophy is launching a new undergraduate course next year in which extrasensory perception will be considered at some length. Advance registration for this course indicates an unusually high class enrollment: much higher, in fact, than had been anticipated. Next year, also, I shall be giving a graduate seminar in philosophy of parapsychology, and, as far as I know, it will be the first time that a course in that subject has been offered at this University at the graduate level.

It does seem that more philosophers hereabouts are expressing interest in parapsychology, although I strongly doubt that this is a result of the recent "recognition" of the Parapsychological Association by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Contributions from this and nearby universities have lately included a number of papers that deal, if not directly with problems in the philosophy of parapsychology, then with matters that are of interest and importance to philosophers of parapsychology. For example, I may cite an intriguing article on death by James Van Evra (University of Waterloo), who develops "a view in which death is seen to be a state which characterizes absolutely nothing, and hence requires no commitment to the belief in selves which survive death" ("On death as a limit," *Analysis* 31 [April, 1971]: 170-176), and two cogent papers by Douglas Odegard of the University of Guelph: "Disembodied existence and

\* Professor Wheatley, unable to be present, mailed in his report in the form of a letter to the Parapsychology Foundation.

central state materialism" (*Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 48 [1970]: 256-260) and "Persons and bodies" (*Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 31 [1970]: 225-242). In the first, Odegard attempts to refute the view, which he finds in D. M. Armstrong's recent work on *A Materialist Theory of the Mind*, "That central state materialism . . . can consistently allow the possibility of disembodied existence" (p. 256); and in the second, he argues that the propositions "'It is possible for any person connected to a body to become disconnected from it' and 'No person connected to a body can be identical with that body' must both be true" (p. 242).

As for experimental and other research at the first-order level, as distinct from the philosophical, most of it is taking place off-campus. Within this University, I understand, a little experimental research is being done by individual students in the Department of Psychology, but undertakings of seemingly greater promise are being made elsewhere. Two research organizations, each at least partly concerned with parapsychological problems, have very recently been formed in Toronto, and evidently both have been active during the past year. One group is the Toronto Society for Psychical Research, whose president is Allen Spragget, a journalist of many parts and the author of the widely-read book *The Unexplained*, and whose members (approximately 200) are investigating, among other things, ESP and PK, altered states of consciousness, spontaneous cases, and psychic photography. The other new organization is the New Horizons Research Foundation, an institution whose fields of study, in addition to parapsychology, include archeology, anthropology, and religion. The noted parapsychologist George Owen is Director of New Horizons and is also an Honorary Councillor of the Toronto Society. Research has reportedly been energetic and productive, and autumn publication of preliminary results is expected.

The style, strategies, and goals of these new research endeavors will obviously differ appreciably from those of an earlier tradition of psychical research carried out in Toronto and other Canadian centers, which concerned itself primarily with the question of survival and was of the mediumistic genre. The most recent example is the work of the Clendennings, a sedulous and talented family who devoted many years in this city in the 1950s and 1960s to an inquiry into survival, an inquiry described in *The Search*, by Gertrude Clendinning (London, 1968). The reports and conclusions of this book may be compared to the remarkable results obtained by Thomas Glen Hamilton (1873-1935), that indefatigable physician, educator, legislator, and psychical researcher whose studies in deep-trance automatism, described in a book published

in Toronto in 1942, *Intention and Survival* (J. D. Hamilton, ed.), surely earned him the title of most outstanding pioneer in psychical research in Canada. His labors in this field, and their outcome, have just lately been rechronicled by his daughter, Margaret Hamilton, in a book entitled *Is Survival a Fact?* (London, 1969). On this question, she, and the Clendennings, and Dr. Hamilton himself all seem to agree that it is. And all three of these books, *Intention and Survival*, *The Search, Is Survival a Fact?*, are impressive, interesting, and careful records. The first is especially striking. Still, despite the convictions of their authors, many of us can read them, and shelves of more or less similar works, and remain thoroughly unconvinced about personal survival. Part of the reason, it would seem, is that in confronting the survival question we are facing one of those comparatively rare subjects (and here the contrast is with evolution, memory, "ordinary" paranormal phenomena, etc.) where we first need to know *how* before we can acknowledge *that*. In the matter of survival, indeed, perhaps we are constrained to understand how it could possibly be a fact, before we can even *believe* that it is one, for if it were a fact, then I suppose this would entail a need for us to reclassify as "paranormal" what we regard as "normal," and vice versa. Anyhow, the cited books are of little help in elucidating a theoretical framework that would afford a grasp of how a person possibly could "live after dying." To my mind, they don't make this idea any more intelligible or less bizarre. The "survival hypothesis" itself can hardly change the enigmatic quality of some of the putative evidence that they offer, for that "hypothesis" appears just to lack any explanatory force.