

PARAPSYCHOLOGY IN GERMANY

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In the year 1889 a young German philosopher and psychologist, Max Dessoir, invented the word "parapsychology." Using the Greek prefix *para*=beside, he tried to designate by this term psychological and physical phenomena which happen or seem to happen outside of familiar events. The new name for the "unclassified residuum of our experience"—as William James characterized the exciting realm of the "occult"—needed about forty years to become internationally accepted and to triumph over "psychical research." A landmark of this triumph was a book by a fellow student of Max Dessoir's, the zoologist and philosopher Hans Driesch. As a professor of philosophy at Leipzig University he published in 1932 the first methodology of our field of research under the title *Parapsychologie, die Wissenschaft von den "okkulten" Erscheinungen* (Parapsychology, Science of the "Occult" Phenomena). This was a revolutionary event in a country of which F. C. S. Schiller, the English psychical researcher, said with some malice in a review of the fifth edition of Dessoir's well known book *Vom Jenseits der Seele* (Beyond the Psyche), in 1921: "His general attitude is that of a very critical psychical researcher . . . and even this demands a deal of courage in Germany, where authoritarianism and a priori dogmatism have always been at home, and the mental atmosphere seems still to be very similar to that prevailing in England forty years ago" (*Proceedings Society for Psychical Research* 32 [1922]: 146). In the same volume of the *Proceedings*, F. C. S. Schiller reviews a work of Dr. V. Schrenck-Notzing: *Physikalische Phänomene des Mediumismus, Studien zur Erforschung der Telekinetischen Vorgänge* (Physical Phenomena of Mediumship; Studies on the Investigation of Telekinetic Events). The author, a Munich physician, was the outstanding pioneer of physical mediumship. He began by taking part in sittings with Eusapia Palladino in 1894, worked with the Polish medium Stanislaw Tomczyk among many others, and got his best results with the brothers Rudi and Willy Schneider from Braunau, Austria. His work, which included the investigation of poltergeist phenomena and hypnotism,

was much contested but, under the bombardment of his critics, he continuously improved the conditions and finally reached results which could cope with any reasonable skepticism. His poltergeist investigations now seem justified by recent developments in this long taboo field, which could, perhaps, even impress some very unyielding psychical researchers who believe in the curious subsoil water theory of Dr. Lambert's. Munich was a favorable place for parapsychology. Another pioneer lived there from 1921: Dr. R. Tischner, also a physician, whose qualitative studies on telepathy and clairvoyance have great merit. His controversy with the psychologist Dr. R. Baerwald, author of the book *Die intellektuellen Phänomene* (Mental Phenomena, 1925), proved to be well founded: Baerwald, head of the so-called school of telepathy, only accepted telepathy as compatible with the physical laws of nature and rejected the possibility of clairvoyance, a bias which has been thoroughly refuted by the later findings of experimental parapsychology, and which Tischner has always unveiled as a pseudophysical prejudice. As part of the parapsychological scene in the twenties, two university professors should not be forgotten: the psychologist August Messer of Giessen University, and the many-sided philosopher T. K. Oesterreich, of Tübingen, whose publications dealt with the philosophical impact of parapsychological phenomena and on the dissociation of personality and the phenomenology of possession. Germany did not have an organization which could be compared with the British and American Societies for Psychical Research. A journal, the *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie*, edited by Dr. Sünner and financed by Dr. v. Schrenck-Notzing followed the old journal *Psychische Studien* in 1926, and ceased publication in 1934. A year later, an important work struck the balance of the pro and con of what was still called "occultism" at that time. *Der Okkultismus; Täuschungen und Tatsachen* (Occultism; Delusions and Facts) by the Swiss born author Mrs. Fanny Moser who later—she died in 1953—would become a generous donor to the Freiburg Institute for Border Areas of Psychology.

In the foreword of his revolutionary methodology, Hans Driesch bitterly complained of the lack of interest of the German universities. "This insupportable situation," he wrote, "has to be characterized with clear-cut words. No doubt that universities should adopt a critical attitude toward new topics; but they are by no means pure institutions of preservation allowed to behave as if all which can be regarded as 'essential' is already known and should only be elaborated in detail." The breakthrough took place at Bonn University where Erich Rothacker, head of the Psychological Institute, encouraged experimental work on motor automatisms and clairvoyance. I was the

experimenter and had the privilege of submitting to the Faculty of Philosophy the first German thesis on a parapsychological topic which yielded positive results (*Psychische Automatismen*, Bonn, 1933). A second contribution to the problem of extrasensory perception followed shortly after and was published in the conservative *Zeitschrift für Psychologie* in 1935.

Just before I finished my paper, Dr. Gerda Walther—still one of the best informed parapsychologists, specialist of mystical experience and physical mediumship—sent me a recently published book by a young American author: J. B. Rhine's *Extrasensory Perception*. This was most encouraging and strengthened my wish definitely to introduce parapsychology into a German university in an institutionalized form. But I had first to finish my studies of medicine and to obtain a chair in psychology. It was only after World War II that the realization of this plan could be followed up in my native town, Freiburg im Breisgau. It began with the erection of a somewhat miraculously financed Institute for Border Areas of Psychology and Mental Hygiene which opened its doors in 1950. The establishment of a chair for Border Areas of Psychology at Freiburg University and the affiliation of the Institute followed in 1954.

In 1966 the chair was extended to cover general psychology as well as border areas of psychology (parapsychology), and a Department for the Border Areas was established at the Psychological Institute of Freiburg University. This development shows the progressive and now total integration of parapsychology into the academic framework. Parapsychology is regarded as part of psychology and not as an independent discipline working in a sort of "ivory tower."

With these and the following remarks I repeat the survey on the Freiburg Institute which I gave to the 11th Convention of the Parapsychological Association held at Freiburg University in September, 1968. Teaching and research cover the entire field of parapsychology: history, methods, findings, hypotheses, problems, and, more and more, the interdisciplinary relations of our field to comparative psychology, folklore, ethnology, theology, medicine, and physics. Social psychology and mental hygiene are involved in studies of beliefs in alleged exceptional capacities such as unorthodox healing or scientifically unaccepted practices of "divination," including, for example, chiromancy and astrology. All these topics are dealt with in the frame of normal and depth psychology as well as psychopathology. Much activity is devoted to the struggle against superstition. For this work in the domain of mental hygiene we chose the slogan "positive critic of superstition," which means that we seek to induce enlightenment based on un-

prejudiced scientific research. In this context we are involved in information about the practical use of psi capacities, which deals with advice for legal proceedings, and with mental disorders which stem from pathological reactions to genuine or delusionary occult experiences.

The Freiburg Institute has a monopoly in the Federal Republic of Germany. We should prefer it to be different, but there seems to be little chance that other departments of parapsychology will be formed in a foreseeable future. The dynamic initiative of an enthusiastic researcher could perhaps create a new center. Psychology as an academic institution has not yet developed the feeling of scientific responsibility with regard to the importance of psi for the understanding of human and perhaps animal behavior. Psychologists seem more imprisoned in the ivory tower of defined or undefined prejudices than, for example, physicists. Physicists are more flexible, more used to radical changes in the basic principles of their science; they are more likely to foster new aspects of nature and even of the psyche as a means of detecting a hidden world.

With regard to the monopoly of the Institute, its staff is much too small for the continuously increasing tasks. Two assistants are paid by the University; one assistant and a secretary are remunerated by the Moser Foundation. Students collaborate in a most effective way. The funds which are permanently at our disposal are so small that we would be limited to a very small scope of research possibilities if we did not get support elsewhere from time to time. We are much obliged to the Parapsychology Foundation which has helped us generously in critical situations. The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Association for Scientific Research), a government subsidized official institution, gave us a three years' grant for studies in extrasensory perception and psychokinesis and invited me to deliver a paper on "New Developments in Poltergeist Research"—an event which was widely and favorably discussed in the German mass media under the title "Poltergeists have become fit for society." It should be added that the German word "Spuk" is hardly less shocking than "poltergeist." It will take some time to replace it with the inoffensive expression RSPK—recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis. The Volkswagen Foundation enabled us to reorganize and complete our 6,000-volume library (which includes the Schrenck-Notzing and F. Moser collections of literature). After this reorganization the care of the library will probably be taken over by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. The library will then become a circulating library for Western Germany, a "Schwerpunktsbibliothek," a center library.

These achievements are partly due to a very good collaboration with the mass media. Newspapers, magazines, broadcasting and television have been in contact with the Freiburg Institute since its establishment and strive to give objective reports on our field. This had a strong influence on public opinion and helped to point out the necessity for an academic center.

In its invitation to this conference, Parapsychology Foundation asked each participant to present an account of his own research and experiments in the area of his major interest within the overall context of the history and development of parapsychology in his geographic locale. I tried to sketch the overall context but I feel it is incomplete without mentioning the most effective help the Freiburg Institute is constantly getting from sympathizing scientists such as the physicists Dr. Karger and Dr. Zicha (Munich), especially in poltergeist investigations, or from Professor Petzold (University of Marburg), a theoretical physicist, who advises us in problems of psi and physics which are beyond our competence. What I said a little ironically about the unyielding attitude of psychologists, is not generally true. There are most encouraging exceptions, and I feel deeply obliged to an increasing number of colleagues such as Professor Dyker (Marburg), Professor Undeutsch (Cologne), and Professor Wallek (Mayence), who fully realize the importance of psi research and give every possible help in its academic integration.

I will now give a short survey of the research work of the Freiburg Institute recently completed or in progress:

1) Attitudes in regard to psi

K. H. Nissen presented a thesis on "Ideology (*Weltanschauung*) and attitude toward parapsychology. An inquiry on German students of psychology."

A representative inquiry into attitudes of Catholic and Protestant theologians toward occultism, spiritualism and parapsychology is in progress, conducted by two psychologists, G. Hammers and U. Rosin.

2) Spontaneous phenomena

E. Hanefeld continues his analysis and classification of spontaneous phenomena which he first presented at the 11th P.A. Convention at Freiburg University.

Miss Ute Pleimes collected and factor-analyzed reports on psi in animals. I will later summarize her papers "Psi in Animals?" recently published in the *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie* 13 (1971), Nos. 2 and 4.

3) *Work with sensitives*

The "observation in expectancy" of possible paranormal dreams with the actress Mrs. Christine Mylius is continuing. Since 1954 she had been sending to the Freiburg Institute dream reports that are recorded in our files as study material for possible precognitive coincidences with future situations. (See "The Gotenhafen Case of Correspondence between Dreams and Future Events: A Study of Motivation," *International Journal of Neuropsychiatry* 2 (1966): 398. When this article was written, we had about 1,300 dreams; we have now more than 2,000 and the coincidences continue in a striking way. I will tell you later of a recent observation with this dreamer which might throw a light on the concept of a psi field. A new seat experiment with the Dutch sensitive Gerard Croiset, with students of Freiburg University, statistically evaluated by the method which U. Timm described in our *Journal* (8 [1965]: 78) proved to be significant.

4) *Quantitative experimental work*

Ch. Wiesinger presented a thesis on "ESP experiments in the social field of the classroom." He found highly significant coincidences between the call sequences of classmates (which he analyzed according to the sociogram), but only chance results in relation to the agent.

J. Mischo undertook a broad scale experimental investigation on basic problems of statistical evaluation and conditions of psi performance to which I will return later.

5) *Psychokinesis*

New poltergeist cases have been thoroughly investigated by the Freiburg Institute: a reconstruction of probable RSPK-events on the coastal boat *Hannelore S.* and a case in the little Bavarian village of Pursruck where raps could be video-tape recorded in the ambiance of two 11- and 13-year-old sisters.

Experiments with the alleged "voices from the dead," which Friedrich Jürgenson claims to receive on tape, were continued with positive results in regard to the physically unexplainable origin of some of the voices. I think this extraordinary phenomenon is worthwhile commenting on later. Quantitative experiments on the problem of a possible relation between frustration and PK are being conducted with groups of students.

Let us now have a closer look at some of the topics. First, let us consider psi in animals. The inquiry of Miss U. Pleimes was focused on the subject of unexplainable behavior of animals before catastrophes but was not limited to this pattern. With the cooperation of the mass media

the Institute got about 500 reports of unusual animal behavior. Many had to do with probable telepathy and psi-trailing, but half of the material concerned animal premonitory behavior. On the basis of the first analysis, a questionnaire was constructed containing 94 items and sent to 190 correspondents. One hundred forty were returned and evaluated. Characteristic patterns became evident. The similarities concerned mostly the type of event, for example "behavior before bombing raids." The data were computer-evaluated, the frequency was determined, correlations examined and a factor analysis performed. Among the dimensions which became evident was a factor dealing with the contact (proximity and intensity) of the animal with other animals. Others comprised the non-directivity of animal premonitory behavior, the relation of the animal to its master, the degree and type of the danger, etc. Strict selection criteria reduced the obviously paranormal cases to 25; further 25 cases involved a concomitant paranormal factor. The other cases were partly phenomena mixed with sensory clues or they seemed not to be reliable enough to be accepted. The determining influence of affective fixations on contact persons could be verified. This study of anecdotal material should be continued by experimental research, but this is a problem of the capacity of the Institute for new programs.

To the topic "work with sensitives" I add a recent experiment with Mrs. Mylius that had an unforeseen issue: I tried with her the technique of "ordering dreams" that had proved to be successful in former normal dream work of the Institute. I asked her to open an envelope before sleeping and to meditate for a while on the phrase that she would find enclosed. It ran: "My lottery ticket wins the first prize." The next morning Mrs. Mylius, who spent a couple of days in Freiburg, reported her dream that she said had unfortunately nothing to do with the dream suggestion: "A street leading through a valley in the outskirts of Freiburg. Some villas. I had formerly been in one of them. A musician I know is living there. I recognize the house and ring the bell. A flaxen-haired young man wearing dark horn-rimmed spectacles answers when I ask for my acquaintance: 'No, he is not here' and adds, 'He does not exist or it is not his house.' I am strangely bewildered by this contradiction and feel that something is wrong." The following evening, Mrs. Mylius met an actress whom she had known when she lived in Freiburg some ten years ago. A collaborator of the Institute—an amateur actor who had proved to be a catalyst for paranormal events—had told her the day before that this actress had a young friend but his name was not given. Mrs. Mylius's colleague was accompanied by this friend: a flaxen-haired young man with dark-

rimmed spectacles. It came out that he was the son of the musician Mrs. Mylius was trying to visit in her dream and that he lived in his father's house after the father's death some years ago. The key word "dream" made the young man tell an extraordinary dream that he also had the night before. He had bought a lottery ticket and won 15,000 marks; enough to emigrate to Brazil where he wanted to escape from the police who were searching for him.

This entanglement of coincidences needs no comment. It seems to indicate the formation of a psi field in which my collaborator may have been instrumental. I find observations of this kind—if they are well documented—highly elucidating for an understanding of how psi works in life situations. I remember in this context a remark of C. G. Jung's in the preface to Fanny Moser's book *Spuk* (1950). With regard to psi phenomena and their dependence on special conditions of the unconscious, he said, "The individual nature of the more complex phenomena of this kind does not allow a statistical approach. In this respect we are therefore totally left to the well observed and verified particular case."

All collaborators of the Freiburg Institute are engaged in both qualitative and quantitative research. Dr. John Mischo, who published with me the "Gotenhafen case," is now doing quantitative work. With a group of graduates he is actually re-checking 100,000 calls of significant and not significant trials of the Institute in regard to problems of evaluation stemming from shuffling habits, call habits, preferential targets, etc. Computer programs were developed for cross-checking the experimental data in every possible form of permutation.

In new multivariate ESP experiments Dr. Mischo is investigating the correlation of the results with attitudes to psi, different dimensions of personality and the social relations of the subjects. He is trying to determine the psychological impact of the stimuli (Zener cards and emotionally loaded pictures) by means of the semantic differential of ERTEL (dimensions "excitation," "valency" and "potency"). For these experiments he uses the automatic ESP testing machine, Psi Recorder '70, which has been developed and built for the Freiburg Institute by courtesy of the Institut für Experimentelle Nachrichtentechnik of the Technical University of Darmstadt. A random signal generator produces the targets and the subjects put in their call statements at consoles in separate rooms. Trials and hits are automatically counted and recorded on punched tape which can be processed directly by a digital computer or printed out on a teletype. The series of cards and calls is submitted to computer controls for many factors, among others the

randomness of the target series and the occurrence of preferential targets in the call series. The latter are submitted to an evaluation of the empirical chance expectancy, which proves to be sometimes considerably different from the theoretical values. Positive results in GESP-situations allowed for a factor analysis on the basis of an attitude scale, a personality inventory, the social contact between agent and percipient and the challenge of the stimuli.

Let me close with an example of PK qualitative work with sensitives. I will try to sketch briefly some aspects of our investigation into alleged spiritual voices on tape. Quite a number of people actually claim to receive voices from "discarnate agencies." A Latvian born author, Konstantin Raudive, just published an English translation of a German book on his experiments under the title *Breakthrough: An Amazing Experiment in Electronic Communication with the Dead* (1971). The first report on this new method stemmed from Friedrich Jürgenson, a 67-year-old painter of Baltic origin who has been living in Sweden since 1943. His publication *Voice Radio with the Beyond* was translated into several languages. An occasional observation of unexplainable voices on a tape record he had made was the beginning of an extensive, rather solitary experimental work that is still going on. He proceeds in two ways. After the recording of a normal conversation on tape by means of a microphone, the tape is sometimes found to include voices of unknown origin which appear between normal words, are superimposed on them, or come out in artificial pauses. The other way is to plug the recorder to a radio set and to record when an appropriate position on the waveband without actual transmissions is found. The voices are mostly very low, often merely whispering, and it needs a long training, Jürgenson and his followers point out, to fully understand what they are communicating. They talk in different languages, often in a mixture, but always in those known to the experimenter. In most of the voices Jürgenson recognizes dead friends of his. He lives in a permanent communication with them and has the missionary idea of persuading mankind of the experimentally proved life after death. The impossibility of proving these claims I will not discuss here, but will restrict myself to the problem of checking if there are unexplainable voices or not.

First exploratory experiences in 1965 seemed to be encouraging. Thus, the physicist Dr. Karger, a student and I had a short tape recorded talk with Jürgenson. He told us that when transcribing a tape with voices for the Freiburg Institute, he found new voices on the copy and consulted a radio expert who was unable to explain the phenom-

anon. On replay of our tapes—we used two recorders—we heard in this context a voice rapidly saying in German “Von Wo” (wherefrom). Three normal explanations had to be excluded:

1. We simply project these words onto the background noise of the tape. They are not objective acoustical events. Years later we were enabled to cope with this hypothesis. A laboratory of the German Post in Berlin procured for us visible speech-diagrams which allow one to recognize vowels and voiced consonants by characteristic fields of energy. “Von Wo” proved to be an objective acoustical event. The first counter-hypothesis was excluded for this case, but was later found to explain quite a lot of other experiences.

2. Someone among the sitters was uncontrolled and had uttered these words. This counter-hypothesis could not be excluded.

3. As under certain conditions a tape recorder may function as a radio set, the word could be a fragment of a broadcast. This explanation seemed to be highly improbable as the words fitted into the context of the normal conversation and seemed to comment on actual statements.

New experiments could be performed only in May 1970 and July 1971. Jürgenson invited our team to his old country house, Nysund, near Mölnbo, Sweden, some forty miles from Stockholm. We used directed microphones, an oscillograph, and a video-recorder. An electronic engineer who accompanied us supervised the recorders for radio reception. I will mention two examples which seemed to defy the three counter-hypotheses.

Before one of our sittings, Jürgenson demonstrated a very emotional voice which he attributed to “Lena,” a Russian girl, one of his dead friends. I was impressed, thought of similarly expressive voices, and remembered in this context the voice of a young collaborator, Brigitte Rasmus. In the following experiment I started a conversation with remarks on the impressive voice of Lena. I had to fight against an attack of coughing and had difficulties pronouncing the word “emotion.” On replay, a voice was heard at that spot, whispering “Rasmus.” I was the only one present who knew this name. The visible speech-diagram shows that the word is objective and furthermore the analysis of the Berlin specialist, Jochem Sotscheck, makes sure that I cannot have whispered it. My interpretation is that Jürgenson got the name from me by telepathy and transmitted it to the tape—a psychokinetic effect as bewildering as the psychophotography of Ted Serios. In another sitting, we concluded the experiment with a pause of one minute and carefully controlled ourselves not to move our lips. We observed the oscillograph which showed deflections twenty-two seconds before

the end. On replay we heard a voice whispering in English, "Stop as you like." What followed was hardly understandable but could be checked later. Then, we heard, "One paus(e)." This last word was pronounced in German. A paranormal origin of this phrase is also highly probable.

Our recent experiments began with a surprise. We had difficulties in finding our way and arrived at Nysund late during the night. One of our team, Gisela B., complained of a terrible toothache while we were driving through endless woods. Jürgenson, waiting for us, had tried a radio experiment. He got voices. One said in German—and he showed it to us the very minute of our arrival: "Sie kommen bald. Zahnarzt. Zahnarzt." ("They will arrive soon. Dentist. Dentist.") I cannot enter here into details of our experimental design but will only demonstrate one result to you, tiny but perfect: There was no woman in the house when we had the sitting in question. A voice was heard on the brand new Sony cassette tape, wedged in a phrase. It said "Peng" and resembled closely the voice of our assistant Gisela who at that time was in Stockholm to get her aching tooth treated by Mrs. Jürgenson, who is a dentist. "Peng" is a sort of German interjection and is used when some striking event happens.

We are actually preparing new experiments with a view to finding out which part of the recording system the supposed PK influence is acting upon.

Striking the balance of the actual situation of parapsychology in Germany, I think we can be hopeful for the future development of our more and more accepted field of research. An ever growing interest of the younger generation in psi is most encouraging. It seems to be part of its most exigent desire for an extension of consciousness.