

# Parapsychology Bulletin

Parapsychology Laboratory  
Duke University

NUMBER 57

MAY, 1961

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## Parapsychology in Russia

Science in the U.S.S.R. in recent years has been undergoing reappraisal by the western world. Another surprise, dealing not this time with the conquest of outer space but, rather, with the nature of man himself will now have to be chalked up to Soviet science. But, while most astro-physicists doubtless have anticipated for some time that Russia would put the first man into orbit, no western parapsychologist would have anticipated that it would be a Russian university that would be the first to establish a state-supported research laboratory in the parapsychological field.

Yet this occurred last year at Leningrad State University, on the initiative of Professor L. L. Vasiliev, Chairman of the Department of Physiology and a corresponding member of the Academy of Medical Sciences. The work is being done under the heading of "bioelectronics," "cerebral radiocommunication," or, in free translation, "mental radio."

A popular science magazine published in Moscow, *Znanie-Sila*, for December, 1960, reviewed a seminar at Leningrad University, in which Professor Vasiliev and his associates (among them Professor P. V. Terentiev) presented papers on Russian research in this field. Professor Vasiliev worked with the late distinguished brain physiologist, Professor V. M. Bekhterev (see *Journal of Parapsychology*, Sept. 1949, for Bekhterev's experiments on telepathy in dogs) and with Professor P. P. Lazarev on tests of thought-transference. Later, in the early thirties, he and his colleagues conducted experiments in telepathy with subjects in the hypnotic state and with subject and hypnotist located in separate rooms. Successful demonstrations of telepathy, including the telepathic induction of hyp-

nosis effects were conducted. Success continued even when the subjects were isolated in chambers of lead immersed in mercury. It was concluded that these experiments excluded the hypothesis that the transfer of thought had a basis in electromagnetic radiation.

The investigators report they were so profoundly puzzled and amazed by the results that only last year was it decided to publish the results and invite scientific reaction. New experiments based on modern techniques were then instituted.

The published reactions of representative Russian scientists to the disclosures of these findings at the symposium appear to be much like those expressed by scientists in western countries when ESP results are presented. Some maintain the impossibility of such results on the grounds that there is no acceptable physical theory that can explain them. Others recognize that the experiments should continue and that the facts be accumulated and considered on their merits. Thus the old familiar split occurs between those who do and those who do not require an acceptable theory before recognizing a new fact—between the conservatives and the progressives. It has always been thus when new findings emerge.

Oddly enough, the Russian article\* here reviewed was triggered as a news item by a report of an American experiment for which we can find no confirmation. It was a report in a French magazine of an ESP test with the subject in a submarine. The authorities in Washington disclaim knowledge of any such test.

An account of the earlier Leningrad research mentioned and reports of the new program of investigation will be awaited with interest by workers in parapsychology in other countries.

\*An English translation of this article will appear in the June issue of *The Soviet Review* (156 Fifth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.).

## Psi Research Perspectives

Parapsychology may one day—far ahead in time—be one of those pure sciences which require all their workers to have a Ph.D. degree; but no basic branch of science begins on that level. Those who want to do research in or contribute to parapsychology have to begin where and as they are, and it is interesting to see what spread and diversification of training one finds in the field.

Consider mere geography: as we write these words from the locus of one research center in the field, it so happens that the staff has membership from each of the inhabited continents, out-numbering the few from the U.S.A. itself. It is not, of course, a simple matter of geography. Approaches to the field are equally extended in range. We have just received for review a book containing a chapter on experimental parapsychology written by a Russian scientist for a series on the advancement of atheism. On the other hand, a religious approach is represented in Father R. Omez' book, *Psychical Phenomena*, a volume in a Catholic encyclopaedia (mentioned in our Feb., 1959, issue).

Among the active workers in this small research field a wide range of professions are to be found: engineering, physics, psychiatry, zoology, psychology, statistics, medicine, philosophy, physiology among others. (Very few as yet are able to say they are "just parapsychologists.")

The research centers themselves have some very diverse affiliations. One parapsychology laboratory in this country is linked with the college department of psychology, one with biology, another with biophysics, and still another has no departmental affiliation. Plans (though still largely *just* plans) for other research institutes run to even wider variations of association. The head of a university department of philosophy in Muslim Pakistan plans to establish a laboratory for parapsychology. A priest from Brazil is bent on a similar objective for a Catholic university in his country. An industrialist in Calcutta wishes to provide for a research center to study psi and

yoga. A college in northern Wisconsin wants to do psi research with an emphasis on mediumship and seership. Even while the goals of the research may be shared by all, these divergent sponsorships mean something.

Practical objectives, too, have been adopted by a few research centers: there is a leaning toward the application of ESP to crime problems in Utrecht, and the predicting of lottery numbers as part of the main research project in Prague. A Texas financier wants a psi research laboratory to finance itself through research contracts, which assumes an applied objective. A Chilean psychiatrist plans to develop a research program on psi in his department in the medical school (again presumably utilitarian).

In view of all these differences, is it possible to maintain the cohesion and co-operation requisite to the growth of an organized profession? Will there be enough in common, a possible meeting ground for all these differently oriented workers? For one thing, it is likely that the next generation of workers will find it easier to discover the common ground that does exist. But already the acceptance of certain standards of evidence, of certain methods and precautionary procedures, and of some agreement regarding terminology is bringing common understanding and co-operation at an encouraging rate. Certainly there is no divisibility in the truth itself; and by expanding the area that is basically factual and seeking to extend the mutually acceptable methods and results, the differences should decline.

Obviously, at this stage, the field must accept the diversification of its membership because it needs *membership*. If there is any one type of professional background better than another, it is unimportant unless and until there are enough representatives from whom parapsychology can choose.

There is another advantage. This very diversification offers the range of viewpoints needed to surmount some of the mental obstacles and barriers that make a beginning science difficult.

### Incidental Problems

As we survey the scene in parapsychology three currently distracting problems are fairly outstanding.

First and perhaps the most conspicuous of these is the wave of *popular exploitation* of parapsychological matters. There were probably never before so many different adaptations of psi and its research connections through radio, television, and the printed word; so many types of show or practice or diversion in which ESP or some imitation of it played a part.

What is so bad about this? Some people who might be serious about the scientific studies are repelled by the confusing claims of imitators and charlatans or mere entertainers attempting to deal with the subject. The time of those concerned with the research is, to some extent, wasted in helping to evaluate research claims of some of the bolder pseudo-investigators. Conservative academic people are driven farther back from a fair appraisal of parapsychology by the extravagant claims of these borderline workers; and very probably those who have to make decisions regarding research funds and government contracts are made more hesitant and guarded.

On the good side, however, is the fact that the public curiosity behind all this activity provides a much-needed forum for the new claims of the research field. It is this very open-mindedness of the popular attitude that insures fair consideration of new discoveries. So we must be prepared to answer countless questions about mushrooms, the power of prayer, the magic of hypnotic regression, and dozens of other current topics as the price of keeping this public interest and by-passing the conservatism from which these questioners are blessedly free.

A second and more painful trend is that of *internal dissension*. Perhaps it is only one of the growing-pains of parapsychology. Or, what would be worse, is it a sign of interrupted growth? At any rate, there has probably never been quite so much internal divisiveness in the research field. It can be said (without mentioning names) to exist on both sides

of the Atlantic, in more than one language, and to wax hot and vigorous. Worst of all, it involves some of the most productive workers and important research centers. All this is, of course, very upsetting. Workers under such pressures are less than their best creative selves.

But there is another viewpoint. First of all, there is in every case at least a halfway important problem at the root of the issue. It would be unhealthy, indeed, if these problems were to be ignored merely in the interest of good will. Perhaps the best feature is the fact that, by making an issue of them, the attention of others is brought to the assistance of those concerned and the likelihood of a proper solution is thereby increased. And because each case involves highly intelligent, devoted persons, wisdom is likely to prevail even though tension has been created. In every case, new work with a better method could provide a solution.

The third of these eruptions is another wave of *external criticism*. The next issue of the *Journal of Parapsychology* contains a fresh blast of fraud charges, and word is at hand that a series of (probably critical) papers by an American psychologist is about to appear. Perhaps few parapsychologists will consider that more outside criticism is likely to be useful. Over the years, such criticism has taken a heavy toll of the man-hour energies of workers in the field, prevented research funds from coming to the aid of the research, and discouraged many who might otherwise have joined in the investigations.

But there is something useful in these attacks too. They help to unite us; and, as stated above, we need this unity in parapsychology today. They also bring out rejoinders, and probably many people besides the critics need to have these answers spelled out repeatedly. Finally, such attacks offset the tendency to ignore the psi investigations and invite more interest in the issue. So let us have it out in this way, for lack of a better, so long as there is any doubt about the case for psi.

## Events

This year the annual convention of the Parapsychological Association in New York will follow immediately upon the meetings of the American Psychological Association, and the prospect of exchange visitors is excellent. There are indications the A.P.A. will have something positive from parapsychology on its program.

The North Carolina Psychological Association, meeting on May 6 at Raleigh with the State Academy of Science, is holding a two-hour panel discussion on the topic "The Credibility of Evidence on Extrasensory Perception." The three listed speakers are Dr. J. G. Pratt, Dr. J. O. Cook (N. C. State College) and Dr. H. G. McCurdy (U.N.C.). Dr. Pratt will review the evidence, Dr. Cook will criticize it, and Dr. McCurdy will present a case for ESP based on personal, non-statistical evidence. Rebuttals and audience participation will follow.

On April 14, in the Ames Hall Courtroom of Harvard University, a "bench" of three psychologists "held judgment" on a lecture of ESP by J. B. Rhine. As arranged by the Harvard Law School Forum, the "trial" was moderated by Prof. Jerome S. Bruner, with the panel consisting of Prof. Edwin G. Boring and Dr. Timothy Leary (both of Harvard), and of Dr. Ulric Neisser (of Brandeis). Judgment: Leary, "yes"; Neisser, "yes—but"; Boring, "interesting but inconclusive."

## Books

University Books (New York) has brought out as one volume G. N. M. Tyrrell's *Science and Psychical Phenomena* and his *Apparitions*, with a foreword by Laura A. Dale.

A book by Renée Haynes, entitled *The Hidden Springs* (Hollis and Carter, London), just out in England, deals with psi abilities and their place in life, religion, and occult practices, past and present.

An Arabic edition of J. B. Rhine's *The Reach of the Mind*, is now in print (Dar El Kotob El Hadissa, Cairo and Baghdad). The translation was by Dr. M. Halwagi.

In the September, 1960, issue of the Anglican periodical, *Prism*, under the title *Thermodynamics, Psi and God*, the paleontologist Dr. R. M. Appleby of the University of Bristol attempted to integrate the conceptions of the physical universe, divinity, and psi by the assumption of a fourth principle (i.e., in addition to mass, energy, and causality).

## Personal Losses

Charles E. Ozanne died on April 5, at the age of 95. With graduate degrees from Yale and Harvard, Mr. Ozanne became a teacher of history and civics in Central High School of Cleveland. His long-standing interest in parapsychology centered primarily in the problem of post-mortem survival, a problem on which he himself made studies and published two papers. He was for many years a financial supporter of the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke. Shortly before his death he established the Psychical Research Foundation (announced in the preceding issue).

Mr. E. Paul Gibson died on March 19, in Grand Rapids, at the age of 62. Mr. Gibson was by profession an engineer and by avocation both an archaeologist and a parapsychologist. He spent several years on the research staff of the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke during the late thirties and is the sole or joint author (among his other contributions) of eight articles in the *Journal of Parapsychology*, containing important experimental results. Both ESP and PK are represented.

Prof. H. J. F. W. Brugmans, Dutch psychologist, died on February 21 in Groningen, at the age of 76. He is known to parapsychologists as collaborator in a timely and significant experiment in telepathy conducted under Prof. G. Heymans in the early twenties.

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