

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH IN VIENNA

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In 1923, Dr. E. Holub started his experiments with the well-known medium, Willy Schneider, at the Steinhof Asylum in Vienna, an account of which by his widow will be given elsewhere. The newspaper reports of some very remarkable sittings at the Steinhof caused great interest among the public, and eventually a group of University professors joined in a kind of committee for psychical research, with the aim of testing decisively the genuineness of the alleged telekinetic phenomena. The chairman of this committee was Professor Wagner-Jauregg, the famous psychiatrist, to whom we owe the malaria treatment of paralysis. Among the members were: Dr. A. Druig, Professor of physiology; Dr. M. Schlick and Dr. Buhler, Professors of philosophy; Dr. F. Ehrenhaft, Professor of physics; and Mr. A. Ehrenfest-Egger, a well-known engineer. At the same time, Dr. S. Meyer, Dr. K. Przibram, and myself, all professors of physics, volunteered to start an independent investigation with the same object.

The first step taken was a kind of reconnaissance, the professors attending a few séances at the Steinhof. They were not a success, and were not conducive to further research. For since the control of the medium was not in the hands of any member of the committee, the phenomena—poor as they were at these semi-official sittings—were regarded as suspicious by the majority of the sceptical professors. On the other hand, the atmosphere of suspicion upon the part of the committee was not encouraging for the medium, and weakened his phenomena sensibly.

The test experiments with Willy under the control of the committee had not yet been held when early in 1924 an event happened by which the later proceedings were greatly influenced. Professor Meyer and Przibram had the opportunity of attending several sittings with Willy's younger brother, Rudi Schneider, who also claimed to be a medium. At one of these sittings Prof. Meyer himself acted as controller and noticed that Rudi had freed one of his hands during a telekinetic move-

ment and had slipped it back immediately afterwards without the other controller knowing—or caring—about this manœuvre. This experience, together with other observations made during an alleged levitation, enabled Prof. Meyer to formulate a theory of deceptive production of the phenomena seen by him. In order to test his theory he invited some dozen colleagues and scientists to a séance at his house and introduced to them Dr. Przibram disguised as a “wonderful new medium.” By means of the same tricks which in his opinion Rudi had used, Przibram gave a brilliant performance of telekinetic phenomena and levitations, completely deceiving the sitters thereby. It must be admitted, however, that at this pseudo-séance one of the controllers was in the plot with Przibram; so that it would not be correct to say that he had worked under exactly the same conditions as the medium.

When the sitting was over, Prof. Meyer revealed the identity of the pseudo-medium to the sitters, who were greatly impressed by the fact that they had been so easily deceived. Those among them who had formerly attended sittings with the brothers Schneider felt convinced that the phenomena they had witnessed there might have been just as easily produced by tricks. A few days later the story of the successful pseudo-séance was broadcast by the newspapers. Prof. Meyer was interviewed and told the reporters of his observations at the sitting with Rudi, and of Prof. Przibram’s successful tricks. As a consequence of this, the same daily papers which shortly before had regaled their readers with long reports of sensational phenomena at the Steinhof, changed their tone completely and published articles headed “Exposure of Famous Medium,” “Frauds of the Mediums,” etc. The cases of the two brothers Willy and Rudi were soon completely confused and the Viennese newspaper readers were consoled with the thought that eternal laws of Nature were, after all, still valid, while the rubbish about telekinesis and levitations was pure fraud and trickery.

Prof. Meyer’s disclosures and their effect on public opinion had exactly the reverse effect on myself. I had not believed in the existence of metapsychic phenomena at the commencement of our research, but when I saw how easily a mere suspicion could be turned into an exposure, I became sceptical of the sceptics, and resolved to study these matters a little more closely. I joined the above-mentioned research committee and warmly advocated a thorough enquiry into the whole subject, though a number of the members seemed to be inclined to throw Willy overboard since his brother had been exposed. My suggestion was at last accepted and in the spring of 1924 the sittings with Willy were commenced in my laboratory in the Physical Institute of Vienna University.

Unfortunately, Dr. Holub (who had been suffering from a serious heart disease) had died in the meantime, and Willy was left alone with his widow. Mrs. Holub was willing to devote her time in demonstrating that her husband was right in defending the theory of the genuineness of Willy's phenomena. She therefore gladly accepted the committee's proposal to test these phenomena. Being afraid, however, that an investigating circle of the professors alone would be a serious handicap for the medium, she insisted that herself and a few sitters of Dr. Holub's former séances should attend our sittings until Willy became sufficiently accustomed to the new circle.

I must emphasize in this connection that I do not personally mistrust Mrs. Holub, whom I consider a most estimable lady. I have sat close to her at a good many séances and have never noticed the slightest attempt at trickery on her part. The committee's policy was, however, not to trust any human being except its own members; and it was agreed, therefore, that so long as the circle contained any non-members, no phenomena would be considered as being genuine.

Between April and July, 1924, a series of sittings with Willy was held in my laboratory. Two members of the committee besides myself acted as representatives of the University committee while the other sitters were partly friends of the late Dr. Holub, and partly colleagues of mine. The phenomena were rather poor during April and May, but in June a series of good sittings followed with strong telekinetic phenomena. The control was very similar (although not exactly equal) to that described by Mr. Harry Price in the account of his sittings.¹ At the successful sittings Mrs. Holub was the principal controller and myself the auxiliary. In view of the committee's policy I did not rely on Mrs. Holub's control; on the contrary, I watched her as closely as I did the medium. During the production of the phenomena I was undoubtedly in contact with both Willy's hands and feet, and also with Mrs. Holub's right arm. The distance from Mrs. Holub to the objects moved was considerably greater than the range of her left arm or her legs. The phenomena which occurred at these sittings were telekinetic movements of objects placed on a table or on the couch to the left of the medium at a distance of 80-130 cm from Willy's left arm. Since I was positively sure about my control over the medium's hands and feet, the hypothesis of trickery would involve the assumption that Willy could produce a stiff rod from his throat which could reach to a distance of up to 130 cm. Any interference upon the part of the sitters was excluded by the illumination of the room. A hooded red

¹ A. S. P. R. *Journal*, Vol. XIX, page 430, 1925.

lamp at the right threw a relatively bright beam of red light across the space between the sitters and the table so that any suspicious movement of the sitters would have been noticed instantly by my ultra-sceptical and watchful colleagues. It was not possible, either, that the objects could have been secretly fitted with watch springs or any other device. They had been carefully examined by myself and were kept constantly in my laboratory where nobody could touch them.

The sittings would certainly have been more convincing if we had succeeded in replacing Mrs. Holub by a member of the committee as the principal controller. We tried that repeatedly, but without success. At one sitting, a telekinetic movement took place with Mr. Ehrenfest-Egger and myself as controllers. This phenomenon consisted, however, solely in the upsetting of a luminous pin stuck in a small cork which was placed at the far end of the table. Since the upsetting of a light object might have been produced quite easily by the shaking of the table, we could only regard it as a dubious phenomenon.

I clearly foresaw that the failure of producing phenomena without Mrs. Holub's control would be regarded as a very suspicious circumstance by the committee. On the other hand, I was convinced that Mrs. Holub, who was sitting close beside myself, could not have produced some of the phenomena we saw without my noticing it. Nor could she help Willy in doing any tricks since his four extremities were sufficiently controlled by myself. The failure to produce telekinetic phenomena without Mrs. Holub's control might be explained as being due to purely psychical causes. During the trance, both Willy's elbows were resting on the principal controller's lap and his head was lying on the same controller's left shoulder. Taking into account the possible connection between psychical phenomena and sexuality, it was not at all astonishing that the telekinetic forces were stronger when a sympathetic female was principal controller than it was when a sceptic and suspicious scientist was controlling. (As a matter of fact, we had sittings with different controllers a year later. They were successful only with a lady as principal controller).

In spite of the fact that the sittings of June, 1924, did not fulfil the rigorous conditions set up by the committee, I found that their results furnished fairly strong evidence in favor of the hypothesis of genuine metapsychical phenomena. Therefore, I invited to my laboratory several members of the committee who had not attended the séances; showed them the arrangements; and gave them an account of the phenomena seen. My colleagues were not at all convinced by this report but insisted upon more rigid conditions, such as the use of a

cage for the medium; longer distance from the medium to the objects moved; exclusion of all non-members from the sittings, etc. Willy received no information concerning this interview with the committee; yet his psychic power soon afterwards declined considerably—before we started changing the controls. After a few negative séances the experiments were stopped owing to the commencement of the vacation.

As a result of this first period of research my private opinion was favorable to the assumption of the genuine character of the phenomena. The two other members of the committee who had attended the sittings were less confident. Their viewpoint seems to me intelligible, for only the controller himself is absolutely certain that the medium could not have used his hands or feet. The remainder of the committee were not impressed with the results so far obtained, and remained as sceptical as they had been before.

The experiments with Willy were not resumed in the autumn of 1924 because he left for England, where the S. P. R. held a number of sittings with him. I may mention that the preliminary account of these sittings by Dr. Woolley of the S. P. R. was decidedly favorable to Willy's claims.

In October, 1924, I had the opportunity of attending a sitting with Rudi Schneider which took place in the flat of Dr. R. Hoffman, Prof. of Theology at Vienna University. Rudi was controlled by Prof. Hoffman in a very effective manner. Hoffman sat on a chair close to and opposite Rudi and held each hand with one of his own. Both Rudi's legs were squeezed between the professor's knees. The sitters sat in a semicircle with myself at the end farthest from the medium. (Cf. Figure 1.) The distance between the medium and myself was about two meters. While all the sitters sat facing the centre of the semicircle, Rudi sat with his back towards the centre. The room was lighted by a red lamp standing on a low stool within the semicircle. A number of telekinetic phenomena occurred amongst which I will mention only the most striking ones. A small hand-bell which was covered with luminous paint lay on a little stool right in front of myself. It was lifted from the stool and thrown on my knees. I took it and held it on the open palm of my right hand. I noticed very distinctly a varying pressure and slight movements of the bell as if a feeble force were trying to lift it off my hand. The force did not succeed, however, in doing so, and at last I placed the bell on the stool again. Soon afterwards, it was knocked to the floor. The reader will agree with me that it seems to be impossible for any acrobat or conjuror to move objects at a distance of about 180 cm behind his back when his hands and feet are securely held by a con-

troller. Denying the genuineness of the phenomena I witnessed would imply, therefore, the assumption of confederacy on the part of the sitters. Certainly, some of the sitters were strangers to me and I

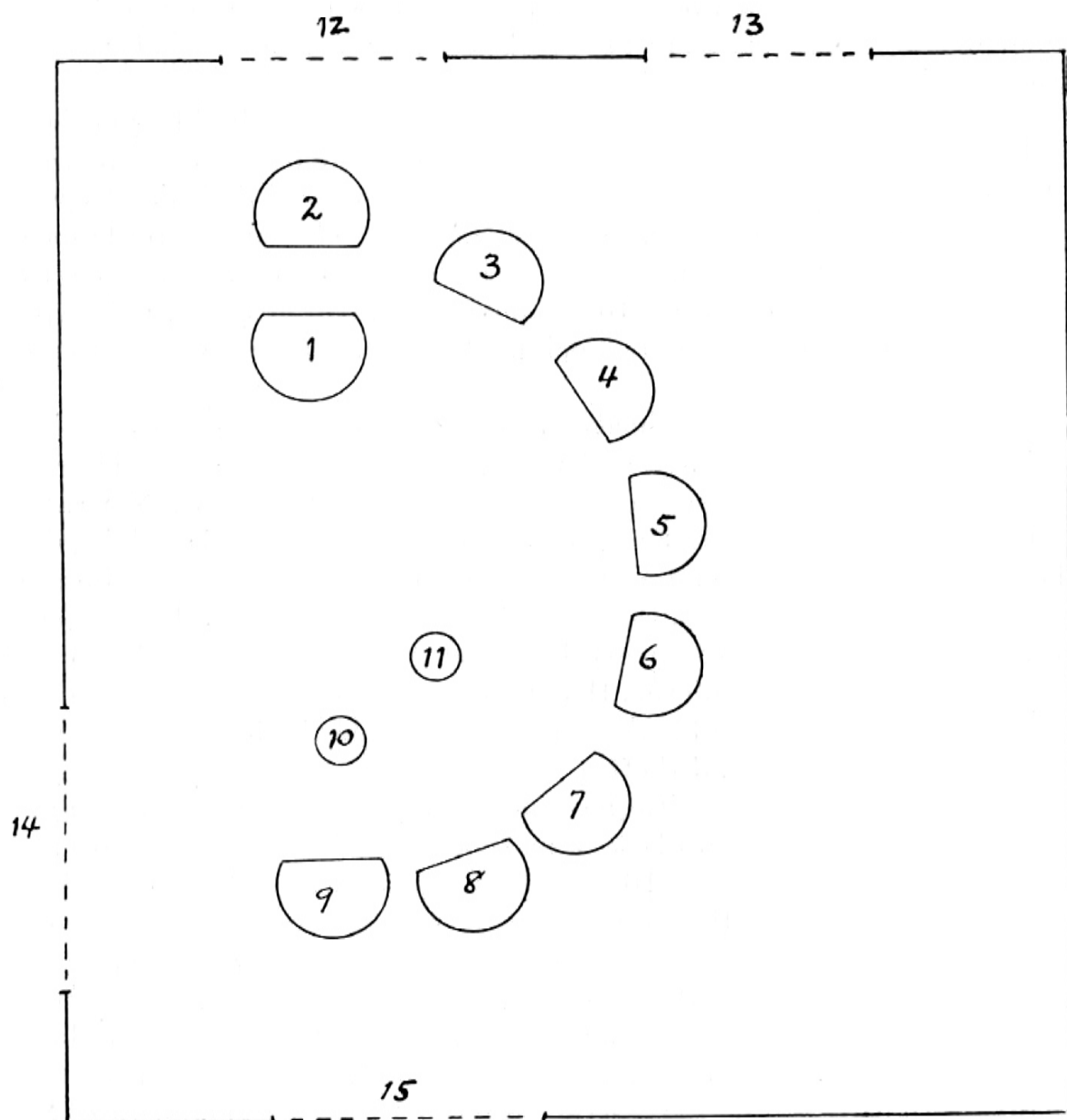


FIGURE 1.

Plan of Prof. Hoffmann's séance room as used for a sitting with Rudi Schneider in October, 1924. 1, Rudi; 2, Professor Hoffmann; 3-8, sitters; 9, Professor Thirring; 10, stool on which the hand bell was placed; 11, red lamp; 12, 13, windows; 14, 15, doors.

cannot absolutely deny the possibility of confederacy in the case of this sitting. Still, on comparing my own experiences with the accounts of Schrenck-Notzing, Holub, and others who had examined

the phenomena of Willy and Rudi Schneider, it seems to me that the hypothesis of confederacy is hardly tenable. It would involve the further assumption that these brothers find everywhere, in Vienna as well as in Munich and in London, good, willing, and well-trained confederates who are working so skilfully and exactly that none of them has ever been exposed.

The sceptic may or may not find it possible to build hypotheses which would account for a fraudulent production of the phenomena. At any rate, however, it would be necessary to build different hypotheses for almost every single séance; whereas, the one hypothesis of genuine telekinetic phenomena can easily cover all the facts. It seems to be reasonable, therefore, to support the latter hypothesis in spite of the obvious difficulty of reconciling telekinetic forces with orthodox science.

I was as good as convinced of the genuineness of the phenomena I had witnessed with Willy and Rudi Schneider when a further event happened which might well have shaken my confidence. In November, 1924, a man named Karl Krauss turned up in Vienna. He claimed to be a strong physical medium who had been tested by Schrenck-Notzing. Upon my inquiring, Dr. v. Schrenck-Notzing informed me that he considered Krauss to be a really excellent and genuine medium. He warned me at the same time, however, that this man resorted to trickery whenever the conditions would allow it, and that he had previously been prosecuted for fraud and theft.

In our experiments with Krauss we used two large gauze cages, adjoining. One of the walls was common to both cages, and possessed a small window² of about 16 by 21 centimeters, at a height of about 75 centimeters above the floor. Across this window we fastened two pieces of string which divided the window into four smaller rectangular openings of about 8 by 10.5 cm. (Cf. Fig. 2.) The cages communicated only by means of this small window; everything else was closed by gauze. We put the medium into cage No. 1, and the objects which had to be moved by the telekinetic forces, on a small table in cage No. 2. (Cf. Fig. 3.) Cage No. 1, possessed two more small openings leading outside, through which the medium stretched his hands. Each hand was held by a reliable controller. Before the beginning of every sitting he changed his clothes in my presence and put on a bathing costume. Then the lower part of his body, including both legs, was put into a black cloth bag which was fastened round his waist by means of a padlocked steel chain, which was pinned also to his bathing

² Krauss insisted upon this window for passing the alleged ectoplasm to the second cage.

costume by four safety-pins. In order to prevent regurgitation we wrapped up his head in a lady's veil which was fastened by two luminous safety pins underneath his chin and on the top of his head. We locked the doors of both cages in full light; grasped his hands firmly (one controller on each side); and then switched the lights out, leaving only a dim red lamp hanging in the centre of cage No. 2 right over the table supporting the objects. These objects were generally a mandolin and a short wooden stick. A portion of each object was

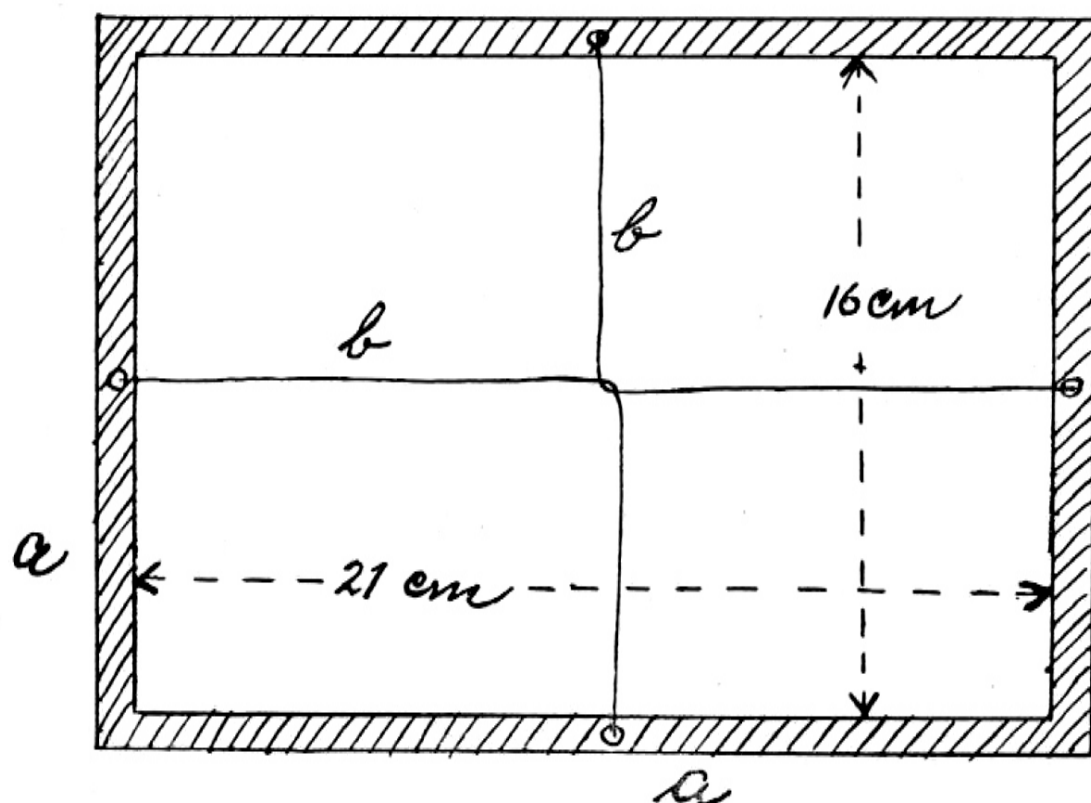


FIGURE 2.

Window through which the cages used in the experiments with Krauss communicated. *a, a*, wooden frame; *b, b*, string.

made luminous, the remainder being painted with a sticky black substance which came off on the hands when touched.

Krauss pretended not to require the trance state but only "concentration" for the production of telekinetic phenomena. When he had concentrated enough, after sitting for some time in the dark, he made convulsive movements and then succeeded in knocking the objects off the table. He repeated this experiment two or three times in each of three sittings. On one occasion he raised the small table for several minutes.

The above result seemed to be very convincing. All the sitters were sceptical and hostile to all mediumship. Any confederacy by them

was excluded by the fact that cage No. 2 was securely closed by gauze with the exception of the small window leading into the medium's cage. The controllers' grip on the medium's hands was wholly firm and reliable. The medium's legs were stuck in the cloth bag, and it seemed to be impossible that he could stretch them through the cross-stringed window. The veil on his head prevented him from doing anything by

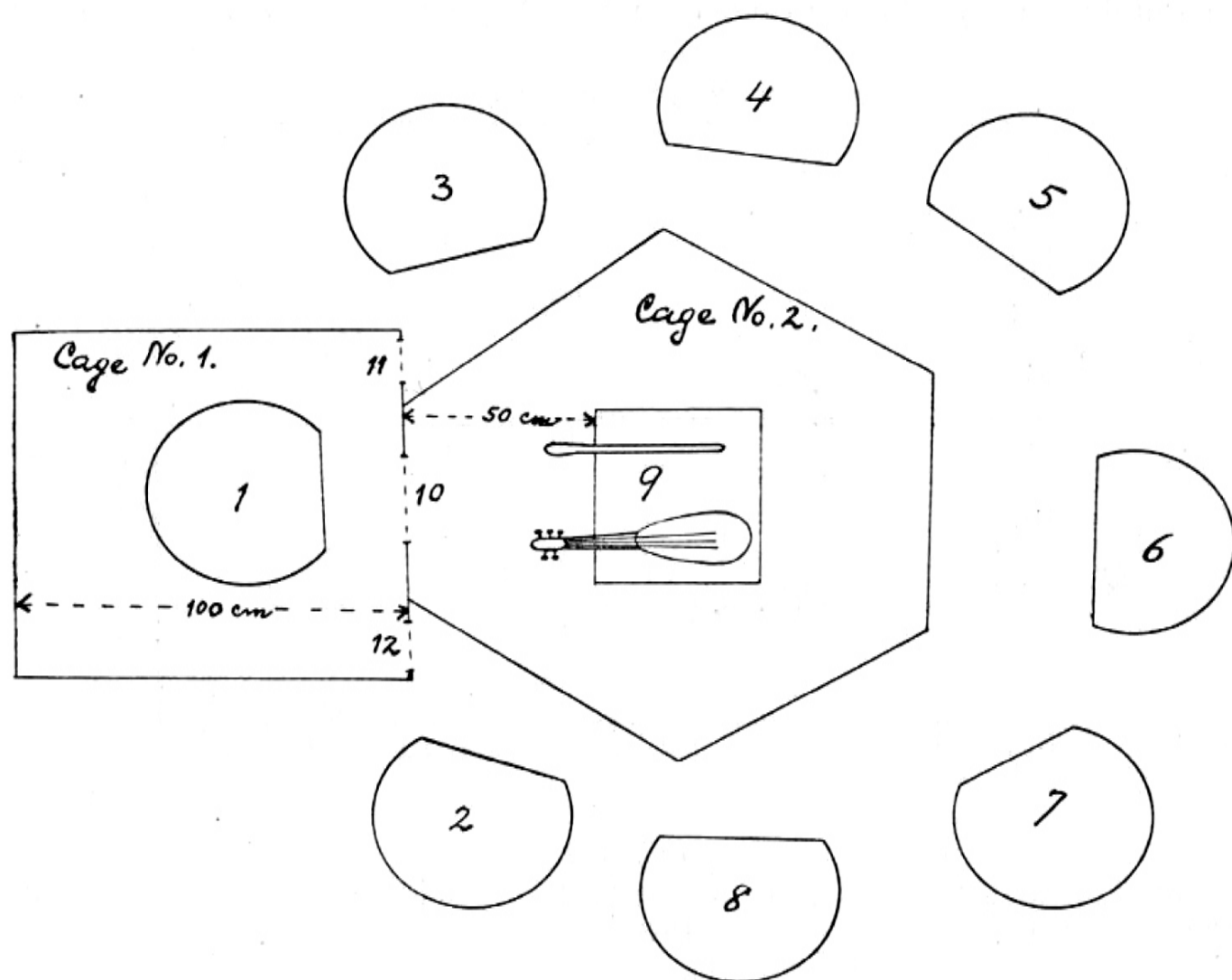


FIGURE 3.

Arrangement of the two cages as used in the experiment with Krauss. 1, medium; 2, 3, controllers holding the medium's hands; 4-8, sitters; 9, small table on which a short wooden stick and a mandolin are lying; 10, window as shown in Figure 2.; 11, 12, lateral openings through which the medium stretched his hands.

means of his mouth. In addition to all these precautions Krauss agreed to our switching on the light immediately (about two seconds) after each telekinetic phenomenon. The light seemed to give him a little shock, but no tool or instrument with which he could trick was

visible. The medium sat on his chair with both legs in the bag, his hands linked with the hands of the controllers. All these sittings with the cages took place in a room of my laboratory.

At another sitting held in the house of Mr. M. Dumba I witnessed a table levitation. A large rectangular table (size about 60 by 150 cm) was placed in front of the medium, Krauss. He was sitting on a chair, and a controller on each side held his hand and each put a foot on the medium's foot. The distance from the medium's chest to the near edge of the table was about 50 cm. I was sitting at the opposite end of the table from Krauss. When the lights were switched out it was pitch-dark in the room with the exception of a few luminous pins which, sticking in the table-top, indicated the position of the table. Krauss asked me to count up to ten. I did so, and when I had said "ten" I noticed by the motion of the luminous pins that the table moved away from myself horizontally towards the medium. Then it rose suddenly to a height of at least two meters from the floor and after a few seconds came crashing like thunder down again. The lights were then switched on immediately, and we saw Krauss panting and shaking in all his limbs, but hands and feet still firmly held by the controllers. On the same evening Krauss suggested that he should produce materialization phenomena. I had never seen any materializations at the sittings with Willy, hence I was intensely interested in the subsequent proceedings. By means of two black curtains a small cabinet was constructed in which Krauss took a seat on a chair. Two controllers stretched their hands through small slits on each side of the cabinet and held Krauss's hands, which were resting on his knees. The curtains were drawn together in front of Krauss and we waited in the dim light of a shaded lamp for further events. After about a quarter of an hour we noticed a slight movement of the curtain and soon afterwards a human finger appeared right over the medium's head in the division between the curtains. It disappeared after a few seconds; then returned; and at last four fingers of a human hand were visible. I stepped nearer, looked close at this materialization and even touched it with my fingers. It was so plainly human flesh and blood that I grew suspicious and quickly slipped my hand along the arm of the right controller into the side slit of the curtain. I found the controller's hand lying on Krauss's right knee—but no trace of the medium's right hand! It was obvious that Krauss had played the old and well-known trick of somehow or other mixing up his ten fingers until both controllers held the same hand (in this case the left), while his right hand was free to simulate materializations. I thought of Schrenck-Notzing's warning and realized clearly the plain truth that

sittings like this with unreliable controllers were of no value whatsoever.

The table levitation, however, seemed to be a different matter. The medium's hands had been so far apart during this phenomenon that there had been no possibility of an exchange. Besides, the controllers during the table levitation had been more experienced men than the one who had been fooled in the cabinet. I concluded, therefore, that there were only two possible ways of explaining the table levitation: either the phenomenon was a genuine telekinetic movement or the medium had got a confederate in the house of Mr. Dumba. I excluded the third alternative, *viz*: that Krauss being held by both hands and feet, could lift

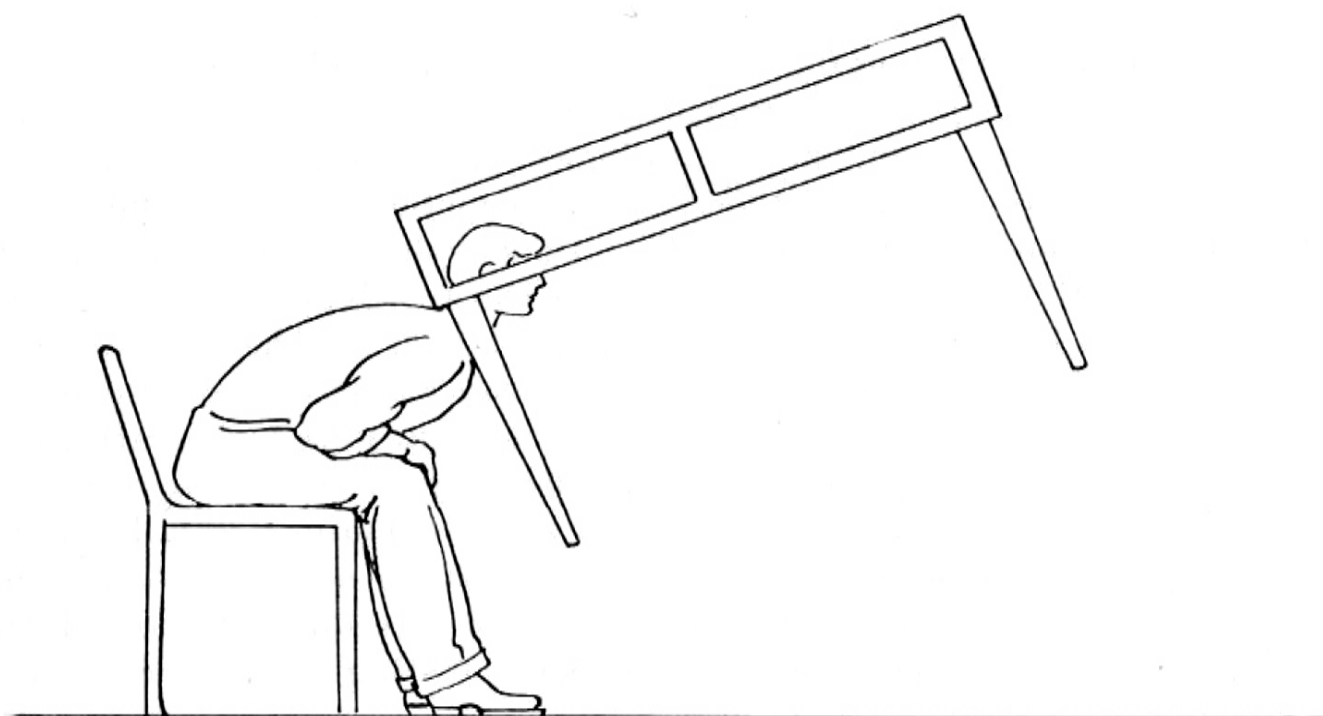


FIGURE 4.

Sketch showing table levitation by trick.

the table himself by a trick. I made up my mind, therefore, to let him repeat this experiment in my laboratory with a few reliable persons as sitters and with myself and another member of the committee as controllers. If he then succeeded we should regard this phenomenon as genuine telekinesis.

We made the experiment in my laboratory and he succeeded in lifting a table still heavier than that used at the sitting in Mr. Dumba's house. On this same evening, however, we learned that all was fraud and trickery. While controlling his hands and feet we noticed that his body bent forward very much before the table moved towards him. Hence the suspicion arose that he did something with his head. Cer-

tainly it seemed incredible that he could lift the heavy table with his teeth; and besides, on examining the table-top after the levitation, we failed to find any impressions of teeth. Wishing to clear up the question, we asked him to perform the experiment once more. This time Mr. Ehrenfest-Egger put his hand under the table during the levitation and caught his head by the hair. Fig. 4 shows how he did it. By leaning forward and putting his head under the table-top he first pulled the table nearer to himself. Then he pushed his head into the hole where the drawers used to be. (They had been removed at his request.) By pressing back his head and working with his shoulders against the side walls of the table he lifted it for a few seconds and then let it go down with a crash.

As soon as we knew that the table levitation was a trick we no longer believed in the telekinetic phenomena produced in the cage. A skilful lady sitter, Countess Wassilko, slipped off her shoes, put on the cloth bag, and sat herself on the chair in cage No. 1. By trying hard, she succeeded in slipping her right foot which was within the bag, through the stringed window, thus knocking the objects off the table. This proved that the bag was not sufficient precaution against trickery with the legs.

We had four more sittings afterwards with Krauss. The arrangements were the same as before with one exception. We discarded the bag altogether and instead fastened the medium's feet to the floor by means of leather straps. These straps were each about 70 cm long and allowed him enough freedom and comfort in sitting: he could easily cross his legs, but was prevented from slipping them through the window. All these sittings were absolutely negative. We altered the arrangements once more by discarding all foot control and reducing the apertures in the window by means of a network of about 12 strings. No more phenomena occurred. Eventually Krauss confessed that he had swindled during the sittings in my laboratory, asserting at the same time that he had been able to produce genuine phenomena also. Schrenck-Notzing, with whom I afterwards communicated, is still convinced that some of the phenomena which he had witnessed with Krauss in Munich had been absolutely genuine. Unfortunately, I was not able to prove the truth of these assertions by my own experience.

I am now going to deal with the influence of the Krauss exposure on myself and on the committee. First of all, this experience taught me how easily one is subject to deception and mistakes. My conclusions regarding the two possible explanations of the table levitation proved to be erroneous. I had overlooked the possibility that Krauss could do it with his head. Was it not possible, or even probable, that

in my reasoning concerning Rudi's phenomena I had likewise overlooked another possibility? Was it not perhaps the most natural explanation of all the reported incredible metapsychical phenomena that the observers of them had also been victims of similar deceptions?

The majority of the committee was convinced that the latter viewpoint was the solution of the riddle; whereas Schrenck-Notzing pointed out that it was only our lack of experience which had enabled Krauss to play his tricks; and that an experienced psychical observer would have prevented fraud by proper precautions. He (Schrenck-Notzing) had warned me beforehand not to leave a loop-hole in the controlling conditions since Krauss would use every possibility of tricking.

As a defender of Willy's claims I might argue as follows: The Krauss case showed certainly that deception is possible for a short while; but it also showed that the period of deception does not last very long. Three or four weeks after my first meeting with Krauss we knew all his tricks, whereas Willy had been investigated for several years by well-skilled and experienced observers without anybody's finding the slightest attempts at trickery. The sceptic's answer to this is generally: "It proves only that Willy is more cautious and skilled than the others."

At any rate, my position among the committee as a defender of the hypothesis of genuine phenomena was weakened considerably by the exposure of Krauss; and certain decisions concerning further research work were made against my advice. The date of March 15th., 1925, was fixed as a final time-limit for Willy. The committee would consider it worth while to continue the experiments with him if by this date he had succeeded in producing telekinetic phenomena in the cage at my laboratory under the same conditions where Krauss had failed. Any one who has experimented with a medium and knows the difficulties one meets in dealing with these people will readily understand that an ultimatum like this will always be fruitless. The time elapsed, and, of course, without any positive result; whereupon the committee resolved to stop further research and to dissolve itself. I did not hesitate in signing this resolution myself since I realized that independent research with Willy would be more promising than further work under the auspices of the committee. The last step taken by the committee was the issue of a report on its activities. It was there stated that a medium (Krauss) had been exposed, whereas two other mediums (Willy and Rudi) had failed in producing phenomena under conditions which were thought rigid enough for final evidence regarding their genuineness.

Although this report was intended only for a medical paper, the daily press got hold of it and printed it with their own comments.

Their readers were told that the scientists had thoroughly investigated the matter and had once more reached a negative result—"exactly as is always the case when the question of mediumship is treated scientifically."

It is worth while to compare these statements with the facts: The investigations had been conducted almost exclusively by myself, and the results which I had obtained seemed to indicate rather the genuineness of the phenomena produced by the Schneiders than the contrary. It is true that the controlling conditions had not been sufficient for a crucial test in the strictest sense. Still, a number of phenomena had occurred under my control which I could hardly explain by the assumption of trickery. The lack of better evidence was due partly to circumstances connected with the mentality of the medium, and partly to lack of patience on the part of the professors. The members of the committee were certainly handicapped by their feeling of responsibility as an official organization which on no account must become the victim of a swindler's tricks. The fear of public opinion is a serious mistake, however, in research work of a fundamental nature like this. It is less unfortunate for science if a couple of University professors are deceived by a conjurer than if they miss discovering an important truth by the mere fear of being deceived.

I am dwelling on these general topics (which may seem commonplace to some of my readers), because the methods of our committee are typical of the ways by which official science attempts to conduct psychical research; and because the reception of the committee's report in the Vienna daily press may account for the general attitude of public opinion towards metapsychical phenomena. A very learned friend of mine whom I met last spring was shocked when I told him that I was going to attend a séance. "I wonder that you are wasting your time with such nonsense," he said. "Have you not read in the papers that these swindlers have been exposed lately by the University committee?" The fact that my own investigations could be used as an argument against myself shows clearly in what a superficial manner all questions connected with mediumship are read and talked about even by serious men.

When the committee had been dissolved, Dr. H. Hahn, professor of mathematics at the University, and Dr. P. Ludwik, professor of engineering, joined me in order to continue the investigations. Between March and July, 1925, a number of sittings with Willy were held partly in Mrs. Holub's flat, and partly in my laboratory. These sittings confirmed an observation which we had already made a year ago: periods of poor phenomena by the medium were alternating with peri-

ods of strong phenomena, while the control conditions remained constant. After a very good period in January, 1924, the phenomena became weaker at the first sittings with the committee, and a good many negative sittings followed. Willy recovered, however, in the spring and we experienced the above-mentioned good sittings in June, 1924. In July, his force declined again, and I do not know what happened during the vacation. In the autumn he is said to have given one of his most brilliant sittings at his father's house at Braünaü immediately before his departure to England. The phenomena produced at the sittings of the S. P. R. were rather weak, however. After his return to Vienna we held one or two negative sittings at my laboratory in February, 1925. A month later there were some very good sittings, again at Mrs. Holub's flat; and after that another period of weakness followed which lasted until June.

A typical good sitting was that of June 8th which is very fully described in Mr. Price's article in this *Journal* (vol. XIX, p. 420-445). I will refer those readers who are interested in the details of the controls and of the phenomena, to this report. One of the most interesting features of this sitting, which fully confirmed earlier observations, was the influence of music on the production of the phenomena. What this medium wants more than anything else is an atmosphere of cheerfulness among the sitters. In all our sittings the strongest telekinetic phenomena occurred amidst a roar of laughter when the sitters were joking or when some rhythmical chorus was sung. It is exactly this fact which made the phenomena particularly suspicious to the sceptical members of the committee. In their opinion, it proved that the medium is always waiting till the sitter's attention is diverted so that he can play his tricks more easily.

I quite disagree with this opinion. First of all, it is quite immaterial whether the other sitters are diverted or not since only the testimony of the controllers is of any value for the question of genuineness. The experienced controller, however, knows well when a phenomenon is likely to happen and he will be most attentive while the others are laughing and singing. Certainly his sense of hearing will be impeded by the noise, but what he is using almost exclusively is his touch with the medium and his eyes. It is quite ridiculous to assume that an experienced controller would loosen his grip on the medium's hands, or would fail to see the luminous buttons on the medium's sleeves because the sitters are making a noise.

I believe, on the contrary, that the production of the phenomena must necessarily depend on the mutual feeling of goodwill between medium and sitters if they are to be really genuine; that is to say, of

the medium whose elbows were resting on a cushion on her lap. Prof. Ludwik, who sat next, held each hand of Willy in one of his own hands. Both Willy's wrists and ankles were very visible, through the bright luminous buttons sewed at the sleeves and trousers of his pyjamas. His head was lying on Miss Krisch's left shoulder. Prof. Ludwik directed his attention solely to the observation of Willy's hands and feet while the sitters witnessed the phenomena. He saw all four extremities of the medium perfectly well, besides holding firmly both his hands.

The first part of this sitting proved negative. Recalling our former experience of the influence of music on the phenomena, I went to my adjoining private room after the interval and played the piano during the second part of the sitting. Willy's trance activity was improved by the music, and the following phenomena were recorded by Professor R. Hoffmann: Oscillating movements of the table cloth; lifting of the tambourine and the rubber doll which had been placed by Hoffmann on the table at a distance of about 100 cm from the medium; shifting of the tambourine sideways for a few inches and the upsetting of the rubber doll. The upsetting of objects of little weight, like the rubber doll, is always regarded as a doubtful phenomenon since it may be easily produced by the shaking of the table. Miss Krisch asserts, however, that it would have been quite impossible for Willy to have touched the table without her noticing it.

Mrs. Holub, who was also present at this séance, sat between two other persons behind the first row of sitters, at a distance of about 250 cm from the table. Any interference from her side was ruled out by the fact that the red light illuminated the space between the table and the sitters, as well as the first row of the sitters' chairs.

Although the phenomena which occurred on July 10th were relatively feeble, this sitting seems to me to be the most convincing of all that were held during my investigation. We tried to repeat the experiment a week later with the same controllers, but no phenomena occurred. No more sittings were held during the summer, and it is doubtful whether Willy will be at our disposal during the next college term.

Summarizing the results of my investigations, I may make the following statements: as a teacher of exact sciences I had never dreamt of believing in metapsychical phenomena until the beginning of 1924. My investigations with Willy Schneider taught me, however, that the hypothesis of genuine telekinetic phenomena is much better founded than the average scientist realizes. My conviction of their genuineness would be still greater except that the experience with Krauss had

taught me to be very cautious. I learned further that the information concerning psychical research given by the daily press as well as by scientific journals is generally one-sided and unreliable. There seems to be a great gap between the group of convinced occultists or spiritists and the very badly-informed average intellectual man.

In adopting the standpoint of genuineness of telekinetic phenomena it seems to me that Willy is one of the best mediums of the present time. He is accustomed to good control conditions and he does not appear to be in the habit, like some other mediums, of playing tricks as soon as you let him.

It is highly desirable that he should remain available for further psychical research.