Introduction to the Ernst August Dölle Symposium on Nonpublishable Psychosomatic Papers

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Originally this symposium was planned to be highly serious and scientifically and socially relevant. Each of us older researchers has some hidden drawer(s) full of incomplete research data, provisional manuscripts, doctoral theses, which we think to be unpublish-able. Sometimes the results are inconclusive or an essential collaborator has left for a faraway new post or a new method has made those employed obsolete. Our symposium was thought to gather such common frustrations, taxonomize them and search for possible prophylaxis and/or salvage operations. When asking colleagues and friends for their opinion on a symposium on nonpublishable psychosomatic papers we stereotypically encountered one of two opposed reactions. There were those (quite few) who were disgusted and stated that no self-respecting scientist should poke fun at his own endeavors. And there were the others who were very amused, even delighted and immediately produced free associations along par-odistic lines and offered cooperation. Obviously nobody but me could see a serious dimension in the proposed symposium title. Thus by demoscopic majority its content was changed.

When scanning for a distinguished and suitable chairman we immediately thought of Ernst August Dölle. This doyen of German psychologists had suddenly come to light – if not life – in 1974 by a Festschrift to end all Festschriften [1]. Although reportedly elusive, by some even declared dead, H. Speidel promised to retrieve him – but let him describe this in his own words. The symposium was an immediate comic success. The audience filled the lecture room and its adjoining corridor. Laughing attained acoustic levels which disturbed all the four symposia on the same floor. I only hope that the written texts equally communicate the fun we all had writing and delivering these papers and listening to them. An apt conclusion was given by Thure von Uexküll's spontaneous comment: 'When a science dares making fun of itself, it has really come of age'.

Reference

1 Herrmann, T.W.: Dichotomie und Duplizität. Grundfragen psychologischer Erkenntnis. E.A. Dölle zum Gedächtnis (Huber, Bern 1974).