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Lazaros C. Triarhou

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This year marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Erwin Stransky (Fig. 1), one of the last “universal savants” of the Viennese School of Neurology and Psychiatry.

Stransky was born in Vienna on July 3, 1877, the son of Moritz Stransky, a Jewish manufacturer, and Mathilde (née Schönauer). He graduated from Leopoldstadt Community



Fig. 1 Unpublished photograph of Erwin Stransky taken before World War I by Max Schneider, Vienna (author’s archive). Copying, redistribution, or retransmission without the author’s express written permission is prohibited

High School (currently *Sigmund-Freud-Gymnasium*) in 1894 and finished his medical studies at the University of Vienna in 1900. Realizing an interest in brain research during his student years, he trained under Heinrich Obersteiner, Lothar von Frankl-Hochwart, and Hermann Nothnagel. Following a 2-year internship at Vienna General Hospital, he joined the *Psychiatrische und Nervenlinik* of Julius Wagner-Jauregg in 1902 as an assistant. Stransky was habilitated in psychiatry and neuropathology in 1908; his thesis dealt with schizophrenia, then called dementia praecox [5]. Stransky was appointed *außerordentlicher Professor* of psychiatry and neurology in 1915. During World War I he served as an army physician, reaching the rank of major and decorated with the Knight’s Cross of the Order of Franz Joseph [1].

Stransky’s *venia legendi* (right to teach) was revoked in 1938, following the *Anschluss*. He avoided deportation and survived the Third Reich unharmed owing to his “Aryan” wife [1, 10]. He was reinstated as full Professor in 1946, and retired as Professor Emeritus a year later. Subsequently, Stransky headed the Rosenhügel Neuropsychiatric Hospital; he was succeeded by Reisner [5] in 1951, but continued to be involved in the clinic and in research.

Between 1899 and 1962, Stransky produced 300 publications in neuropathology, neurology, psychiatry, clinical and medical psychology, psychotherapy, and mental health.

In his early years, he developed histological staining methods and investigated peripheral neuropathies [7], aphasia, asymbolia, thalamic tumors, and therapeutic blood transfusion in multiple sclerosis [9]. The “Stransky sign”, a variant of the Babinski sign, denotes pyramidal tract damage: vigorous abduction of the little toe and its sudden release may elicit an extensor response of the great toe [8].

In 1903, Stransky formulated a “dissociation process” [6] and in 1904 “intrapsychic ataxia” (the incongruity

L. C. Triarhou (✉)
Economo-Koskinas Wing for Integrative and Evolutionary
Neuroscience, University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Greece
e-mail: triarhou@uom.gr

between *thymopsyche* and *noopsyche*—or between affect and cognition in modern terms) as a pathogenetic hallmark of schizophrenia. His ideas were credited by Emil Kraepelin, Carl Jung, and Eugen Bleuler [3].

In 1932, Stransky reported the case of an electrocution accident that killed a catatonic patient; a temporary remission of clinical signs before the patient's death helped Stransky to foresee the potential value of shock therapy [5].

In a lecture to the Swiss Society for Neurology and Psychiatry ("From dementia praecox to schizophrenia") Stransky reviewed five decades of schizophrenia research. According to Hoff [2], the transcript of that talk (published in the *Swiss Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry* in 1953) belongs to the rare classical milestones that no serious researcher in the field may ignore.

He contributed the chapter on manic–depressive disorder to Aschaffenburg's *Handbuch der Psychiatrie* (1911). An opponent of psychoanalysis, Stransky published in the 1920s papers on hysteria, neuroses, psychiatric fashion trends, and subordination-authority-psychotherapy [10].

An outstanding clinician for organic diseases as well, Stransky studied progressive paralysis, Korsakoff's syndrome, and epilepsy.

Stransky suggested revisions of the Austrian Criminal Law and wrote on unjustified confinement, preventive measures against juvenile delinquency, and the psychiatrist as a criminologist [4]. He was often called as a medical expert to high-publicity trials [1]. His interest in mental health extended from medical consultation to studies on leadership, the idea of peace, and the psychopathology of statesmanship; he lectured at Vienna's high schools on mental health during maturation [2]. A final topic he delved into was the psychology and psychopathology of the aged, also observing his own aging process.

His books include a two-volume *Textbook of General and Special Psychiatry* (1914/1919), *War and Mental Illness* (1918), *Psychopathology of States of Emergency and Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1921), and *Mental Health* (1955). As a medical historian, Stransky authored biographical notes on Heinrich Obersteiner, Emil Redlich, Sigmund Freud, Emil Kraepelin, Julius Wagner-Jauregg, Constantin von Economo, Anton Gabriel, and Alexander Pilcz.

He joined numerous societies, including the Société Médico-Psychologique in Paris, and became the first Austrian, in 1933, to be granted honorary membership by the American Psychiatric Association [10].

An eloquent public speaker, Stransky lectured undaunted until the end, despite a protracted physical hardship [2]. He died in Vienna on January 26, 1962 of an inoperable carcinoma of the stomach [5] and was interred at Vienna's *Zentralfriedhof*.

Students and colleagues, including Hans Hoff, Erich Menninger von Lerchenthal, Herbert Reisner, Franz Seitelberger, Walter Spiel, Helmut Tschabitscher and Milo Tyndel, extolled his vivacious eloquence, kindness, and medical ethos.

Stransky was married to the soprano Josefina Stransky (née Holas, 1899–1978). In the 1930s, she participated in the Salzburg Festival with performances of Bruckner's *Third Mass* and Mozart's *Requiem*.

Conflicts of interest None.

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