

## OBITUARY

The Editors of the *Journal* regret to announce the death on March 9, 1962 of Paul Albin Hoffmann, Emeritus Professor in physiology at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau, born July 1, 1884. Paul Hoffmann is best known for his work on the tendon reflexes which was carried out on man and at an early date (1919-1928) led him to the concept of a mono-synaptic transmission of this reflex. In electromyography it is commonly referred to as the H-reflex, when elicited by electrical stimulation. He also discovered that by careful grading of stimulus strength the H-reflex could be activated without accompanying muscle contraction, thereby implicating the large-diameter afferent fibers from the muscle, as measured by Sherrington (1894). At the time (1919-1922) Hoffmann was restricted to studying conduction distances on postmortem material and combining them with Garten's values for conduction velocity. The work of Erlanger and Gasser then made recalculation from reflex times possible. In 1928 in a paper with Keller he definitely proposed that the tendon reflex be regarded as mono-synaptic, still being careful to enunciate his conclusion as an hypothesis. Hoffmann used to refer to the tendon reflexes as "Eigenreflexe" and fully realized that they were the proprioceptive reflexes of Sherrington.

Another of Hoffmann's best known discoveries is the so-called silent period. This was observed in electromyographic work in which a muscle was activated volitionally. When a transient contraction was imposed, the electromyogram transiently disappeared (silent period).

Hoffmann himself preferred to work on man and did not carry his analysis down to the animal experiment in which the development of his findings took a turn, well known to the readers of this *Journal*, and followed by Hoffmann with great interest and shrewd comments.

Hoffmann was an unassuming, quiet man of independent judgment and great personal originality. This, and his sense of humor coupled with friendly approachability made him much liked by disciples and colleagues. He was Honorary Member of the German Physiological Society.

In 1922 he summarized his findings in the slim volume *Untersuchungen über die Eigenreflexe (Sehnenreflexe) menschlicher Muskeln* (Berlin, Springer). Hoffmann was one of Sherrington's early pupils from the Liverpool laboratory.

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