

Race and breathing therapy: The career of Lothar Gottlieb Tirala (1886–1974)

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Abstract. The historiography of life, work and visions of Jakob von Uexküll (1864–1944) has grown up during the last years. But up to now lives of his important followers in science are still unknown. This article is devoted to life and work of Lothar Gottlieb Tirala (1886–1974), who studied psychology and medicine in Vienna and started cooperation with Uexküll in 1914. They stayed in contact during the following decades, although Tirala began a career in race hygiene and neo-darwinistic scientific thought. He organised the contact between Uexküll and Houston Stewart Chamberlain and got support from the Wagner-family in 1933 to become professor for race biology in Munich. After his booting out in 1936 because of massive faults in teaching Tirala changed his scientific interests and began to stretch Uexkülls “Reflexlehre” into healing of blood pressure diseases in men. He became a favourite researcher in German natural cure community after 1945. Even today his studies are integrated in efforts to fight hypertension.

In a death notice in the *Wiesbadener Kurier* newspaper on Feb. 23, 1974, relatives mourned Dr.med. Dr.phil. Lothar Gottlieb Tirala, o.ö. Universitätsprofessor a.D., “He was a person of unusual intellectual gifts and tireless creative work”.¹ This formulation is a masterly circumlocution for one of the strangest medical careers that ever played out on German territory. The protagonist thereby managed in extraordinary manner to blur almost all the tracks of his various activities, so that the historian’s work must resemble that of a

¹ Death notice Lothar G. Tirala. *Wiesbadener Kurier* Feb. 23, 1974.

detective.² In the standard work “Rasse, Blut und Gene” (“Race, Blood, and Genes”), Tirala appears almost in a series with Karl Saller as a “victim of occupational reprisals,” in the Third Reich (Weingart *et al.* 1988: 536). Like Saller, the authors assert, Tirala was fired in the 1930s; and the reason he was dismissed from his teaching tasks were his weak efforts to conform to the National Socialists (Weingart *et al.* 1988: 541). The authors illuminate neither Tirala’s career before 1933 nor his work after his dismissal in 1936. Paul Weindling has researched the first, along with the network of influential persons who furthered Tirala (Weindling 1989: 510). But Weindling’s information on the time between 1936 and 1945 is unclear, and after 1945 Tirala seems not to have existed at all. Weindling, as well as Weingart, Bayertz, and Kroll, overlooked Tirala’s unique research approach to homosexuality. Manfred Herzer was the first to describe this, but in complete isolation from Tirala’s other oeuvre and person (Herzer 1992: 116).

The following essay examines Tirala’s career, his approaches to research, and the long path of his career from 1908 to 1974, thus closing a gap in research.

Lothar Gottlieb Tirala came from a respected Austrian family of civil servants. His grandfather Johann Gottlieb Tirala was a member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences and a Professor of Chemistry in Graz. Johann Gottlieb’s son Theodor had made his career in law, and had been transferred as an Imperial Councilor to Brünn. Here, Lothar Gottlieb Tirala was born on Oct. 17, 1886. Like his forefathers, he went to Vienna to study and completed his Dr. phil. in Psychology in 1908 and his Dr. med. in 1913.³ His scientific teachers in this period were Otto Weininger’s companion⁴ (Tirala 1969: 119), the private lecturer Hermann Swoboda (Tirala 1930: 165), and the pharmacologist Ernst Meier. For a while he had to do with the Psychoanalytical Society. He also felt drawn to the ideas of the biologist

² For example the University Archive in Vienna has no files on Tirala in his capacity as university employee. The Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (Bavarian Main State Archive) and the Archive of the University of Munich do not have the files on Tirala’s appointment. Nor are any files found in the Hessian ministries on any measures relating to Tirala.

³ Vienna a: File Tirala.

⁴ Tirala seems not to have had any contact with Weininger. But he later proudly underscored that he had lived next to the room in which Weininger died.

Jakob von Uexküll (1864–1944), whose concept of a neo-vitalist-like doctrine of existence (“Umweltlehre”, or “theory of environment”) would lastingly shape Tirala’s thinking. Among these ideas were the radical rejection of leading protagonists of the idea of racial hygiene and the glorification of “Mendelism” at the expense of Darwinism, which was condemned as unnatural and scientifically untenable (Uexküll 1912/1913: 1089). In accordance with the tenets of his mentor, Tirala, too, believed in a supra-individual guiding principle in nature that influenced people (Tirala 1969: 57). But in contrast to Uexküll, he was open to the idea of the neo-Darwinists. This did not alter the long-lasting friendship between Tirala and Uexküll, but it often led to long scientific debates between them, as Tirala underscored with great plasticity in a “fictional discussion” about Uexküll between himself and a colleague that Tirala wrote on the occasion of Uexküll’s 70th birthday (Tirala 1934d). Thus, Tirala argued to his antagonist that Uexküll’s actions were based on Kant, that Uexküll rejected Lamarckism as well as Darwinism, and that he made biology scientific again, in opposition to Ernst Haeckel, who, in connection with Darwinism, had raised it to the level of a religion (Tirala 1934d: 274). At the same time, he argued, Uexküll’s ideas were extremely modern, due to their orientation toward Mendel’s laws, which had only recently been rediscovered. Beyond that, claimed Tirala, Uexküll was also able to judge and analyze the situation of living beings in their living worlds (Tirala 1934d: 279). In this way, he was not only able to support the neo-vitalistic teaching of adjustment, but also to surpass the Darwinists in explaining the world (Tirala 1934d: 282). In Tirala’s explication, the completely overwhelmed adherent of Darwinism has no choice but to follow Uexküll’s argumentation. At the end of the discussion, Tirala points to the valuable remarks of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who probably also arranged the cooperation between Uexküll and Tirala.⁵ In Bayreuth in the summer of 1914, Tirala encountered Siegfried Wagner, the heir and epigone of Richard Wagner (Tirala 1935a: i). This contact to Bayreuth would later have favorable consequences for Tirala’s further career. Tirala’s publications permit the deduction that, after completing his medical training, he worked for Uexküll as an Assistant and was permitted to ac-

⁵ Bayreuth Archive: Uexküll-Chamberlain April 10, 1911; G. v. Uexküll 1964: 97; ASZN A1931 T Tirala-Dohrn.

company him to France in 1914 on field studies (Tirala, Uexküll 1914; G. v. Uexküll 1964: 97). Earlier, in the academic year 1913–14, Tirala had worked as an Assistant at the Pharmacological Institute of the University of Vienna under Prof. Meier.⁶ In the following years, as well, he continued his career as a biologist, transferring to the Physiological Institute of the University of Vienna as a regular member of the staff with the position of Assistant (Tirala 1917).

In World War I, Tirala, whose initial rank was that of a Lieutenant of the Reserve, was assigned to a front hospital and rose to the position of Senior Physician of the Reserve.⁷ In 1915, he married Auguste Victoria Wenzlitzke, who bore him two sons and three daughters in the course of a long marriage. Also in 1915, Tirala assumed the direction of the Surgical Ward at Levico Army Hospital, which he headed until Spring 1918.⁸ Then he was appointed Head Physician at the Army Gas School in Vienna and was permitted to devote himself to the ideological schooling of officers (Tirala 1934c: 355). He compiled his lectures in a small book that contained all the ideas of racial hygiene that would be discussed in the German-speaking world in the 1920s (Tirala 1918). Tirala was in favor of both positive and negative eugenics, warned against letting “inferior people” breed out of control now that the nation’s most capable had died on the battlefields, and underscored the dangers of syphilis and tuberculosis (Tirala 1918: 6–18).

After the lost war, Tirala initially continued to work in or near Vienna, but already left university employment before the beginning of the 1919–20 academic year. In the period that followed, he gained recognition for lectures on racial hygiene at schools (Tirala 1934c: 356) and for the continuation of his zoological studies (Tirala 1923). He gave lectures at the University of Vienna on “Problems of the General Theory of Inheritance” and spoke on the topic of the “Decline of the West or the Ascent of the German People?”⁹ In mid-1920, he set up a practice as a general practitioner and railroad doctor in Wilhelmsburg, Lower Austria (Weinrich 1990: 345). There he

⁶ 1913. Übersicht der akademischen Behörden Professoren, Privatdocenten, Lehrer, Beamten, etc. an der k.k. Universität zu Vienna für das Studienjahr 1913–14, Wien: Universitätsverlag, p. 49.

⁷ Weinrich 1990: 345; Vienna b.

⁸ Berlin, Bundesarchiv W1 A 537.

⁹ BDC PK 12678.

assembled a circle of adherents and advocated the sterilization of “inferior” people — and National Socialism, as a companion later recalled.¹⁰ From 1922 to 1924 he studied again to become a gynecologist at the Viennese Women’s Clinic (Degener 1935: 1613). At the same time, he interned for a short time at the medical department of the German University in Prague (Hlavackova, Svobodny 1998: 212). He maintained contact with Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Jakob v. Uexküll, whom he informed about the course of Chamberlain’s illness.¹¹

In 1925, he moved to his home city of Brünn, which now lay in the Czechoslovakian republic, and took over a local gynecology practice.¹² In 1926, he completed his Habilitation in Physiology at the German University in Prague, but was not hired to instruct.¹³ A year later, he applied for a Lectureship in Racial Hygiene at the Prague University, but was not accepted (Weindling 1989: 510). By returning to the city of his birth, Tiralá also opted for Czechoslovakian citizenship. Uexküll occasionally visited Tiralá in the latter’s new home.

In the years up to his failed application in Prague, Tiralá did not publish anything else. But he held a lecture at the Technical College in Brünn on experiments with the housefly, on labor physiology, and on the seemingly ineluctable “decline of the civilized nations”.¹⁴ In 1927, he held a funeral eulogy for Houston Stewart Chamberlain. A year later, Tiralá had his first appearance abroad when he gave a short lecture to the Medical Section of the Society of German Natural Scientists and Physicians at their meeting in Hamburg; another year later, he expanded this lecture into an essay (Tiralá 1929a). He regarded himself as a student of Uexküll and thought about applying to humans Uexküll’s teachings on the nerve and tonus centers of animals (Tiralá 1929a: 139). Tiralá hypothesized that using a special breathing technique that eases the nerves would make it possible to heal all blood pressure diseases. He referred in particular to the publications that Uexküll had written in 1903 and 1907 and had

¹⁰ REMA A 106/I.

¹¹ Bayreuth Archive: Uexküll-Chamberlain Oct. 29, 1920, Uexküll-Eva Wagner Aug. 3, 1924.

¹² Vienna a.

¹³ Munich b: MF 68256.

¹⁴ BDC PK 12678.

reformulated with his companion Albrecht Bethe in 1929 (Uexküll 1903; 1904 a–c; 1907; 1929 a–b).

Tirala was also increasingly politically active for the German Nationalists (until 1928) and National Socialists. His radicalism found expression in a series of essays in the magazine *Volk und Rasse* (“Folk and Race”). Along with special instructors for racial hygiene at schools for continuing education (Tirala 1931). He called for the establishment of state-run eugenic marriage counseling offices (Tirala 1932) and for child rearing to be oriented toward “breeding, selection, reproduction, and enhancement” (Tirala 1930: 169). He also advocated a kind of tax on bachelorhood to prevent the extinction of the German people (Tirala 1929b: 87), whereby a few years later he himself denied the sense of such a punitive tax (Tirala 1932: 111). Nothing more is known about further contacts with National Socialist party leaders or persons standing close to them. But Tirala’s relations with important members of the Nazi party must have been substantial. Otherwise it is difficult to explain why the until then almost unknown gynecologist from Brünn should be appointed to the chair for racial hygiene at the University of Munich in Summer 1933. Fritz Lenz, he previous holder of this chair, unique in Germany until 1933, had been called to the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology in the field of human genetics and eugenics.

Tirala had neither made his mark in renowned specialized journals nor held lectures at a college or university. But with the support of the new National Socialist government, he managed to have his teaching position turned into a tenured professorship.¹⁵ The appointment procedure was a farce. While the medical faculty and the founder of the German racial hygiene field, Alfred Ploetz, spoke against Tirala and Ernst Rüdin also maintained neutrality, Tirala received decisive support from the external “evaluators” Eva Wagner (the wife of the deceased Houston Stewart Chamberlain), Julius Lehmann (a publisher), and Philipp Lenard (the founder of “German physics”).¹⁶

¹⁵ Munich b: MF 68256.

¹⁶ Philipp Lenard (1862–1947) is regarded as the founder of “German physics”, as opposed to Albert Einstein and his theory of relativity. For his research on the possibility of the ionization of the air, Lenard received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1905 and was a Professor at Heidelberg University until he was pensioned in 1931.

Tirala's co-applicant Ernst Rodenwaldt found no acceptance from the responsible Bavarian State Ministry of Education and the Arts, although — or perhaps precisely because — the established faculty in Munich had backed him (Weindling 1989: 510). At the end of 1933, Tirala had been appointed to the chair in Munich. His training or academic upbringing by Swoboda and Uexküll had made him critical of Rüdin's stance on racial hygiene. Additionally, he had not even made a name for himself with scientific publications. Fritz Lenz commented upon this development with the words: "To sum up, the following can be said about Mister Tirala: His publications show that he has not been instructed in the elementary foundations of racial hygiene. The information he provides is unreliable, his presentations unconcentrated and unclear".¹⁷

Tirala began his career in Munich with two mistakes. First, he claimed that the law to prevent the birth of children with hereditary diseases, which was designed for the long term, would have positive results immediately — an affront to the protagonists of the draft law, Ernst Rüdin and Hans Luxenburger, who headed the "German Research Institute for Psychiatry" (*Deutsche Forschungsanstalt für Psychiatrie*) in Munich (Tirala 1933). A little later, Tirala also denigrated the grand master of German heredity research, Eugen Fischer, and his main work as useless in terms of racial hygiene (Tirala 1934a). He slapped down Fischer's protest (Fischer 1934) by pointing out his own achievements in the field of racial hygiene (Tirala 1934b).

This performance led to a subtly planned counter-measure on the part of the medical faculty, which included several professors who felt snubbed by the performance of the newcomer from Bohemia. For example, Ignaz Kaup, one of the forerunners of the racial hygienic seminars at the University of Munich, had to relinquish his own courses after the Ordinariat (tenured professorship) for racial hygiene was set up (Böhm 1995: 249).

Increasingly, Tirala's lectures were disturbed (Böhm 1995: 349) — and the Assistants of the head of the university psychiatric clinic,

Later, in the Foreword to his book *Rasse, Geist und Seele*, Tirala called Lenard his "fatherly friend". Tirala worked on the Festschrift for the dedication of the "Philipp-Lenard-Institut" at Heidelberg University. See Tirala 1936b.

¹⁷ Munich b: MF 68256.

Oswald Bumke, whom Tirala had also snubbed, immediately reported this to the rector's office.

The moment that Tirala entered the auditorium, he was received with listeners' seemingly endless foot stamping, so that Tirala could not make himself understood for a long time. The unrest continued throughout the entire lecture. The lecture was very frequently interrupted by trampling, laughing, and catcalls. Tirala's attempts to re-establish order were answered with laughter and noise [...]. Professor Tirala often speaks quietly, sometimes almost as if talking to himself. Sentences are often not finished. Several times long-lasting lulls developed... It was often difficult for me to follow the sense of what was said, even when I understood it acoustically; in part it seemed to me that the unusual succession of ideas was to blame. (Bavarian Main State Archive: MF 68256)

Seemingly well-meaning members of the medical faculty immediately recommended examining Tirala for nervousness.¹⁸ Tirala suspected a broad intrigue against him, but his request for a disciplinary hearing petered out and he had to accept the presence of his antagonists' Assistants as "customary". To rid himself of them, Tirala suddenly had the scheduled lectures for jurists and pre-internship hereditologists dropped from the 1935 summer semester.

Even though Tirala had to expend much energy defending himself, he came to the fore with numerous lectures in Munich.¹⁹ As Director of the Institute for Racial Hygiene, by 1935 he had authorized about 70 dissertation topics that show his interest in expanding Kretschmer's theory of body types beyond the differential diagnosis between schizophrenia and manic depression (e.g. Hermann 1934; Kretzner 1934; Mayr 1935; Pichler 1935; Raff 1935; Riese 1935). Together with Ernst Rüdin, he also represented the German Empire at the conference of the "International Federation of Eugenic Organizations" (IFEEO) in 1934 in Zurich, where he embarrassed himself with unqualified remarks on the topic of homosexuality (Schlaginhausen 1995: 182). But he asked Rüdin to provide him material about test persons for a study of his own on homosexuality.²⁰ A short time later, Tirala invited his former academic mentor Hermann Swoboda to the Munich branch of the German Society for Racial Hygiene (*Deutsche*

¹⁸ Bavarian Main State Archive: MF 68256.

¹⁹ Munich c: MPIP-HA GDA 134.

²⁰ Munich c: MPIP-HA GDA 134.

Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene), where Swoboda was permitted to present his theory of cycles, which Rüdin regarded as unscientific (“calculating in the algebraic kitchen of alchemy”, Swoboda 1917; Weber 1993: 208.). Tirala expressed his ideas on homosexuality in a lecture before the *Gesellschaft deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte* (Society of German Naturalists and Physicians, Tirala 1935b). Referring to the alleged degeneration of the Hellenes, Tirala declared that homosexuality was caused by racial miscegenation. This “true homosexuality” comprised the genotype, and its carriers were active as seducers (Tirala 1935b). This hypothesis was included in Tirala’s main racial-hygiene work, “Rasse, Geist und Seele”, in which he also construed a connection between Asiatic races (Jewry) and homosexuality (Tirala 1935a: 66/67, 80). The connection between intersexuality of secondary sex traits and homosexuality, as well as the alleged tie between racial degeneration and homosexuality, reveals that Tirala took inspiration from Otto Weininger (Weininger 1904: 52, 81). But Tirala did not go quite as far as other physicians in the Third Reich, who declared sexual research, homosexuality, and Jewry to be a single conglomerate (Rodenfels 1939; Thiele 1939; Trumit 1939, see also Braun 2001). Outside of medicine, the only similar oppositional stance toward homosexuality and homosexuals was in the oeuvre of the jurist Rudolf Klare (Klare 1937: 27, 35, 45).

In 1935, Tirala’s position in Munich seemed to have stabilized. Along with his racial hygiene writings, he wrote the book *Heilung der Blutdruckkrankheit durch Atemübungen* (“Healing Blood Pressure Disease with Breathing Exercises”), in which he concretized the studies on breathing therapy he had been conducting since 1929 (Tirala 1935c). In this book, he maintained that breathing therapy relaxed all tensed nerves in the body, thus enabling an alternative cure not only for high blood pressure, but also for all cardiac and circulatory diseases (Tirala 1935c: 66–69). This view is based primarily on the theory of reflexes developed by Jakob v. Uexküll, with whom Tirala continued to maintain contact.²¹

Tirala was also a convinced opponent of the use of alcohol and nicotine (Tirala 1935c: 71–73).

But at this time another intrigue against him was spreading, one he had himself provoked. Soon after his appointment in Munich, he had

²¹ Tartu, Uexküll Centre: Correspondences 1934.

already complained to the Bavarian State Ministry of Education and the Arts about hostility that his family, which initially remained in Brunn, was exposed to. The Foreign Ministry thereupon assigned its local consul to look into the matter.²² But by the beginning of 1936, it turned out that, in contrast to what he had said earlier, Tirala had a very bad reputation as a doctor and that, on the other hand, he had not, after all, always been a strong supporter of the National Socialist cause.²³ In addition, accusations, to this day unproven, were accumulating that Tirala had performed abortions. Tirala himself denied all the charges and accused the responsible Foreign Office agents of intellectual corruption. To secure himself against every form of attack from state authorities, at the beginning of November 1935 Tirala applied for “Selbstreinigung” (“Self-purification”), a party trial before the party court of the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers Party) in the Gau (“province”, in Nazi parlance) of Munich.²⁴ Before this court could begin its work, events accelerated. Because of quarrels about alleged behavior unfitted to his profession, Tirala was expelled from the Nazi physicians association in early December 1935.²⁵ Critics had judged his new book *Sport und Rasse* (“Sport and Race”, Tirala 1936a) to be ridiculous or insignificant (Jaensch 1936; Schultz 1936). It also turned out that Tirala had accepted lecture fees without holding the corresponding lectures and that, in seminars, he had falsified the number of attendees.²⁶ This was especially problematic because at this time Lothar Gottlieb Tirala was not yet tenured; as a result, he was discharged without notice in Spring 1936. The State of Bavaria and the University of Munich also sued him for reimbursement of about 5,000 Reichsmarks in lecture fees and advances.²⁷

Tirala’s dismissal was an important turning point in the Third Reich’s policy of filling university chairs. The offended established medical faculties had been victorious in the middle term over the outsiders supported by Party offices. Even the head of the NSDAP Racial Policy Office, Walther Gross, had to concede at this time that

²² The files on this matter unfortunately no longer exist in the Archive of the Foreign Ministry.

²³ Munich b: MF 68256.

²⁴ Berlin, BDC OPG 1696.

²⁵ Munich b: MF 68256.

²⁶ Munich b: MF 68256.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

the politicization of higher education since 1933 had failed because of unknowledgeable party members (Uhle 1999: 280). The further direction of the Institute for Racial Hygiene was entrusted to Ernst Rüdin and Hans Luxenburger, while the rooms were acquired by the Institute of Hygiene.²⁸

Tirala responded to his termination immediately, filing an objection. In the time that followed, he repeatedly tried to get an appointment to a chair for racial hygiene, at the same time expanding his expertise to the field of alternative medicine. Thus, he declared that breathing therapy could cure liver damage and cardiac dilation (Tirala 1936 c–d), as well as occupationally induced heart damage (Tirala 1937), once again underscoring that these studies were based on preliminary work by Uexküll.

Until 1943, however, Tirala focused his attention on the possibility of being reinstated as a Professor of Racial Hygiene. In the dispute over the State of Bavaria's demand for money, he claimed that the ministry's staff had grossly deceived him about his tenure status and answered them with a counter suit.²⁹ But the leaders of the Munich branch of the Nazi party also felt offended and launched against Tirala a campaign of vituperation that culminated in his dishonorable dismissal from the party.³⁰ Winifred Wagner — one of the Bayreuth friends of Bavarian State Interior Minister Adolf Wagner and of the head of the Personnel Office of the Reich Labor Leader, Freiherr v. Loeffelholz — supported the former Professor of Racial Hygiene by filing complaints with Reich Minister Rust.³¹ Winifred Wagner also invited Tirala to Bayreuth in the summer of 1936 and personally introduced him — and his work — to Adolf Hitler.³² This indicates that the contact between Tirala and this representative of the Villa Wahnfried must have been close, yet no correspondence is extant in the Archive of the Richard Wagner Memorial Site of the City of Bayreuth. Nor did Brigitte Hamann write a single syllable about Tirala in her monumental study "Hitlers Bayreuth" (Hamann 2002). At about the time when Winifred Wagner brought to Hitler's attention the fate of her friend, the former university professor Lothar Gottlieb Tirala,

²⁸ Berlin, BDC W1 508.

²⁹ Munich b, MF 68256.

³⁰ Berlin, REMA A 106/I.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Berlin, REMA 106/II.

we note a suspension of Tirala's opponents' efforts. In March 1937, Tirala even went on the offensive. He won a court victory against Hans Luxenburger, who had to make a formal apology retracting all assertions that Tirala was pedagogically incompetent.³³ In late March/early April of the same year, the Führer's Chancellery under Philipp Bouhler ordered a complete audit of the proceedings against Tirala. But the first concrete results were not forthcoming for almost a year. Then the highest party court of the NSDAP resolved to rescind Tirala's expulsion and declared all the accusations against him null and void.³⁴ The primary reason the court gave was the points of accusation against "Prof. Tirala's" activities as a physician in Brünn could not be investigated. So this was a dismissal of charges, rather than a finding of innocence. On May 4, 1938, the Gauleiter of Franconia, Julius Streicher, turned to Education Minister Rust, appealing to his "National Socialist conscience", and demanded Tirala's reinstatement.³⁵ Not long afterward, Tirala self-confidently approached the minister to make it clear that, after the end of the "baseless campaign of slander" against his person, there was no longer any reason not to confer the *venia legendi* on him again.³⁶ At the same time, with the support of Julius Streicher, Tirala tried to get an appointment to an as yet unfounded School of Racial Hygiene in Nuremberg (Weindling 1989: 511). The Führer's Chancellery apparently saw in this the chance for a compromise and issued a directive that Tirala be paid 1,000 Reichsmarks from the support funds of the *Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG — German Research Association) until the appointment to the Munich chair was settled.³⁷ This subsidy was preceded by a debate within the DFG, because Ferdinand Sauerbruch initially spoke against such support; but he was outvoted after Walter Groß, Julius Streicher, and Gerhard Wagner intervened with Reich Education Minister Rust (Klee 2001: 179). Tirala had long-term plans to create an "Institute for Racial Physiology" that would address the "physiology of sexuality" and pregnancy testing, among other things.³⁸ In this, Tirala showed himself to be an

³³ Berlin, REMA A 106/II.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.* Streicher-Rust May 4, 1938.

³⁶ *Ibid.* Tirala-Rust June 17, 1938.

³⁷ Berlin, REMA A 106/II Bouhler-Streicher March 28, 1939.

³⁸ Berlin, REMA A106/II Tirala-DFG June 24, 1938.

adherent of the writings of Arthur Dinter (“Die Sünde wider das Blut” — “The Sin Against the Blood”). This research intention was backed especially by Julius Streicher, who in March 1939 reported the provision of rooms to this end in Nuremberg.³⁹ But the outbreak of war seems to have prevented the development of such an institute in the “Stadt der Reichsparteitage” (“City of the Reich Party Conventions”), so that in June 1940 Tirala resumed his efforts for an appointment to the chair in Munich.⁴⁰ These efforts at reinstatement, along with the possibilities given since 1938 through the occupation of the Sudetenland and the construction of the protectorate of “Bohemia and Moravia”, led in 1940 to a comprehensive police reinvestigation of the charges pressed against him in 1936. Several witnesses thereby gave testimony under oath that Tirala had accepted tremendous fees to carry out illegal abortions⁴¹ and that he had maintained business contacts with local Jews. The result of these charges was that, in Spring 1943, the Bavarian State Ministry of Education and the Arts and the Security Service of the SS declared Tirala to be unworthy of appointment to a chair. The Ministry also insisted on reimbursement of a total of 6,635.79 Reichsmarks and once and for all forbid Tirala to bear the title of University Professor (Ibid.). Weindling’s arguments thus seem unpersuasive that Tirala’s chances to be reappointed in Munich had improved in 1944 because Rüdín’s position was weakened (Weindling 1989: 511). It is indeed true that at this time Rüdín had long ceased to play the role he had still had in the 1930s (Weber 1993: 253/254, 259–261), but Tirala had already been taken completely out of the running for the chair in Munich. It is true that the plenipotentiary for the Sanitation/Health Department, Paul Rostock, as well as the Squadron Physician Armin of Tschermak-Seysenegg made some efforts on behalf of the “causa Tirala” in Fall 1944.⁴² But in January 1945, the Reich Education Minister briefly informed the petitioners that “Reich Leader Bormann has rejected further support for Tirala”.⁴³

³⁹ *Ibid.* Streicher-Rust March 29, 1939.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* Tirala-Rust June 28, 1940.

⁴¹ Munich b: MF 68256.

⁴² Berlin, REMA A 106/II Rostock-Rust Oct. 18, 1944; Tschermak-Rust Nov. 3, 1944.

⁴³ *Ibid.* Rust-Rostock Jan. 8, 1945.

Tirala had eluded further criminal prosecution by following his family to Kitzbühel in secure Tyrolia at the end of 1944. Here he ran a small practice — without official permission — until 1946.⁴⁴ He earned additional money by publishing an extremely successful small book with Reclam publishing house (Tirala 1943)⁴⁵.

By fleeing to the Tyrolian mountains, Tirala not only shed his investigators from the police and the educational bureaucracy, he also escaped denazification in Munich. In Austria, where denazification consisted merely of a short questionnaire, Tirala claimed he had been dismissed from state service “for political reasons” in 1936 and also expelled from the NSDAP, which he had been forced to join.⁴⁶ When the Munich physicians’ association wrote to the Tyrolian Chamber of Physicians that Tirala had been a convinced National Socialist, he rebutted this with various witness testimonies to the opposite effect from clergymen and earlier acquaintances.⁴⁷ Thus, Othmar Spann also confirmed Tirala’s role as an antifascist who had even hidden Spann’s son Adalbert from the Gestapo in 1936. Tirala and Spann may have known each other for a long time, since the latter had been a Professor at the Technical College in Tirala’s home city, Brunn, in 1909.

Tirala immediately received registration as a physician and moved to Graz, where he lived from 1948 to 1950. There he briefly headed the sanatorium Himmelhof before opening a private practice.⁴⁸ Undisturbed by the Bavarian ministerial bureaucracy, he called himself “Univ-Prof. für Erbpathologie a.D. [University Prof. for Heredopathology, ret.], Dr.med. et Dr.phil. Tirala, Facharzt für Gynäkologie [Specialist for Gynecology], Internist”. But in 1949, the physicians’ association in Graz denied him the right to use the last title. After Tirala had once again entangled himself in disputes about demands for payment, he moved to Vienna in Summer 1950. But the Chamber of Physicians there demanded a comprehensive résumé from Tirala prior to any registration. In his list of publications, he left out all his essays in *Volk und Rasse* (“Folk and Race”) and renamed his main work as “Bios, Geist und Seele” (“Bios, Mind, and Soul”).⁴⁹ He

⁴⁴ Vienna a.

⁴⁵ By the end of the war, Tirala had sold about 30,000 copies of this 70-page book.

⁴⁶ Vienna a.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Vienna a, report of the Styrian physicians’s chamber.

⁴⁹ See Vienna a, Tirala’s résumé.

also listed a number of studies that had never been published⁵⁰. Tirala was permitted to open a practice as a general practitioner, but was denied the right to carry the title of a specialist or the term “Univ-Prof”. But this did not stop Tirala from continuing to promote himself with these academic titles. The Chamber of Physicians responded to this in 1952 with criminal proceedings, and Tirala also stood once again under suspicion of behavior unworthy of the profession, due to advertising measures.⁵¹ In the same year, the press termed him a racial hygienist who administered lethal injections.⁵² The matter in question was an apparently fateful treatment of a diabetes patient⁵³.

At this time, the Bavarian bureaucracy had already taken up Tirala’s trail again, since he had complained about the confiscation of his property in an indignant 1950 letter to the University of Munich.⁵⁴ The new — and apparently completely clueless — university management displayed willingness to give him his skull collection, his X-rays, his microscope, a manuscript (“Der Erbgang des Genius” — “The Heredity of Genius”), and autographs from Richard and Winifred Wagner, but first sent an inquiry to the Bavarian State Ministry of Education and the Arts. The Ministry immediately remembered its claims for monies owed and demanded that Tirala transfer 663.58 DM (in place of 6,635.79 RM)⁵⁵. In various letters to Austrian addresses (the Vienna Chamber of Physicians, Vienna University), the Ministry and the University underscored that Tirala was not entitled to bear the title of Professor.⁵⁶

Overtaken by his own past, in February 1952 Lothar Gottlieb Tirala left Vienna for Wiesbaden in a hurry. Here he was entrusted to head a sanatorium operated by the married couple Wilke at Bierstädter Straße 1. This workplace seems to have left him enough time to engage in research again. At the 59th Congress of the “Deutsche Gesell-

⁵⁰ Die Erbgrundlage und Entstehung der Homosexualität, Munich 1935. Konstitutionspathologie und Zwillingsforschung, 1947 “in press”. Zur Theorie der Heilatmung, 1947 “in press”. Grundlagen und Erfolge einer neuen Diabetesbehandlung, 1949, (manuscript).

⁵¹ Vienna a.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ This may be the reason why the book Tirala planned in 1949, “Grundlagen und Erfolge einer neuen Diabetesbehandlung”, never appeared.

⁵⁴ Munich a.

⁵⁵ The currency reform pegged the exchange rate at 1:10.

⁵⁶ Munich a.

schaft für innere Medizin” (German Society of Internal Medicine), in the presence of other prominent researchers (including Thure von Uexküll), he explained the significance of breathing therapy (Tirala 1953). He emphasized the importance of “dextrose therapy” (Tirala 1954: 105) and “oxygen treatment”, which were highly thought of in the 1950s (Tirala 1956/1957). As supportive measures for the breathing therapy he continued to propound, he discovered the use of leeches, hormones, and novocaine shots (Tirala 1954: 89, 130, 131). He also engaged in cancer research (Tirala 1954/1955).

But Tirala continued to use the title of Professor, which repeatedly led mistrustful contemporaries to make inquiries to the University of Munich.⁵⁷ His adverse experiences with state agencies — in particular in relation to his activity under National Socialism — did not stop Tirala from demanding in 1957 that the Hessian State Interior Ministry pay him compensation for damages suffered during the Nazi period.⁵⁸ Thereupon, the Vienna Chamber of Physicians, the Bavarian State Ministry of Education and the Arts, and the University of Munich sent file material on Tirala’s activity to Hesse, with the result that the original files went missing in the mills of the Hessian bureaucracy, but Tirala still did not receive any compensation. In 1958, he also lost his position as senior physician when Franziska Wilke closed the sanatorium after her husband’s death.⁵⁹ Tirala thereupon opened his own practice in internal medicine. In 1960, he briefly cooperated with the pharmaceutical company Cesra (Tirala 1960).

He continued to work as a propagandist for breathing therapy. In the early 1960s, he had already sold more than 100,000 copies of his book *Heilatmung bei Blutdruck-, Herz- und Kreislaufkrankheiten* (“Breathing Therapy in Blood Pressure, Cardiac, and Circulatory Diseases”). As an author, he called himself “Dr.med.et.phil. Lothar Gottlieb Tirala, o.ö. Univ-Professor a.D”. Also in the early 1960s, he “discovered” the perniciousness of rock music as a trigger of hypertension (Tirala 1961). But he claimed he noticed a positive side effect of breathing therapy in the curing of eye diseases (Tirala 1966). In 1967, Tirala founded a private “breathing school” in his medical practice in Wiesbaden.⁶⁰ In the same year, he found a forum for his research in

⁵⁷ Munich a.

⁵⁸ Vienna a, letter from the Hessian State Interior Ministry.

⁵⁹ Wiesbaden: Business file card Wilke.

⁶⁰ Wiesbaden, business file card Tirala.

the *Weltunion für prophylaktische Medizin und Sozialhygiene* (“World Union for Prophylactic Medicine and Social Hygiene”), located in Vienna since the early 1950s. Here, in the second half of the 1960s, he presented not only new ideas to expand breathing therapy, but also his revisionist hypotheses on the Nazi period. He summarized the latter in 1969 in his last book (Tirala 1969), *Massenpsychosen in der Wissenschaft* (“Mass Psychoses in Science”), which was published by the Grabert-Verlag and declared an auxiliary issue of the rightwing-conservative *Deutschen Hochschullehrer-Zeitung* (“German College Instructor Newspaper”). Along with Einstein’s theory of relativity and Freud’s psychoanalysis (“psychological placebo”), Tirala also rejected Darwin’s teaching and the Nazi doctrine of racial hygiene (Tirala 1969: 12–13, 93). Instead, he asserted, biology as pursued by Jakob von Uexküll was suited to explore the origins and effects of the human race (Tirala 1969: 8). The succession of this neo-vitalistically anchored theory, he said, included the studies by Hermann Swoboda, whose theory of cycles had scientifically demonstrated the inheritance of character traits (Tirala 1969: 112–113). Finally, he once again wrote on the inheritance of homosexuality (Tirala 1969: 114) which he sought to explain with Richard Goldschmidt’s chromosome theory, which had been refuted by 1956 at the latest (Goldschmidt 1916; Bleuler, Wiedemann 1956). Tirala may have seen his last book as revenge, fixed in writing, against his opponents, who had long since been branded as forerunners of National Socialism. Unlike many contemporaneous colleagues, he did not thereafter write any memoirs, but continued to run his medical practice and the attached “breathing school” in Wiesbaden. But his 1933–1936 interlude in Munich was mentioned in the recollections of former antagonists:

The dilettantism was terrible — we had a racial hygienist who had not even mastered the fundamentals of genetics, but who “healed” diseases, from brain tumors through dental granuloma to flat feet, by means of breathing exercises [...]. (Bumke 1952: 144)

After his death on Feb. 20, 1974, his oldest son Siegfried (born in 1917) did not continue the “breathing school”. But this did not lead to Tirala’s disappearance from the parascientific discussion. His supposed victim’s role in the Third Reich benefited him again. First, his bestseller *Heilatumung bei Blutdruck-, Herz- und Kreislaufkrankungen* was republished in 1997 under the title *Heilatumung*:

Gesundheit ohne Medikamente (“Breathing Therapy: Health without Medications”, see Tirala 1997) and second, his breathing therapy teachings experienced further development in the digital age. Although Tirala himself had rejected confronting a weakened organism with modern musical sounds as dangerous (Tirala 1961), at the beginning of the new millennium, the Israeli dance teacher and therapist Benjamin Gavisch propounded the combination of meditation music and breathing therapy.⁶¹ Melodies, said Gavisch, stimulated the body directly and improved breathing technique. Gavisch thereby referred directly to Tirala’s earlier works. Tirala’s work had unfortunately been forgotten, lamented Gavisch, who, with his CD player and breathing therapy, is pushing onto the pharmaceutical industry’s ca. 26-billion-dollar hypertonia treatment market. After preliminary clinical tests in Europe, in 2001 the U.S. Federal Drug Administration granted permission for this product resulting from racial physiological ideas to be sold on the U.S. market (*ibid.*). Since the product is already found on German-language homepages,⁶² it cannot be ruled out that, via the detour through the U.S.A., Tirala will manage a brilliant comeback in the German-speaking world. That would pave the way for his rise to the Olympus of (para-)science and his final laundering of all suspicion of National Socialist contacts.

But at the same time, his importance in the history of biological schools of thought in Germany between 1900 and 1945 would remain unconsidered. For the close, decades-long contact between the neo-vitalist-like Jakob von Uexküll and the mostly neo-Darwinistically oriented Lothar Gottlieb Tirala raises doubts whether the strict separation or even enmity between mechanists/Darwinists and neo-vitalists, as presumed until now in the history of science, ever existed in reality. Might there also have been other personal and ideological intersections? And what effects did the exchange of ideas have on the development of both research directions? These are questions that could shatter our image of the history of the natural sciences in 20th-century Central Europe. Tirala is not thereby the key to the gates of wisdom, but he may be a previously unperceived glimmer pointing in the right direction.

⁶¹ Musik hören gegen zu hohen Blutdruck. *Handelsblatt* 22. 08. 2002.

⁶² See for example www.musikmagieundmedizin.com/aktuell (as of Summer 2003).

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Раса и дыхательная терапия: жизнь Лотара Готтлиба Тиралы (1866–1974)

В историографии жизни, трудов и взглядов Якоба фон Юкскюлла за последние годы многое прибавилось, но в то же время биографии его последователей почти неисследованы. Лотар Готтлиб Тирала, чья жизнь и деятельность рассматривается в статье, учился психологии и медицине в Вене и начал научную деятельность в сотрудничестве с Юкскюллом в 1914 году. Их связь продолжалась и в последующие десятилетия, хотя научная карьера Тиралы пошла вверх в области расовой гигиены и неodarвинистской науки. Он установил контакт между Юкскюллом и Х. С. Чемберленом. После увольнения

с места профессора по расовой биологии из университета Мюнхена в 1936 году он поменял свою научную ориентацию и начал применять “учение о рефlekсах” Юкскульла в лечении гипертонии.

**Tõug ja hingamisteraapia:
Lothar Gottlieb Tirala (1886–1974) elukäik**

Jakob von Uexküllü elu, töö ja vaadete historiograafiaie on viimastel aastatel palju lisandunud, kuid samal ajal on ta teaduslike järgijate elud peaaegu uurimata. Lothar Gottlieb Tirala (1886–1974), kelle elu ja tööd artikkel vaatleb, õppis psühholoogiat ja arstiteadust Viinis ning alustas koostööd Uexküllüga 1914. a. Nende side jätkus ka järgnevail kümnendeil, kuigi Tirala karjäär oli seotud rassihügieeni ning neodarwinliku teadusega. Tema korraldatud oli kontakt H. S. Chamberlaini ja Uexküllü vahel. Pärast vallandamist rassibioloogia professori kohalt Münchени Ülikoolist 1936. aastal vahetas Tirala oma huviala ning asus rakendama Uexküllü “refleksiõpetust” vererõhuhaguste ravis.