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R Pup - A VARIABLE AFTER ALL

The GOIa supergiant R Pup (HD 62058) was first reported by Gould (1879) to be variable. During the following century however its variability could not be confirmed by any of the numerous subsequent observers. R Pup thus was considered constant since 1907 although recently White (1975) finds some possible evidence for very slow variations in both brightness and colours.

R Pup was observed in UBV on 7 nights between January 3 and January 30, 1977. The comparison stars used were HD 61409 a KO star and HD 60646 a FO star. Their respective magnitudes remained constant within $0^m.002$ during this period. R Pup revealed definite variations in magnitude and colours on a time scale well exceeding the 27 days covered by the observations, the V magnitude dropping by about $0^m.002$ a day towards a minimum. The overall amplitude observed was $0^m.19$ in U, $0^m.12$ in B and $0^m.06$ in V but is certainly larger.

The behaviour of R Pup is strikingly similar to that of HD 101947 for which GOIa star Reipurth and Eichendorf (1978) presume that it may be a very long-period low-amplitude classical cepheid. Observations of that star and of other hitherto unsuspected supergiants will be submitted shortly to Astronomy and Astrophysics.

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