Léon Marillier and the veridical hallucination in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century French psychology and psychopathology

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Abstract
Recent research on the professionalization of psychology at the end of the nineteenth century shows how objects of knowledge which appear illegitimate to us today shaped the institutionalization of disciplines. The veridical or telepathic hallucination was one of these objects, constituting a field both of division and exchange between nascent psychology and disciplines known as ‘psychic sciences’ in France, and ‘psychical research’ in the Anglo-American context. In France, Leon Marillier (1862–1901) was the main protagonist in discussions concerning the concept of the veridical hallucination, which gave rise to criticisms by mental specialists and psychopathologists. After all, not only were these hallucinations supposed to occur in healthy subjects, but they also failed to correspond to the Esquirolian definition of hallucinations through being corroborated by their representation of external, objective events.

Keywords
France; Léon Marillier; métapsychique; psychical research; psychology; veridical hallucination

Introduction
In France and elsewhere, telepathy is nowadays widely associated with superstition, and its empirical study continues to be relegated to the margins of academia. However, it is less well known that, during its birth, modern scientific psychology attempted to address psychological realities by the use of this term, notably during the first International Congresses of Psychology. This article reconstructs the emergence of the concept of veridical or telepathic hallucinations in Britain and its reception in France in the late nineteenth century, and its demise in the early twentieth century.

By introducing the philosopher and psychologist Léon Marillier as a key figure in discussions of veridical hallucinations taking place during the formation of modern psychology, we hope to contribute to a little-known chapter in the history of psychology in France (Plas, 2000; 2012). Placing these French developments within an international context, this essay is a contribution to the history of the clinical exploration of the unconscious (Crabtree, 1993; Ellenberger, 1970).

Léon Marillier
Léon Louis Marie Marillier was born in Lyon on 31 December 1862. The son of Auguste Marillier, a wealthy merchant, and Cécile Marillier née Chaley, he spent his childhood and adolescence at Autun and Besançon. Admitted to the prestigious Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, he soon resigned and obtained a degree scholarship at Dijon University. One of his professors was Alfred Espinas, and in Paris he also made the acquaintance of Charles Seignobos, who was a lecturer at the Ecole in 1877 and later became a renowned historian.

In 1885 Marillier became lecturer at the Faculties of Letters and Philosophy in Paris. He began to follow two routes that characterized his specific approach: the study of normal and pathological psychology as well as religious studies. In 1885–86 he followed the course of exegesis of Auguste Sabatier, a Protestant theologian and founder of the Faculty of Protestant theology in Paris. Though Marillier was not a Protestant himself, with the support of Sabatier he established a free course in the same Faculty from 1887 to 1889, entitled ‘Psychology in its relation with religion’. In parallel, from 1888 onwards he gave another free course on ‘Religious phenomena and their psychological basis’ in the Section of Religious Sciences at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études, which was followed in 1889 by a professorship of Psychology and Morality at the Ecole Normale for schoolteachers of the Seine. Marillier also studied biology and medicine, and he frequented laboratories, hospital clinics and mental asylums.

In 1890 Marillier was appointed Maître de Conférences at the Ecole pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE), and entrusted with a course on ‘The religions of non-civilized peoples’. For the curriculum of the year 1893 he wrote a memoir on *La survivance de l’âme et l'idée de justice chez les peuples non civilisés*, which was printed with the annual report of the School. The anthropologist Marcel Mauss (a nephew of Émile Durkheim) and the folklorist Arnold Van Gennep were among his students from 1895.

The approach to religious facts developed by Marillier was based firstly on British anthropological authors, particularly Edward B. Tylor and Andrew Lang, which he helped to make known in France. In contrast to Tylor and Lang, however, Marillier maintained the idea of a progressive historical evolution in the capacities of the mind, leading to a complexification of religion, in which a continually renewed mysticism finds a legitimate place. Psychology served him here as a framework of analysis, which is why Marillier can be considered as a psychologist of religions. It is as a psychologist that he affirmed that the study of primitive religions revealed a primordial unity of the human mind; for whatever forms they took in different peoples, he saw the same fundamental ideas recurring again and again. It is also as a psychologist that he put religious sentiment or emotion at the heart of every religious
fact, so that one could connect the beliefs and religious facts to certain particular features of
the intellectual and emotional structure of the minds in question, and thereby unearth
universal psychological laws.²

Léon Marillier had a remarkable range of activity. He was an untiring lecturer, a
collaborator in many scientific journals, a translator, the author of many prefaces, a passionate
advocate of the Armenian cause from the first hour of the League of Human Rights, and a
militant in the fight against alcoholism. However, his main concern was the psychological
study of religion as outlined, for instance, in an article entitled ‘Religion’ published in La
Grande Encyclopédie in 1900, which presents the synthesis of Marillier’s approach. Also as
collaborator (with Jean Réville) of the Revue d’histoire des religions, he published his
conceptions in many articles, notes and reviews in the journal. Not least, he contributed to the

On 1 January 1891 Marillier married Jeanne Le Braz, the sister of the writer and
folklorist from Brittany Anatole Le Braz, for whom he wrote the preface to the book La
légende de la mort chez les bretons armoricains (1893); in this, Marillier analyses the
religious beliefs in lower Brittany. Also in Brittany, his fate was tragically sealed in a
shipwreck on 20 August 1901. He escaped from the shipwreck, but died at the age of 38 years
in Paris on 15 October 1901 from a congestion of the lungs. He is buried in the cemetery of
the cathedral of Tréguier in what is now the Côtes d’Armor region.

Discussions of telepathic or veridical hallucinations at the first International Congress of
Psychology in 1889

Marillier’s clinical and psychological studies in Paris led him to participate, with the eminent
physiologist Charles Richet (a future Nobel Laureate) and the ‘father’ of modern French
psychology, Théodule Ribot, in the creation of the Society of Physiological Psychology. In
1885, Jean-Martin Charcot was the President of the Society, which was enthusiastically
managed by Richet as its secretary. The work of this erudite group was discussed and
published in a Bulletin, and also in Ribot’s Revue Philosophique; it dealt with hypnosis, sleep-
walking, suggestions, hallucinations, supernormal faculties and mediumship (on the Society
for Physiological Psychology, see, e.g. Brower, 2010; Plas, 2000). Among the most
frequently addressed themes was that of mental suggestion at a distance, i.e. telepathically
transmitted hypnotic suggestions. Charles Richet was among the scientists working on this
question, together with the young Pierre Janet, who reported his observations on the famous
case of Léonie in Le Havre, in which Léon Marillier also participated (Janet, 1885/1968a; 1885/1968b; see also Dingwall, 1968).

This Society was so dynamic in its wish to obtain recognition for the ‘new psychology’, as defined by Hippolyte Taine and Théodule Ribot (Carroy, Ohayon and Plas, 2006), that it organized the first International Congress of Physiological Psychology in Paris in 1889, under the presidency of Charcot. As Marillier recalled, an organizing committee, also headed by Charcot, drew up a programme which devoted large parts to hypnosis – a question which ‘attracts the interest of psychologists and the public’ – and also to the problem of hallucinations (Marillier, 1889: 539). The Englishman Frederic W.H. Myers was the president of the section devoted to hallucinations, and Marillier served as secretary.

The term ‘hallucination’ is here to be understood in the sense that was given to it at that time by leaders of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in London, of which Myers was one of the founding members. SPR delegates (most prominently Myers and his brother Arthur, together with the Cambridge philosopher Henry Sidgwick and his wife Eleanor) practically represented Britain at the first four sessions of the International Congress of Psychology between 1889 and 1901 (Rosenzweig et al., 2000; Sabourin and Cooper, 2014; Sommer, 2013a: ch.3). At that time the most commonly recognized causes of hallucinations were those of mental illness, clinical hysteria, feverish delirium, and intoxication. However, the interest at these meetings was not in these pathological forms, but in hallucinations which could occur in normal, healthy individuals.

What was the significance of identifying hallucinations in normal subjects? The answer is to be found primarily with respect to the aims of the SPR, which inaugurated large-scale surveys of hallucinations in the sane, with a view to statistical analysis. A clear indication is given by Marillier in his presentation of the conclusions of the section ‘Statistics of hallucinations’ in the plenary session of the first International Congress of Psychology. In his report he insisted several times on a point that appeared to him most essential, i.e. that the inquiries conducted over several years in England by the SPR, in America by William James, and in France by himself, should above all make it possible to study hallucinations in subjects who were normal, or ‘of normal appearance’; also the hallucinations were reported by the subjects themselves, in contrast with the hallucinations observed by doctors in hysterical patients and persons who present ‘psychic disorders’. To Marillier (1890: 45), the study of hallucinations in the sane ‘was the sole object of the inquiry’, insisting that ‘in the psychological literature’ there were only a few examples of this sort, one of which was a text
he had published three years previously in the *Revue Philosophique* describing some hallucinations he had observed in himself (Marillier, 1886; see also Le Maléfan, 2005).

Marillier admitted that especially in England and America the enquiry had a second goal, which was to investigate the frequency of hallucinations and their correspondence to external facts represented in them, termed ‘veridical’ hallucinations by Myers. Marillier referred to a book on precisely this question, which had just been published in England, i.e. *Phantasms of the Living* by the SPR researchers Edmund Gurney, Frederic Myers and Frank Podmore (1886). But for Marillier this part of the enquiry ‘possessed a rather particular character’, which he did not wish to discuss further; and a little later in his presentation he cautiously indicated that he did ‘not consider that the influence of real objects is a question that is resolved for the moment’ (Marillier, 1890: 45). Marillier’s caution on this point can be taken as an indication of the way that a part of the community of psychologists and psychopathologists treated ‘bizarre facts’; they did not agree with Hippolyte Taine who wrote in the preface to the second edition of his *De l’intelligence* that ‘the more a fact is bizarre, the more it is instructive’ (Taine, 1878: 17). For as we shall see below, the veridical hallucination was manifestly a bone of considerable epistemological and metaphysical contention within the fledgling community of professionalized psychologists.

But what precisely is meant by the term ‘veridical hallucination’? To determine this, we return to the work of the SPR.

*The study of veridical or telepathic hallucinations by the SPR*

The study of veridical hallucinations goes back to the foundation of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882 by eminent British intellectuals and scientists. The first large body dedicated to the radical empirical study of reported phenomena traditionally called ‘supernatural’, the Society formulated among its early aims the systematic evaluation of ‘death wraiths’, i.e. apparitions of the dying to family members or friends not cognisant of the death crisis, as well as other forms of hypothetical spontaneously-occurring telepathic impressions. Rather than merely collecting anecdotal reports, however, the survey was to be based on a general census of hallucinations in the sane using rigorous exclusion criteria, which served as the inferential baseline for the calculation of probabilities of hypothetical telepathically-induced hallucinations. Respondents were to answer the following question: ‘Have you ever, when in good health and completely awake, had a vivid impression of seeing, or being touched by, a human being, or of hearing a voice or sound which suggested a human presence, when no one was there?’ (Gurney, 1884). To avoid confirmation bias, collectors
were requested only to survey ‘trustworthy persons, from whom [the collector] does not know which answer to expect’ (original italics). Positive answers were received from 5,680 persons, of which about 710 cases of veridical hallucinations survived rigorous cross-examinations by Gurney and colleagues and were published in the two hefty volumes of *Phantasms of the Living* (Gurney, Myers and Podmore, 1886).

Although Myers and Podmore (a founder of the Fabian Society and one of the SPR’s in-house sceptics) figure as co-authors, Gurney wrote the bulk of the more than 1,300 pages. Myers wrote the Introduction and a ‘Note on a suggested mode of psychical interaction’, and Podmore’s name was included in acknowledgement of his being the most active investigator besides Gurney. The book contains extensive and sophisticated discussions and reviews of the international literature pertaining to hallucinations, and also to illusions, dreams, altered states of consciousness, and the psychology of eyewitness testimony.

The authors concluded that two points were indeed demonstrated by the results of the survey: (1) there were a significant number of ‘phantasms’ or hallucinations in normal subjects; (2) a large number of these witness accounts reported that these occurred around the moment of death (or serious crisis) of the person whose presence was being ‘hallucinated’.

From about 1883, Gurney and Myers were led to suppose that there was a strong analogy between these spontaneous cases and the transmission of thought as it had been observed in experiments performed by the SPR in telepathy (a term coined by Myers in 1882 to label the hypothetical transmission of feelings, ideas and mental representations from one mind to another by means other than through the recognized channels of perception). The cases surveyed in *Phantasms* indicated that the moment of death or situations of mortal danger seemed favourable for such exchanges between a subject suffering a crisis and a loved one, ignorant of the crisis, having a simultaneous vision or sensation unambiguously representing the event, sometimes over considerable distances.

Obviously, the term ‘veridical hallucination’ constituted an oxymoron, since it was at odds with the definition of hallucinations given by Jean-Étienne Esquirol as being distinct from an illusion on the one hand, and, perhaps more importantly, as having no object in physical reality on the other. In fact, the study of veridical hallucinations in the sane was an integrated facet of the early SPR’s explorations of the psychodynamics of hypnotic and mediumistic trance and other altered states of consciousness. Complemented by findings from their simultaneous exploration of the psychology of automatic writing and hypnotism, Gurney’s and Myers’s guiding idea was that if veridical hallucinations did occur, they might
best be understood as recipients’ idiosyncratically dramatized expressions of subliminally received telepathic impressions.

Obviously, these early explorations of the unconscious or subliminal mind fundamentally challenged standard views of psychological automatisms as intrinsically pathological or at least psychologically and morally inferior to the operations of the conscious, rational self, as proposed by Henry Maudsley, William Carpenter and other leaders of British mental science (Alvarado, 2002; Sommer, 2013a: chs3–4; Williams, 1985). Also there was another sense in which the work of the SPR collided head-on with nineteenth-century enlightened sentiments and ideals. The notion of telepathy, after all, provoked associations with magical thinking and ‘enthusiasm’, which had been outlawed through vulgarization and pathologization throughout the Enlightenment by religious and materialistic writers alike.9

Particularly in Germany and the USA, representatives of fledgling professionalized psychology were therefore concerned that the work of the SPR, and its support by leading figures such as William James and Charles Richet, created unwanted associations of the ‘new psychology’ with spiritualism, mesmerism and other contemporary large-scale movements decried as dangerous survivals from savage stages of human development. So, from the very beginning, psychologists such as Wilhelm Preyer, Wilhelm Wundt, Hugo Münsterberg, G. Stanley Hall, Joseph Jastrow and James McKeen Cattell vehemently guarded the birth of the new profession as an integral part of their public relations activities. When the ‘father’ of modern American psychology, William James, began to adopt the research programme of his friends Gurney and Myers, and publicly announced his conviction of the authenticity of the Boston trance medium Leonora Piper (e.g. James, 1896), attempts by psychological colleagues to repudiate psychical research intensified (Coon, 1992; Sommer, 2013a: ch.4; Sommer, 2013b; Taylor, 1996).

While psychologists such as Preyer, Wundt, Münsterberg, Hall, Jastrow and Cattell sought to publicly discredit psychical research by lumping it together with spiritualism, sweepingly explaining scientific interest in reported supernormal phenomena in terms of an unhealthy and morally regressive obsession with the irrational, researchers like Gurney, Myers, Richet and James were far from receiving support in spiritualist quarters either. On the contrary, spiritualists accused them of inventing the concept of subliminal telepathy to undermine and explain away the ‘spirit hypothesis’ (e.g. Haughton, 1886; Kiddle, 1885; Noël, 1886).10 Moreover, the continuing use of the term ‘hallucination’ by Henry Sidgwick and colleagues in England to refer to reported veridical apparitions led some spiritualists to
believe erroneously that the SPR was trying to pathologize experiences on which spiritualists based part of their beliefs (Anon., 1890).

An enquiry to be broadened?
Increasingly aggressive attacks on the SPR, particularly by German and American leaders of the nascent psychological profession, fostered the reticence of French psychologists with respect to studies of telepathic hallucinations. In 1887 Marillier published an article in Ribot’s *Revue Philosophique* addressing telepathic experiments conducted by Pierre Janet, Julian Ochorowicz (1886; 1887) and other colleagues, and commenting on *Phantasms of the Living*; he noted that although the enterprise was not without promise, work still remained to be done with all the necessary rigour and without adding religious preoccupations, which he thought he had discerned in the research performed by his English colleagues (Marillier, 1887: 401). But since nothing should be rejected *a priori* concerning the manifestations of the mind – a view often heard from representatives of the ‘new psychology’ as well as other intellectuals in France11 – phenomena such as telepathy were admitted to be phenomenological possibilities, but were still to be demonstrated.

Like the English psychical researchers, French psychologists stressed that one should only have recourse to hypotheses as exotic as telepathy after eliminating fraud and illusion, and also other novel causes that were plausible but no less difficult to prove. Among such novel causes was the unconscious. Marillier therefore indicated in his notice of *Phantasms*, with respect to the method of collecting testimony from witnesses by an enquiry, that any testimony can be ‘unconsciously fabricated’ (Marillier, 1887: 415). In this vein ‘the part of the subject in telepathic hallucinations is very considerable: he contributes much of his own, it seems [...]’ (p. 417). Taking an interest in the unconscious would give ‘the solution to many of the problems which are most embarrassing for the science of mind’ (p. 422, italics added).

Marillier’s remarks obscured the fact that the psychology of eyewitness testimony formed an important part of the theoretical discussions in *Phantasms*. When Marillier abridged over 1,300 pages of *Phantasms* to a mere 395 pages in his translation *Les Hallucinations télépathiques* (Gurney et al., 1891), essential theoretical and methodological parts of the work were excluded, such as Gurney’s ‘Note on witchcraft’, which contrasted the quality of the rigorous methods employed by the SPR with anecdotal early modern testimony for witchcraft.12

Marillier was undoubtedly reluctant to agree that a demonstration of telepathy should be admitted as a fact. In the introduction to his translation of *Phantasms*, he explicitly
opposed Charles Richet (who wrote the preface for *Les Hallucinations télépathiques*), who claimed that the existence of mental suggestion and action at a distance had been demonstrated. Marillier held a similar view of interpretations concerning the miracles of saints, possession states and mysticism: he restricted himself to that which conformed to the general laws of psychology. In the year of his translation of *Phantasms*, he further demonstrated this in an essay in the SPR *Proceedings* (Marillier, 1891), a psychological study of the apparitions of the Virgin in Dordogne. Stressing that to him the interest of these apparitions consisted ‘not in the visions themselves’ but ‘in their contagious character’ (p. 100), Marillier dismissed suggestion at a distance to account for certain features of the case *prima facie* suggestive of telepathy, and instead proposed an explanation in terms of hereditary constitution and expectant belief in the visionaries, which he argued were apt to construct illusions on the basis of an objective point in the peripheries of the perceptual field.

Yet Léon Marillier’s decision to translate *Phantasms of the Living* as *Les Hallucinations télépathiques* – even if the translation is not completely contradictory with certain formulations in the original text – appears to be an attempt to settle the question posed by the precise clinical status of the testimonies forming the empirical basis of the book. Like his English colleagues, Marillier introduced a renewal of the question of forms of hallucinatory activity without madness into the field of psychopathology. Hence, at the first International Congress of Psychology, Marillier concluded his presentation of the work of the section on hallucinations by announcing a study extended to include other countries, on the basis of the questionnaire used in England and in France; he said the results would be presented to the next Congresses by a permanent committee charged with producing a general report.

**Discussions of telepathic hallucinations at the second and third International Congresses of Psychology in 1892 and 1896**

Marillier’s presentation of the survey in French-speaking countries during the second International Congress of Psychology in London in 1892 continues his imperative to reduce the phenomenology, and ‘spiritualist’ associations, of telepathic hallucinations by centring on the more general and less controversial problem of hallucinations in normal subjects.

Meanwhile, attacks from abroad on the unorthodox orientation of the Paris Society for Physiological Psychology and the London SPR increased. For example, when SPR delegates reaffirmed their role as representatives of British psychology by organizing the London Congress (Henry Sidgwick was elected president, and Frederic Myers, together with James
Sully, served as secretary), the ‘father’ of scientific psychology in Germany, Wilhelm Wundt, issued a vocal protest in a critique of hypnotism and psychical research as varieties of experimental psychology, which he published in his journal *Philosophische Studien* and separately as a widely publicized pamphlet, and which was translated into French in 1893. Concerned that the SPR involvement would imply that ‘clairvoyance, if not directly, but still hidden under the innocent mask of a statistics of hallucinations’ was to form ‘the main subject’ of the meeting (Wundt, 1892: 8), Wundt also attacked young psychologists in Germany (Max Dessoir and Albert Schrenck-Notzing; see Sommer, 2013b) and France (Pierre Janet and Charles Richet) for emulating the research programme of the SPR.

*Telepathic or coinciding hallucinations?*

Although it was commissioned by the International Congress of Psychology and actively supported by another ‘founding father’ of modern psychology, William James, the unorthodox scope of the ‘Census of Hallucinations’ was considered controversial by other psychologists. The census was a replication of the *Phantasms* survey, as envisaged by Gurney in 1887 but cut short by his death in 1888 (Myers, 1889: 301). It was based on a much larger and international sample, to ‘ascertain what proportion of persons, being awake, and not suffering from delirium or insanity, or other morbid conditions obviously conducive to hallucinations, have hallucinations of sight, hearing and touch, and of what nature these hallucinations are’ (Sidgwick H, 1892: 56). In a plenary session, as President of the Congress Henry Sidgwick read the report of the SPR on the statistical survey of hallucinations conducted in England since the Paris meeting, ending his presentation by asserting that a certain number of cases confirmed the findings of *Phantasms* and concluding his presentation by announcing the full report on the Census in the SPR *Proceedings*.

Léon Marillier, who was solely responsible for the French-speaking part of the Census, then took the floor. The survey, from 15 April 1889 to 30 June 1892, covered France, Switzerland and Belgium, and included a number of replies from other French-speaking countries. In total, 6,000 questionnaires had been distributed, notably to professors in university faculties, high schools and colleges, to members of the Society for Physiological Psychology and a Society of Popular Traditions, as well as to priests, primary-school inspectors, doctors, pharmacists, veterinary surgeons, journalists, writers and artists. Moreover, advertisements had appeared in the *Revue Scientifique*, the *Revue Philosophique*, the newspaper *Le Temps*, and in Marillier’s French edition of *Phantasms*. The high
intellectual standing of the addressees had been deliberate, Marillier recalled, according to the
directives of the committee on hallucinations of the preceding Congress.

Doubtless somewhat vexed, Marillier admitted that relatively few questionnaires had
been returned: 3,493, of which 679 were positive. Marillier blamed a ‘general repugnance of
French people for psychological surveys’, recalling that Ribot’s survey concerning heredity
had not been any more successful. He also observed that a large number of people feared that
their mental health or their intelligence would be questioned, and that others refused to reply
in order to avoid encouraging the ‘spiritualism’ suggested by the theme of the enquiry.
Others, on the contrary, were offended due to their religious convictions and thought that the
enquiry sought to explain away miracles through madness. Marillier stated that priests
deplored the project, refusing to ‘associate themselves with our project of materialism and
destruction’, which is why ‘the Catholic clergy in Brittany abruptly terminated a series of
research from which I hoped interesting results!’ (Marillier, 1892b: 64).

Marillier said that, for all these reasons, the French survey did not seem to have the
same certainty as the one conducted in England, and already presented by Sidgwick. This was
doubtless a euphemism, in order to indicate that Marillier did not draw the same conclusions.
Indeed, in his presentation he did not speak of ‘telepathic’ but of ‘coincident hallucinations’, a
term which was less compromising and which left open the possibility of an explanation other
than that of telepathic transmission. The crucial issue was, of course, to show that reports
which bear witness to a coincidence between a hallucination and a real fact were convincing.
However, Marillier stated that even if reports seemed ‘sincere’, he was unable to say to what
extent the reported coincidences were exact. So he concluded by proposing to gather
additional witnesses, which he hoped ‘to be able […] to give later’. To the best of our
knowledge, he never did.

Two other conclusions drawn from this inquiry were announced by Marillier: (1) there
are indeed, statistically, hallucinations in normal subjects that are different from those in
mentally ill patients; (2) given the percentage of first-hand reports of coincident
hallucinations, the probability of telepathy must be admitted. However, Marillier immediately
qualified this possibility by rehearsing the usual reservations. Telepathy was thus admitted,
albeit in a low key, and certainly not in the same terms as those employed by Richet and the
delegates of the English SPR. Also, Marillier’s account of the London Congress in the Revue
Philosophique was rather coy on the subject of the statistical survey on hallucinations,
drawing no conclusion for the reader (Marillier, 1892a: 505). Moreover, he wrote that the
enquiry on hallucinations in the sane was closed, thus contradicting his own announcement of
a follow-up, which he had made at the Congress. Lastly, he divided the communications presented at the Congress into four groups, allocating his summary to the fourth group, which he entitled ‘Mental pathology and hypnotism’, whereas the results of the surveys were read in the inaugural or general meeting of the Congress.

We also find in this review a reference to the crystal-vision experiments, conducted by Frederic Myers in order to induce hallucinations. Myers had developed his theoretical framework of the ‘subliminal self’, which located the unity of mind below rather than above the psychophysical threshold (see, e.g. Myers, 1892; 1903), thereby threatening to push the ‘rational soul’ from its traditional psychological throne. But Marillier (1892a) used the expression ‘subconscious states’, thus replacing his previously favoured term ‘unconscious’ with the ‘normal consciousness’ and ‘sub-consciousness’ of Pierre Janet (who – in opposition to Myers and William James – asserted automatisms and trance states were intrinsically pathological, and who meanwhile did not wish to be reminded of his telepathic studies any longer).

The rather laconic mention in Marillier’s review of Charles Richet’s speech at the London Congress on the future of psychology as being ‘eloquent’ can also be seen as indicating a turning-point. Richet had argued that there existed data which allowed the supposition that human intelligence had extraordinary resources, and that unsuspected powers lay within: a ‘transcendental psychology’ would shortly see the day, which would explain the phenomena of clairvoyance, of the transmission of thoughts, of presentiments, etc. This was for Richet ‘the future of psychology’ (Richet, 1892). This view was not shared by many of Richet’s French colleagues. There arose an increasingly sharp division between what is merely plausible – or ‘adventurous’ in the terms of Janet (1892a) – and what was generally admitted as a legitimate object at the heart of a rationalistic, ‘enlightened’ psychology.

The International Congress of Psychology in Munich

Whatever Marillier may have written, the question of hallucinations in normal subjects was still on the agenda at the third International Congress of Psychology in Munich in 1896. The full report of the Census of Hallucinations had been published in the SPR Proceedings in 1894 (Sidgwick et al., 1894), and while Henry Sidgwick’s main contribution to the Munich Congress was a rebuttal of a critique of SPR experiments in telepathy (Sidgwick H, 1897), his wife Eleanor presented the results of the Census (Sidgwick EM, 1897). William James, who (together with Richard Hodgson, a close friend of James and secretary of the American Society for Psychical Research) was responsible for the American part of the Census, broadly
supported Mrs Sidgwick’s positive conclusion; however, other participants criticized the calculation of probabilities employed to make a statistic inference regarding telepathy or ‘death coincidences’. It is not surprising that it was Charles Richet who undertook the defence of the probabilistic method in the debate, since it he had introduced the calculation of probabilities in the evaluation of telepathic hypnotism in France (Richet, 1884). For Richet, in spite of minor errors in the details of the enquiry, the massive figure attesting coincidences confirmed that it remained ‘very probable that there are veridical hallucinations’ (Richet, 1897).

Marillier was doubtless present at the Munich Congress, but he did not present any new results, nor did he take part in the discussion of Mrs Sidgwick’s report. Had he given up? Had he understood that the topic was too compromising? Did he think that this sort of subject belonged rather to the psychological anthropology of religion that he was inaugurating at the time? Did his friendship with Binet – who had acknowledged the importance of Gurney and Myers as psychologists (e.g. Binet, 1890: 47,n41; 1892), but who was unsympathetic to experiments in ‘so-called telepathy’ (Binet, 1894; 1895) – perhaps reinforce a scepticism which was already present? To our knowledge, there is no clearly expressed position of Marillier on these points.

Again, Marillier wrote a report on the Congress in the Revue Philosophique. Concerning the final report on hallucinations experienced in the waking state by normal subjects read by Mrs Sidgwick, he limited himself to indicating the statistically favourable result in favour of the hypothesis of telepathy, without any further comment (Marillier, 1896: 412). We may further discern in his report two orientations that were gaining ground in question of the ‘confines of psychological science’ (Janet, 1897: 27): the work of Théodore Flournoy, the ‘father’ of Swiss professionalized psychology and collaborator of Myers and James, on the subliminal cognition of mediums (Flournoy, 1897; 1901; 1899/1994); and the SPR work on the transfer of thought. These two routes would come to delimit and reduce interpretations of the meaning to be accorded to telepathy and its modus operandi, in line with the wish of Pierre Janet (1892b) expressed several years earlier.15

**Conclusion: the end of the story?**

The English enquiry on hallucinations in normal subjects had thus come to an end, but the study of telepathy nevertheless continued in the SPR and in other countries (see, for example, Beloff, 1993; Mauskopf and McVaugh, 1980). With the death of Frederic Myers in January 1901 (Gurney had died in 1888, Henry Sidgwick in 1900, and Mrs Sidgwick made no efforts
to represent British psychology after her husband’s death), psychical research had ceased to constitute a genuinely British branch of psychological investigation (Sommer, 2013a: ch.4).

In France, articles on mental suggestion, telepathy and veridical hallucinations continued to appear in the *Annales des sciences psychiques*. The public interest in telepathic hallucinations was further renewed by the initiative of the famous astronomer (and some-time Spiritist) Camille Flammarion. By means of a questionnaire distributed in the press (Flammarion, 1899), he succeeded in obtaining more than 4,000 replies to the survey, the results of which were published in 1900 in *L’Inconnu et les problèmes psychiques* (Flammarion, 1900). Some of these replies appeared to confirm that a dying person could sometimes ‘manifest’ at a distance, and Flammarion became even more convinced in his belief in unknown forces, and in the survival of the soul. In spite of his enormous scientific reputation and the public success of his writings, this was enough for psychologists not to consider him a serious collaborator.

Moreover, the official negative attitude of psychologists to the ‘marvellous’ became more pronounced in the course of the fourth International Congress of Psychology in Paris in August 1900, where representatives of French Spiritism claimed a place in the study of these new faculties of the mind and the practice of mediums, but were explicitly requested by some psychologists to stop troubling science with their fantastic propositions, which were declared neuropathic in nature (Parot, 1994). At the same Congress, however, the creation of an International Psychological Institute was announced, which, at the time of its actual foundation two months earlier, had been baptized ‘International Psychic Institute’ by the Polish positivist psychologist and psychical researcher Julian Ochorowicz. Ochorowicz, who was both the original initiator of the International Congresses of Psychology (Ochorowicz, 1881) and a pioneer in the study of mental or telepathic suggestion (e.g. Ochorowicz, 1887), stressed that the Institute was dedicated to ‘all sorts of psychological research’, without ‘excluding those which have not yet entered the official domain of psychology’ (Ochorowicz, 1901: 137). Théodule Ribot, in his opening address to the Congress, had already indicated that the Institute’s programme accorded considerable importance to ‘the advanced, adventurous parts of experimental psychology, which are not the least attractive’, and he emphasized the excellent opportunity of studying the ‘phenomena that the Society of London proposed to call “supernormal” – a more appropriate term than “supernatural”’ (Ribot, 1901: 46).

But it was not the psychological section within the Institute (which, under Janet, was to separate in 1902 and eventually became the Société française de psychologie; Plas, 2012: 99) that continued the investigation of ‘marvellous’ phenomena. Eminent representatives of
physics, such as Marie and Pierre Curie, and philosophers such as Henri Bergson were among those investigating, for instance, the feats of the Italian physical medium Eusapia Palladino at the Institute (Brower, 2010; Courtier, 1908).\textsuperscript{18} The wish to scientifically explore unusual phenomena, which were on the margins of official science but nevertheless highly intriguing to scientists and laymen alike, had thus not yet come to an end.

Léon Marillier, however, was not to take an active part in this. His premature death in October 1901 deprived French psychology of one of its first representatives. Moreover, given his cautious and ambivalent stance with regard to the ‘miraculous’, as well as his growing focus on religious studies and the establishment of an ‘enlightened’ psychology and anthropology of religion, it is not likely that he would have chosen to be involved in the study of the physical phenomena of spiritualism, which came to dominate French psychical research through Charles Richet.

Marillier’s attitude to the subject of telepathic hallucinations seems to us a faithful reflection of the ambivalence – the scepticism and yet at the same time the interest – aroused by this ‘bizarre’ object at the heart of the nascent psychology during the fin-de-siècle. It constituted an area of exchange between psychology and the ‘psychic’ sciences, and also with mental medicine and psychopathology. For specialists in mental illness and the psychopathologists who debated these matters, the main question was whether the telepathic hallucination was actually a hallucination, since it could manifest in normal subjects. The answers to this question were varied, and in France they can be connected to changes concerning the very definition of ‘hallucination’ and its place in mental pathology (Le Maléfan, 2008).

Thus, telepathic hallucinations constituted a frontier-object within the human sciences and medicine. Their rejection, marginalization, and finally their relegation to the field of psychiatry through the pathologization of belief in the ‘marvellous’ at large, were the signs of a segregation between that which became legitimate and that which was illegitimate in these sciences – not without leaving a residue, which in France was continued to be explored under the name of ‘métapsychique’ (Richet, 1905).

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[Notes]

1 For a list of Marillier’s writings, see Le Maléfan (2005).

2 One can thus see on which points Mauss differed from Marillier, after succeeding him as the head of the EPHE, by applying the sociological method to the study of religious phenomena.

3 Inaugurated in 1889 as ‘International Congress of Physiological Psychology’, the organizing committee changed its name for the second session in 1892 to ‘International
Congress of Experimental Psychology’, and the third session in 1896 to ‘International Congress of Psychology’. For the sake of simplicity, we will use the last title to refer to all sessions.

4 The study was also carried out in Germany by Max Dessoir and von Schrenck-Notzing; and in Russia by M. Kleiber and N. Grote.

5 A survey of this sort constituted an innovation in the field of psychology, by virtue of its technique of enquiry and the internationalization of the data collection (Pétard, 1996), and also at the level of the statistical treatment of these data (Hacking, 1988).

6 On the SPR see, e.g.: Gauld, 1968; Hamilton, 2009; Oppenheim, 1985; Sommer, 2013a; Williams, 1984.

7 As with Marillier, Gurney’s early death contributed to his obscurity in the historiography of the psychological disciplines, although his literary output was considerable. On the historical import of Gurney as an explorer of the mind see Gauld (1992) and Sommer (2011).

8 At the heart of theoretical discussions on the psychology and physiology of hallucinations in Phantasms was the revised version of an essay published by Gurney (1885) in the British journal Mind.

9 On magical thinking and ‘enthusiasm’ as fundamental political issues see, for example: Heyd (1995); Porter (1999); Sommer (2013a: ch.1).

10 One of the scientifically eminent leaders of British spiritualism, Alfred Russel Wallace, later launched a similar attack on concepts of the unconscious (Wallace, 1891). Rather than Myers, however, Wallace targeted the German philosopher Carl du Prel, whose research programme Myers had tried to make fruitful for scientific psychology (Sommer, 2013a: ch.3).

11 Such as the philosopher Frédéric Pauhlan (1892), father of the writer Jean Pauhlan.

12 In the year of Marillier’s review of Phantasms, Richard Hodgson (Gurney’s and Myers’s SPR colleague and notorious debunker of fake mediums) conducted what to our knowledge was the first experimental study of eyewitness testimony (Hodgson and Davey, 1887).

13 The census of hallucinations was not concerned with clairvoyance but telepathy. On Wundt’s ex cathedra assaults on psychical research, see Sommer (2013a: ch.4; 2013b).

14 He read a communication contributed by Ribot.

15 Janet did not express himself directly on the subject of telepathic hallucinations, but about ‘so-called new questions studied by the S.P.R. and the Annales des sciences psychiques. All that will soon be rendered precise, distinguished, and reduced to its proper proportions’ (Janet, 1892b: 439).

16 The last census of hallucinations was conducted by the SPR in the late 1990s, though on a much smaller scale (West, 1990).

17 On the pathologization of spiritualism (or Spiritism) in France, also see Le Maléfan (1999), Alvarado (2010), and Le Maléfan, Evrard and Alvarado (2013).

18 In Italy, Palladino had converted the arch-sceptic Cesare Lombroso to believe in spiritualism. Similarly, the positivist alienist Enrico Morselli, who initially expressed concern that the research of the SPR was ‘neo-mystical’ and declared those who believed in telepathic hallucinations mad (Morselli, 1896), eventually became convinced of the authenticity of many of Palladino’s phenomena while continuing to reject the ‘spirit hypothesis’ (Morselli, 1908). On Morselli, see Brancaccio (2014). Shortly after Pierre Curie, Bergson, Flournoy, Lombroso, Morselli and William James had admitted they were convinced of the reality of some of
Palladino’s marvels, psychologists in America seized opportunities to debunk Palladino in New York, in an attempt to assert publicly the importance of fledgling professionalized psychology for the protection of the American people from ‘dangerous superstitions’ (Sommer, 2012).