

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

G. Stanley Hall on “Mystic or Borderline Phenomena”

CARLOS S. ALVARADO

Rhine Research Center, 2741 Campus Walk Avenue, Building 500, Durham, NC 27705
carlos@theazire.org

Submitted 2/11/2012, Accepted 1/17/2014

Abstract—G. Stanley Hall (1844–1924) was one of the most prominent of the early American psychologists and an outspoken skeptic about the existence of psychic phenomena. This article presents a reprint of one of his critiques on the topic, a little-known paper entitled “Mystic or Borderline Phenomena” published in 1909 in the Proceedings of the Southern California Teacher’s Association. Hall commented on some phenomena of physical mediumship, as well as on apparitions, telepathy, and mental healing. In his view all could be explained via conventional ways such as trickery and the workings of the unconscious mind. The paper is reprinted with an introduction and annotations providing biographical information about Hall and additional information and clarification of the points he made in the paper. It is argued that Hall’s paper represents an instance of boundary-work common at the beginning of organized psychology, representing an attempt to give authority to the discipline over fields such as psychical research.

Over the years there have been many examples of attempts to reduce psychic phenomena to conventional explanations presented by students of the mind (see the discussions of Alvarado 2009, Coon 1992, Oppenheim 1985, Plas 2000). A representative of this point of view, and the topic of this paper, is American psychologist G. Stanley Hall. In this paper I present a reprint of a neglected article written by him to criticize psychic phenomena (Hall 1909).

In addition to Hall’s unquestionable importance for the development and history of American psychology, I had several other reasons to choose this article. The paper is a good summary of Hall’s negative views about psychic phenomena and psychical research and represents the opinion of other psychologists at the time. Furthermore, and perhaps because the paper was published in the proceedings of an education conference, and

not in a psychology or a psychical research journal (Hall 1909), the paper is not well-known among students of psychic phenomena and deserves to be remembered as representative of negative opinions about psychic phenomena discussed by a prominent American psychologist. However, the reader should keep in mind that I am not presenting a study of Hall nor a detailed survey or analysis of his thinking. This paper is instead a reminder of Hall's views about psychic phenomena through the reprint of one of his articles, presented with some general biographical and contextual information.

As I will discuss below, Hall's paper is an example of the attempts of many early psychologists to separate their emerging field from psychical research. Admittedly, writings by other authors fulfilled a similar function (e.g., Jastrow 1889, Münsterberg 1899) and also could have been singled out as examples of separating both fields. But none of the other candidates were as respected and as well-established in American psychology as Hall was.

I am also presenting Hall's paper as a reminder of the importance of remembering critics and criticism in our discussions and understanding of the past developments of psychical research. This is because many historical articles published by workers in the field tend to focus on proponents of, or on defenses of, the "reality" of psychic phenomena (on this issue see Alvarado 2012:624–626).

Psychologists and Psychic Phenomena

As stated by Coon (1992) in her paper about American psychologists:

Experimental psychologists studied the mind, its limitations and its capabilities. Many perceived their own science as the most fundamental of the sciences because it was only through the mind that knowledge was possible. Belief in spiritual and psychic phenomena was to these psychologists only the secular ghost of a religious past, but a malevolent ghost preventing public confidence in scientific naturalism. Psychologists, as experts of the mental realm, would therefore expose fraud, credulity, and deception in matters psychic and spiritualistic. They would offer alternative naturalistic explanations and would be the self-appointed guardians of the scientific light. (Coon 1992:149–150)

Some reduced phenomena to conventional mechanisms, for example Pierre Janet (1859–1947) and Alfred Binet (1857–1911) in France, who wrote about automatism and dissociation to explain mediumship (Binet 1892, Janet 1889).¹ In Germany, Wilhem Wundt (1832–1920) argued that phenomena such as the influence on the mind at a distance had normal

psychological and physiological explanations or was due to “superstitious self-deception or intentional fraud” (Wundt 1897:275).

In the United States, where G. Stanley Hall operated, there were questions about the scientific character of psychical research (Mauskopf & McVaugh 1980, Moore 1977), as seen in the writings of several psychologists. For example, Joseph Jastrow (1863–1944) argued that psychical research “has . . . contributed an interesting chapter to the natural history of error . . .” (Jastrow 1889:81). Similarly, Edward W. Scripture (1864–1945) complained in his book *The New Psychology* about “unscientific methods of experimentation and . . . the air of occultism in which the whole is enveloped” (Scripture 1897:69).

All of these authors were engaging in boundary-work. They were actively separating their activities and concepts from those of others “for the purpose of drawing a rhetorical boundary between science and some less authoritative residual non-science” (Gieryn 1999:4–5). Méheust (1999) has argued that many physicians in France developed a variety of conventional explanations (such as hyperesthesia) to separate hypnosis from psychic phenomena such as mental suggestion. Others have discussed a variety of strategies designed to separate psychology from psychical research (e.g., Coon 1992, Parot 1994, Sommer 2012, Wolfram 2009). Such boundary-work was related to the development of psychology as a scientific discipline and to its professionalization, which included defenses of the expertise of psychologists over the facts of the mental realm (see also Sommer 2013). In Coon’s view:

Psychologists were stationed at the periphery of science, and therefore they were the most threatened by challenges to the boundary and the most susceptible to cultural anxieties about what it meant to be ‘scientific.’ (Coon 1992:150)

Of course there were other issues involved. Psychologists were reacting to phenomena such as telepathy and mediumship that questioned the dependency of thought, and consciousness in general, on the nervous system. Such views seemed to many to run counter to what had been learned about the localizations of sensory and motor functioning during the nineteenth century (Clarke & Jacyna 1987).

In the paper reprinted here, Hall illustrates well the process of boundary-work by presenting an authoritative account of what he believed were the problems with accepting evidence for mental healing, telepathy, mediumship, and other phenomena. Hall attempted to discredit these topics by pointing out that many of them could be explained by trickery, particularly phenomena of physical mediumship such as raps and slate-

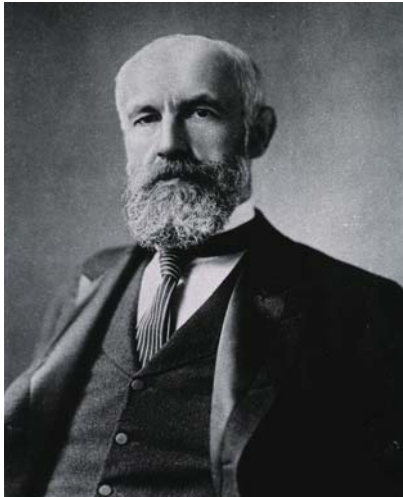
writing. He also argued that those who believed in the existence of psychic phenomena lacked knowledge about the productions and capabilities of the mind (e.g., hallucinations, dissociation). In his conclusion he suggested that the functions of the unconscious mind could account for psychic phenomena in conventional ways. Although not directly stated, he seemed to argue that a field such as psychical research was not necessary because psychology could explain the phenomena in question without recourse to a new field.

G. Stanley Hall

Psychology

Granville Stanley Hall (1844–1924) was active in American psychology during the early nineteenth century when the discipline developed as a systematic field separate from philosophy (O'Donnell 1985).² He obtained the first American psychology Ph.D. degree at Harvard University under William James in 1878 and was the holder of the first philosophy professorship at Johns Hopkins University in 1884 (Green 2007).

Hall was very productive, as seen in his books *Youth* (1907), *Educational Problems* (1911), *Morale* (1920), and *Life and Confessions of a Psychologist* (1923). His book *Adolescence* (1904) has been discussed in recent times (Arnett, 2006). Hall was involved with topics such as child development, education, teaching, and philosophy. A bibliography of his writings published in 1914 listed 328 publications, 285 of which were listed before the article (published in 1909) reprinted here (Wilson 1914). Some of Hall's papers were about topics such as hypnosis (Hall 1881), experimental psychology (Hall 1885), fears (Hall 1897), and anger (Hall 1899), among many other



G. Stanley Hall

subjects (see the references presented by Ross 1972 and Wilson 1914).

In addition to teaching and research, Hall's importance in American psychology was evident at the end of the nineteenth century. According to a historian of psychology: "Until about 1894, Hall was the unrivaled leader of American psychology" (O'Donnell 1985:141).

Hall was a founder of journals, among them the *American Journal of Psychology* (1887) and the *Pedagogical Seminary* (1891). He was instrumental in the formation of the American Psychological Association in 1892 and president of Clark University (1888–1920). Hall created in this institution the first autonomous psychology department in the country, where



Sigmund Freud, G. Stanley Hall, Carl G. Jung (front row), Abraham A. Brill, Ernest Jones, Sandor Ferenczi (back row), at Clark University in 1909.

he granted several psychology doctorates. Furthermore, Hall organized at Clark a conference in 1909 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the university, for which he brought Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and Carl G. Jung (1875–1961) to the United States, among others (Rosenzweig 1992).

However, by many accounts Hall was a difficult man to deal with. He had many conflicts with William James (1842–1910) and with several other psychologists (Ross 1972, Rosenzweig 1992). According to Christopher Green: "First and foremost a self-promoter, Hall was determined that everyone acknowledge his supremacy over American psychology" (Green 2007:315).

Psychic Phenomena

By the time Hall had become an influential figure in American psychology, there was a considerable literature about psychic phenomena and psychical research in existence, even if it was only a recently developed discipline. This is clear not only in developments in English-speaking countries (Moore 1977, Oppenheim 1985) emphasized by Hall, but in developments from countries such as Italy (Biondi 1988), France (Plas 2000), and Germany (Wolffram 2009).³

Throughout his career, and as seen in his article presented here, Hall was highly critical of psychical research (e.g., Hall 1887, 1895, 1908, 1909,

1910). His early involvement in the topic included his presence at a meeting held on September 23, 1885, to consider the formation of the American Society for Psychical Research. He became a member of the Society's council and one of its vice-presidents (American Society for Psychical Research 1885, Formation of the Society 1885). As early as September of 1885 Hall stated that he was skeptical about thought-transference. He was conducting tests in his house "but with no trace or shadow thus far of any thought-transference in the sense of the English Society" (Miles & Miles 1929:334).⁴ He also wrote that he had seances with mediums, and that he searched for mediums in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston (Hall 1910:xv-xvi). The latter took place during the late 1880s.

In a widely cited long review of publications issued by the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), Hall (1887) strongly criticized the Society's work on spontaneous and experimental telepathy. In his view, telepathy "lacks everything approaching proof save to amateurs and speculative psychologists will be allowed to lapse to forgetfulness" (p. 146). Such a position, however, was highly exaggerated. His argument that the SPR researchers were "amateurs and speculative psychologists" was more a dismissal, and one associated with name-calling, than a critical examination of the problem. The SPR pioneers, as seen in Gauld's (1968) study, were enthusiastic, but they were aware of and vigilant about various conventional explanations and artifacts associated with research. An example was the discussion of criticisms of the evidence for spontaneous telepathy in the first major work of the Society, *Phantasms of the Living* (Gurney, Myers & Podmore 1886:Vol. 1:Chapter 4).

In a later review he characterized some of the literature of this field as having

. . . deep unconscious bias of prejudice, in the form of hunger for immortality, which weights every die of fact, where the atmosphere, though clearing up, is still murky with traces of nearly every form of superstition that the world has ever seen . . . (Hall 1895:141)

Unfortunately, Hall lacked perspective on this issue as well, failing to examine his own biases and prejudices. It may even be argued that the psychical researchers were more self-critical and showed more cognizance of alternate viewpoints than critics such as Hall.

A similar negative stance appears in his book *Educational Problems*. In a chapter dealing with the lies of children, he mentioned cases of witchcraft, poltergeists, and mediums as examples of a "chronic diathesis of falsehood . . . most common among barely pubescent or pre-pubescent girls" (Hall 1911, Vol. 1:350; see also Hall 1908:680).

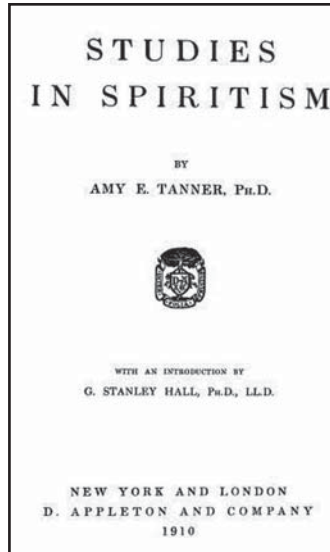
Hall (1908:681) believed "there is no clairaudience or clairvoyance save through the regular channels of the sense" and that evidence for spontaneous veridical experiences was not to be trusted due to coincidence and other factors such as "errors in verification, [and] the fallibility of human testimony" (p. 682). Characteristically, he failed to acknowledge the detailed attention some early psychical researchers paid to such problems (e.g., Gurney, Myers, & Podmore 1886:Vol. 1: Chapter 4).

Hall also had seances with the celebrated medium Leonora E. Piper (1857–1950), as reported in Amy E. Tanner's *Studies in Spiritism* (1910:177–185, Chapter 16).⁵ He wrote in the introduction of the book:

"I for one can see nothing more in Mrs. Piper than an interesting case of secondary personality with its own unique features" (Hall 1910:xxx). The ideas he presented in Tanner's book were strongly criticized in the psychical research literature (Hyslop 1911, Lang 1911). Hyslop pointed out many problems with Hall's writing and suppositions, as well as with Tanner's. For example, he said it was not true that, as Hall claimed, Piper read the records of her trance statements (p. 70 of Hyslop's critique). He also believed that Hall, as well as Tanner, were learning to study mediums as they proceeded in their examination of Piper and presented assertions without evidence. Both authors, Hyslop maintained, insinuated many things that were untrue, trying to present a negative picture of psychical researchers. In Hyslop's words:

The authors are forever telling us that the "controls" are extremely suggestible and often remind us that the subconscious is a very delicate affair. That is what psychic researchers like Dr. Hodgson always said or acted upon, but we are not told this fact, as if no one knew it but antipsychic researchers . . . As to suggestibility I would only say that was apparent to more people than these experimenters and the psychic researchers have always recognized that this was either a difficulty to be overcome or a necessary condition in the obtaining of the supernormal. (Hyslop 1911:87–88)

With this background, there is no question that Hall's self-appointed role as a critic of psychical research was problematic at best and that many of his evaluations need to be taken with a grain of salt. His general strategy,



Tanner's *Studies in Spiritism*

both in the article presented here as in his other writings, was to offer all kinds of suggestions about possible artifacts and conventional explanations that in his view could account for the phenomena reported without informing his readers that such critiques were not new nor that they were well-known and discussed by psychical researchers. Consequently, uninformed readers most probably received the impression, particularly those that knew the comments were coming from an eminent psychologist, that psychical researchers were incompetent and that evidence for psychic phenomena was very weak or nonexistent. Nonetheless, Hall remains a good example of the rejection of psychic phenomena by American psychologists at a time that deserves to be remembered today as an historical example of skeptical views on the subject.

Reprint of Hall's 1909 Article

The paper reprinted below was one of three papers presented by Hall in December of 1908 at the Southern California Teacher's Association. In the program, the paper was listed with the title "The Psychology of Hypnotism, Telepathy, Spiritism, etc.," but it was printed in the *Conference Proceedings* in 1909 as "Mystic or Borderline Phenomena" (Hall 1909). I have added to the paper several footnotes that present further information about the topics discussed by Hall.

Mystic or Borderline Phenomena

This topic is an omnibus one, which includes spiritualism, mesmerism, hypnotism, crystal-gazing, mind-reading, Eddyism,⁶ clairvoyance, telepathy, all the mancies, magic, sleight of hand, the Emmanuel Movement,⁷ primitive medicine, and now certain subtle forms of mental arrest and perversion.

I. A word about raps or typtology. This was introduced in this country by the Fox sisters more than fifty years ago; and it was supposed that by answering questions by two raps No, by three raps Yes, revelations from the spirit world could be communicated to man. The phenomenon of these girls marks the outbreak of what might almost be called a spiritualistic epidemic, as a result of which many of the most eminent people in this country were convinced that there were veritable apparitions, that the souls of the dear departed hovered around us, that the spirit shore was near, and that our deceased friends could give indubitable proof of their post-mortem existence. Not a few of these mediums confessed; some of them are known to have had the power of snapping the joints at the toes, fingers, elbows, and even knees.⁸ Moreover, one can purchase now various kinds of apparatus that can be concealed about the person and which give either muffled, dim and mystic notes, or shrill, resonant ones; and these have often been described as very remarkable.⁹ We have yet to find, however, any kind of raps not explicable on physical principles, provided only the investigator can

control the conditions; and most investigators are more and more reluctant to conduct their researches unless they can do so. Female mediums cannot be searched; but the credulous still believe, and the skeptics still doubt.

II. Slate-writing can be produced in many ways, which are bought and sold by firms that deal in sleight of hand apparatus. Slade, the great medium, could not perform when he had sciatica, and was thought to write with his toes as the result of a great deal of practice.¹⁰ There were often spirit drawings as well as messages. A college graduate and a professional man once called on me, and I am only an amateur conjurer, and wished to see slate-writing. I gave him two slates, which he cleaned and tied and held; then I placed my hand upon them in daylight, and soon a message appeared from Mary, which he recognized and by which he was deeply affected. I told and showed him how I had written the message, but in invisible ink which would not wash off, and brought it out by an acid gas, which I had palmed in a rubber capsule, and squeezed out from a hypodermic needle which I pushed between the frames. He was unhappy, and was finally frank enough to tell me that he believed I really did it by the aid of spirits, but that it was more becoming in a college professor to give him this kind of scientific patter.

There is almost nothing tricks cannot do, aided by skill and practice. There are many codes: for instance, reading cards can be done by two confederates, one of whom catches the heart rhythm as the toe or a crossed leg moves, and counts off the suit and the card, marking the beginning of the count by any rustle or noise of the foot, hem, snuffle, or any other sign, which the observers never detect. Probably hundreds of these tricks are well known and are found in the copious literature on this subject;¹¹ but the victim is entirely in the hands of the one who knows the secret or has the apparatus. So even mediums sometimes deceive each other, even in the same trick. My contention is that every investigator should know what are the resources of sleight of hand.

The English Psychical Research Society have recorded over seven hundred ghost stories, and the French Society many more, where it would seem that real spooks, wraiths, apparitions, spectres or something of the sort appeared to one or more senses. We must, however, insist that the investigator in this field must also know something about abnormal psychic phenomena, such as visions, optical illusions, etc. He must realize that sleep is often very partial, and that a part of the mind and one or more of the senses may dream while the others wake. He must understand hallucinations and hypnotism or induced sleep.¹² A great many so-called mediums are perfectly honest but simply deluded. Very interesting in this connection are reports of the French investigations by Vaschide and also by Viollet, who have studied the same phenomena but from a totally different standpoint: viz. from that of the physician.¹³ They describe and interpret many cases of spiritistic hallucinations and illusions, some of which are entirely outgrown and vanish as the patient becomes more normal; and, conversely, some of their patients come to believe more intensely in spirits and also in more spirits as their mental disorders become more grave. Belief in spirits is profoundly

engraved upon our very nervous system. For instance, I am an utter sceptic, not about immortality, for all these studies leave that great question just where it was before, but about objective materialization of ghosts and their power to appear to any of the senses. When I was a boy and lived a mile from the village in the country, I used to run past the grave-yard surrounded by a high, black wall, with a black gate and shaded by moaning pines, with my heart in my mouth, for it stood remote from dwellings. What was my surprise a year or two ago, on walking over the same track, alone, late at night, to detect a little of the old shudder. I forced myself, therefore, to brave it, and climbed over the gate, marched to the middle of the grave-yard, lit a cigar by scratching my match upon a tomb-stone, and looked boldly around and walked deliberately out as I came; but what I was surprised to find was that my nerves and muscles were very tense and that it had cost me a great deal of nervous energy to thus face the old superstitions of my childhood which were still potent in my automatism.

Of course, it is hard to realize that our friends are really dead, and one purpose of funerals has been that the survivors may actually see them encoffined and entombed, and therefore that by all these sad ceremonies the unconscious depths of their souls might completely realize and feel that their friends were indeed dead. For only if this is done, are we secure against the intrusions of their ghosts. It is a remarkable circumstance that many young girls in the *backfisch*¹⁴ stage have been the centre of spiritistic phenomena, and have deceived their parents and other adults, sometimes scientific men, to the very top of their bent, in one or other aspect of this domain. I have a list of nearly a score of such cases. It is a peculiar age, when the imagination is sometimes as vivid as the senses are, and when young girls, who have the lying diathesis, can do things that escape detection in a remarkable way.¹⁵ What about spirit clothes? Did anyone ever see or hear or read of a nude ghost?¹⁶ or must we agree with a recent writer who declares that, while the ghosts are real, their clothes are products of hallucinations? The sceptic asks if the clothes are not the ghosts themselves.

Then there are the phenomena of possession and trance, or mediumship proper. The Watseka wonder made the parents of a little dead girl near her age believe that the spirit of their daughter had come back to her, and acted the role for weeks in the house of the dead girl; and in a trance state found possession of her own soul and wanted to go back to her own home.¹⁷ Not merely the ghosts of dead friends but of strangers, not only those of recent but of ancient time who, if one theory of perispirit¹⁸ is right, should have transcended the mortal sphere, come back and taken possession of the souls of mediums. Quite often spirits from Mars or Saturn, Lucifer, Raphael, and even mythological personages have been named as co-respondents in these psychic rapes. Dual and multiple personalities are pretty well known, as in the remarkable studies of Prince upon Miss Beauchamps [sic], or of Flourney [sic] upon Mlle. Smith.¹⁹ One medium I know is possessed at times by the spirit of God Himself; and very often the spirit controls important proof, as in the case of Mrs. Piper who developed from phiniut [sic] up to imperator, rector, etc.²⁰

Take all that the spirits have ever communicated through all the dark mediums, and on slates and planchettes, etc., what has it added to human knowledge? Dual personality is exaggerated change of mood; while crystal-gazing shows that the slightest, transient, unconscious impressions may not only be received but, by exceptional persons, be reproduced from their filmy traces, while the medium remains honestly unconscious that such impressions have ever been received. Fugies or impulsive runaways, or those who forget their past lives suddenly and start new careers, belong to this field.²¹

As telepathy, or the transmission of impressions from one person to another outside the ordinary channels of sensations, this, although firmly established in the conviction of many people wiser than I, still seems to me undemonstrated. Like others, I have tests which I have elaborated and which, if successfully met, would convince me. Several in past years have attempted to meet my tests, but not often. There are now funds, the controllers of which often advertise for the demonstration of telepathy as well as of spiritualism, but these tests have never been made, because a scientific man demands that he, and not the medium, shall control the conditions under which they are made.

The method of probabilities argues that, although one honest man's experience in seeing a ghost may not be convincing, that of ten honest men would be more so, and that of thousands would establish a presumption which, in the end, would be irresistible. Evidence is compared to a bundle of sticks which, if small, would be easily broken, but which could be so large that nothing could break it; but surely this is bad logic.²² Before Copernicus the whole world believed that the sun went around the earth. Again, who has not had experiences of levitation, floating, swimming, hovering? but does that make one ounce of difference with anybody; still more could such evidence be convincing? Proofs for such things must be weighed, not counted.

As to Eddyism, it has several kernels of precious truth with a vast amount of chaff. The influence of the mind on the body is very great,²³ possibly more in our age than ever before; and who does not welcome the attempt of the Emmanuel Movement to set a back-fire, reduce the error, and produce a truth? The Emmanuel Movement, however, has greatly lost cast among medical people especially, partly because it has entered upon a public propaganda which seems very much like advertising, which is against the medical code and medical honor. Moreover, the cheapness of the training these people give of only a few weeks cannot possibly qualify classes to practical mental-healing. My criticism, however, lies against the scientific quality of the Emmanuelists: not only are they theologians with a rather limited knowledge of philosophy and psychology [sic], but not one of them begins to have adequate experience in this field.²⁴ Meanwhile, the Binnets [sic], Grasset, Freud, Bleuler²⁵ and their school have spent laborious years in working out a rationale here, and they themselves feel that the field is large and that a great deal of the work needs to be done. So that, on the whole, I think we must conclude that it is premature; that this new junction

which is so much to be desired between religion and medicine is not likely to be made by this new movement.

The fact is that the unconscious part of the soul is vastly larger than the conscious part, and is often far more sensitive; it is like an ice-berg, nine-tenths under water.²⁶ Man's soul is a great museum of which consciousness lights only a few rooms. The brain is too large and too complex for the mind to use all of it. We are getting at a radically new conception of the human soul which, there is reason now to fear, is to make most of our current systems more or less obsolete.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Nancy L. Zingrone for editorial suggestions to improve this paper. I wish to thank the Society for Psychical Research for financial support.

Notes

- ¹ On the work of these and other men regarding dissociation and mediumship see Alvarado (2010), Alvarado, Machado, Zangari, and Zingrone (2007), and Le Maléfian (1999).
- ² The most complete study about Hall is Ross (1972). See also Bringmann (1992), Goodchild (1996), Hogan (2003), Hulse and Green (1986), and Sokal (1990).
- ³ See also the large number of books about psychic phenomena listed by E. Abbott (1864) and Crabtree (1988).
- ⁴ This is a reference to thought-transference work of the Society for Psychical Research, which was well-known during the nineteenth century. This work has been summarized by Podmore (1894; see also Luckhurst 2002). On the Society in general see Cerullo (1982) and Gauld (1968).
- ⁵ Mrs. Piper was of key importance for the development of American and English psychical research. Her life and work has been discussed by her daughter (Piper 1929) and by many other writers (e.g., Gauld 1982:Chapter 3, Tynn 2013). Early work with the medium includes that reported by Hodgson (1892, 1898), Hyslop (1901), James (1886, 1890), Leaf (1890), and Lodge (1890). Hall (1910:xxxiii) described Amy E. Tanner (1877–1964) as his assistant at Clark University. However, Tanner was a psychologist in her own right (Pettit 2008).
- ⁶ This refers to Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910) and her Christian Science movement (Gill 1998, Podmore 1909).
- ⁷ The Emmanuel Movement was an American psychotherapy and spiritual guidance method (Caplan 1998:Chapter 6, Gifford 1997). Its leaders said its purpose was “*to bring into effective co-operation the physician, the psychologically trained clergyman, and the trained social worker in the*

alleviation and arrest of certain disorders of the nervous system which are now generally regarded as involving some weakness or defect of character or more or less complete mental dissociation” (Worcester & McComb 1909:48–49, italics in original). The movement received much discussion in leading American intellectual reviews (e.g., Gage 1909, Powell 1909)

⁸ For mid-nineteenth century discussions about the Fox sisters and early American mediumship, see Capron (1855) and Capron and Barron (1850). Weisberg (2004) presents an overview of the Fox sisters and the controversies surrounding them. On raps said to be produced by the Foxes’ joints, see Flint (1851).

⁹ For a discussion of fraudulent means to produce raps, see Carrington (1907:Chapter 5).

¹⁰ This is a reference to the highly controversial American physical medium “Dr.” Henry Slade (ca 1835–1905; Podmore 1902:Vol. 2:87–91). On fraudulent ways to produce slate writing, see Carrington (1907:Chapter 6).

¹¹ Two examples are D. P. Abbott (1908) and Carrington (1907). Here, as in other writings, and in other parts of the article, Hall presents his comments without acknowledging that psychical researchers were aware of the issue of fraud and of techniques of fraud from the beginning of the movement. Gauld’s (1968) discussion of the early SPR presents many examples of this regarding physical mediumship and other topics. As seen in this, and in other instances through the essay reprinted here, Hall had a tendency to offer advice and issue recommendations under the apparent assumption that his points had not been considered before. While this may have been true among some, such as members of the general public engaged in seances, it did not apply to most psychical researchers.

¹² See also Hall (1920:60). Hall failed to acknowledge that many psychical researchers knew about and explored these topics (du Prel 1885/1889, Gurney, Myers, & Podmore 1886, Hyslop 1906, Myers 1903). There is a small but growing literature about the contributions of psychical researchers to the study of the subconscious mind and of dissociation (e.g., Alvarado 2002, Crabtree 1993, Plas 2000).

¹³ These are references to Roumanian psychologist Nicolas Vaschide’s (1874–1907) skeptical study of telepathic experiences (Vaschide 1908) and French physician Marcel Voillett’s study of mediumship from the point of view of abnormal mental health (Voillett 1908). On this last topic see Alvarado, Machado, Zangari, and Zingrone (2007), Alvarado and Zingrone (2012), and Le Maléfian (1999).

¹⁴ This refers to their teen years.

¹⁵ Frank Podmore (1856–1910), an early SPR researcher, had argued similarly about poltergeists years before (Podmore 1896).

¹⁶ Yes, a few people have. See Lang (1897:69, 137, 280)

¹⁷ On the Watseka Wonder case, see Stevens (1878), and the later discussion of Anderson (1980).

¹⁸ The perispirit was the concept of a semi-physical subtle body believed to bridge the physical body and the spirit discussed by French spiritist authors (Delanne 1897, Kardec 1863, see also Alvarado 2008).

¹⁹ This refers to American physician Morton Prince's (1854–1929) study of Christine L. Beauchamp (pseudonym of Clara Ellen Fowler, b. 1873; Prince 1905) and Swiss psychologist Théodore Flournoy's (1854–1920) study of medium Hélène Smith (pseudonym of Catherine Élise Müller, 1861–1929; Flournoy 1900). Both books are classics in the study of the dynamics of multiple personality and mediumship.

²⁰ I mentioned Mrs. Piper in my introductory comments (see Note 5). Phinuit, Imperator, and Rector were her spirit controls at different times. On her controls, see Sidgwick (1915).

²¹ This is a reference to fugue states, such as the case of Ansel Bourne (Hodgson 1891). Hacking (1996) has discussed aspects of the history of the concept.

²² This is a reference to a point made in *Phantasms of the Living* (Gurney, Myers, & Podmore 1886:Vol. 1:169–170). However, once again Hall does not represent psychical researchers accurately. Their actual claim, as stated in *Phantasms of the Living*, was somewhat different. It was that the consideration of specific cases as sticks depended

not on its being so flawlessly strong, as evidence for our hypothesis, that no other hypothesis can possibly be entertained with regard to it, but on the much humbler fact that any other hypothesis involves the assumption of *something in itself improbable*. Third-hand ghost-stories, and the ordinary examples of popular superstitions, have no claim to be regarded as sticks at all . . . and no multiplication of their number could ever make a respectable faggot. But in every one of the examples on which we rest the telepathic hypothesis, the rejection of that hypothesis does . . . involve the assumption of something in itself improbable; and every such example adds to the cumulative force of the argument for telepathy. The multiplication of such examples, therefore, makes a faggot of ever-increasing solidity. (Gurney, Myers, & Podmore 1886:Vol. 1:169–170)

On the statistical study of apparitions, see H. Sidgwick, Johnson, Myers, Podmore, and E. M. Sidgwick (1894).

²³ An example of this, discussed in Hall's *American Journal of Psychology*, was the phenomenon of faith healing (Goddard 1899). Hall was surely aware of the use of hypnosis to produce physiological effects (e.g., Beaunis 1887:Part 1, Chapters 3–9).

- ²⁴ An example of a critique of the movement from the medical point of view was presented by Gage (1909). Hale (1971) has argued that the insistence on the subconscious in the Emmanuel Movement associated their enterprise to the occult in the eyes of “psychologists who prided themselves on their scientific Wundtian heritage” (p. 249).
- ²⁵ Alfred Binet was a psychologist trained in law and in the natural sciences, while Joseph Grasset (1849–1918), Sigmund Freud, and Eugene Bleuer (1857–1940) were physicians who specialized in mental phenomena and conditions.
- ²⁶ Hall’s ideas about the unconscious have been discussed by Fuller (1986:68–69). There were many such ideas before and around the time Hall was writing (Münsterberg, Ribot, Janet, Jastrow, Hart, & Prince 1910, Myers 1892; see also Crabtree 1993, Ellenberger 1970, Fuller 1986; and Nicholls & Liebscher, 2010).

References

- Abbott, D. P. (1908). *Behind the Scenes with Mediums*, second edition. Chicago: Open Court.
- Abbott, E. (1864). Literature of the doctrine of a future life: Or, a catalogue of works relating to the nature, origin and destiny of the soul. In W. R. Alger, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life* (pp. 678–913). Philadelphia: George W. Childs.
- Alvarado, C. S. (2002). Dissociation in Britain during the late nineteenth century: The Society for Psychical Research, 1882–1900. *Journal of Trauma and Dissociation*, 3, 9–33.
- Alvarado, C. S. (2008). Further notes on historical ideas of human radiations: III. The perispirit and mediumistic forces. *Psypioneer*, 4, 85–92. <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.4April08.pdf>
- Alvarado, C. S. (2009). Psychological research in the *Psychological Review*, 1894–1900: A bibliographical note. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 23, 211–220.
- Alvarado, C. S. (2010). Classic text No. 84: ‘Divisions of personality and spiritism’ by Alfred Binet (1896). *History of Psychiatry*, 21, 487–500.
- Alvarado, C. S. (2012). Distortions of the past. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 26, 611–633.
- Alvarado, C. S., Machado, F. R., Zangari, W., & Zingrone, N. L. (2007). Perspectivas históricas da influência da mediunidade na construção de idéias psicológicas e psiquiátricas. *Revista de Psiquiatria Clínica*, 34(Supplement 1), 42–53.
- Alvarado, C. S., & Zingrone, N. L. (2012). Classic Text No. 90: ‘The Pathology and Treatment of Mediomania’, by Frederic Rowland Marvin (1874). *History of Psychiatry*, 23, 229–244.
- American Society for Psychical Research (1885). *Science*, 5, 13.
- Anderson, R. I. (1980). The Watseka Wonder: A critical re-evaluation. *Theta*, 8(4), 6–10.
- Arnett, J. J. (2006). G. Stanley Hall’s *Adolescence*: Brilliance and nonsense. *History of Psychology*, 9, 186–197.
- Beaunis, H. (1887). *Le Somnambulisme Provoqué: Études Physiologiques et Psychologiques* (second revised edition). Paris: J. B. Baillière.
- Binet, A. (1892). *Les Altérations de la Personnalité*. Paris: Félix Alcan.
- Biondi, M. (1988). *Tavoli e Medium: Storia dello Spiritismo in Italia*. Rome: Gremese.
- Bringmann, W. G. (1992). G. Stanley Hall and the history of psychology. *American Psychologist*, 47, 281–290.
- Caplan, E. (1998). *Mind Games: American Culture and the Birth of Psychotherapy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Capron, E. W. (1855). *Modern Spiritualism: Its Facts and Fanaticisms, Its Consistencies and Contradictions*. Boston: Bela Marsh.
- Capron, E. W., & Barron, H. D. (1850). *Explanation and History of the Mysterious Communion with Spirits: Comprehending the Rise and Progress of the Mysterious Noises in Western New-York, Generally Received as Spiritual Communications* (second revised edition). Auburn, NY: Capron and Barron.
- Carrington, H. (1907). *The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism: Fraudulent and Genuine*. Boston: Herbert B. Turner.
- Cerullo, J. J. (1982). *The Secularization of the Soul: Psychological Research in Modern Britain*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Clarke, E., & Jacyna, L. S. (1987). *Nineteenth-Century Origins of Neuroscientific Concepts*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Coon, D. J. (1992). Testing the limits of sense and science: American experimental psychologists combat spiritualism, 1880–1920. *American Psychologist*, 47, 143–151.
- Crabtree, A. (Compiler) (1988). *Animal Magnetism, Early Hypnotism, and Psychological Research 1766–1925: An Annotated Bibliography*. New York: Kraus International Publications.
- Crabtree, A. (1993). *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Delanne, G. (1897). *L'Évolution Animique: Essais de Psychologie Physiologique suivant le Spiritisme*. Paris: Chamuel.
- du Prel, C. (1889). *The Philosophy of Mysticism* (2 volumes). London: George Redway. [Original work published in German in 1885]
- Ellenberger, H. F. (1970). *The Discovery of the Unconscious*. New York: Basic Books.
- Flint, A. (1851). Discovery of the source of the Rochester knockings. *Buffalo Medical Journal and Monthly Review*, 6, 628–642.
- Flournoy, T. (1900). *From India to the Planet Mars*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Formation of the Society (1885). *Proceedings of the American Society for Psychological Research*, 1, 1–2.
- Fuller, R. C. (1986). *Americans and the Unconscious*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gage, H. (1909). The Emmanuel Movement from a medical view-point. *Popular Science Monthly*, 75, 358–369.
- Gauld, A. (1968). *The Founders of Psychological Research*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Gauld, A. (1982). *Mediumship and Survival*. London: Heinemann.
- Gieryn, T. F. (1999). *Cultural Boundaries of Science: Credibility on the Line*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gifford, S. (1997). *The Emmanuel Movement: (Boston, 1904–1929): The Origins of Group Treatment and the Assault on Lay Psychotherapy*. Boston: Distributed by the Harvard University Press for the Francis Countway Library of Medicine.
- Gill, G. (1998). *Mary Baker Eddy*. Reading, MA: Perseus Books.
- Goddard, H. H. (1899). The effects of mind on body as evidenced by faith cures. *American Journal of Psychology*, 10, 431–502.
- Goodchild, L. F. (1996). G. Stanley Hall and the study of higher education. *Review of Higher Education*, 20, 69–99.
- Green, C. D. (2007). Johns Hopkins first professorship in philosophy: A critical pivot point in the history of American psychology. *American Journal of Psychology*, 120, 303–323.
- Gurney, E., Myers, F. W. H., & Podmore, F. (1886). *Phantasms of the Living* (2 volumes). London: Trübner.
- Hacking, I. (1996). Les aliénés voyageurs: How fugue became a medical entity. *History of Psychiatry*, 7, 425–449.
- Hale, Jr., N. G. (1971). *Freud and the Americans: The Beginnings of Psychoanalysis in the United States, 1876–1917*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hall, G. S. (1881). Recent researches on hypnotism. *Mind*, 6, 98–104.

- Hall, G. S. (1885). Experimental psychology. *Mind*, 10, 245–249.
- Hall, G. S. (1887). Review of *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, and *Phantasms of the Living*, by E. Gurney, F. W. H. Myers, and F. Podmore. *American Journal of Psychology*, 1, 128–146.
- Hall, G. S. (1895). Psychic research. *American Journal of Psychology*, 7, 135–142.
- Hall, G. S. (1897). A study of fears. *American Journal of Psychology*, 8, 147–249.
- Hall, G. S. (1899). A study of anger. *American Journal of Psychology*, 10, 516–591.
- Hall, G. S. (1904). *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education*. (2 volumes). New York: Appleton.
- Hall, G. S. (1907). *Youth: Its Education, Regiment, and Hygiene*. New York: D. Appleton.
- Hall, G. S. (1908). Spooks and telepathy. *Appleton's Magazine*, 12, 677–683.
- Hall, G. S. (1909). Mystic or Borderline Phenomena. In *Southern California Teacher's Association: Sixteenth Annual Session* (pp. 103–107). Redlands, CA: Redlands Review Press.
- Hall, G. S. (1910). Introduction. In A. Tanner, *Studies in Spiritism* (pp. xv–xxxiii), New York: D. Appleton.
- Hall, G. S. (1911). *Educational Problems* (2 volumes). New York: D. Appleton.
- Hall, G. S. (1920). *Morale, the Supreme Standard of Life and Conduct*. New York: D. Appleton.
- Hall, G. S. (1923). *Life and Confessions of a Psychologist*. New York: D. Appleton.
- Hodgson, R. (1891). A case of double consciousness. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 7, 221–255.
- Hodgson, R. (1892). A record of observations of certain phenomena of trance. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 8, 1–167.
- Hodgson, R. (1898). A further record of observations of certain phenomena of trance. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 13, 284–582.
- Hogan, J. D. (2003). G. Stanley Hall: Educator, organizer, and pioneer. In G. A. Kimble & M. Wertheimer (Editors), *Portraits of Pioneers in Psychology* (Volume 5, pp. 19–36), Mahwa, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum; Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Hulse, S. H., & Green, B. F. (Editors) (1986). *One Hundred Years of Psychological Research in America: G. Stanley Hall and the Johns Hopkins Tradition*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hyslop, J. H. (1901). A further record of observations of certain phenomena of trance. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 16, 1–649.
- Hyslop, J. H. (1906). *Borderland of Psychical Research*. Boston: Herbert B. Turner.
- Hyslop, J. H. (1911). President G. Stanley Hall's and Dr. Amy Tanner's Studies in Spiritism. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 5, 1–98.
- James, W. (1886). Report of the Committee on Mediumistic Phenomena. *Proceedings of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 1, 102–106.
- James, W. (1890). A record of observations of certain phenomena of trance (5). Part III. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 6, 651–659.
- Janet, P. (1889). *L'Automatisme Psychologique*. Paris: Félix Alcan.
- Jastrow, J. (1889). The problems of "psychic research." *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 79, 76–82.
- Kardec, A. (1863). *Spiritisme Expérimental: Le Livre des Médiums* (sixth edition). Paris: Didier.
- Lang, A. (1897). *The Book of Dreams and Ghosts* (new edition). New York: Longmans, Green.
- Lang, A. (1911). Open letter to Dr. Stanley Hall. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 25, 90–101.
- Leaf, W. (1890). A record of observations of certain phenomena of trance (3). Part II. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 6, 558–646.
- Le Maléfan, P. (1999). *Folie et Spiritisme: Histoire du Discourse Psychopathologique sur la Pratique du Spiritisme, ses Abords et ses Avatars (1850–1950)*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Lodge, O. [J.]. (1890). A record of observations of certain phenomena of trance (2). Part I. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 6, 443–557.

- Luckhurst, R. (2002). *The Invention of Telepathy 1870–1901*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mauskopf, S. H., & McVaugh, M. R. (1980). *The Elusive Science: Origins of Experimental Psychical Research*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Méheust, B. (1999). *Somnambulisme et Mediumnité (1784–1930): Vol. 1: Le Défi du Magnétisme Animal*. Le Plessis-Robinson: Institut Synthélabo pour de Progrès de la Connaissance.
- Miles, W. R., & Miles, C. C. (1929). Eight letters from G. Stanley Hall to H. P. Bowditch with introduction and notes. *American Journal of Psychology*, 41, 326–336.
- Moore, R. L. (1977). *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Münsterberg, H. (1899). Psychology and mysticism. *Atlantic Monthly*, 83, 67–85.
- Münsterberg, H., Ribot, T., Janet, P., Jastrow, J., Hart, B., & Prince, M. (1910). *Subconscious Phenomena*. Boston: Richard G. Badger.
- Myers, F. W. H. (1892). The subliminal consciousness: Chapter I. General characteristics of subliminal messages. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 7, 298–327.
- Myers, F. W. H. (1903). *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (2 volumes). London: Longmans, Green.
- Nicholls, A., & Liebscher, M. (Editors) (2010). *Thinking the Unconscious; Nineteenth-Century German Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Donnell, J. M. (1985). *The Origins of Behaviorism: American Psychology, 1870–1920*. New York: New York University Press.
- Oppenheim, J. (1985). *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850–1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Parot, F. (1994). Le bannissement des esprits: Naissance d'une frontière institutionnelle entre spiritisme et psychologie. *Revue de Synthèse*, 115, 417–443.
- Pettit, M. (2008). The new woman as "tied-up dog": Amy E. Tanner's situated knowledges. *History of Psychology*, 11, 145–163.
- Piper, A. (1929). *The Life and Work of Mrs. Piper*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner.
- Plas, R. (2000). *Naissance d'une Science Humaine: La Psychologie: Les Psychologues et le "Merveilleux Psychique"*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes.
- Podmore, F. (1894). *Apparitions and Thought-Transference*. London: Walter Scott.
- Podmore, F. (1896). Poltergeists. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 12, 45–115.
- Podmore, F. (1902). *Modern Spiritualism: A History and a Criticism* (2 volumes). London: Methuen.
- Podmore, F. (1909). *Mesmerism and Christian Science: A Short History of Mental Healing*. Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs.
- Powell, L. P. (1909). The Emmanuel Movement. *American Review of Reviews*, 39, 577–581.
- Prince, M. (1905). *The Dissociation of a Personality*. New York: Longmans, Green.
- Rosenzweig, S. (1992). *Freud, Jung, and Hall the King-Maker: The Historic Expedition to America (1909), with G. Stanley Hall as Host and William James as Guest*. St. Louis, MO: Rana House Press.
- Ross, D. (1972). *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Scripture, E. W. (1897). *The New Psychology*. London: Walter Scott.
- Sidgwick, H., Johnson, A., Myers, F. W. H., Podmore, F., & Sidgwick, E. M. (1894). Report on the Census of Hallucinations. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 10, 25–422.
- Sidgwick, Mrs. H. [E. M.] (1915). A contribution to the study of the psychology of Mrs. Piper's trance phenomena. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 28, 1–657.
- Sokal, M. M. (1990). G. Stanley Hall and the institutional character of psychology at Clark 1889–1920. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 26, 114–124.
- Sommer, A. (2012). Psychical research and the origins of American psychology: Hugo Münsterberg, William James, and Eusapia Palladino. *History of the Human Sciences*, 25, 23–44.
- Sommer, A. (2013). *Crossing the Boundaries of Mind and Body: Psychical Research and the Origins of Modern Psychology*. Ph.D. thesis, University College London.

- Stevens, E. W. (1878). *The Watseka Wonder: A Startling and Instructive Psychological Study, and Well Authenticated Instance of Angelic Visitation*. Chicago: Religio-Philosophical Publishing House.
- Tanner, A. E. (1910). *Studies in Spiritism*. New York: D. Appleton.
- Tymn, M. (2013). *Resurrecting Leonora Piper: How Science Discovered the Afterlife*. Guildford, UK: White Crow Books.
- Vaschide, N. (1908). *Les Hallucinations Télépathiques*. Paris: Librairie Bloud.
- Viollet, M. (1908). *Le Spiritisme dans ses Rapports avec la Folie: Essai de Psychologie Normale et Pathologique*. Paris: Bloud.
- Weisberg, B. (2004). *Talking to the Dead: Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Wilson, L. N. (1914). *G. Stanley Hall: A Sketch*. New York: G. E. Stechert.
- Wolfram, H. (2009). *The Stepchildren of Science: Psychical Research and Parapsychology in Germany, c. 1870–1939*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Worcester, E., & McComb, S. (1909). *The Christian Religion as a Healing Power: A Defense and Exposition of the Emmanuel Movement*. New York: Moffat, Yard.
- Wundt, W. (1897). *Outlines of Psychology*. Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann.