



Article

***Hallucinations and Illusions* by Edmund Parish: the unlikely genesis and curious fate of a forgotten masterpiece**

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Abstract

In 1894, the German scholar Edmund Parish published his classic work *Über die Trugwahrnehmung*, with an expanded English edition called *Hallucinations and Illusions* appearing in 1897. Both versions won critical acclaim from celebrities such as Joseph Jastrow and William James, although, curiously, few others seemed to have noticed the book. After two more publications, Parish inexplicably stopped publishing. During the century that followed, it seemed as if neither he nor his work had ever existed. Now that scholars have finally started to appreciate the book, the present paper seeks to answer the questions of how it came into being, why it disappeared for so long, and who its mysterious author was.

Keywords

Biography, dissociation model, moral insanity, rehabilitation, Society for Psychological Research

Introduction

In 1894, Edmund Parish published his book *Über die Trugwahrnehmung*, a pioneering work on hallucinations and other misperceptions (Parish, 1894). On its release by the distinguished German publishing house Ambrosius Abel, it was quickly translated into English and published in the UK by the equally distinguished Walter Scott, with the title of *Hallucinations and Illusions* (Parish, 1897a). Top experts in the field wrote glowing reviews in high-ranking scientific journals, but soon thereafter, for unknown reasons, all went silent – except for a few rebukes from fellow researchers who disagreed with Parish’s crystal-clear yet critical analyses of the state of affairs in their field; later, one of them even wrote that Parish’s work was ‘not worth summarising’ (Gauld, 1968: 184). After two more publications (Parish, 1897b, 1897c), Parish’s academic output came to a halt, and he himself appears to have retreated from the scientific community. The criticisms lasted a little longer, but for well over a century only a few people have referred to him or his work (e.g. Baerwald, 1925: 138; Berrios, 1996: 29). It was not until the 2006 re-release of the English edition

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Figure 1. Edmund Parish in his thirties, c. 1894; reproduced with kind permission of Dr Esther Sophia Sünderhauf, Von Parish Kostümbibliothek, Munich.

(Parish, 2006) that the book gained renewed attention among hallucination experts (Blom, 2010: 390; McCarthy-Jones, 2012: 71; Telles-Correia, Moreira and Gonçalves, 2015).

To throw light on this remarkable series of events, the present article seeks to analyse the book's genesis, as well as its content and reception, by placing it in the context of the author's biography, which has hitherto been unavailable. Edmund Parish (1861–1916) (see Figure 1) – or Edmund *von* Parish, as he was later allowed to call himself – was a nobleman who lived in Imperial Germany. Given the scholarly circles in which he moved, one might expect him to have been an academic, trained perhaps at the University of Munich, and travelling to conferences in London and Paris on a meagre university salary. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. Parish did indeed mingle with the top people internationally in his field and he did attend conferences throughout Europe, but he was a self-made man who funded his own work, graced the field of hallucination research with his book, and then moved on. He was colourful, whimsical and restless, as was Central Europe at the time, during that unique period of unbridled industry and creativity preceding World War I. Parish's life knew glorious highs and pitch-black lows, transporting him from the bliss of a privileged upbringing in an elite corner of the German Empire to the humiliation of being admitted to a psychiatric institution, and from the sun-kissed beaches of the French Riviera to the blood-spattered trenches of muddy Flanders. So, what prompted this restless soul to write one of the great classics of hallucination research? Also, why did this important work disappear so suddenly? In an attempt to answer these questions, I will provide an outline of the book itself, a tentative reconstruction of Parish's colourful life, and a reevaluation of his work in the light of biographical and historical circumstances.

Method and sources

For the purpose of the present study, a search was carried out in PubMed, Google Scholar and the historical literature, up to October 2019. An additional search was carried out in historical archives in Berlin, Hamburg and Munich in Germany, and Žamberk in the Czech Republic.

The search yielded 2260 hits for ‘Edmund Parish’ and ‘hallucination’ in Google Scholar, and none in PubMed. After removal of duplicates, advertisements for the book and other non-scientific and non-biographical texts, the remaining articles were assessed to establish their eligibility. In addition, key volumes from the author’s private collection of historical psychiatric textbooks were checked for useful references. This procedure yielded three books, one scientific paper and one book review written by Edmund Parish, as well as 15 reviews of his work by others. The search in historical archives yielded 14 files on Edmund Parish, ranging in length from a single page to several hundred pages.

The book

Über die Trugwahrnehmung (Parish, 1894) is a richly detailed and lavishly referenced book, which, over the course of its 246 pages, offers a thorough introduction to the field of hallucination research. Moreover, for present-day readers it constitutes an invaluable time capsule, having saved for posterity virtually all that was known near the end of the nineteenth century, not just on hallucinations, but on all kinds of misperception (for definitions, see Table 1). As William James (1842–1910), the father of modern psychology, remarked at the time:

The erudition of Herr Parish’s work is exemplary and admirable, and in its text and footnotes it is safe to say that one may find reference to everything, important and unimportant, that in recent years has been written on hallucinations from either the medical or the psychological point of view. (James, 1895/1986)

This was even before Parish had started to expand his work. In the preface to the 1897 English edition, he informed his readers that the book – now 390 pages – was not a simple translation of the German original, but that he had ‘been at pains to render it generally more complete and bring it up to date’ (Parish, 1897a: ix). Although the two editions thus differ somewhat, their subject matter can be divided into three distinct, albeit tightly interwoven, strands.

The first strand of Parish’s book contains a comprehensive literature review, providing definitions and clinical descriptions of numerous types of misperception, lifted from the late nineteenth-century literature and earlier. He describes hallucinations in the context of psychosis, mood disorder and organic brain disease, auras in the context of epilepsy, and zoopsia in the context of delirium; and also lesser known phenomena such as the *fata morgana*, the Brocken spectre, *Gedankenlautwerden*, hyperaesthesia of the retina, chromatopsias, optical illusions, afterimages, diplopia monocularis, fortification spectra, paraesthesia, hyperaesthesia, synaesthesia, micropsia, and the phantom limb, to name just a few of the phenomena he elucidates. In this first part, Parish also reviews explanatory models of a medical, psychological and parapsychological nature, with special reference to the centrifugal and centripetal models of olden days, that is, those stressing the role of the peripheral sense organs versus those stressing the role of higher cerebral centres. To our current sensibilities, his attention for parapsychological models may seem curious, but this was in tune with the erstwhile practice of combining straightforward scientific research with the study of occult phenomena. Among those who engaged in such a two-track approach were many of the top people in the field, including Eugen Bleuler (1857–1939), Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Carl Jung (1875–1961), Sándor Ferenczi (1877–1933), Pierre Janet (1851–1947), Henri Bergson (1859–1941), Théodore Flournoy (1854–1920) and

Table 1. Definitions of various types of misperception.

Misperception	Unique beginner for the classification of positive disorders of perception, comprising hallucinations, illusions, and distortions; in Parish's work, the terms 'fallacy of perception' and 'false perception' are used interchangeably to cover this term
Hallucination	A percept, experienced by a waking individual, in the absence of an appropriate stimulus from the outside world (e.g. seeing a cat that is not there; hearing a voice in the absence of sound waves)
Illusion	A percept, experienced by a waking individual, which is based on an appropriate stimulus from the outside world that is either misperceived or misinterpreted (e.g. taking a moving curtain for a cat or an intruder; hearing music in the monotonous drone of a computer fan)
Distortion	A percept, experienced by a waking individual, which is based on an appropriate stimulus from the outside world, of which, however, a highly specific aspect is altered in a consistent manner (e.g. seeing all straight lines as wavy; feeling one's head grow to an unnaturally large size)

Cesare Lombroso (1836–1909) (Blom, 2003: 138–44). It is therefore unlikely that anyone was shocked when Parish presented all manner of explanatory models, including several folk explanations and 'ghost stories' (McCorristine, 2010: 203–6).

From this overview, Parish made a seamless transition to the book's second strand, which dealt with the 'Census of Hallucinations'. Officially known as the 'International Census of Waking Hallucinations', this was a huge project carried out between 1889 and 1892 by the UK-based Society for Psychical Research (SPR). The project had been designed to collect accounts of hallucinations that might be linked to actual events, in an attempt to prove the existence of telepathy and, as many hoped, the existence of an afterlife (Sidgwick et al., 1894). As summarized by Parish, the SPR sought to achieve these goals by studying hallucinations in relation to so-called death-coincidences, that is, hallucinations taking place within a time frame of 24 hours during which the person featuring in them had died, typically at a distance, and unexpectedly. Obviously, the credibility of such stories depended on some form of substantiation (such as the testimony of a third person) that the hallucination had actually taken place *before* the news of the person's unexpected demise had broken. As Parish elucidated with irrefutable logic, to explain such stories as indicative of telepathy would go against our common sense, whereas to explain 'hundreds and hundreds' of such stories as a matter of chance would go even more against our native wit (Parish, 1897a: 273–5). Their multitude was exactly what had prompted the SPR to launch its Census of Hallucinations. Impressed by the sheer number of stories that circulated at the time, many of which had been collected by Gurney, Myers and Podmore (1886) in their two-volume *Phantasms of the Living*, the SPR hired 410 volunteers to collect statistics on hallucinated death-coincidences in the UK. After questioning 17,000 people in total, and having excluded all reports that seemed to be dreams or other non-hallucinatory phenomena, the SPR found that 9.9% of the general population in the UK had first-hand experience of hallucinations. Moreover, among the accounts collected were 350 death-coincidences which, according to the SPR's calculations, was 440 times higher than could have been expected on the basis of chance alone. Since similar results had been obtained in Germany by Albert Baron von Schrenck-Notzing (1862–1929), in France by Léon Marillier (1862–1901) and in the USA by William James's American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR), the general conclusion of the SPR was that 'between deaths and apparitions of the dying person a connexion exists which is not due to chance alone' (Sidgwick et al., 1894: 394). Parish, however, in this second section of his book, recalculated the enormous volume of data extracted from the total number of 27,329 case files in all four countries, critically assessed the methodologies employed, and came to the sobering conclusion that the

reliability of reports of death-coincidences was questionable, citing ‘retroactive hallucinations’ (i.e. recall bias) and flawed definitions of the notions of ‘dream’ and ‘waking hallucination’ as the weakest links of the studies. This basically undermined the esoteric claims made by the SPR and its sister organizations, and even called into question their epidemiological findings, which are widely cited up to the present day (Blom, 2010: 87–8).

The third strand of Parish’s book contains his own explanations of the mechanisms underlying hallucinations and other misperceptions. Before him, Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol (1772–1840) had provided an influential definition of ‘hallucination’, and in the process had made the term applicable to all sensory modalities rather than to the visual modality alone. He wrote:

Hallucinations of sight . . . have been denominated *visions*. This name is suited to a single form of hallucination. Who would dare to say, visions of hearing, visions of taste, visions of smell? . . . A generic term is wanting. I have proposed the term *hallucination*, as having determinate signification, and as adapted consequently, to all the varieties of delirium which suppose the presence of an object proper to excite one of the senses, although these objects may be beyond their reach. (Esquirol, 1845/1965: 110, original italics)

Parish cast his net even wider, adding that hallucinations could also be experienced outside the context of pathology and, moreover, that other types of misperception (i.e. illusions and distortions; see Table 1) should not be neglected. Although he did not formally arrange these disparate phenomena in a classification, as their unique beginner he chose ‘fallacies of perception’, or ‘false perception’, saying, ‘On the whole, it seems to me that the term “false perception” (*Trugwahrnehmung*) is the best general term’ (Parish, 1897a: 3). By adopting the word *Trugwahrnehmung*, he paid tribute to the Prussian psychiatrist Karl Ludwig Kahlbaum (1828–99), who had introduced the term in 1866. Taking his own stance to its logical extreme, Parish contended that it even applied to what Friedrich Hagen (1814–88) had called ‘pseudohallucinations’ (Hagen, 1868):

Whether I ‘hallucinate’ with eyes closed or open, whether I see distinct and vivid images, or dim floating shapes, is a matter of no importance. The dimmest, most formless mist which I ‘see’, or ‘think I see’, is really seen, and even though this visual impression may have arisen subjectively, it should nevertheless be called a fallacious perception, hallucination, or illusion, quite irrespective of how it originated, or what circumstances favoured the appearance of the phenomenon, and quite irrespective also of its influence upon the percipient, or his attitude with regard to it. (Parish, 1897a: 17–18)

Parish, a firm believer in the brain’s economic use of resources, further conjectured that the same centres and association pathways should be involved in regular sense perception and all fallacies of perception. Moreover, he proposed that hallucinations and illusions are both based on stimuli provided by the sense organs. To substantiate his claim, Parish explained that, irrespective of the well-known differences in phenomenological presentation, they could both be conceptualized as stemming from ‘dissociation’, a notion that he defined as:

. . . that state in which the nerve stimulus no longer flows through the channels determined by habit, and by the co-operation of simultaneous stimuli, because inhibitions, or obstructions, whether from pathological or physiological causes, have been set up in the normal association-paths, or obstructions which normally exist in other connecting tracts have been weakened or abolished altogether. (Parish, 1897a: 152)

Contrary to present-day practice, Parish thus used the term ‘dissociation’ to designate a disruption of the normal flow of perceptual information in afferent sensory pathways, followed by a change of routing of that information in the direction of unrelated brain centres, which would then conjure up

a percept unrelated to the information collected by the sense organ. He furthermore opined that all fallacies of perception have a neurobiological origin (which could be triggered by pathological as well as physiological processes) whereas their content, especially in the case of more complex phenomena, would be furnished by ‘temperament, mental and emotional bias, education, superstition, the spirit of the times, etc.’ (pp. 112–13). Parish’s dissociation model thus accounts for the perceptual nature as well as the interrelatedness of all types of misperception, relating these phenomena to disruptions in the brain’s associative pathways, attributing their huge variability to specific physiological and pathological processes, and interpreting their content as (often) being furnished by past experiences. With this model, and thanks to the rich historical and conceptual context in which it was embedded, he succeeded in painting a lively and detailed picture of virtually all that can go wrong with human perception, illustrating his account with numerous examples and case vignettes. Although his fine-grained and hence somewhat meandering style does not always make for easy reading, even today, in its tiniest details, Parish’s book is never less than illuminating.

Reception of the book

Both the German-language original and the English version of Parish’s book received enthusiastic reviews in first-rate scientific journals such as *Mind*, *Science* and the *American Journal of Insanity*, which later became the *American Journal of Psychiatry* (James, 1895/1986; Jastrow, 1897; Johnson, 1895; MacKenzie, 1897; Scribners, 1898; Sidgwick, 1897; Wreschner, 1898). All reviewers agreed that the book’s scope was unsurpassed, that the dissociation model was original, and that Parish’s criticism of the SPR’s work was thorough. As already mentioned, James (1895/1986) especially was full of praise. MacKenzie (1897: 541) was equally impressed, holding that:

Every leading proposition of the book lies in a matrix of carefully collated authorities. There is nothing vague, timid or unjustified. From definition to conclusion, the exposition is an orderly sequence of relevant considerations. As a result, Mr. Parish’s book is at once an important contribution to the psychology of perception and an admirable introduction to the theory of insanity.

Jastrow (1897), too, acknowledged the book’s merits. Although he was not fully convinced of the dissociation model, he considered the criticism of the SPR’s work ‘most commendable’ – something that even James, as President of the ASPR, admitted, calling Parish’s book ‘the most solid existing contribution to the subject up to the date’. However, he found that Parish was ‘driving his theory a little too hard’, and regretted that he showed so little confidence in the Census’s methodology (James, 1895/1986). Unfortunately, not all critics were able to put it so courteously. Thus, one anonymous reviewer for the *British Medical Journal* saw fit to ridicule the opacity of the German language in general and, by extension, of Parish’s translated work, complaining that ‘in several places [he had] found a difficulty in reaching the meaning’ and offering that the book was ‘full of curious illustrations and anecdotes’ (Anon., 1897). Although gratuitous and uncalled-for, this reviewer’s observations showed a rare glimpse of the outrage that Parish’s work had apparently provoked in certain circles. Of note, the 1894 German edition of his book had appeared months before the SPR’s final ‘Report on the Census of Hallucinations’ (Sidgwick et al., 1894). Its authors must have been infuriated to see the fruits of their enormous efforts criticized before the ink had dried on their own conclusions. In an attempt to salvage what they could, the SPR in turn criticized Parish’s re-analysis in a 12-page article, detailing every fault and calculation error, real or imagined, that they had been able to detect (Sidgwick, 1897). Yet most of the early reviewers agreed that the quality of Parish’s book was first class. Another representative of the SPR wrote:

If, however, Herr Parish's treatment of the evidence for telepathy will hardly seem adequate to those who take a more favourable view of it than he does, it must be remembered that this forms merely a subordinate part of his book. To psychologists and to those interested in the general study of hallucinations, his wide knowledge, his capacity for the orderly marshalling of facts, and his careful and impartial discussions of disputed points, will make his work of great value, if not indispensable, and should rank him among recognised authorities on the subject. (Johnson, 1895: 171)

In the light of so much praise and recognition, even from spokespersons of the organizations Parish had criticized, it is all the more remarkable that his book faded into obscurity before the nineteenth century drew to a close. Was it too critical? Was it too complex? Was it too far ahead of its time? Before seeking to answer these questions, perhaps we should first have a look at the man himself and see whether Parish's biography provides any clues as to what may have happened to his book.

Edmund Parish

Ancestry

Edmund Parish (1861–1916) was a member of a large and influential aristocratic family, on a par with the Grosvenors and the Rothschilds, with branches throughout Europe and North America, and with connections through marriage with numerous other noble families. Despite the spread of the Parish family throughout the Western hemisphere, its name is still frequently associated with Žamberk, a town in the Pardubice region of the Czech Republic that used to be part of Austria and was previously known as Senftenberg (Drocár, 2009). The connection with Senftenberg started with John Parish (1774–1858), whose ancestors had come from Scotland and, before that, from France, where they had been known under the name 'Paris'. In his capacity as banker and head of the Hamburg-based trade firm Parish & Co., John Parish was one of the wealthiest men of his time. As a reward for helping to finance the Austrian coalition forces during the Napoleonic Wars (1803–15), he was elevated to a Bohemian knighthood in 1816, a year after he had bought Schloss Senftenberg, a castle at the heart of the region, to be used by him and his wife as their retirement home (Ehrmann and Lindner, 1839: 76). After John's death, the castle and its assets went to his brother, Richard Parish (1776–1860), who in turn passed it on to his son George Parish (1807–81), an elder brother of Edmund Parish (1829–1902), whose son and namesake would later write *Hallucinations and Illusions*. Although this is not the place to dwell on the vicissitudes of the Parish family at large, this brief introduction allows us a brief glimpse of the backdrop in which Edmund Parish Jr. was born.

Early years and family of origin

Edmund Parish Jr. was born in Hamburg on 27 November 1861. His parents were the aforementioned Edmund Parish Sr., a lawyer, and Helene Luise Anna Franziska Parish, née von Adelebsen (1837–1907). Edmund Jr. was the second of five brothers, of whom Charles, his elder brother, and Arthur, the fourth sibling, died in their infancy. Soon after Edmund's birth, the family left for Würzburg, where his brother Oscar was born. In 1868, when Edmund was about seven, the family moved to Schloss Wasserlos in Alzenau, Bavaria, in the vicinity of Frankfurt am Main, where Edmund Sr.'s law firm was based and where the fifth sibling, Richard Francis (or Francis) was born. The castle had previously been in use as an infirmary (and, fittingly, now houses the Klinikum Aschaffenburg-Alzenau). The three brothers appear to have spent a happy youth together at Wasserlos, living the lives of little aristocrats, surrounded by servants, indulging in horseback riding and hunting, and engaging in horse and dog races (Svobodová, 2015: 31–8). Edmund and his

brothers were raised in the Lutheran faith (Königliches Herolds-Amt). Nevertheless, spiritism was discussed freely at their parental home, and lectures on the subject were attended with great interest (Parish RF, Journal, 3 Jan. 1896). In general, the intellectual climate was rich. The boys were probably tutored privately, and the castle sported a library room with books in different European languages, which family members read to themselves but also out loud to each other. Socially, the Parishes were extremely well connected, especially with other nobility, whom they met on numerous occasions – in honour of the War Minister, the King or the Emperor – and obviously at all the gatherings that they hosted themselves.

Yet life at Wasserlos Castle was not just a bed of roses. According to Edmund's brother Francis, his family of origin could best be characterized as 'the nervous family' (Parish RF, Journal, 20 Oct. 1897). In his journal, Francis relates how their mother, Helene, had a habit of dominating proceedings by giving in to severe mood swings and mean-spirited analyses of others' shortcomings (20 Oct. 1897). Their father, usually calm in the face of these rantings, allegedly had an aggravating effect on her. However, his stoicism appears to have been little more than a front; according to Francis, his real way of coping was by viciously abreacting afterwards to the first person he met. Francis wrote that he could only deal with one parent at a time and '*need[ed] cold-water shock treatment to recuperate*' when he had to endure the two of them together for too long (20 Oct. 1897). Luckily for him, his parents had developed a habit of avoiding each other as much as possible, with his mother either retreating to her bed or taking long walks outside (getting lost more than once, so the family had to go looking for her after dark) and his father occupying himself elsewhere, burying himself in work or distilling Schnapps (Collection Von Parish Kostümbibliothek, hereafter CVPK). As one can imagine, another household strategy of coping with tensions was the consumption of alcohol, along with tobacco and the odd dose of opium or morphine, which were always in stock for medical emergencies. However, Francis looked back fondly on his childhood years, so the atmosphere in the Parish household may not always have been as strained as described here. But growing up in this family dynamic would have been challenging, especially when protocol demanded that everyone should keep up appearances at all costs.

A family in decline

Having to deal with the family's public image of rich nobility in the face of dwindling funds and the lack of a personal title of nobility must also have been difficult for young Edmund. John Parish, his illustrious forebear, had left the family a fortune, but the money had been unevenly spread and swiftly spent. Moreover, since John had had no children, the aristocratic title granted to him in 1816 had not been inherited by Edmund's branch of the family. Overall, the position of the Parish family was in decline. Obviously, Senftenberg Castle was still a valuable family property, but keeping it required continuous investment. George (brother of Edmund Sr.), who had inherited the castle, had no children, but after his death in 1881 it did not go to Edmund Sr. or his elder brother; the reasons are not known. Instead, it went to the third generation, more specifically, to Edmund Jr.'s younger brother, Oscar (Drocár, 2009). Oscar went on to become an important politician in Bohemia and appears to have done quite well, using Senftenberg Castle as a base for his work in Prague and Vienna, and continuing the tradition of hosting receptions and family gatherings. It is unknown why Edmund Jr. – the eldest of the three surviving sons – had missed out on the inheritance, although he was later compensated handsomely in different ways. Thus, around 1907, he inherited so much money from the related Godeffroy family that he could afford to live a fully independent life (CVPK). Earlier, after a successful application for Prussian citizenship, he had been incorporated into the aristocracy and granted the right to bear the ancient family coat of arms from 1899 onwards. The hereditary title allowed him to change his name to 'von

Parish'. Although a similar honour had been bestowed on his father and his two brothers, by then Edmund Sr. was on the brink of bankruptcy and eventually forced to sell Wasserlos Castle. Francis, his youngest son, was so desperate about his family's financial situation and the loss of the castle that he considered either becoming a priest or leaving for Africa. Having been depressed and suicidal since the age of 12, when he was 13 Francis had somewhat naïvely sought to kill himself by lying on ice-cold tiles. Later, as an adult, he had developed the habit of sleeping with a loaded revolver pressed against his chest. Considering suicide unchristian, he hoped that the weapon would spontaneously go off at night and that 'the good Lord would thus take [him] to Him' (Parish RF, Journal, 26 June 1897). In the light of all this, we can safely conclude that life at Wasserlos Castle was fraught with equal measures of privilege and hardship.

Education

As far as we know, Edmund Parish was tutored privately. Although his membership of the Gesellschaft für psychologische Forschung (GfpF) might suggest that he was a trained psychologist, he appears to have had no academic credentials. In all known scientific documents he is addressed as 'Herr Parish' or 'Edmund Parish' rather than 'Herrn Dr. Parish', which would have been appropriate had he been formally trained (Anon., 1895). But he must have received ample education, including foreign-language courses and training in statistics and probably also in psychology and medicine. Moreover, in order to be able to review the international literature, he must have had access to an academic library. Unfortunately, little is known about the circumstances under which he wrote his book. It is tempting to picture him writing it at Wasserlos Castle, as René Descartes (1596–1650) had done long before him at Endegeest Castle, Holland, and Michel de Montaigne (1533–92) at his castle in the Périgord, France. However, it is more likely that Edmund had already moved out of the parental home, as he was 33 in 1894, the year his book came out. A letter from 1890 mentions that he 'kept himself busy with literary and historical studies' (Státní Oblastní Archiv V Zámrsku, Inv.č. 384), but it is unclear whether these involved university courses, private studies, or perhaps drafts for *Über die Trugwahrnehmung*.

Military service and institutionalization

Like his two brothers, Edmund Parish had to face conscription. At the age of 25, he joined the Royal Saxon Army Corps, where he served as a hussar for over two years, obtaining the rank of lieutenant (Stadtarchiv Landeshauptstadt München, file 211018). After his military service, he settled in Munich, where he started to exhibit problematic behaviour that was not further specified other than that, among other feats, he spent so much money that he got into debt (Státní Oblastní Archiv V Zámrsku, Inv.č. 530). Eventually, things got so out of hand that Edmund Sr. – in his dual role of father and lawyer – felt forced to intervene. Thus, in 1888, he successfully applied to the Royal District Court of Alzenau, after which Edmund Jr. was involuntarily admitted to Katzenellenbogen sanatorium near Frankfurt am Main, a private psychiatric clinic for the higher social classes (Laehr and Lewald, 1899: 137). It has been suggested that the reason for his admittance was alcohol addiction (CVPK). Considering the drinking habits at his parental home, this may indeed have been one of the reasons, although the sanatorium's discharge letter does not mention it, and instead states that Edmund suffered from 'a considerable weakness of volition and judgement', 'anergia and fickleness', and 'degenerative idiocy', together justifying a diagnosis of 'moral insanity' (Státní Oblastní Archiv V Zámrsku, Inv.č. 384). Having no modern equivalent, this hard-to-grasp disorder, first conceptualized in 1835 by James Prichard (1786–1848), occupies some sort of middle position between what we would now call mania, personality disorder and psychopathy. Prichard (1835: 20)

defined it as follows: ‘A morbid perversion of the feelings, affections, and active powers, without any illusion or erroneous conviction impressed upon the understanding: it sometimes co-exists with an apparently unimpaired state of the intellectual faculties.’ In other words, a person suffering from moral insanity was considered ill in an emotional and behavioural sense, in the absence of psychosis or cognitive decline. Incidentally, the term moral had nothing to do with morality in the modern-day sense, even though the discharge letter does mention that Edmund’s ‘moral behaviour’ had improved over time (Státní Oblastní Archiv V Zámrsku, Inv.č. 384). Regarding the expression ‘degenerative idiocy’, the adjective reflects the suspicion of a constitutional or hereditary component – whether or not in terms of the nineteenth-century degeneration theory – whereas ‘idiocy’ should probably be taken as ‘foolhardiness’ rather than ‘feble-mindedness’, since it is unlikely that anyone would have doubted Edmund Parish’s intelligence.

Following Edmund Sr.’s application, the Royal District Court found sufficient grounds to issue an official declaration of insanity, along with an *Entmündigung*, a judicial incapacitation measure that renders a person unaccountable for his deeds and revokes his right to manage his own affairs, to vote, and to get married. Irrespective of the necessity – or possible lack thereof – to take such drastic measures, the whole affair must have been deeply humiliating to Edmund Jr., especially in the light of his noble origins and the stigma associated with psychiatric disorders, which was even stronger then than it is now. For all we know, his father must have taken this step in utter despair, fearing not only for his son’s future but also for his and the family’s reputation.

Back to Munich

The Katzenellenbogen discharge letter does not mention what kind of treatment Edmund received during almost two-and-a-half years in the sanatorium but, during the second half of this period, he succeeded in convincing the physicians treating him that he had recovered sufficiently (Státní Oblastní Archiv V Zámrsku, Inv.č. 384). After the formal testimonies of no less than three medical experts, the Royal District Court found fit to lift the *Entmündigung*, allowing Edmund Jr. to return to Munich in 1890 (Inv.č. 384). As a free man again, he got married straightaway, and joined (or perhaps reconnected with) the Munich section of the GfpF, the distinguished scientific society which counted among its honorary members international notables such as Ambroise-Auguste Liébeault (1823–1904), Hippolyte Bernheim (1840–1919), Charles Richet (1850–1935), Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900), Frederic Myers (1843–1901), Cesare Lombroso (1836–1909), William James, Joseph Jastrow (1863–1944) and Eduard von Hartmann (1842–1906) (Sommer, 2013). Edmund moved freely in these circles, participating in scientific meetings, and presenting papers at GfpF conferences held in Munich, Paris and London (Anon., 1895). Remarkably, within a mere four years of his release from Katzenellenbogen, his *Über die Trugwahrnehmung* was published as part of a series of monographs (the Second Collection of Writings of the GfpF) (Parish, 1894). At the time, the GfpF catered chiefly for an orthodox audience (Sommer, 2013), which meant that Parish’s work fell squarely within the boundaries of the organization’s agenda, and was applauded by like-minded people such as the philosopher and experimental psychologist Arthur Wreschner (1866–1932) (Wreschner, 1898). The recognition and praise must have greatly aided Parish’s rehabilitation. To rise within four years from a certified psychiatric patient to a celebrated author – and in the field of his former treating physicians too – was no mean feat, to say the least.

Alienation

Despite the incapacitation order and involuntary admittance to the sanatorium he had endured at the hands of his family, after his release Edmund appears to have remained quite close to them.

He travelled between Munich, Wasserlos and Senftenberg every few months to join in family gatherings and to spend nights with them. However, from 1895 onwards he seems to have grown more and more distant. The reasons for this are not entirely clear, but during that time his brother Francis describes him in his journal as quite intense and self-centred, preferring hunting rather than family gatherings (returning home one evening with 36 hares and 14 rabbits); and he dominated one family meeting with a two-hour hypnotic experiment performed on his servant. Elsewhere in his journal, Francis sneers that Edmund is ‘off shooting hares again’. A year later, he writes, ‘Here in the conservatory a row with Edmund, like every day’. He subsequently sums up the joint three-week visit to their parental home by stating: ‘Edmund’s last night here. The whole time he treated me in a moody and despotic manner; often terrible rows between the two of us. – I resolve to see him as little as possible’ (Parish RF, Journal, 6 Oct. 1896). For Francis, whose journal consists mostly of mundane and almost detached observations, this was an uncharacteristically strong reaction – followed, as we shall see, by uncharacteristically drastic measures.

Married life

In 1890, a few months after his release from Katzenellenbogen, Edmund married Georgine Jung (b. 1865), whom he appears to have met at the sanatorium. Rumour has it that her father had worked there, either as a guard or a mason, and that, in his company, she had been able to observe Edmund on an almost daily basis (CVPK). Aware of his condition, she nonetheless consented to marry him. And Edmund, aware that she was not the noble candidate his parents must have had in mind for him, could not wait to marry her. Whatever his parents may have thought, the wedding was held at Wasserlos Castle. Over the years, the pair had three children, Helen (1891–1926), Richard (1893–1948) and John VII (1897–1964). Edmund apparently led a ‘wild life’ again (Valenta, 2013), as he also conceived two illegitimate children, Edmund (1897–1934) and Martha (b. 1899), with Helene Martha Heines, the family’s nanny (Miller and Schulz, 2015: 519–29).

Edmund’s marriage to Georgine lasted 10 years. In 1900 she was so fed up with his unfaithfulness that she demanded a divorce. Upon hearing about Edmund’s extramarital affair, which, according to Georgine, involved an artist (who may or may not have been the same person as the nanny), the Parish family members were gravely upset. Georgine had confronted the woman by asking her whether she had set her sights on marrying her husband. Although Georgine’s action was frowned upon by Edmund’s family as unbecoming of their social standing, they all sided with her – except Edmund’s brother Francis, who asked himself in his journal whether his brother’s behaviour might have been ‘due to his illness’ and wondered, in hindsight, whether Georgine had perhaps only consented to marry his brother because of his wealth and nobility. In particular, Georgine’s timing, so soon after her husband had received his hereditary title, made Francis suspect that she had acquired what she had always wanted – for her and her children – and now sought to leave (Parish RF, Journal, 15–16 Aug. 1900). Although Francis thus appears to have been Edmund’s most loyal supporter, the two of them soon fell out, for reasons that remain unclear. The last time they met appears to have been three years earlier, when Francis visited Edmund in Munich. At the time, Edmund had been quite agitated while preparing a lecture to be held that evening, which Francis did not attend (Journal, 1 Apr. 1897). After one last letter to Edmund, which came back unopened, the two brothers appear to have had no further contact (Journal, 19 Aug. 1900).

Soon afterwards, Francis finally pursued his long-held plan to go to Africa. During the preparatory phase that lasted nearly six months on account of his huge social network, he paid farewell visits to anyone in Germany who mattered to him, including the King and Queen of Bavaria, but,

pointedly, skipped Edmund. When, three years later, Francis returned home from Rwanda, cachectic and rattling with tuberculosis, he made another, smaller tour to let everyone know he was back – but again missing out Edmund. He died a few weeks later, on 24 July 1903, in the presence of his other brother, Oscar, whereas Edmund did not come into view again until Francis's funeral (Parish RF, Journal, completed by Parish O, 4 July 1903).

Second marriage

In the same year, three years after his divorce, Edmund had a third child with Helene Heines, named Oskar Heines (1903–34) (Miller and Schulz, 2015: 519–29). Whether the Heines children and their mother ever lived with Edmund is unknown, but in 1906 Edmund von Parish, as he now called himself, married Hermine Viktoria Spitzer (1881–1966), a woman 20 years his junior. With her, he had another daughter, Hermine Elisabeth 'Harriet' von Parish (1907–98), who was born in Rome. The three of them went on to live a glamorous nomadic existence, travelling for many years throughout Europe and North Africa, staying at top hotels in Germany, England, France, Italy, Algiers, Libya and Tunisia (Stadtarchiv Landeshauptstadt München). They mixed with the jet set, and spent much of Edmund's share of the family fortune on designer clothes, fashion magazines and books on haute couture, which they purchased in huge quantities. These eventually became the basis of an internationally renowned collection, today exhibited in the Von Parish Kostümbibliothek, housed in a Jugendstil villa in Munich, which Edmund's widow Hermine von Parish acquired in 1916 (CVPK; see also Munno, 2017). Apart from indulging in this extravagant, bohemian lifestyle, Edmund also played a role in the developing German aviation industry. To help the Kingdom of Bavaria build an air force of its own, he himself paid for its first aeroplanes (Županič, 2009). Meanwhile, he worked closely with Otto Lindpaintner (1885–1976), the aviation pioneer and celebrity in his time, who had won numerous prizes during these pre-war years with flights in his primitive, custom-built aeroplanes; he was now experimenting in Munich, Schneverdingen and Paris, with Edmund financing his various projects (CVPK).

World War I (1914–18)

Then, all of a sudden, playtime was over. In June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was shot. Europe exploded into international conflict and before long Germany had plunged into a war on two fronts. For 52-year-old Edmund, this meant that his lavish, itinerant days and his aviation exploits were over. As a reservist, he was summoned to the Western Front in December 1914 (Bayerische Kriegsarchiv München), and was sent to Flanders in Belgium, where he joined the German Sixth Army. Its ambitious 'Race to the Sea' had been halted by the Allied forces, and the 500-kilometre stretch of land running from Alsace to the North Sea had been turned into an uninterrupted line of trenches. In the face of this new type of warfare, Edmund's skills as a cavalryman must have been of frustratingly little use. Instead, he was in the trenches for over a year, participating in the Battle of Neuve-Chapelle, the Battle of La Bassée, and other notoriously brutal fights. In the meantime, three of his sons had also joined the ranks of the German troops at the Western Front. In 1915 Edmund was transferred to Lille, northern France, promoted to the rank of first lieutenant, and awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class. In November of that year, with typical military logic, Edmund von Parish, world expert on hallucinations, was made commander of an infirmary – for horses (Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv). Eight weeks later his family received news that he had fallen fatally ill (Valenta, 2013). According to a telegram sent by his wife to Oscar, he suffered from nephropathy and heart disease (Státní Oblastní Archiv V Zámrsku. Inv.č. 530). He was

repatriated to Munich, where he died six months later in his own home on 3 June 1916, aged 54 (Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv).

Discussion

Even before his death, Parish's seminal contribution to hallucination research had already sunk into oblivion. It probably did not help that he stopped writing so soon after its release, but it is hard to believe that this was the only reason. As already noted, one of the book's selling points had been its scope. The state of affairs in nineteenth-century neuroscience did not allow him – or anyone else, for that matter – to generate pathophysiological hypotheses that were immediately testable; however, the dissociation model had the virtue of aiming at unification and comprehensiveness, taking into account all that can go wrong with regular sense perception, in whatever form or context – an ideal that today's neuroscience is still striving for (Looijestijn et al., 2015, 2018; Waters et al., 2018). Another selling point had been his observation that hallucinations tend to be embedded in regular sense perceptions and that the two are therefore inseparable. Even though the book did occasionally refer to now obsolete theories such as 'degeneration' – still so influential at the time that even Emil Kraepelin (1856–1926) could not resist its lure (Blom, 2003: 74–9) – on the whole, it was systematic and scientifically rigid. But that same scientific rigour may have been what tempered people's enthusiasm. When the book came out, many still hoped that science would take theology's place in bridging the gap between the mundane and the metaphysical (Alvarado, 2017), and Parish's book delivered quite the opposite of what people wanted to hear. Also, it is not unthinkable that once the general interest in the occult had waned, the book kept being associated with the metaphysical issues it criticized and was therefore mistakenly considered 'one of those books on occultism'. Yet another reason why it may have been met with reserve is that Parish presented empirical data that he had not collected himself. Today it would be out of the question that original, unpublished data would be used by any third party, but at the time apparently no-one was concerned about it. Alternatively, Parish may have been allowed to use the data because of his connections with researchers within the GfpF who had been involved in the study. Whatever the reason, this was not why Parish's work was criticized. Rather, as we saw, the owners of the data rebutted him chiefly on statistical and ideological grounds. However, even though his use of the SPR's data was never openly called into question, it may have been frowned upon behind his back and seen as a reason to boycott his book.

From a totally different vantage point, it is not unthinkable that details about Parish's personal life had leaked out, casting a shadow over him and his work. In the tightly-knit network of upper-class nineteenth-century society, rumours and gossip spread like wildfire, even on a global scale. What were people to make of the stories that may have circulated at the time about this seemingly brilliant German nobleman who had previously been sectioned? With this possibility in mind, and given the density of Parish's work, lay people, and scientists too, may have hesitated to trust his book, as they were unsure whether its contents made any sense. Moreover, since the notion of psychiatric rehabilitation was still in its infancy at the time (Anthony and Liberman, 1986), there were probably few people who appreciated the actual magnitude of Parish's accomplishment. He came from a complex and demanding family, lacked a formal academic background (as far as we know), and battled with psychiatric illness, institutionalization, incapacitation and stigmatization, so it is nothing short of a miracle that he succeeded in rising above all that and produced his magnum opus in what appears to have been a very short time span.

Conclusions

With the wisdom of hindsight, Parish's *Hallucinations and Illusions* deserves a place among the great historical works on hallucinations and related phenomena, comparable with Alexandre Brierre de Boismont's *Des Hallucinations* (1852), James Sully's *Illusions* (1881) and Henri Ey's *Traité des Hallucinations* (1973). It provided a state-of-the-art overview of late nineteenth-century knowledge: a sound definition of hallucinations as perceptual phenomena; a call to conceptualize them as lying on a continuum with other disorders of perception (including illusions, distortions, and, in some cases, even negative disorders of perception); a coherent biological hypothesis for their mediation; a plausible appeal to psychological and social factors for the content of (especially complex) hallucinations; and a well-founded critique of parapsychological explanations. At the time of publication, it was recognized by top figures in the field as first-rate, but simultaneously criticized by those who disagreed with it on – chiefly – ideological grounds. For the majority of its potential readership, though, the book may have been somewhat perplexing. Those in search of a purely biomedical or psychological account were possibly taken aback by Parish's extensive treatment of metaphysical issues, whereas those in search of an affirmation of the SPR's results, which promised to breathe life into occultist notions by scientific means, may have been disappointed by the clinical precision of his refutations. Still others may have failed to grasp the coherence of all the phenomena thus brought under a single denominator, asking themselves what the Brocken spectre, diplopia monocularis and 'ghost stories' had to do with hallucinations. On a personal level, Parish may have been difficult to pigeon-hole, as he was probably self-educated and moved with apparent ease in both academic and fashionable circles, thus confusing friend and foe with his intimidating social status as well as his history of psychiatric illness. Given the quality of his work, it is unfortunate that he left the field of hallucination research so soon. However, in the context of his biography, it is something of a miracle that he found the time to devote himself to this topic, to immerse himself in all there was to know about it, and to produce this unmistakable labour of love.

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