



The Eye, the Ear, the Word: Inaugurating *The Charcot Journal*

(Editorial)

Francesco Brigo¹

¹ Innovation, Research and Teaching Service, Teaching Hospital of the Paracelsus Medical Private University (PMU), Azienda Sanitaria dell'Alto Adige, Bolzano, Italy. ORCID: 0000-0003-0928-157

Corresponding Author:

Francesco Brigo

E-mail address: dr.francescobrigo@gmail.com

“Notwithstanding the details I have already provided, I am far from having exhausted the subject, and I dare to hope that you will not regret the time yet remaining to be dedicated to its study.”

Jean-Martin Charcot. *Leçons sur les maladies du système nerveux faites à la Salpêtrière*. Volume I, Leçon II. Paris: Delahaye et Lecrosnier, 1877

In an age where the boundaries between disciplines are increasingly porous, and where the past is often overshadowed by the urgency of the present, *The Charcot Journal* emerges with a clear and deliberate purpose. It seeks to reclaim the richness of historical inquiry and interdisciplinary dialogue as essential tools for understanding the evolution of neurology—not merely as a clinical science, but as a cultural, philosophical, and profoundly human endeavor.

Named in honor of Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893), in this bicentennial year of his birth, the journal pays tribute to a figure whose influence reached far beyond the clinic. Charcot not only gave modern neurology its structure and language, but—most enduringly—its method. This, arguably his most enduring legacy, continues to shape the field to this day. Yet this journal is not merely commemorative; it is a platform for critical reflection, for revisiting foundational ideas, and for exploring the intersections between medicine and the broader intellectual currents that have shaped it.

While several journals currently examine the history of neuroscience, most reflect specific disciplinary perspectives. In contrast, *The Charcot Journal* offers a more integrative and dynamic platform—one that fosters dialogue among historians, neuroscientists, clinicians, and scholars from the humanities and social sciences. It is distinguished by its commitment to interdisciplinary inquiry, the inclusion of underrepresented perspectives, and a focus on the evolving cultural and ethical dimensions of neuroscience.

The choice of the journal’s title pays tribute to Charcot, following the rare tradition of naming scientific journals after prominent figures in medical history, such as *Virchows Archiv*, *Vesalius*, or *Osleriana*. These examples are few and far between. Indeed, the prevailing trend in modern

medicine has been to move away from eponyms (Koehler et al. 2000). This shift may reflect a certain disregard for the past, or perhaps a conscious effort to move beyond a heroic vision of medicine—one centered on the discoveries and achievements of singular great individuals—toward a more horizontal, collective perspective that emphasizes teamwork and the cultural substratum from which discoveries emerge.

This evolution is both valid and valuable. Yet, it is equally true that certain figures stand out—those who marked a rupture, introduced a new paradigm, or left a lasting influence. These individuals continue to inspire. Naming a journal after Charcot is not only a way to honor such a legacy, but also a reminder that medicine is a science made by and for human beings. The use of an eponym lends a more human dimension to scientific discourse and may even spark curiosity about the lives and contributions of those who shaped the field.

Charcot was a towering and profoundly influential figure, but he was also able to bring together a group of students and disciples from diverse backgrounds and with varied expertise. In doing so, he helped shape a modern vision of medicine and neurology—one that laid the foundations for contemporary neuropathology, neurophysiology, neuropsychology, and neuropsychiatry. It is precisely this interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach—one that fosters critical and stimulating dialogue rather than blind, servile obedience to the master's word, however authoritative—that represents the guiding philosophy behind this journal.

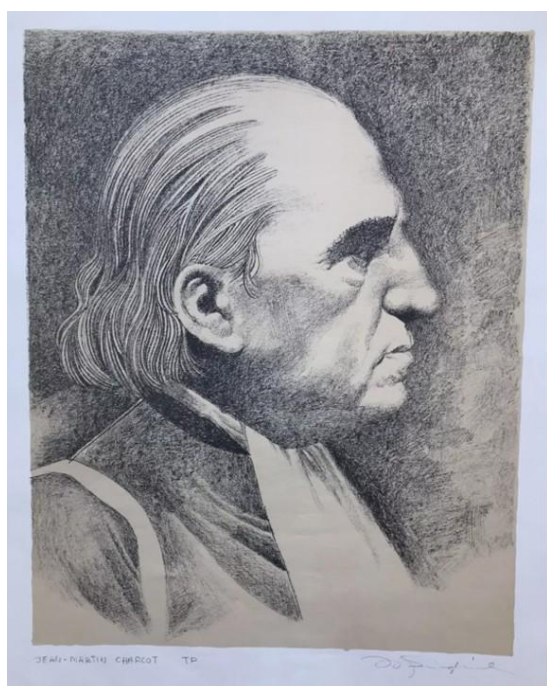


Figure 1. On the left: an original lithograph (trial proof) of Jean-Martin Charcot created by Mark English (1933–2019) (FB, Personal Collection; The artwork by Mark English is reproduced here for scholarly commentary and non-commercial illustrative use. Copyright remains with the rightful owner. No rights claimed.). On the right: the stylized logo of *The Charcot Journal*, derived from this lithograph (Copyright *The Charcot Journal*). Key features—hair, eye, and ear—are highlighted to evoke Charcot's clinical method: experience, observation, and attentive listening.



The journal's logo further reflects this spirit (Figure 1). It is a stylized interpretation of a lithograph I recently acquired from an antiquarian. This particular piece is a trial proof created by the American illustrator and painter Mark English (1933–2019). It portrays Jean-Martin Charcot in profile, distinguished by the white collar of his academic gown. The logo also echoes other historical iconographies, notably the profile portrait created by Paul Richer in 1891 for the frontispiece of Volume I of *Œuvres complètes de J.M. Charcot* (Charcot 1892). Together, these visual references establish a rich and evocative dialogue between past, present, and future.

In the stylized version of the logo, Charcot's black silhouette is highlighted with white accents that emphasize key features. His long, flowing hair—an aspect I've always envied—symbolizes the experience he accumulated over the years. His eye, a tribute to Charcot the *visual*, as Freud famously dubbed him (Freud 1893), evokes his ability to discern order and meaning beneath the seemingly chaotic surface of symptoms. His ear, in turn, represents his attentiveness to the patient's voice, his meticulous and thoughtful clinical interviews, as documented in the famous Tuesday lectures at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris (Charcot 1887). Charcot gazes steadily ahead, his eyes turned to the right, following the direction of writing—a reminder of his countless written contributions. It is also an invitation for us to do the same: to contribute to this journal, which must carry forward his legacy. The “J” of Journal does not obstruct his view; rather, it serves as a tool in the pursuit of knowledge—knowledge that, to be genuine, must remain critical, open and free.

It is in this spirit that this journal is launched. Whether its words will vanish like writing on water or endure into the future is impossible to say for now. But I believe it is worth the attempt.

References

Charcot JM. *Leçons du mardi à la Salpêtrière: recueillies et publiées par Bourneville*. Vols 1–2. Paris: Bureaux du Progrès Médical, A. Delahaye et E. Lecrosnier; 1887.

Charcot JM. *Œuvres complètes de J.M. Charcot. Tome Premier*. Edited by Bourneville D-M. Bureau du Progrès Médical, Ancienne Maison Delahaye, Louis Bataille Éditeur; 1892.

Freud S. Charcot. *Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift*. 1893;43(37):1513–1520.

Koehler PJ, Bruyn GW, Pearce JMS, eds. *Neurological Eponyms*. Oxford University Press; 2000.

Specific Statements

Permissions: This article includes an image of a lithograph by Mark English (1933–2019), reproduced solely for the purposes of scholarly commentary, education, and visual illustration. The author does not claim ownership of the image; all rights remain with the original copyright holder. Despite reasonable efforts, the current rights holder could not be identified or contacted. If the copyright holder or their representative has concerns regarding the use of this image, they are kindly invited to contact the author to request correction or removal.

Funding: The author received no specific funding for this work.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Provenance and peer review: Commissioned; internally peer reviewed.



Disclaimer

The content provided on The Charcot Journal website is for informational and educational purposes only. It is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read on this site. The Charcot Journal and its contributors do not accept any responsibility for any loss which may arise from reliance on information contained on this site.

Terms and Conditions

Unless otherwise stated, all content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). You may share the content for non-commercial purposes, provided that (a) proper attribution is given to the original authors and The Charcot Journal; (b) the content is not modified or adapted in any way. Commercial use and the creation of derivative works are not permitted without prior written permission from the copyright holder. Authors retain full copyright and may reuse their own work in any form, including for commercial purposes. The website may contain links to third-party websites. We are not responsible for the content or practices of these external sites. We reserve the right to update or modify these terms at any time without prior notice.