L'ANNÉE PSYCHOLOGIQUE: History of the Founding of a 100-Year-Old French Journal

Serge Nicolas
Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études and
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Université René Descartes

Juan Segui
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Université René Descartes

Ludovic Ferrand
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Université René Descartes, and Ecole des Psychologues Praticiens

The authors present the history of the founding of the French journal L'Année Psychologique. The names of Théodule Ribot (1839–1916), Henry Beaunis (1830–1921), and Alfred Binet (1857–1911) are closely associated with the journal. Ribot's election to the chair of Experimental and Comparative Psychology at the Collège de France in 1888 marked the official emancipation of psychology in France. Because there was no laboratory associated with the chair, Beaunis, a physiological psychologist from Nancy, proposed to Ribot the creation of the first French laboratory of experimental psychology (1889). Under Beaunis's direction, this laboratory was established at the Sorbonne in Paris but was in fact dependent on another educational institution, L'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études. In 1893 the laboratory's research was first published in a yearly journal named Travaux du Laboratoire de Psychologie Physiologique (2 volumes: 1893–1894). Binet, who joined the laboratory in 1891, was not satisfied by the form of this publication. With Beaunis's agreement, he then created L'Année Psychologique in 1894 to develop the reputation of the laboratory's research. The authors present the evolution and vicissitudes of the journal from 1895 to 1912, with a glance up to the present.

L'Année Psychologique was the first French journal devoted exclusively to psychology. Founded in 1894 by Alfred Binet, it was among the first journals of psychology published in the world. Only a few were available at the time: Philosophische Studien, founded in 1881 by Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920); the American Journal of Psychology, founded in 1887 by Granville Stanley Hall (1844–1924), the Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane, founded in 1890 by Hermann Ebbinghaus (1850–1909) and Arthur König (1856–1901); and Psychological Review, founded in 1894 by James McKeen Cattell (1860–1944) and James Mark Baldwin (1861–1934). On September 11, 1994, L'Année Psychologique celebrated its centenary during the 13th annual meeting of Cheiron–Europe. A commemorative volume was also published on this occasion (Fraisse & Segui, 1994).

In the present article we describe the events that led to the founding of L'Année
Psychologique; we also present the early evolution and policies of the journal. Three main points emerge from our discussion. First, the founding of L'Année Psychologique was closely linked to the institutionalization of psychology in higher education as requested by the minister of education. In particular, it was not the universities but rather special research institutions directly dependent on the Department of Public Instruction that favored the founding of a laboratory-based psychology, with L'Année Psychologique used as a tool to disseminate research. Second, although the founding of L'Année Psychologique was linked to higher education policy in France, which centered on competition with Germany, it was mainly the work of one man: Alfred Binet. Binet took the initiative of publishing the journal, but he benefited from the political and institutional work done a few years earlier by Théodule Ribot and Henry Beaunis. Third, the special character of L'Année Psychologique is connected to a single research institution: the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology in Paris, whose successive directors have been in charge of the journal. The survival of the journal has been due to constant efforts of its founder and his successors, who have guaranteed its high scientific level in publishing their own work.

Théodule Ribot and the Promotion of Psychology in French Journals at the End of the 19th Century

It is impossible to understand the founding of L'Année Psychologique without analyzing the context of the introduction of psychology in French journals and higher education. This introduction would have occurred later had it not been for the tenacity of the founder of French psychology, Théodule Ribot (1839–1916; for a biography, see Nicolas & Murray, 1999).

The Founding of the Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger (1876)

The new psychology was quietly introduced in France in the context of the philosophical crisis during the last third of the 19th century (see Janet, 1865, 1872; de Margerie, 1870; Ravaisséon, 1867; Ribot, 1877; Vacherot, 1868) when Ribot published his first book (Ribot, 1870). Critics of the French positivist school founded by Auguste Comte (1798–1857) and especially those who were critical of Hyppolyte Taine (1828–1893) had already exposed the weakness of the prevailing spiritualist psychology, which stemmed from the school of Victor Cousin (1792–1867) and Théodore Jouffroy (1796–1842). Everywhere the need was felt to leave behind metaphysical entities and verbal explanations. The English were developing a positivist psychology, based on the association of ideas. The Germans, following Weber and Fechner, were introducing quantity and measurement into the study of psychic facts. Ribot brought these two types of psychology to France by means of books (Ribot, 1870, 1879) and articles (Ribot, 1874, 1875a, 1875b). In the 1870s there was no journal in France devoted to psychology; articles were distributed in various journals, one of the most important of which was the Revue Scientifique, edited by Emile Alglave, in which Ribot published the first articles on German psychology (see Ribot, 1874, 1875a, 1875b).

In 1874 Ribot took the initiative in creating a new monthly journal called the Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger (Philosophical Review of France and Abroad) in order to disseminate new trends in psychology. The
founding of the journal was made possible by Ribot’s connections in the publishing domain. He was an active contributor to the two most famous journals at that time: the Revue Politique et Littéraire and the Revue Scientifique, both edited since the beginning of the 1870s by Gustave Germer Baillièре (born in 1837), who was known for the novelty and boldness of his publishing ideas. Although Ribot knew Baillière well, as we can see from his correspondence at that time (see Lenoir, 1957), we should note in addition that from 1872, a personal friend of Ribot, Félix Alcan (1841–1925), a fellow student from L’Ecole Normale Supérieure (from 1862 to 1865), had formed a partnership with Baillière. There is no doubt that Alcan supported the publication of the new Revue Philosophique de la France et de l’Etranger in January 1876. At the same time, a new journal published in England by Alexander Bain (1818–1903) and edited by George Croom Robertson (1842–1891) was very similar in nature to the Revue; it was called Mind, A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy. Without excluding philosophy, the two journals had as a goal the presentation of the current state of psychology and its trends. For his part, Ribot addressed a broad range of issues (see Ribot, 1876), which we can group into five areas: psychology, ethics, natural science, metaphysics, and history of philosophy. The Revue Philosophique de la France et de l’Etranger published original articles, reports, and bibliographical analyses in these five areas. However, during the years 1876–1896 the majority of the published articles were about psychology (Thirard, 1976).

Because Ribot wanted to be in line with the philosophical movement of his time, he emphasized the importance of psychological issues that were to be treated on an empirical basis (see Ribot, 1876). He therefore published articles about and translations of the work of contemporary English and German researchers (including Wundt, Mill, Spencer, and Lewes). The Revue Philosophique de la France et de l’Etranger became an important tool for the promotion of the new psychology in France and made Ribot its most famous representative. We can say that the journal was both an institution that structured French philosophy and the personal work of a man whose mission was to promote psychology in his country.

From the time of the founding of Mind and Philosophische Studien, Ribot published detailed summaries of the articles published in these two journals. In doing so he was informing France of the most recent work in the field of psychology. The dissemination of new work in psychology in the Revue Philosophique de la France et de l’Etranger increased after the creation in 1885 of the Société de Psychologie Physiologique, which prepared the path for the official recognition of a psychology based on experience. This society was founded under the patronage of Ribot and Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893) to promote French psychology. At the beginning, it included honorary members (Jean-Martin Charcot, president; Théodule Ribot, Hippolyte Taine, and Paul Janet), full members (such as Alfred Binet, François Franck, Paul Richer, and Henry Beaunis), associate members (among them Pierre Janet), and foreign members (such as Helmholtz, Galton, Myers, James, Sully, and Delboeuf). Charles Richet was the secretary-general, and Charles Féral and Eugène Gley were assistants. Reports of the society’s meetings were published in the Revue Philosophique de la France et de l’Etranger. Although its name suggested a certain orientation in its work, the topic of hypnotism held a large place. Indeed, the psychopathological orientation of French psychology was reflected in the issues discussed at the meetings.
Nomination of Ribot to the Sorbonne (1885) and the Collège de France (1888): First Official Recognition of Psychology

During the 1880s Ribot was influenced by the work of Hughlings-Jacksons and Spencer (he translated Spencer’s Principles of Psychology), and he wrote a series of articles in the Revue Philosophique de la France et de l’Etranger, subsequently gathered together in books, that gave a pathology-based orientation to French psychology. His monographs on diseases of memory (Ribot, 1881), will (Ribot, 1883), and personality (Ribot, 1885) gathered observations made by medical doctors and psychiatrists. Thanks to his numerous successful publications, Ribot became the leader of scientific psychology in France, which was at the time centered on psychopathology rather than on the experimental psychology being developed in Germany by Fechner and Wundt.

In search of institutional recognition, Ribot benefited from the acceleration of academic reforms in the wake of the military defeat of France by Prussia in 1871. Intellectual leaders such as Ernest Renan (1823–1892), considered the spiritual father of the Third Republic, had suggested that the power of Germany was mainly due to the quality of its academic system (Renan, 1864, 1867). Reforms had started at the end of the 1860s with the creation in 1867 of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE), a research institution linked directly to the Department of Public Instruction, and throughout the years 1870–1880 successive reforms favored innovation in the French academic system. Several reformers, among them physiologist Paul Bert (1872) and philosopher Émile Boutroux (1882), published proposals for educational reform that included the introduction of psychology at universities (but in an undetermined form, not specifically physiological, experimental, or comparative). Sentiments in favor of psychology were in the air, but the dogmatic brakes applied by philosophers at the universities, administrative slowness, political inertia, and a chronic lack of funds prevented this interest from being realized until later.

Within this context of academic reforms (see Liard, 1888–1894; Prost, 1968; Weisz, 1983), psychology was introduced almost surreptitiously, first at the Sorbonne (see Nicolas, in press) and then at the Collège de France (Nicolas & Charvillat, 1999). On July 31, 1885, Ribot was appointed to the first teaching position in experimental psychology, thanks to the Department of Public Instruction. He began teaching at the Sorbonne in December 1885, and the philosophers there could not do anything to contest this arrangement. They were upset by the fact that a topic of study that had traditionally belonged to them was escaping their control, and so they were opposed for a long time to the introduction of psychology at the university (see Brooks, 1993). Because the courses taught by Ribot were not obligatory for the students, the professors at the Sorbonne tolerated this decision of the ministry. For its part, the ministry wanted to promote the new psychology in Paris, the intellectual center of France, because it was important for the country to be in step with contemporary science. As it seemed impossible to develop the discipline within the universities because of the dogmatic opposition from philosophers, the proposed chair of psychology had to be located in another institution of higher education.

In the domain of higher education, France has a special system: Very high level training is given by special establishments that do not depend on the universities, as, for example, the Collège de France. Indeed, the Collège de France,
located near the Sorbonne since the reign of Louis XV, has always cultivated the margins of the dominant classical culture of the Sorbonne; this marginality compared to the official culture has constituted its main characteristic. The intellectual ascendancy of the Collège de France during the second half of the 19th century came from its specialists and scientists (among them Marcelin Berthelot, Claude Bernard, and Ernest Renan). Thus, an appointment to the Collège de France was a sign of official recognition of the value of one’s scientific work and represented (and still represents today) in France the foremost accolade of higher education. The nomination of Ribot to the chair of Experimental and Comparative Psychology at the Collège de France on February 18, 1888, was really the first official act of recognition of psychology. A formal position was created in which psychology was taught continuously, and by one of its most famous representatives.

Henry Beaunis, Founder of *Travaux du Laboratoire de Psychologie Physiologique* at the Sorbonne (1893–1894)

With the start of classes in psychology, research was able to develop properly. Ribot, however, was isolated from such work. He was a theoretician of psychology and a philosopher. It was not his intention to develop a laboratory psychology leading to dissemination in specialized journals, as had Wundt in Germany and Hall in the United States. It was Henry Beaunis (1830–1921) who was instrumental in the founding of the first French laboratory of psychology.

It would not be possible to write the history of *L'Année Psychologique* without mentioning Beaunis, who founded the Laboratory of Physiological Psychology at the Sorbonne (1889) and was also involved in the establishment of a review in 1893 (thus preceding *L'Année Psychologique*), the bulletin *Travaux du Laboratoire de Psychologie Physiologique de la Sorbonne*.

The Psychophysiologist From the School of Nancy

When Ribot and Charcot started the Society of Physiological Psychology in 1885, Beaunis was among the charter members. Beaunis, who had held a chair in physiology at the University of Nancy since 1872, was one of the most famous researchers in physiological psychology in France. Ribot had already known Beaunis for a few years; in 1879 he invited Beaunis to participate in the physiological education of readers by means of articles or book reviews. Beaunis responded positively to the invitation with an article published in the *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger* entitled “On the Comparison of Reaction Times of Different Sensations” (Beaunis, 1883). Other articles followed, most of which fit within the scope of the Society of Physiological Psychology and concerned the psychology of sensations and hypnotic suggestion, Beaunis’s two favorite themes at that time.

Although his scientific work in physiology was not original, Beaunis became famous later thanks to his work in psychology. In 1882, Mr. Dumont, an assistant in physics in the Faculty of Medicine, presented to the Society of Medicine four patients who had been treated with hypnosis by a doctor in Nancy, Ambroise Auguste Liébeault (1823–1904). When Beaunis’s colleagues, Hippolyte Bernheim (1840–1919), professor of clinical medicine, and Jules Liégeois (1833–1908), professor of law, wanted to check the efficacy of suggestion and hypnotism and to study them further, Beaunis was immediately interested in these issues. The three
academics divided the work among themselves during the following years. Bernheim was in charge of the therapeutic aspects, Liégeois studied the phenomenon from the point of view of civil and criminal law, and Beaunis studied the physiological and psychological aspects. Representatives of the School of Nancy all agreed on the rejection of the signs of deep hypnosis observed by Charcot in his patients and described by doctors at the School of the Salpêtrière. According to Beaunis and his colleagues, the phenomenon described by Charcot was due only to unconscious suggestion. It was the demonstration of the power of suggestion and its use in therapeutics that established the position of the representatives of the School of Nancy. Beaunis saw in hypnotism not only a tool to study physiological phenomena but also an experimental technique for the study of intelligence. Hypnotism would be for the philosopher what vivisection was for the physiologist (Beaunis, 1885). Beaunis’s book on “induced somnambulism” (Beaunis, 1886) summarizes his experimental contribution, which was psychophysiological in nature. The results described concerned the somatic aspects of somnambulism. According to Beaunis, subjects in a suggestive state were in a particular cerebral state.

The main goals of his work in the laboratory of physiology in Nancy (Beaunis, 1884, 1886) were, on the one hand, to study the effects of mental activity and to determine the chemical equivalent of cerebral work and, on the other hand, to try to determine the conditions in which the effects were produced. Although officially France had no laboratory of physiological psychology at the time, it had in Beaunis an individual directly involved with these issues.

The Founding of the Laboratory of Physiological Psychology at the Sorbonne (1889)

There was no laboratory associated with the chair of Experimental and Comparative Psychology to which Ribot had been nominated at the Collège de France in 1888. As noted above, Ribot was a theorist, not an experimentalist. Beaunis had already noticed that France was behind the times in the field of physiological psychology compared to Germany or America. He wrote in his memoirs:

If I was unfortunate enough to mention a laboratory of psychology to some of my colleagues, I noticed among them a real stupefaction, as if the two words, psychology and laboratory, refused to be associated. I was ashamed for my country to be so behind the times. (Beaunis, 1914, p. 487)

After giving it much thought, Beaunis asked Ribot if he thought that Louis Liard (1846–1917), director of higher education and defender with Ernest Renan of scientific psychology, would be opposed to the founding of a laboratory of physiological psychology. Ribot promised to talk to Liard about it as soon as possible (Beaunis, 1914). At the beginning of June 1888, Ribot brought a favorable answer from Liard. Here is an excerpt of the letter from Ribot to Beaunis:

He believes like me that the laboratory must be located at the École des Hautes Études. I advise you to visit him when you are in Paris. He needs to talk with you about many details I have only touched on. Overall, it is a good thing, but we need a bit of patience. I forgot to tell you that he is very favorable not only to the project but also to you. (Beaunis, 1914, p. 488)
In Beaunis’s approach to Ribot there was not only a scientific interest but also a personal motive that he did not hide (Beaunis, 1914): He hoped that if the laboratory were created, he, Beaunis, would be named director. During his first trip to Paris he visited Liard and explained the reasons for creating a laboratory. Liard, favorable to the project but offering no definite agreement, asked him to write a short report with a rough estimate of costs. Hope came when Ribot wrote to Beaunis the following few lines on July 8, 1888: “I am very happy to announce to you that it went very smoothly. I believe that it is best to start as soon as possible; since the laboratory will depend directly from the Ministry, everything will be very simple” (Beaunis, 1914, p. 489).

A difficult problem was finding a site for the laboratory. On August 6, 1888, Liard wrote to Beaunis: “I still don’t know the location of the new laboratory. But you can already start to collect all the information concerning the equipment” (Beaunis, 1914, p. 489).

Armed with this permission, Beaunis wrote immediately to Wundt in Leipzig, asking to be put in touch with Wundt’s regular suppliers of equipment. The answer, dated August 30, 1888, kindly gave Beaunis all the information requested. The statutory order announcing the founding of the Laboratory of Physiological Psychology and naming Henry Beaunis director was signed on January 23, 1889. The appointment was well deserved, because Beaunis was one of the leading French scholars of physiological psychology and the instigator of the founding of the laboratory. The laboratory was attached to the EPHE in the Natural Sciences section and was located at the Sorbonne.

The beginning of the laboratory was very modest. Beaunis was alone, without even a laboratory assistant, and one of the janitors of the Sorbonne cleaned the laboratory from time to time. Eventually, however, everything was organized (see Beaunis, 1893, for a description of the laboratory, the equipment, and the journals). Alfred Binet (1857–1911), Jean Philippe (1862–1931), and Jules Courtier (1860–1938) were the first researchers to join the laboratory, in 1891. The recruitment of Binet was essential to the development of the laboratory. Beaunis met Binet for the first time in Rouen, at the train station (Wolf, 1973). Beaunis was waiting for the train from Cany when he was approached by a large man, with a robust complexion, a lively eye seen through his monocle, smiling, the penetrating face of a researcher. He gave his name, and the ice was quickly broken between us. I knew his work and appreciated it, even though I was in the opposite camp with regard to questions of hypnotism and suggestibility, which occupied me a lot at the moment. We spoke. He asked to come to work in the laboratory, which I agreed to immediately. I was happy to find a collaborator of such value for a laboratory that was just at its beginnings and whose creation had aroused controversies that were not yet completely put to rest. What I appreciated in Binet was the depth of his intelligence, his lively spirit, and his personality, which expressed itself so clearly in his research. In each study, in each scientific domain, he knew how to discover something that was not seen before, to express new views, to try new unexplored avenues. He had a remarkable strength for work, a surprising mental activity. (Beaunis, 1914, p. 495)

Binet rapidly took an important place in the laboratory and was named first assistant and then, in 1892, assistant director, at the age of 35. In 1893 the laboratory was officially composed of the following members (see Beaunis, 1893):
Beaunis (director), Binet (assistant director, never to be paid by the EPHE), Charles Henry (lecturer, officially named employee of the EPHE on September 30, 1893), Jean Philippe (assistant, officially named employee of the EPHE on August 4, 1893), and Jules Courtier (assistant foreman, officially named employee of the EPHE on August 4, 1893). Retiring as professor at Nancy in 1893, Beaunis devoted all his time to the laboratory at the Sorbonne, not having to bother with lessons and examinations. During that time, a few students, among them Victor Henri (Nicolas, 1994b) and foreigners, came to work in the laboratory. Most of the work done in the laboratory was published by Beaunis at his own expense in the bulletin *Travaux du Laboratoire de Psychologie Physiologique* (1893 for the work done in 1892; 1894 for the work done in 1893). In the two volumes of the bulletin we find mainly many articles written by Binet alone or in collaboration (see Appendix A). The main themes are centered on the study of colored audition, then on mental calculators and blind chess players, and finally on visual memory. These bulletins preceded the new journal that appeared in 1895, namely *L'Année Psychologique*.

Alfred Binet and the Founding of *L'Année Psychologique* (1894–1895)

The publication of the bulletins of the laboratory was a sign of the desire of its members to make their work known. Ribot himself supported the laboratory in the *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger*. Because the latest trends in research were not psychopathological, the laboratory broke with this French tradition established by Ribot in order to get closer to German and American work centered on the study of normal subjects. Alfred Binet put more and more emphasis on psychopedagogy supposed to interest a large public. He felt that the new orientation of his work needed to become better known in France in order to further the development of a new discipline that was being taught only at the Collège de France. A new journal could do this and inform the French-speaking readers (philosophers, physiologists, instructors, and others) about developments around the world in the discipline of psychology.

The Founding of an Annual Journal of Psychology

Binet was indisputably the originator of the idea of *L'Année Psychologique*. As he wrote in a letter to Beaunis on February 19, 1894:

I have wanted for a long time to speak to you of a project that keeps running through my head. Here it is. I really regret that we pay so much for our bulletin and it does not sell and is not even offered for sale. I have an idea of a publication that would be somewhat different. It would be an *Année Psychologique* analogous to Pillon's *Année Philosophique*, which would publish in an appendix titles of our work, and in which summaries of and critical remarks about others' work could be found. I would like the analyses to be quite well done to avoid having to consult the original works, with drawings of equipment, and the whole thing followed when possible by an experimental critique, the only true critique in fact. I spoke of this project to Alcan, who is a little hesitant. What do you think of my idea? Would you approve if I can make it work? (Beaunis, 1914, pp. 497–498)

Although Beaunis gave his approval to the project he was quite skeptical concerning the outcome. Binet's idea was readily adopted by the publisher, Alcan,
and *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger*, edited by Ribot, advertised the publication of this new journal as follows (July 1894, p. 112):

The Laboratory of Psychology of the Hautes-Etudes (Sorbonne) will publish, starting in 1895, an Année Psychologique, including a series of original articles and a full report of the work in experimental psychology done around the world during the year 1894. Subscriptions (at the price of 5 francs) should be sent to the Laboratory of Psychology (Sorbonne), Paris.

Binet and Beaunis had to advance the editorial expenses, Alcan finding the venture too risky financially. Thanks to the support of the Department of Higher Education and the zeal of many subscribers, they managed to cover the expenses of the first volume (Binet, 1895). This first volume was divided into three parts: original experiments, general reviews, and book reviews and a bibliographical index. The contents (see Appendix B) began with the experiments of Binet and Henri on memory (Nicolas, 1994a) and the first work concerning the psychology of famous men (by Binet). The volume also included the work of American collaborators in the laboratory and work done at Geneva by Théodore Flournoy, who had just established a laboratory of experimental psychology (see Nicolas & Charvillat, 1998). The presence of Flournoy's articles shows Binet's interest in experimental work conducted in other French-speaking countries. Although Binet's wish was not to present just the work of his own laboratory (which was the case, for instance, with the *Philosophische Studien*, edited by Wundt), one should note nevertheless that the work of Binet's team had a central position in *L'Année Psychologique*. The reason for this apparent monopolization is obvious: The laboratory at the Sorbonne was one of the few important research centers in experimental psychology at that time in France and French-speaking countries. There was another psychological laboratory at the Salpêtrière founded by Charcot in 1890 and directed by Pierre Janet.

When the first volume of *L'Année Psychologique* appeared, Beaunis left the laboratory (he was old and ill; see Nicolas, 1997), and Binet became his successor. Beaunis had expressed the key idea in the introduction to the volume: psychology understood as a natural science and separated from metaphysics (Beaunis, 1895). His article briefly summarized the emancipation of psychology and its growth as a science. He noted that metaphysical tendencies disappeared only during the 19th century with the writings of Taine, Spencer, and Bain. The only sound area for the growth of a scientific psychology was physiology as practiced by Germans J. Müller, Weber, and Helmholtz, and their successors. Thanks to its research on the brain, the cerebral localizations, sensations, the speed of nerve transmissions, and other topics, physiology had opened new horizons for psychology and provided it with the means of becoming a real science. Beaunis acknowledged the importance of Weber's research on sensations, but he considered Fechner to be the real instigator of a new psychology because he carried out complete and systematic work, based on rigorous and methodical experiments, and tried to express psychophysical laws. To Beaunis, the *Elemente der Psychophysik* by Fechner (1860) was the seminal book in experimental psychology. Beaunis emphasized the fact that in France Ribot had exercised a great influence on physiology in introducing experimental psychology and noted that in his own day, following Wundt's work, things were speeding up:
But it is no longer, as it was at the beginning, the measure of the duration of psychic processes and of the intensity of sensations that constitutes the almost exclusive object of research; memory, attention, judgment—in sum, all the psychic processes—are studied by experimental procedures commonly used in physiology. It is thanks to this methodology that psychology will become a science of observation and experimentation, in other words, a true science like other natural sciences. For this reason, psychology must forbid all speculation on the essence and the nature of the soul, on its origin, on its destiny. It is not useful to ask such questions because it is impossible to resolve them scientifically. Psychology is the study of humans’ and animals’ psychological expressions, the search for links between these psychological expressions, and the functioning of bodily organs, in particular the brain. Psychology gathers the information necessary for constituting a “human science,” without which the social sciences, education, and criminology will never have a solid foundation. Psychology must not go beyond that. It is in this spirit that this book has been conceived. (Beaunis, 1895, pp. vi and vii)

Beaunis was one of the small group of French pioneers of experimental research in psychology. Following Ribot (1870, 1879), he claimed that psychology had to break away from philosophy to become an independent science, using methods from the natural sciences. But if we had to evaluate today Beaunis’s contribution, we can say that it was mainly institutional. Beaunis founded and directed the new laboratory and attracted French and foreign researchers, but his own experimental research was not original, as revealed by his list of publications (see Nicolas, 1995). This title goes indisputably to Alfred Binet.

The Development of L’Année Psychologique (1895–1912)

The publishers of L’Année Psychologique as well as its editorial policy varied appreciably during the following years. We know a good deal about the journal’s development at the beginning of the century under the direction of Binet, thanks to the correspondence of the general secretary of the journal at that time, Swiss psychologist Jean Larguier des Bancels (see Chapuis, 1997; Nicolas, 1997). Binet’s two closest colleagues at the journal were Larguier des Bancels (1876–1961) and Théodore Simon (1873–1961; see Wolf, 1961); Simon published various versions of the famous metric scale of intelligence in collaboration with Binet (see Binet & Simon, 1905, 1908, 1911).

For reasons related to the business practices of Alcan (as we have seen, Binet and Beaunis had to advance money for the production of L’Année Psychologique and to cover the expenses of selling the journal), Binet decided to choose another publisher in 1896 (Volume 3, 1896–1897). The new publisher, Schleicher, also printed Binet’s most important books: Intellectual Tiredness (Binet & Henri, 1898), On Suggestibility (Binet, 1900), and The Experimental Study of Intelligence (Binet, 1903).

The nature of L’Année Psychologique did not change from 1894–1895 (Volume 1) to 1902–1903 (Volume 9), but from 1902 Binet anticipated the collapse of Schleicher’s publishing company. Thus he proposed a collaborative effort to Edouard Claparède (1873–1940), recently (1901) editor with his cousin Théodore Flournoy (1854–1920) of a French-speaking Swiss journal of psychology, the Archives de Psychologie (see Nicolas & Charvillat, 1998). The idea of publishing the two journals together never came about, but it is indicative of Binet’s fears about the future of L’Année Psychologique. Binet also contacted other potential
publishers, among them the Swiss Kündig and the French Masson. A contract with Masson was signed at the beginning of July 1903. The change of publishers coincided with the beginning of a gradual change of editorial policy (for the final plan, see Binet [1904]). This change of policy was dictated by commercial and not ideological considerations, because Masson was devoted mainly to medical studies. The change consisted of broadening the framework of the journal to include biology and moral philosophy along with psychology. Binet's intention was to publish either yearly or every 2 years, according to need, general review articles as well bibliographical essays and commentary by experts from many different fields: physiology, pathology, anthropology, sociology, criminology, child psychology, pedagogy, ethics, and philosophy.

The change of publishers was not without drawbacks, and Binet was always looking for new collaborators for articles and book reviews. Despite the advertising devoted to Volume 10 (1903–1904), it did not sell well (only 375 copies), and the editor lost money. Binet decided to modify the format of L'Année Psychologique again. Volume 11 (1904–1905) included more original articles (14 in all, 8 written by Binet) and 10 general review articles and the announcement of a new project of fusion with the Archives de Psychologie (nothing came of the negotiations). An American bibliography that had been published in L'Année Psychologique since Volume 2, and was published at the same time in Psychological Review, was removed to save space. Afterward, Binet returned to the format of the previous volumes. The annual reviews held an important place in L'Année Psychologique, and Binet was always looking for potential collaborators. He was still worried about sales, however; although they increased after 1906, the terms of contract imposed by the publisher became more severe. This new situation forced Binet to adopt a different strategy for Volume 13 (1906–1907), replacing the book reviews and some articles with general reviews.

The year 1907–1908 was marked again by a change of editorial policy (Binet, 1908), both for ideological reasons (Binet was becoming more and more interested in applied psychology) and commercial reasons (he had to find new readers). Henceforth, Binet gave priority to applied and social psychology (testimony, pedagogy, counseling, expertise, judicial psychology, psychological techniques, etc.) and reduced the number of annual reviews. Economic issues continued to threaten the journal. Sales dropped from 504 for Volume 12 to 455 for Volume 13. Binet attributed this drop to the lack of originality of the articles submitted by his colleagues. The call for external collaborators remained a priority, and the publication of an article by a psychoanalyst (Jung, 1909) was indeed an original step, showing that Binet was extremely broad minded at a time when this new approach was not well known in France. That Binet was very interested in this new approach to psychology was further demonstrated by his appraisal of psychology in 1910, when he placed the work of Freud among the four important developments in psychology. Readers and critics noticed the rarity of annual reviews and book reviews from 1907 on. Piéron (1909) was one of the most severe critics, but he might not have been aware of all the problems faced by the editor. The composition of the two following volumes (16, 1909–1910, and 17, 1910–1911), the last ones edited by Binet, was easier because of the high quantity of original articles written by Binet and Simon.

When Binet died in 1911, Larguier des Bancels and Simon (for biographies,
see Nicolas, 1997) undertook the production of the commemorative volume in 1912. This volume was composed of articles on Binet’s life (Simon, 1912) and work (Larguier des Bancels, 1912). But apparently his colleagues were not ready to pursue the editorial philosophy of L’Année Psychologique (see Nicolas, 1997, for further details). Larguier des Bancels refused to assume the task because it was too much work. Simon thought that L’Année Psychologique was Binet’s property and that it could not be anyone else’s, although he would have been happy to edit another journal of psychology (a wish that was never realized).

L’Année Psychologique survived nonetheless because the laboratory was not closed after Binet’s death. Piéron (1881–1964; for an autobiography, see Piéron, 1992) was assigned by the Department of Higher Education to be director of the laboratory. He also became editor of L’Année Psychologique, a position he held for more than 50 years. Piéron imposed a new editorial policy, different from Binet’s policy at his end of life. Piéron wanted the journal to return to its first goals: to publish research performed at the Laboratory of Physiological Psychology at the Sorbonne and to contain bibliographical analyses.

A Glance From 1912 to the Present

Piéron was promoted in 1920 to the chair of the Physiology of Sensation at the Collège de France. He created various research institutions to develop psychology in France, including the Institut de Psychologie (1920), regrouping the faculties of arts, science, and medicine. In 1944 he oversaw the introduction of a certificate of psychophysiology in the faculty of science; this led to the creation of a degree of psychology in 1948, confirming at last the breakup with philosophy. The same year, Piéron appointed Alfred Fessard and Paul Fraisse (1911–1996) to the editorial board of L’Année Psychologique. When Piéron retired from the Collège de France in 1952, he continued to hold the editorship of L’Année Psychologique. From this date, the journal came out in two volumes. Piéron published his main articles in L’Année Psychologique and also his well-known bulletins of information (necrology, etc.).

After Piéron’s death in 1965, his chosen successors were Fraisse and Fessard, who agreed that Fraisse would become the new editor of the journal (for an autobiography, see Fraisse, 1983; see also Rozensweig, 1997) and Fessard the associate editor. In 1980, George Noizet (1925–1984), the new director of the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology, became coeditor of the journal. After his untimely death in 1984, L’Année Psychologique became a quarterly. Juan Segui was coeditor with Paul Fraisse until the end of 1994, when Fraisse retired. Since then, Segui has been the editor of L’Année Psychologique; he is also the director of the laboratory. The journal has seen an internationalization of its board with the nomination of associate editors from mainly French-speaking countries, such as Canada, Belgium, and Switzerland. In the past, L’Année Psychologique was centered on experimental psychology, but its scope now has widened to include new disciplines such as cognitive neuropsychology, social psychology, and the history of psychology.

Conclusion

L’Année Psychologique was mainly influenced in the beginning by Binet’s personality (see Carpintero & Molto, 1994). Its founding was unquestionably the
work of Binet, although he benefited from Ribot’s efforts to start teaching psychology in France and from Beaunis’s efforts to create a laboratory of experimental psychology. Currently, the journal is linked to the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology at René Descartes University in Paris. The survival of the journal in its first years was due to Binet’s tenacity and to the efforts of his colleagues, including Ribot. Indeed, when Binet created the journal Ribot was very pleased, and he was associated with the editorial board from the beginning. Ribot contributed to the development of the journal by writing articles for it and by talking regularly about its contents in his own journal, *La Revue Philosophique de la France et de l’Etranger*. However, he was not greatly interested in laboratory psychology or pedagogical issues, and he was very pleased by the founding in 1903 of the *Journal de Psychologie Normale et Pathologique* by his two closest former students, Pierre Janet (1859–1947) and Georges Dumas (1866–1946). The psychopathological orientation he advocated in his teaching and in his books was finally realized in this new journal, which attracted numerous contributors interested in psychopathology.

It is difficult to compare the stories of journals that were contemporaries or predecessors of *L’Année Psychologique*. However, it seems true that the history of *L’Année Psychologique* is very close to that of two pioneer journals: the *Philosophische Studien*, founded by Wundt, and the *American Journal of Psychology*, founded by Hall (see Dallenbach, 1937; Ross, 1972). All three were created to introduce a new discipline in their respective countries and to publish scientific work. But the form and content of *L’Année Psychologique* were closer to Hall’s journal than to Wundt’s. Moreover, although *L’Année Psychologique* was closely linked to the laboratory of the Sorbonne, it was also open to the work of other laboratories of psychology. In this respect *L’Année Psychologique* was very similar to other contemporary journals, such as the *Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane*, edited by Ebbinghaus, and *Psychological Review*, edited by Cattell and Baldwin, even though these journals were created in completely different contexts (see Sokal, 1997). *L’Année Psychologique* was and still is a national and international journal. Its role is to inform readers of developments in psychology throughout the world by means of reviews and bibliographical analyses and to show the energy and originality of research done in France and in French-speaking countries. At the beginning of its second century, *L’Année Psychologique* is a journal of reference that has had and still has a great influence in France.

References


Appendix A

Contents of the Two Volumes of the Travaux du Laboratoire de Psychologie Physiologique

Volume 1 (Published in 1893; Work Done in 1892)

Introduction (p. 1)
“On Two Cases of Colored Audition,” H. Beaunis and A. Binet (p. 4)
“A Study on a New Case of Colored Audition,” A. Binet and J. Philippe (p. 18)
“A Note on Some Professional Calculators (Preliminary Communication),” A. Binet and J. Philippe (p. 38)
“Geometrical Visual Memory,” A. Binet (p. 42)
“Additional Notes on Mr. Jacques Inaudi,” A. Binet (p. 45)
“A Note on Individual Psychological Questionnaires,” H. Beaunis (p. 51)
“The Roots of the ‘Alaire’ Nerve in Coleopteran: A Note by Mr. A. Binet” (p. 82)
“Contribution to the Psychology of the Musician,” J. Courtier (p. 84)
Volume 2 (Published in 1894; Work Done in 1893)

"A Note on a Case of Colored Audition," V. Henri (p. 1)
"Summary of an Observation of Colored Audition," J. Philippe (p. 6)
"The Application of Mental Chronometry to the Study of Colored Audition," A. Binet (p. 11)
"On the Speed of Graphic Movements," A. Binet and J. Courtier (p. 14)
"New Experiments on the Speed of Graphic Movements," A. Binet and J. Courtier (p. 22)
"Some Experiments on Mr. Péridès Diamandi, Mental Calculator," A. Binet (p. 24)
"Simulation of the Memory For Digits," A. Binet and V. Henri (p. 26)
"The Memory of Chess Players Who Play Without Seeing," A. Binet (p. 32)
"Investigation on the Character of Children," A. Binet (p. 51)
"The Psychology of Conjuring," A. Binet (p. 54)
"Experiments on the Development of Visual Memory in Children," A. Binet and V. Henri (p. 56)

Appendix B

Contents of the First Volume of L'Année Psychologique (Published in 1895; Work Done in 1894), Published by H. Beaunis and A. Binet in Collaboration With T. Ribot and V. Henri

Foreword (p. i)

Introduction (p. iii)

First Part: Original Reports

"Memory for Words," A. Binet and V. Henri (p. 1)
"Memory for Sentences," A. Binet and V. Henri (p. 24)
"Psychological Notes on Dramatic Writers," A. Binet and J. Passy (p. 60)
"F. De Curel, Psychological Comments," A. Binet (p. 119)
"Research on Phonetics," Weeks (p. 174)
"Influence of the Environment on 'Ideation,' " T. Flournoy (p. 180)
"A Case of Personification," T. Flournoy (p. 180)
"Weight Illusions," T. Flournoy (p. 191)
"Laboratories of Psychology in America," E. B. Delabarre (p. 209)

Second Part: Bibliography

Histology, Anatomy, Physiology of the Nervous System (p. 241)
Visual Sensations (p. 309)
Auditory Sensations (p. 333)
Tactile Sensations and Other Senses (p. 342)
Sense of Time, Rhythm (p. 360)
Attention (p. 373)
Association of Ideas, Memory and Images (p. 389)
Pleasures, Pains, Feelings and Aesthetic Sense (p. 428)
Movements, Speech (p. 446)
Mental Chronometry and Psychophysics (p. 455)
Psychology of Children and Pedagogy (p. 466)
Hypnotism, Suggestion, Sleep, Dreams, Hallucinations, Etc. (p. 484)
Handbooks of Psychology (p. 502)
General Questions (p. 521)
Diversities (p. 529)
Obituaries (Charcot, Myers, Romanes, Helmholtz, Brown-Sequard; p. 535)

Third Part: Bibliographical Tables

Received April 2, 1998
Revision received March 18, 1999
Accepted April 15, 1999