

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESSES OF PSYCHOLOGY (1889-1960)

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Modern science -including psychology- can be viewed as an "organization that deals with the discovery of new facts and laws of natural phenomena. In analyzing it, social and conceptual factors must be taken into account in order to obtain a deeper understanding of its historical development (CARPINTERO & PEIRO, 1981). All these factors appear clearly in the history of the International Congresses of Psychology, taken as an exchange of ideas, and communication of the results of empirical and theoretical endeavor.

The second half of the nineteenth century was characterized by three major events: the gradual appearance of psychology in university programmes, the foundation of a great number of laboratories, and a greatly increased volume of research and information. This brought about the necessity for new channels for the communication and interchange of scientific ideas and data. It is in this context that the birth of International Congresses of psychology must be placed; as an important vehicle for scientific knowledge that has performed an essential role in formal, as well as informal, communication (GRIFFITH, 1970).

The Congresses have mainly been the result of hard work of international committees and above all, of the International Union of Scientific Psychology. The

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Congresses also played a role as a medium for maintaining the unity of psychological science. They have been held every three or four years, but great interruptions have taken place due to the World Wars. Their effects upon the history of psychology were extremely important (CLAPAREDE, 1929; THURSTONE, 1923; NUTTIN, 1978).

The social structure of the Congresses is straight for. Each meeting has been carried out through the organized effort of a national committee, led by a president or chairman, who is always an eminent person in the scientific field. The presentation of ideas and results has generally been carried out through three different channels: general sessions, symposia and free communications, but the various channels seem to alter the nature of the information passed through them (MONTORO, 1982; PIERON, 1954).

There have been changes in the names given to these meetings. These changes reflect deep problems in the identity of psychology itself. It is well known that the first Congress held its sessions under the title of the International Congress of Physiological Psychology. For the second Congress a new name was chosen, the Congress of Experimental Psychology, and finally, they agreed on this (for the following meetings). These changes reflect the efforts to gain a clear image of psychology broadening its field each time.

The first Congress met in Paris in 1889, sponsored by the French Society of Physiological Psychology, and it echoed an old aspiration of J. OCHOROWICZ, as can be seen in the pages of RIBOT's journal, *Revue philosophique* (1881) (MONTORO, CARPINTERO, TORTOSA, 1983). OCHOROWICZ, through this sort of meeting, wanted to secure the unity of scientific psychology against the growing specialization and fractionation of the works of psychologists (OCHOROWICZ, 1881).

The First Congress (Paris, 1889) had J.M. CHARCOT as President, the second (London, 1892), H. SIDGWICK. Both meetings gave place in their programmes to physiological questions, and the problem of hypnotism was viewed on important. The Third Congress, held in Munich under the Presidency of C. STUMPF in 1896, gave birth to new themes, broadening the entire field of psychology. In so doing it paved the way to the controversial Fourth Congress (Paris, 1900) in which a large number of spiritualists, theosophists, occultists, and people interested in psychical research tried to dominate the scene. It is one of the accomplishments of the Fifth Congress (Rome, 1905) to have clarified the concept of psychology thanks to its President, Giuseppe SERGI, and the effort of Italian positivists. In Rome there were also some initial steps made towards the acceptance of applied matters in scientific sessions.

The sixth Congress (Geneva, 1909), presided by T. FLOURNOY had to face the problem of the organization and structure of these meetings and an important change was brought about by the tireless Swiss Psychologist Edouard CLAPAREDE, a person to whom the Congresses of Psychology are particularly indebted.

The Seventh meeting was planned to be held in the United States, in 1913, but it finally took place in Oxford ten years later, in 1923, as a consequence of the First World War. Another change was the greater presence of American

psychologists in the meeting, and a sharp fall in French and German influence. The rhythm was recovered and in 1926 the psychologists met in Groningen, with C. HEYMAN acting as Chairman, but a smaller number of persons attended the meeting. Three years later, psychologists went to America for the first time, meeting at the Yale University (in New Haven), under the presidency of James McK. CATTELL. The programme was the most ambitious of all the Congresses that had taken place until that time, and the Congress had a larger number of participants and communications than in any of the previous meetings; psychometrics, physiological psychology and clinical psychology dominated the scene.

Copenhagen hosted the Tenth Congress, in 1923, with E. RUBIN as Chairman; this Congress was characterized by the small size of its programme and by the strong participation of American psychologists, interested in gaining a first-hand knowledge of European contributions and research. There it was decided that psychologists would meet in Madrid, in 1936, with RAMON y CAJAL acting as honorary Chairman, and Emilio MIRA as President but the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936, and psychologists had to move to Paris, where the Eleventh Congress was held in 1937. We have presented elsewhere (MONTORO, QUINTANILLA, 1982) a short account of the plans for a meeting that did not take place, but could have been essential for the development of Spanish psychology. In any case, the substitute meeting held in Paris, under Henri PIERON reflected some of the growing European instability but that reached its peak when the Second World War broke out, breaking up the timing of the Congresses again, which could not be renewed until 1948.

It was the third time that war had interrupted the normal development of the reunions of the psychologists, who seem very sensitive to this kind of event (MICHOTTE, 1938; FRAISSE, 1969).

In 1948, when psychologists met in Edinburgh, under the presidency of J. DREVER, the life of their Congresses was restored to normality. In Edinburgh the interest in psychometrics and clinical psychology was dominant. In the following meetings, their programme were extended to include the whole complexity of psychology. American psychologists outnumbered all those from other countries. David KATZ presided the meeting in Stockholm (1951), E.C. TOLMAN, that of Montreal (1954), A. MICHOTTE that of Brussels (1957), and W. METZGER chaired the one in Bonn (1960). Here we shall limit our considerations to the first 16 Congresses. We are at present investigating the remaining Congresses (1960-1980).

All this describes the external history of the Congresses. But there are other indicators that give interesting information about the evolution of the nature of psychology.

The information of the number of participants (TABLE I) clearly shows the growth of psychology in recent times. The first half of the 16 Congresses had an average of 370 participants. One can clearly see the boom of psychology in the last three Congresses analyzed here (1954, 1957, 1960).

TABLE 1. ACTUAL INFORMATION ABOUT INTERNATIONAL CONGRESSES
OF PSYCHOLOGY (I-XVI)

CONGRESS	YEAR	CITY	PRESIDENT	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES
1	1889	PARIS	J.M. CHARCOT	204	21
2	1892	LONDON	H. SIDGWICK	—	—
3	1896	MUNICH	C. STUMPF	455	20
4	1900	PARIS	Th. RIBOT	430	29
5	1905	ROME	G. SERGI	440	21
6	1909	GENEVE	TH. FLOURNOY	582	28
7	1923	OXFORD	CH. S. MYERS	239	20
8	1926	GRONIGEN	G. HEYMANS	241	21
9	1929	NEW HAVEN	J.McK. CATTELL	1129	36
10	1932	COPENHAGEN	E. RUBIN	—	—
11	1937	PARIS	H. PIERON	589	36
12	1948	EDIMBURG	J. DREVER	688	36
13	1951	STOKHOLM	D. KATZ	658	30
14	1954	MONTREAL	E. TOLMAN	1021	32
15	1957	BRUSSELS	A. MICHOTTE	1256	47
16	1960	BONN	W. METZGER	1833	44

* Without factual information about these aspects in the published proceedings

When we consider the countries of origin of the psychologists that delivered papers in the meetings, we find that five countries, the USA, the Great Britain, Germany, France and Italy fact 76 per cent of the papers contributed to the account for Congresses. The United States contributed a third of the papers (TABLE II).

The American explosion seems to have taken place in the last three Congresses, not taking into account the meeting of New Haven (1929). In the period analyzed here, the "boom" of psychology is closely connected with the evolution of American psychology. In the previous congresses we see a predominance of the European psychology, especially before the First World War. All these facts fit quite well with the standard image of the development of our science.

On the other hand, it seems that the majority group in each Congress consists mainly of psychologists and researchers from the country where the meeting takes place. Each Congress becomes a screen on which the organizers offer the best representative contributions of their country, reflecting different 'national' traits in scientific work.

High importance is given to the honorary positions awarded to the most distinguished members of the particular scientific community. Every country chooses eminent men to head their own meeting, beside them, we have detected the existence of a relatively small group of scientists that acumulate a great number of honours indicative of a social distinction among psychologists. They exercise control over the scientific community. This is a sort of 'elite'. Among its members we have found the most prominent ones to be Henri PIERON (who held 19 important duties), Herbert S. LANGFELD (16), Albert MICHOTTE (14), James DREVER (13) and Charles RICHTER (13). Perhaps it is not without significance that three of them belong to the same generation: LANGFELD, PIERON and MICHOTTE; LANGFELD was born in 1879 and the latter two, in 1881. But more interesting is the fact that they are not members of any theoretical school, as most of their prominent contemporaries were. Their names are related to experimentalism, and PIERON and MICHOTTE are best defined through their effort to give solid support to scientific psychology in their respective countries. All that seems to indicate that the 'elite' of these Congresses could be viewed as an eclectic group of men, chosen by the community in order to maintain some equilibrium to balance between national and 'school' trends in psychology. They represent a force that is generally missing in the accounts of the history of psychology which are built only on 'schools'.

The Congresses offer information about the evolution of themes that dominated the research in psychology for many years. We have classified the published reports according to their content, and we have found that only five categories, among nineteen that were used account for more that half of the contributions presented in the meetings (55 per cent) (TABLE III): these are 'psychometrics', 'sensation-perception', 'general psychology', 'physiological psychology', and 'clinical psychology'; they seem to have been the basic areas of psychological research through the years. There are interesting differences in the relative frequency of these subject-matters in the

TABLE II: FREQUENCY OF PAPERS AT I.C.P. (I-XVI) BY COUNTRY

CONGRESS		1o	2o	3o	4o	5o	6o	7o	8o	9o	10o	11o	12o	13o	14o	15o	16o	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
NATION		0	5	4	15	3	12	5	8	327	5	29	17	24	45	116	197	812	32.04
U.S.A.		1	7	7	7	2	1	17	9	19	3	20	61	34	9	66	46	309	12.19
ENGLAND		12	10	17	54	32	22	3	5	4	1	34	7	24	5	35	25	290	11.44
FRANCE		2	7	53	17	12	6	6	25	29	8	15	8	9	4	17	53	271	10.70
GERMANY		1	1	17	10	108	6	0	7	4	1	14	6	10	1	19	12	217	8.57
ITALY		21	43	124	139	202	73	40	84	443	23	187	133	168	95	329	430	534	

TABLE III: FREQUENCY OF PAPERS BY AREA IN I.C.P. (I-XVI)

CONGRESS		1.o	2o	3o	4o	5o	6o	7o	8o	9o	10o	11o	12o	13o	14o	15o	16o	TOTAL	PERCENT	ACUMULADO
SUBJECT MATTERS		1	5	10	20	18	10	3	8	74	0	19	23	28	21	50	80	370	14.60	
PSYCHOMETRICS		3	7	15	15	27	11	4	25	24	4	28	12	19	10	53	53	310	12.23	26.83
SENSATION-PERCEPTION		4	2	11	29	29	17	3	15	30	4	13	14	18	13	21	28	251	9.90	36.73
GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY		2	11	18	15	23	1	6	6	52	2	25	9	9	8	29	18	234	9.23	45.96
PHYSIOLOGICAL PSYCH.		0	1	24	18	42	1	3	2	47	1	11	14	22	1	7	31	225	8.88	54.84
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY																				
TOTAL WORKS PRESENTED		21	43	24	39	202	73	40	84	443	23	187	133	168	95	329	430	2534	100	

various channels for presenting information: In invited papers, 'general psychology' clearly dominates (37.70 per cent), 'psychometrics', 'clinical psychology' and 'physiological psychology' occupy the first places in symposia (13.89 per cent, 10.93 per cent and 10.93 per cent respectively); and finally, 'psychometrics' and 'sensation and perception' are the leading ones in free communications (15.88 per cent and 14.67 per cent respectively), (MONTORO, CARPINTERO & QUINTANILLA, 1982).

The published reports by the different Congresses were analyzed and their references were taken as basic material for a 'citation analysis'.

In this way, it has been possible to establish that only a very small fraction of the entire volume of papers summarized in the official reports of these Congresses have references (only 12.86 per cent of all the papers). In later meetings we find no changes in the trend of quoting previous researches, but only greater accuracy when any work is quoted. This scarcity of quotations gives an indication of the great difference that exists between a paper written for a meeting, and a journal article, the normal vehicle for exchanging scientific knowledge today (GARVEY, 1979). Meetings and journals are not identical media for communicating scientific knowledge, when viewed from the collaborative aspect: in Congresses, single authorship of papers is overwhelming.

Taking into consideration the limited volume of quotations found in all the papers, one can notice that the 'half life' of information -the median of the temporal distribution of the cited works- is about three years, which indicates its great recency. From a linguistic point of view, there appears to be two different epochs in the period considered here: before the First World War there existed a general tendency to quote French and German works. Following the First World War English citations rank first.

The most frequently cited researchers are the following: A. MEINONG (12 cites), E. THORNDIKE (12), W. WUNDT (11), W. JAMES (8), H. PIERON (8) and E. CLAPAREDE (8). Some of these names are 'classics' in psychology, and the last two were very active in organizing the Congresses; all of them are at the very top of the ANNIN - BORING - WATSON ranking of eminent psychologists (rank 27), with the exceptions of CLAPAREDE (rank 26) and MEINONG (rank 24), (WATSON, 1977). In any case, this selection of names could scarcely pretend to represent the entire field of modern psychology, and only serves as a feeble indicator of the dominant influences among psychologists attending Congresses.

The published reports of the Congresses also offer interesting information about the academic and professional association of the authors. The first place belongs to the University, whose members contribute with two thirds (66 per cent) of the papers delivered at the meetings.

The analysis of the International Congresses of Psychology offers a valuable account of the evolution of this science, especially in its institutional dimension. In them, an eclectic psychology seems to emerge that compensates for school tendencies, and brings out national trends in science. Experimentalism and methodological questions are dominant.

During these Congresses, the continuous growth of psychology is clearly seen as well as the great impact of social disturbances, such as wars, upon the development of science. The Congresses also attest the intensive interaction that exists between social and intellectual factors in the progress of science.

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