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Problems in the Behavioural Sciences

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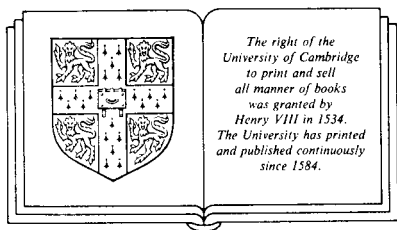
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Foreword

Hunger (like its predecessor in this series, *Thirst*, by B. J. Rolls and E. T. Rolls) is inter-disciplinary in its very nature: an adequate approach to the study of food intake, and the mechanisms that subserve it, is possible only if one starts by ignoring the traditional boundaries between psychology and physiology. Professor Jacques Le Magnen shows elegantly how, if one first poses essentially behavioural questions and then, to answer them, makes a series of simple (but careful and well-controlled) behavioural measurements, one is inevitably drawn to consider the physiological mechanisms that are likely to underlie the behavioural regularities observed; also, the physiological questions that one can then go on to pose are much more precisely framed and better targetted than if one had simply gone into the endocrine and nervous systems and baldly asked, 'how does this tissue control food intake?' There is indeed no better example of the importance of the systematic description of behaviour for problems in physiology than Le Magnen's now-famous observation that meal size is well correlated with the latency to eat the next meal, but not with the interval since the previous one. How much can flow from such a seemingly simple observation the reader will find (with much else) here.

Professor Le Magnen's laboratory is located in Paris, in an institution at once *ancien régime* and entirely modern, the Collège de France. It will surprise no one that our guide to the mysteries of hunger should reside in the city in which a million master chefs have explored every nuance of the motto, 'l'appétit vient en mangeant'. A future generation of chefs may perhaps have to pass an examination on the relation between this essential gastronomic truth and fluctuations (here lovingly described) in the levels of insulin and other hormones that regulate the concentration of sugar in the blood. They will find all they need for their studies in this book. Who knows, their labours may even enable them to add fresh tricks to their trade and to shape the next 'nouvelle cuisine'. For Professor Le Magnen shows the keen interest of the Frenchman, as well as the nutritional scientist, in all the varied aspects of that most important part of life, eating. His lucid account of how they can nearly all be encompassed by a few simple principles of wide generality makes compelling reading.

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