

THE PROCESS OF PSYCHOLOGY'S PROFESSIONALIZATION IN ARGENTINE

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SUMMARY

One of the main striking features of Psychology in Argentine, is the permanent neglect of the productions of the past.

It is possible to observe this trend in two cases. First, in all the psychology that appears at the beginning of the century. Second, in the period previous to the professionalization of psychology, around 1940 and 1950. This latter seems more extrange still, because one of the consequences of that period was, precisely, the creation of psychology as a career in the most important universities of the country, and consequently, the emergence of a new professional rol: that of the psychologist.

In this paper, we will center on that period, because we are convinced that then, the conditions for professional psychology were established in the country. Before that, we will summarize the main characteristics of the first psychology to appear in the country.

EXPERIMENTAL AND CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY

The first problem in the analyzis of Argentine psychology at the beginning of the century, is its accurate characterization. For many of the few papers on history of psychology in Argentine, following a traditional perspective from 1930 (Foradori, 1935), that early psychology was considered Experimental Psychology (Cortada, 1978; Papini, 1976; Tavella, 1957). Such characterization, of course, was not entirely arbitrary.

From the point of view of the historiographic models in those years, with the great impact of Boring's work, there was agreement as to the fact

that Psychology began as an independent discipline when Wundt introduced the experimental method in psychology in Leipzig, when the first Laboratory of Experimental Psychology was founded. Such historiographical perspective has deserved many criticism from the historiography of the last years (Ash, 1983; Blumenthal, 1980; Danziger, 1979; Kelly, 1980; O'Donnell, 1979; Tortosa et al, 1992).

On the other hand, and taking into account facticum data about the first psychology in Argentina, it is evident that the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology as an institution appeared early in the country. In 1899, Horacio G. Piñero established it at National School, and two years later at the Faculty of Philosophy.

However, when Horacio Piñero himself, explained the genalogy of scientific psychology, that is, of the *new psychology*, he showed that it was neither the Laboratory, nor Wundt the emblem that lead it. On the contrary, Wundt occupied the same referential place as Charcot and Ribot (Piñero, 1902), but within an identifying trilogy, in which the reception of Wundt's work is immediately belittled:

«Wundt's School, founder of Experimental Psychology in Leipzig, has also influenced our studies; but, I must warn you, it has not the enormous repercussion that it aroused in United States, where fifty laboratories are still following the ideas of the great master. In my opinion, they do a lot of psychometric, and psychometrics is but a small chapter of Psychology.» (Piñero, 1903).

Such confession, shows that, of that trilogy, Charcot and Ribot, and further more, the whole psychology originated in France, are the ones that are going to shape that first psychology in the country.

In that sense, and taking into account the impact of the French clinical thought, I have preferred to consider that psychology, as being of an Experimental and Clinical character. Clinical, because, it follows Claude Bernard, who explain that experimenting is central in medicine, but it only begins to exist from and after clinical work. Clinical is also the space that Horacio Piñero gives to his collection of articles in 1916, entitled *Works of Normal and Pathological Psychology* (Piñero, 1916). Clinical is, in turn, the context that Ingenieros gives to his book *Hysteria and Suggestion*, when he attaches them the subtitle: «Studies of Clinical Psychology». And finally, Ingenieros himself, mentioned in his book the works by Janet and Grasset on dissociation of mind, where, the concept of an superior automatism and a inferior mind, «begins to be incorporated into *Experimental and Clinical Psychology*» (Ingenieros, 1919, p. 311, the emphasise is ours).

PSYCHOLOGY SINCE 1930

In the few historiographical works on Argentine Psychology, thirty years have been conceived as a period of decadence of experimental model (Cortada, 1978; Papini, 1976), or even as an empty period (García de Onrubia, 1983). From the view of politics, the thirties began with a *coup d'état* that pulled down the democratic government of Hipolito Yrigoyen. From then on, it was consolidated by electoral fraude, federal interventions in many Provinces, and the beginning of torture and political murder (Ciria, 1980). The rightists, in turn, with a clear protection on the part of President Uriburo first, and never punished afterwards, didn't conceal their admiration for Mussolini as well as their friendliness toward the enemies of Spanish Republic and, after 1933, the advances of nazism (Ciria, 1980). From the view of culture, in turn, José Babini, one of the great historians of science in Argentine and a disciple of Aldo Mieli, noticed the dogmatism originated from German Philosophy, which is read in Spanish through the translation by *Revista de Occidente*, with a strong impact on Argentine in those years (Babini, 1967). Those were the years of antipositivism reaction, that was encouraged by very different people, like Coriolano Alberini and Alejandro Korn (Farré, 1958; Farré y Lértora de Mendoza, 1981; Korn, 1983). But they were, at the same time, years of vanguardism and Utopias, very characteristic of a mixed culture (Sarlo, 1988). So, in that contradictory context, psychology grewed in a striking way.

In fact, in 1930 the Buenos Aires Society of Psychology was recreated, following the primitive Argentine Society of Psychology, founded by Piñero and Ingenieros in 1907. In 1931, the Psychology Institute was organized within the Faculty of Philosophy. This Institute, between 1935 and 1941 published the *Anales del Instituto*, in where would not only the most important local people wrote, but also other well known figures from Latin America, like Plinio Olinto (1938), Walter Blumenfeld (1938 y 1941), Mariano Ibérico (1938), or even those one that began to arrive from Europe, like Emilio Mira y López (1941), Bela Székely (1941) or Heribert Brugger (1941). In 1933 too, the Criminology Society was re-created and in 1929, the Mental Hygiene Argentine League was founded, within the Neurology and Psychiatric Society. Likewise, well known personages as Dumas and Koehler visited our country in those years, and one of the most important theoretical book of Argentine Psychology, *Instinct, Perception and Reason* by Enrique Mouchet (1941), was chosen as one of the one hundred most important books by a research directed by the well known Rubén Ardila (Ardila, 1974).

At all events, it would be in the next decade, that Argentine Psychology will receive important reorientations. But it is wise here, again, to avoid of any quick political or ideological generalization.

As, on the one hand, academic psychology, that is, psychology at universities, returned to philosophical positions. In 1940 or 1950, a very important area of academic psychology, at least at Buenos Aires University, conceived psychology as a part of philosophy. But, not in the wundtian sense, in which psychology was, in fact, the most empirical science, a science of immediate experience, a complement to natural sciences, the basis of spiritual sciences, and a discipline that was preparatory of philosophy (Wundt, 1922). In those years in Argentine, psychology was a part of philosophy in a classical sense, that excluded empirical studies. The development of forms of philosophy near to existentialism or tomism, were epistemological obstacles to the new models of psychology developed principally in the United States, where technical intervention on human behaviour, was the main goal.

But, on the other hand, in contradiction with that, the social and political context of the country, didn't authorized such a merely speculative philosophical psychology. In the country, since the last years of the 1930 and because of the Second World War, an incipient industrial was in process, in the beginning aiming to the substitution of the importa-products (Kosacoff y Azpiazu, 1989). Such process, grew under the military government of 1943, because it was fostered by the Postwar National Board, and, above all, under the first peronista authorities, that governed the country between 1946 and 1955. The two Fiveyear Plans of government, on 1947 and 1953, tried, at the same time, to achieve more industrial production and to overcome distribution crisis (Halperin Donghi, 1983; Waldmann, 1981). The peronism process, in which overlapped at the same time, modern and tradicional significant, producing a new working and urban class, that requires a very quick reversion and modernization. In that context, professional guidance, reaches constitutional status in the new National Constitution sanctioned in 1949, when it was incorporated as one of the chapters of the article 37, that consecrates the worker's, family's, old people's, education's and culture's right:

«The professional guidance for the young people, conceived as a complement to the action of education and instruction, is a social function that the State secures and fosters by of institutions that guide the young people to such activities for which they have natural aptitudes and abilities, with the aim that the accurate professional election will benefit themselves and the whole society» (Cámara de Diputados, 1950).

So, Psychotecnics and Professional Guidance, appeared as a new way of intervention in the fields of education and work.

At the same time, the process of winning of the new sectores of workers and their families, led the peronist government to the strong bet on children and education rights, with constitutional status too. Peronist education, in some sense, consolidated, and in other sense corrected, the model of common, free, obligatory and laical education, a really emblem of the State at the end of the last century, by which the State tried to turn the immigrant's children into Argentine citizens. The educational project of peronism, in many aspects, was not very different from that of the 1880 generation. But, what has changed, are the beneficiaries: children of immigrants before, children of workers then.

The educational problems of scholar performance and abilities, were central for a massive educational project, but also for a project establishing that «capable pupils have the right to reach the most highest degrees of instruction». So, psychology could be one of the most useful tools, first for diagnosis, and then for egalitarian levelling. Similarly, the problems of laboral reconversion, found, or, at least, they believed to have found, the key for their principal problems in psychotecnics.

It is not strange, then, that some of the most significant projects of professional development of psychology, originated from the protection of three academic centres, but with a direct relation with the fields of education and work. One of these centres, developed at Tucumán National University, related to the professional guidance. The other two, at Cuyo National University: one of them in Mendoza, led by Horacio Rimoldi; and the other in San Luis, led by Plácido Horas.

ANTECEDENTS OF PSYCHOLOGY'S CAREER IN TUCUMAN AND CUYO UNIVERSITIES

At Tucuman National University, there were three scientific institutes, in where psychological subjects were studied:

- 1º The Psychological, Biological and Antropolical Section of the Educational Sciences Institute. The Section was directed by Oscar Oñativia, while the whole Institute was directed by Ricardo Nassif.
- 2º The Psychotecnics and Professional Guidance Institute, directed by Benjamin Aydar.
- 3º The Philosophy Institute, directed by Diego Pró.

In the Psychological, Biological and Antropological Section, Oscar Oñativia dictated a course on child psychology, José Mansilla another one on Rorschach's Psychodiagnostic and Oñativia and Beatriz Paula de Nassif, another one on Applications of Goodenoug Test. The Section itself, colaborated with the production of the contents for a «Census on Mental Level and Scholar performance», that the Government of the Province were developing on 1953.

Regarding the Psycotecnics and Professional Guidance, the development of the «humain factor» and the «study of work of worker» were its aim, taking in account that it considerer the problems of more production, likely to be translated into psychological goals: «adapting of the tools to the worker and the worker to the tools; aptitudes and quality more accordance with the diferents jobs, appropriate working places, motivation, incentive, etc.» In that frame, proffesional guidance was both an aim and a tool within the Second Fiveyear Plan. As the German historian Peter Waldmann has recognized in his study on peronism, the two Fiveyear Plans of government, and specially the second, were Peron's most important suces, beyond the opinion about ist contents that anyone can formulate (Waldmann, 1981). In the chapter devoted to work, it was established that social and economical policy of the State, had to be developed on different basis. Among them and in fourth place:

«Establishing the rational correlation between the aptitude of worker and his job in order to obtain highest levels of productivity and payment» (Nación Argentina, 1953, p.83).

At the same time, the Second Fiveyear Plan, tried to «channel the learning and professional guidance», subject that will be developed later.

If we take into account that, besides these ideas, the Second Fiveyear Plan, in the item devoted to the universities, fixed that they must been free, distributed on all over the country and «eminently practical and specialized», it is easy to conlude that the implementation of the Licenciature on Psychotecnics and Guidance Proffesional in 1953, seemed to be solidly founded.

A few years later, after the First Argentine Congress of Psychology in 1954, precisely held in Tucumán, the career of Psychotecnics and Professional Guidance, changed into the career of psychology. That, because in the Congress, the organization of the career of psychology in the national universities was recommended. In particular, in the case of Tucumán, the Congress recommended «the creation of the career of Psychologist at the Faculty of Philosophy od the Tucumán national

University, on the basis of the studies that are in course at the career and professorship of psychotechnics, and taking into account the lines of the career of psychologist approved» (Primer Congreso Argentino de Psicología, 1954, p. 508 y 509).

From the academic point of view, then, the conditions for the immediate beginning of the career of psychology in Tucuman University were set. In that sense, its delay is strange, as it was organized between 1958 and 1959. Perhaps, that was because of the close relationship between the role of psychotechnic or psychologist, and the very political projects of peronista government, which was finally pulled down by a new coup d'Etat in 1955.

At Litoral National University, the situation was not very different. The Career of Assistants in Psychotechnics, was there organized in 1953, at the Faculty of Philosophy in Rosario, the second city of the country. More than two hundred pupils, were interested in that career. But, because of the First Argentine Congress of Psychology, at the end of 1954, was created the career of Psychologist, which clearly showed the emphasis on the professional role better than on the discipline (Ascolani, 1988; Gentile, 1989).

At the Cuyo National University in turn, there were two groups interested in psychology since 1940. One of them in Mendoza, was led by Horacio Rimoldi, a physician graduated in Buenos Aires, who went to the United States in 1947 and got his Ph. D. in Chicago on psychological studies. Rimoldi learnt very early the problems that psychology could solve: war disorders (Rimoldi, 1941) or the professional guidance of adolescents (Rimoldi, 1940). Rimoldi was one of the most modern, among all those people interested in psychology. Not only for his interest on quantitative methods within a Laboratory, but also for his notion of psychology as a behavioural science, following the American models. Beside this, because he emphasizes the practical feature of psychology:

«The new orientations in education, the problems at big industries, the study of minority groups, the mass suggestions created by such political systems, guilt feelings or the aggressiveness either individual or in groups, racial tensions, religious discrimination, mental hygiene and the therapy of madness, environmental maladaptations, the problems related to the rational distribution of military and civilian personnel in war periods, the readaptation of displaced people, and so on, were and are still being studied. Definitely, the goal is to obtain a better adjustment of the individual to the environment respecting the individual differences and some basic rights that any person deserves» (Rimoldi, 1950, p. 87 y 88).

Many of the problems mentioned by Rimoldi for the professional intervention of a psychologist, revealed the impact of typical problems of North American society. Nevertheless, Rimoldi, directed an Experimental Psychology Institute at Universidad de Cuyo, between 1941 and 1946, in which for the first time he tried a local standardization of the Test of Raven. Within the social and political context we are examining the search for individual differences, was oriented towards the improvement of school performance and by the necessity to give similar opportunities to all pupils, although Rimoldi didn't seem to be close to peronism. In fact, he was out of the country at the beginning of peronism, and when peronism was pulled down, he was near the group of *Journal Science and Research*, led by Nobel Award Houssay, a well known opponent of Peron. Rimoldi promoted the creation of psychology career in 1950, but at the same time, he tried to introduce psychological studies within Medicine careers (Rimoldi, 1957). And after Peronism's pulled down, one of his disciples in Mendoza, Nuria Cortada took part in the elaboration of the Psychology Study Plan at Buenos Aires University (Cortada, 1978).

The other group at Cuyo National University was working at San Luis, where Plácido Horas, created the Pedagogical Research Institute in 1948, later called Psychopedagogical Research Institute. Besides the many tasks that both the Institute and Horas carried on during the fifties, as for instance the edition of the *Annals of the Institute*, Horas promoted agreements and actions together with the government of the Province of San Luis.

Perhaps, the most important agreement could be the one organizing the Educational Psychology and Professional Guidance Direction, that depended both of the University and the Provincial Government. In October the first 1952, the Headmaster of National University, Dr. Ireneo Cruz, went to San Luis to sign the agreement.

Dr. Cruz appears as one of the Headmasters who was most identified with peronista government, and Cuyo National University has shown many evidences of its unconditional adherence to the «new Argentine reality», as governmental marketing termed political and social reforms in the country. In 1949, has hosted the First National Congress of Philosophy. That Congress, by its objective academical importance and within a country strongly split by the antinomia peronism-antiperonism, was defined as an important act of government. Peron himself spoke at that Congress, later known as «The Organized Community», one of the most important political documents of the peronism in those years. The Cuyo National University, also were studying the organization of the

Chair of National Defense, not only as a Chair within it, but also as a model that for the others national universities to follow (Anónimo, 1949a). Finally, the University had organized the Work Institute, where again the Chief of State himself handed the certificates to the first graduates in 1949. Peron's words in that opportunity, show clearly the degree of the relationship between the Government and the Cuyo National University:

«I congratulate the Cuyo University. I congratulate it because in it, they didn't conform, like ordinary people, to follow the things that others have created. They, because they teach the doctrine of our movement, want to create new things» (Anónimo, 1949, p. 3).

In turn, the traditional newspaper *La Prensa*, strongly opponent to the government, and that a few years later would be expropriated, only eleven days after the end of the First Congress of Philosophy, wrote an editorial, entitled «Universities without legal government». There, the newspaper warned that, although the university law had been in force some time, only the universities of La Plata, Tucumán and the Litoral have been normalized. The article pointed out their concern about the situation of all of the universities, but Cuyo National University received the harshest critic:

«The situation at Cuyo National University, whose only authority, according to the new university law, is the Headmaster, designed by the President of the Nation is worse. They have organized neither the University Board nor the Directive Board of the faculties, and every Faculty are under the government of interventors delegated by the Headmaster» (La Prensa, 1949, p. 2)

So, in that context, the Pact between the Provincial Government and Cuyo National University, can be include within these lines of ideological agreements. The functions of such Educational Psychology and Professional Guidance Direction, were very important: «to advise in the teaching of feeble-minded child»; the «diagnosis and psychopedagogical assistance of the confined depending of Minority Direction»; «to examine psychotechnically the aspirants a Grants offered by the Province»; the «examination and professional guidance and capacitation both in the study of the aptitudes, and in all concerned with the adjust the personality to the job»; «to prepare the specialized technical personnel in all the tasks mentioned» (Dirección de Psicología Escolar, 1952).

Concerning the latter, Plácido Horas himself promoted the creation of Specialization on Psychology, for what he have taken into account different aspects, like antecedents of the career in other countries, that is meant,

España, France and Unites States; the relationship between the background on Psychology and the mains of the Second Fiveyear Plan; the development of the discipline in Argentine; the aplication's fields at that moment and in the future (Anónimo, 1953).

One of the points of the Resolution that established such Direction, repeated those aspects, and shows, certainly, the relationship between professional psychology development and Second Fiveyear Plan:

«...that diversés goals of the Second Fiveyear Plan, in a precise or indirect way an in many of its items, supports legitimacy the organization of Specialists on Psychology in order to operate in many fields» (Universidad de Cuyo, 1953).

Such Specialization on Psychology at Cuyo National University was strutured on the basis of three years of study, with 11 asignatures. In the first level, there was four asignatures: Anatomy and Phisiology; Psychology I; Psychology II; Psychology of the Child and Adolescent. In second level another four: Notions of Psychopatology; Forensic Psychology; Social Psychology; Notions of Mathematics applied to Psychology. In third level the another three ones and the final monography: Applied Psychology I (general problems; notions of psycometrics; critical study of tests applied to students); Applied Psychology II (scholar and professional guidance; professional selection; general psycotecnics and notions of psycotecnics applied to industry); Applied Psychology III (notions of biotipology and antropometry; diferencial psychology and characterology. Methods of study). The Specialization was destined to graduated in pedagogy, philosophy and related disciplines.

Two features, perhaps contradictory, must be point out. First one, the Specialization was certainly a career of psychology, although it brief duration. Second one, the profile of the Specialization, was not one major career of 5 years, but a short Specialization for other universitary graduated, still in 1953, and althoug Horas in San Luis and even before Rimoldi in Mendoza knew very well that the careers of psycholgoy in the other known countrys (England, United States and France), include almost five years of study.

Only one year later, at the First Argentine Congress of Psychology, it was recomendé the creation of careers of psychology as universitary major careers, and in that sense, were created, during three years at national universities: in 1956 at Rosario; in 1957 at Buenos Aires; in 1958 in San Luis, La Plata and Córdoba; in 1959 on Tucuman (Barriónuevo y García Marcos, 1975). But then, the policial context had been changed.

The military revolution that pulled down Perón in 1955, displaced everything related with peronism, even psychological institutions. For instance, the Records of the First Argentine Congress of Psychology, would be published in eleven volumes, but only one of them was edited before the fall of peronism. The manuscripts for the other ten, have never been found so far. In Rosario, were displaced all the actors of the old plan on psychology of 1954. And where that didn't happen (like San Luis), any vestige able to concern psychology with the plans of peronism, were carefully eradicated.

After that, we arrive to the period most knew of the process of professionalization in Argentine, that will ripen around 1960 and 1970. In these years, psychology definitively forgot any feature of state discipline that was one of its principal characteristics at the beginning of the century and during the peronism. On the contrary, the psychologist became an agent towards change (AA.VV. 1973; García, 1983) and so originated new characteristics (Vilanova, 1993). First, the adoption of theoretical models very far from only of behaviorism, but also of any one becoming from United States, as were the exigency of the political radicalization of 1960 and 1970. Second, the preeminence of the clinical practice, specially within a private office, that possibilite the professional to be insulated in relation to any control dispositive. Third, the very long delay in the legalization of professional exercise of psychology, that was only obtain in the last decade (Avelluto, 1983).

Taking into account these features, it is no strange why psychologists always forget the beginnings of the professionalization in the country. In fact, their identity as psychologist, was in contradiction with any possible behaviorist technician promoted by the State.

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