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Professions and Proficiency



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Chapter 9

The Beginnings of Psychologist Profession in Argentina: Science, Institutional Context and Society



Hugo Klappenbach

Initial Considerations

Argentina is a country located at the southern tip of South America. It gained independence from Spain in 1816 and since then has subordinated much of its culture and economy to other European nations, particularly France (in the cultural domain) and England (in the economic domain). After World War II, as British interests in the country declined, North American interests increased.

Considering these initial characteristics, this chapter analyses the rise and demise of certain types of knowledge in the field of psychology between approximately 1940 and 1970. First, the chapter describes the reception in Argentina of the so called *new psychology*, originated in European countries, mainly in France, Germany and England at the very beginning of twentieth century. Second, it explains the changes in the field of psychology around 1940, when appeared for the first time in the country undergraduate university programs related to psychology, most of them called programs in *psychotechnics* and *professional guidance*. Then, the chapter advances in the analysis of the intimate connections between these psycho-technical university programs and the needs of the federal administration for interventions and practices in the field of psychotechnics and professional guidance. Finally, the chapter analyzes the decline of psychotechnics and professional guidance, which coincides historically with the emergence of a new profession in Argentina: that of the *psychologist*. Once again, the chapter describes the deep connections that existed between the rise of the psychology profession in the 1960s and the political, cultural and economic situation in Argentina in those years. In this context, the decline of

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psychotechnics and the professional orientation and the appropriation of psychoanalysis as one of the central characteristics of the psychologist's profession is analyzed. One of the central issues of the chapter is the verification of the real gap that existed between the *psychotechnician* of the 1940s and the *psychologist* of the 1960s.

The *new psychology* appeared in Argentina at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of twentieth century. There were two reasons for its emergence. On the one hand, the consolidation since the 1880s of positivist ideas and the organization of the nation. The territory we know today as Argentina emerged from the dismemberment of the former Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata and the process of independence that had begun with the installation of the first government independent from the Spanish crown in 1810 and the declaration of independence in 1816 (Brown, 2010). What became known as the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata emerged, even though numerous *caudillos* in the different provinces proclaimed their relative autonomy with respect to the central policies of the Buenos Aires government. From 1820 the United Provinces “split between *Unitarios*, who supported the dominance of Buenos Aires, and *Federalists*, who preferred a more open and decentralized national government” (Lewis, 2001, p. 41, emphasis added). Only in 1862 all the provinces, including the powerful Province of Buenos Aires, agreed to a new national unification, and Bartolomé Mitre, precisely from Buenos Aires, became the first President of the country (Hedges, 2011). Adriana Puiggrós pointed out that the presidencies of Mitre (1862–1868), Sarmiento (1868–1874) and Avellaneda (1874–1880) had to deal with the “organization of the nation and the provinces, the economy, communications, transport, the organization of the national army, public health and the educational system” (Puiggrós, 1996, p. 55). For his part, José Babini added that “parallel to the national organization, science was also organized” (Babini, 1949, p. 63).

In that context of the construction of the national administration, positivist ideas became almost an official ideology. August Comte had been eloquent in this respect: “Les besoins essentiels de l'école positive concourent directement avec les devoirs naturels des gouvernements” [The basic needs of the positivist school coincide directly with the intrinsic duties of the governments] (Comte, 1844, p. 96). Thus, it has been pointed out that the political consensus of the late nineteenth century was sustained because of “set of philosophic and social ideas that proclaimed the triumph of science in Latin America” (Hale, 1986, p. 382). Such set of ideas “is commonly referred to as *positivism* [emphasis added], though there is no accepted definition of the term” (Hale, 1986, p. 383). So, positivism became an authentic *philosophy for action* in several Latin American countries, mainly Argentina, Brazil and Chile.

It is not surprising, therefore, that psychology emerged in Argentina within the framework of these ideas. On the other hand, it should be noted that in the reception of the new European psychology, the French filter that characterized the dominant sectors of culture and academia in the country was fundamental. We have pointed out that the *new psychology* began to circulate in the country through at least five main channels (Klappenbach, 2006; Klappenbach & Fierro, 2021).

1. In the first place, from the original work of authors from France. Among them, of course, Théodule-Armand Ribot, whose importance was highlighted for South America as a whole (Filho, 1939). But also Joseph Grasset, another central personality in Argentina, as we will immediately develop, up to Pierre Janet, Binet, Piéron, Charcot, and Georges Dumas, who “had an outstanding influence not only in France but also in Latin America”, especially in Brazil (Eisenbruch & Eisenbruch, 2000, p. 392).
2. The journals published in France, especially the *Revue Philosophique* founded in 1876 by Théodule-Armand Ribot, the *Journal de Psychologie Normal et Pathologique*, published from 1903 by Pierre Janet and George Dumas and, to a lesser extent, the *Bulletin de l'Institut Général Psychologique*.
3. The texts that I classified as *divulgarion* written by French authors, mainly the two famous books by Théodul-Armand Ribot. The first one, the *Psychologie anglaise contemporaine* (Ribot, 1870) and the second one, the *Psychologie allemande contemporaine* (Ribot, 1879).
4. The French translations of books and works from authors from other languages, mainly German but also English. The situation was similar to that analyzed in the case of Spain, where between 1876 and 1907, German psychology entered through the translations by Félix Alcan publishing house in Paris (Carpintero, 2000).
5. The translations into Spanish of books and works from other languages. It has been analyzed the importance of translations within the modernizing project of Spanish psychology before the Civil War. Some of the well-known publisher houses in the field of psychology were Daniel Jorro, la España Moderna, Librería de Fernando Ré, all of them in Madrid, as well as Sempere y Cía in Valencia (Quintana, Rosa, Huertas, & Blanco, 1997).

The dominance of the French bias explained above in the reception of the *new psychology*, was reinforced by the introduction of the French historiographical perspective. For example, Alfred Binet had reconstructed the origin of the *new psychology* in the following terms:

Depuis une quinzaine d'années la psychologie est entré dans une ère nouvelle. Cette ère date approximativement de 1878, époque doublement importante pour la psychologie, puisque c'est elle où, en Allemagne, M. Wundt a ouvert le premier laboratoire de psychologie expérimentale, celle aussi où en France M. Charcot a inauguré ses recherches sur l'hypnotisme chez les hystériques. A peu près à la même époque, M. Ribot fondait la *Revue Philosophique*, et donnait une vive impulsion aux études de la psychologie expérimentale en France. [For about fifteen years psychology has entered into a new era. This era dates from about 1878, a time that is doubly important for psychology, since it was there when, in Germany, Mr. Wundt established the first Laboratory of Experimental Psychology, and when in France, Mr. Charcot inaugurated his research on hypnotism in hysterics. At about the same time, Mr. Ribot founded the *Revue Philosophique*, and gave a lively impulse for the studies of experimental psychology in France.] (Binet, 1894, p. 1)

A few years later, Horacio Piñero, a physician who founded the first Laboratory of Experimental Psychology in Argentina in 1899 and taught psychology courses at

the University of Buenos Aires since 1902 and at the Normal School for Professors since 1904, employed almost the same words:

Dos hechos de importancia primordial señalan definitivamente sus rumbos en 1878: Charcot y sus estudios sobre la histeria y el hipnotismo, y Wundt fundando en Leipzig el primer Laboratorio de Psicología experimental. Si a estos hechos agregamos que Ribot funda la *Revue Philosophique* en esa misma época, podemos decir que de este trío surge: la observación clínica, la investigación experimental y la divulgación científica. [Two facts of primary importance definitively point to his directions in 1878: Charcot and his studies on hysteria and hypnotism, and Wundt founding in Leipzig the first Laboratory of Experimental Psychology. If we add to these facts that Ribot founded the *Revue Philosophique* in that same period, we can say that from this triad emerges: clinical observation, experimental research and scientific popularization.] (Piñero, 1902, p. 117)

So, Argentine's reception of the so-called *new psychology*, followed French Psychology tradition and was in fact very different both from German Psychology and North American Psychology. Piñero's words, emphasized the 3 main characteristics and the 3 referential authors guiding the European *new psychology*: (1) Clinical observation (guided by Charcot); (2) Experimental research (guided by Wundt); and (3) Scientific divulgation (linked to Ribot). However, considering that in Argentina physicians, lawyers and personalities from the field of culture and education rarely read German and, instead, read French fluently, what truly was introduced within Argentine Psychology, was French Psychology, mainly Clinical Psychology related to what we entitled *disaggregation of personality* (Klappenbach, 2006).

The Rise of Psychotechnics and Professional Guidance in the Field of Psychology

However, in those early years psychology's courses was part of the teaching in programs related to education, law or medicine. Psychology programs did not exist at either the undergraduate or graduate level. This situation began to change towards the 1920s, in this case in settings outside the university. And it increased in the 1940s, by then already in university settings. However, it is necessary to point out that in both cases, those programs in the field of psychology, so to speak, were not called *psychology programs*, but rather programs in *psychotechnics and professional guidance*.

The development of psychotechnics and professional guidance in Argentina was based on two complementary processes (Klappenbach, 2005). On the one hand, the advances in the field of *applied psychology* and psychotechnics in relation to the knowledge of aptitudes and personality traits that made possible the reciprocal adaptation of man to work, as well as in relation to the techniques or personality scales necessities to successfully establish the individual diagnosis, leveling and reorientation that those problems involved. The early work of Münsterberg in the United States and that of Stern in Germany or Claparède and Bovet in Switzerland, had matured in the organization of the International Conferences on Psychotechnics,

the first of them organized precisely by Claparède in Geneva 100 years ago (Carpintero, 2020a, 2020b; Trombetta, 1998). In his autobiography, Claparède explained some of the objectives of that conference: “The aptitude of a subject varies from one day to another. What is the ‘real measure’ of the aptitude of an individual? ... Another closely connected problem ... is that of the possibility of modifying original aptitudes through practice” (Carpintero, 2020b, p. 33).

In Argentina as well as in other Spanish-speaking countries, two of Münsterberg’s books had been circulating since 1911, *La psicología y la vida* [*Psychology and Life*], and *La psicología y el maestro* [*Psychology and the Teacher*], both of them translated into Spanish by Domingo Barnés, a promoter of applied psychology in the field of education, and introducer of Claparède’s ideas in Spain (Quintana et al., 1997). Münsterberg’s daughter pointed out that *Psychology and Life* was the first book Münsterberg published in English. In turn, *Psychology and the Teacher* was written between April and June 1909 and was one of Münsterberg’s most popular books. (Münsterberg, 1922). In Argentina, in his classical study on fatigue, Alfredo Palacios demonstrated a broad knowledge of Münsterberg’s work on the psychology applied to industry, which had been translated into Spanish by Santos Rubiano.

Alfredo Palacios questioned such work because, in his consideration, it remained within the Taylorist tradition (Palacios, 1944). Frederick Taylor (1856–1915), an engineer by profession, had argued that inefficiency at work could be solved by *systematic management*: “the fundamental principles of scientific management are applicable to all kinds of human activities, from our simplest individual acts to the work of our great corporations” (Taylor, 1911, p. 7). Taylor stated that scientific management was able “to obtaining the maximum output for each man and each machine” (Taylor, 1911, p. 27). Taylor discussed what he called the *management of initiative and incentive* because under such philosophy “practically the whole problem is ‘up to the workman’, while under scientific management fully one-half of the problem is ‘up to the management’” (Taylor, 1911, p. 39). Alfredo Palacios criticized Taylorism because its aim was to increase production and because the worker was considered just another machine. From his socialist perspective, the application of psychology to industry was aimed at preventing fatigue and improving the working conditions of the worker, the real axis of the economy.

Karl Jesinghaus, for his part, considered that Münsterberg had coined the term *psychotechnics* and emphasized the importance of knowing the personal aptitude of the worker in order to select the most suitable for each job (Jesinghaus, 1921). Jesinghaus had received his doctorate with Wundt in Leipzig and resided in Argentina between 1913 and 1935 and then between 1945 and 1948, when he died in the city of Tucumán (Geuter & León, 1990; Klappenbach, 2007; Lescano, 2019).

At the same time as the work of Münsterberg and Claparède, once again the French tradition in psychotechnics, especially the work of Henri Piéron and Guy Palmade, circulated in Argentina. Piéron stated that psychotechnics is the discipline that governs *the application of the data of psychophysiology to human problems*, through the use of a set of rigorously scientific methods and mainly of psychometric methods (Piéron, 1949, p. 7). In any case, the psychotechnician was not necessarily an applied psychologist. The knowledge and mastery of the psychometric

techniques, of the mental functions that they were evaluating, and of the conditions that affected their validity and reliability, all of this did not necessarily imply the application of those techniques in a certain area. That is, the epistemological foundation of psychotechnics was a scientific and technical one; instead, the epistemological foundation of applied psychology, is a social validation.

In the case of *professional guidance*, Henri Piéron defined it as follows:

Tâche sociale destinée à guider les individus dans le choix de la profession, de telle manière qu'ils soient capables de l'exercer et qu'ils s'entrouvent satisfaits, en assurant aussi, par la repartition de ces choix, la satisfaction des besoins professionnels de la collectivité. [Social task intended to guide individuals in their choice of profession, in such a way that they are able to practice it and they find themselves satisfied with it, while also ensuring, through the distribution of these choices, the satisfaction of the professional needs of the community.] (Piéron, 1951, p. 199)

In any case, in Argentina, the professional guidance was biased by what we could call the *Catalan perspective*. In 1927 the Institut Psicotécnic de la Generalitat was reorganized, under the direction of Emilio Mira y Lopez, who, in his South American exile, published in Buenos Aires the well-known *Manual de Orientación Profesional* [Handbook of Professional Guidance] (Mira y López, 1947). A diverse group of political exiles worked at the Catalan institute, among them Werner Wolff, Alfred Strauss, Sandor Eiminder and Alexandre Chleusebairgue (Moreu Calvo, 2007). Chleusebairgue headed one of the Sections of the Institute, the Section of Commercial and Industrial Psychotechnics, in which he taught a Seminar on Marketing (Benavent Oltra, 2008; Sáiz & Sáiz, 2007). Alexandre Chleusebairgue, of Belgian origin, was an engineer from the Polytechnic School of Berlin, who moved to Barcelona in the early thirties and there published three significant books on professional guidance in one of the most well-known publishing houses from Barcelona, Editorial Labor: *Orientación Profesional I. Fundamentos y Teoría* (Chleusbairgue, 1934a), *Orientación Profesional II. Procedimientos Prácticos* (Chleusbairgue, 1934b), and *Psicología del trabajo profesional* (Chleusbairgue, 1934c). It has been pointed out that Chleusebairgue's objective was "to harmonize the psychological characteristics of the workers with the economic needs of the country through the study of the professionography, ergology and psychometry" (Cercós i Raichs, 2009, p. 21), an objective that would also be central in Argentina, as we will analyze later on. In that sense, the curriculum of the degree in Psychotechnics and Professional Guidance organized by the National University of Tucumán in 1950, which we will analyze below, "was inspired by similar models of Cataluña and Mira y Lopez in Brazil" (Casali de Babot, Ventura, Jorrat, & Lupiáñez, 2006, p. 27).

There are several reasons for the importance of Catalan psychotechnics in Argentina. First, Mira y Lopez's time in Argentina before settling permanently in Brazil. It is interesting to note that Mira y Lopez published important works in Argentina, among them his famous *Manual de Orientación Profesional*. Secondly, the books of the publishing house from Barcelona Labor, which were widely circulated in Argentina. Finally, the importance of the psychotechnics biased by the socialist and Christian humanist traditions, both distanced from the Taylorist psychotechnics.

On the other hand, psychotechnics and professional guidance in Argentina, was also based in the economic and social conditions that had transformed the political scenario in the country since the late 1930s. The Second World War had favored an incipient industrial process originally aimed to import substitution (Kosacoff & Azpiazu, 1989). This process was to be accelerated after the military coup of 1943, which instituted the National Post-War Council. In this context, in 1945 the National Commission for Apprenticeship and Professional Guidance was organized (Pronko, 2003), within the framework of the transformation of technical education at different levels (Wiñar, 1970).

Peronism, the party that administered Argentina from the 1946 elections until it was ousted by a military revolution in 1955, consolidated this industrialist tendency. The accurate characterization of Peronism has generated conflicting interpretations in Argentine historiography (Acha & Quiroga, 2012; Rein, 2009). At the extremes, it could be conceptualized both as a kind of fascism (Germani, 1961, 1968; Halperín Donghi, 2006; Romero, 1965) and as a national liberation movement close to left-wing ideas (Hernández Arregui, 1973; Portantiero, 1973; Ramos, 1968). Considering that the main objective of Peronism was the welfare of the workers, it can be also characterized as a labor party. The two Five-Year Plans promoted by the Peronist regime, in 1947 and 1953, sought at the same time, to generate greater production and to overcome the distribution crisis (Halperín Donghi, 1983; Waldmann, 1981). In fact, according to data collected by Lewis, from 59,765 industrial establishments in 1943, the figure rose to 148,371 in 1954. In the same way, the number of workers increased from 820,470 in 1943 to 1,217,844 in 1954 (Lewis, 1990). In short, between 1930–35 and 1945–49, Argentine industrial production doubled as a result of the promotion of credit, control over the exchange rate and tariff protection (James, 1990). Peron's administration promoted an "alliance with small and medium-sized industrial entrepreneurs linked to the domestic market and the worker's unions emerging from the process of industrial modernization in a virtuous circle of consumption and production" (Fair, 2009, p. 519). That is, the transformations produced during Peron's administration, consolidated a new urban working class, which required a quick labor reconversion. In this context, professional guidance was incorporated as a new right in the Constitutional Reform of 1949, within the rights of the worker, the family, the elderly, the education and culture:

La orientación profesional de los jóvenes, concebida como un complemento de la acción de instruir y educar, es una función social que el Estado ampara y fomenta mediante instituciones que guíen a los jóvenes hacia las actividades para las que posean naturales aptitudes y capacidad, con el fin de que la adecuada elección profesional redunde en beneficio suyo y de la sociedad. [Professional guidance for young people, conceived as a complementary to the action of instructing and educating, it is a function social services that the State protects and promotes through to guide young people to the activities for which have natural aptitudes and capacity, so that the professional choice is in your best interest and in the best interest of society.] (Constitución de la Nación Argentina, 1949, p. 23)

Perón's Administration reinforced this direction in the Second Five-Year Plan. One of the special objectives of the Plan was that the National Employment Service would carry out "studies, censuses and research that would make it possible to

determine occupation levels that would provide elements of judgment to channel learning and professional orientation” (Presidencia de la Nación, 1953, p. 57). The plan also expected that the state, in accordance with the rights of workers, would ensure greater efficiency and productivity of work in industry (Presidencia de la Nación, 1953, p. 282). This objective would be achieved on the basis of three axes: (a) the improvement of technical working conditions; (b) the improvement of environmental conditions that would preserve the health and safety of workers and (c) workers’ training to raise the skills and quality of the workforce through specialized state institutions, learning and training centers organized by professional associations and industrial establishments in coordination with the actions of the state (Presidencia de la Nación, 1953, p. 282).

According to the above mentioned *Manual de Orientación Profesional* by Emilio Mira y López from Barcelona, the concept of professional guidance meant a “complex and persistent scientific action, with the aim of achieving that each people fit the type of professional work in which, with less effort, he can obtain greater performance, profit and satisfaction for themselves and for the society” (Mira y López, 1947, p. 1). Mira y López distinguished between *individual* professional guidance and *collective* professional guidance. While the individual professional guidance was a psycho-social process, *collective* professional guidance involved public policies, both in the field of socio-economic development in general and, in particular, in the field of the labor market, the training of human resources and in the demographic policies. As we mentioned earlier, due to the impact of the Catalan perspective, in Argentina, at least during Perón’s administration, the type of professional guidance was mainly collective professional. However, it also made possible the development of individual career guidance, which in reality would be consolidated only later in the 1960s (Klappenbach, 2018).

Within this framework, three national universities proposed new university programs in the *field* of psychology, although clearly related to the teaching and training in psychotechnics and professional guidance. From a legal point of view, national universities in Argentina are autonomous. However, they are financially dependent on the federal public administration. In this direction, it is not surprising that certain needs of the national state had an impact on the organization of new undergraduate or graduate programs in universities. The National University of Tucumán organized the Degree (Licenciatura) in Psychotechnics and Professional Orientation in 1950, directed by Benjamín Aybar (Klappenbach, 1995; Rossi, 1997). Sometimes, *licenciatura* is translated as a bachelor’s degree. However, *licenciatura* in Argentina classically last between 4 and 6 years, involve the approval of no less than 30 courses, and qualify for practically all professional practices in the disciplinary field in question. For this reason, they are more comparable to a master’s degree. The National University of Rosario organized the Psychotechnical Assistant program in 1953 in the city of Rosario directed by Arminda Benítez de Lambruschini (Gentile, 2003). And the National University of Cuyo, organized the same year the Specialization’s Degree in Psychology in the city of San Luis directed by Plácido Horas (Klappenbach, 1995).

The three universities had elements in common. Firstly, they were the most recent universities in the country. The Universidad Nacional del Litoral had been organised in 1919 and the Universidad Nacional de Tucumán in 1921, both on the basis of provincial universities. The National University of Cuyo in 1939. On the other hand, the National University of Tucumán and the National University of Cuyo were the only ones in which the Confederación General Universitaria, a student centre which was close to the Peronist administration, was represented. On the other hand, in the older and more traditional universities, such as those of Buenos Aires, La Plata and Córdoba, the predominant student union was the Federación Universitaria Argentina, which was strongly reformist and strongly opposed to the Peronist administration (Pis Diez, 2012). Finally, in the three universities, studies centred on psychotechnics and professional orientation were organized at the beginning of the 1950s, and later, from the middle of the decade, undergraduate programs in psychology.

The most important undergraduate program was the one implemented by the National University of Tucuman. His director, Benjamin Aybar was a philosophy professor, who considered that the problems of greater production could be translated into psychological terms: “adaptation of the tools to the worker and the worker to the tools; skills and qualifications more consistent with the various crafts, appropriate works places, motivation, incentives, etc.” (Aybar, 1954, p. 26). According to those premises, Aybar had organized in 1948, the Institute of Psychotechnics and Professional Guidance (UNT), whose objective were the development of the *human factor* and the study of workers’ work. Benjamin Aybar has been studied mainly for his contributions to philosophy (Caturelli, 1973; Rego, 1983). It has been pointed out the way in which, in an original way, he approached the problem of *transcendence*, from a position which, although it was basically Thomistic, at the same time it approached Augustinian positions, insofar as he proposed a preintellectual access to this transcendence. This preintellectual instance, the primordial truth of the person, was called by Aybar *esseedad*. Later, it is constructed the self, a matter which, in his opinion, had not been appreciated by modern thought. His position also distanced himself from existentialist approaches, insofar as he did not consider the man to be thrown into the world, but, on the contrary, he was harmoniously placed in the world. In any case, his philosophical, ontological and anthropological positions were closely related to his interest in psychology, psychotechnics and professional guidance. Along his most well-known book, *The Intuitive Realism* (Aybar, 1954), he introduced ideas of Janet and Dumas and demonstrated his interest in the psychological aspects of the personality. He considered that education’s process should be based on that preintellectual tendency, that is, on that *esseedad*, as the best way to respect the “diversity of aptitudes,” among different individuals (Aybar, 1954, p. 26). Aybar was referring to the educational process, but, at the same time, it is clear that he was referring to the objective of the professional guidance process, that is, to find the best occupation for personal fulfillment.

In Tucumán, professional guidance was based on two foundations. The first was purely economic and recognized the importance of work science. The second had an anthropological-philosophical-psychological character, based on the search for

personal fulfillment or personal realization. On this basis, the potential development of each individual's aptitudes could correspond, on a psychophysical level, to the development of his or her own *esseedad*. In 1954, the Psychotechnics and Professional Guidance Institute at National University of Tucumán was preparing the organization of the First Psychotechnics Week of Northern Argentina. In one of the newsletters related to such preparations, the topic of work was conceptualized. It was pointed out that in the last years it had been insisted on "the hierarchy of man, turning him into the vital center of economic activity and the point of reference from which all the other elements that make up an industry are organized" (Anónimo, 1954c, p. 570). In this direction, even though the idea of the adjustment of man to work did not disappear completely, the center of the question had changed significantly (Klappenbach, 2002).

The program's curriculum was organized by course's groups. The required courses of the psychological group were Experimental Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Social Psychology, Psychotechnics and Professional Orientation. Another group of required courses had to be approved at the School of Law: Political Economy, Sociography, Labour Legislation, among others. Finally, a third group of required courses had to be completed in the Biochemistry Department such as Anatomy and Physiology, Mental and Industrial Hygiene (Rossi, 1997). The Degree in Psychotechnics and Professional Guidance was opened until 1958. The transformation of such program into an undergraduate program in Psychology was a suggestion made by the First Argentine Congress of Psychology, which took place in 1954, precisely in the city of Tucumán. In one of the sections of the Congress it was recommended the organization of undergraduate programs for *professional psychologist*. In the case of Tucumán, the recommendation of the organization of an undergraduate program in psychology, specified that it was to be organized in the Department of Philosophy and Humanities, and was to be based on the studies for the degree in Psychotechnics and Professional Guidance (Anónimo, 1954b, p. 509).

The case of the program of Psychotechnical Assistant at the Universidad Nacional del Litoral, in the city of Rosario was short-lived. The program began in April 1953, with more than two hundred students enrolled. A precedent had been the organization in December 1951 of the Cabinet of Psychotechnics in the city of Paraná. The objective of the cabinet was to determine physical and intellectual aptitudes as a professional orientation (Ascolani, 1988). The program of Psychotechnical Assistant, on the other hand, was developed over two years. In the first year it was required to approve the following courses: Introduction to Philosophy, Psychology (theoretical), Logic and Sociology. And in the second year, Psychology II, Child Psychiatry (which was offered at the School of Medicine), Psychostatistics (which was offered at the Department of Economic Sciences). One year later, the recommendations of the First Argentine Congress of Psychology led to the creation, at the end of 1954, of the undergraduate Psychologist Program, which emphasized the professional role rather than the scientific discipline (Ascolani, 1988; Gentile, 1989, 2003). In May 1954, the Institute of Psychology was organized, which "could propose the creation of the Psychologist Program in its various specializations and on the basis of minor technical programs such as that of Psychotechnical Assistant"

(Ascolani, 1988, p. 46). Less than a year later, the displacement of the sectors related to Peronism from the university postponed the implementation of the new program until 1956, when new intellectual actors took over almost identically the previous study curriculum and organized the first psychology program in a national university. The program of Psychotechnical Assistant began to languish after the psychologist program was created, and students of the former were offered the possibility of continuing their studies in the new undergraduate program. And those who finally successfully completed the auxiliary program and approved all the courses, never received the corresponding diploma. The university only gave them a certificate, as a minor symbol of an experience that needed to be forgotten (O. Menin, personal communication, May 13, 1999).

The case of the program organized at the National University of Cuyo had some similarities with the previous ones, but also some differences. In the first place, it was organized in the small city of San Luis, where the human and social sciences studies of that university were developed. Secondly, it was the only one in those years before the First Argentine Congress of Psychology, which included the term *psychology* and not psychotechnics or professional guidance. However, one of the objectives of the program were the training of the personnel of the Department of Educational Psychology and Professional Guidance. The National University of Cuyo organized, in 1952, in San Luis, the Department of Educational Psychology and Professional Guidance, which depended jointly on the University and the Government of the Province of San Luis. Its director was Plácido Alberto Horas and among its purposes were the following: counseling in the teaching of underprivileged children; diagnosis and psycho-pedagogical assistance of the wards dependent on the Direction of Minors; examinations and advices related to professional guidance and training both in the study of aptitudes as well as in the adjustment of the personality to work; psychotechnical examination of the applicants for scholarships offered by the Provincial Administration; to provide training to technical personnel specialized in the above mentioned tasks (Universidad Nacional de Cuyo & Provincia de San Luis. Dirección de Psicología Educacional y Orientación Profesional, 1952, p. 273).

Plácido Horas considered professional guidance to be a meeting point between individual aspirations and conditions—personality and aptitude—on one hand and social needs on the other. Professional guidance “aims to ensure that the occupations and professions chosen in a way that was congruent with one’s own personality, aptitudes and social environment” (Horas, 1951, p. 131). In that sense, Horas argued that professional choice depended directly on the type of social structure and the possibilities of technical means of a society. In this vein, he emphasized the lack of a technical economic-social structure in the city of San Luis: “if we compare it with a U.S. city similar to ours, we will see the quantitative and qualitative differences in the professional preferences” (Horas, 1951, p. 132). Plácido Horas had already pointed out the importance of professional guidance at an early stage. One of the purposes of the Institute of Pedagogical Research (Instituto de Investigaciones Pedagógicas), organized also by Horas at the Department of Educational Sciences of the National University of Cuyo, was precisely, “to consider the problems of

professional guidance through its different aspects and according to the needs of the Cuyo environment” (Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación, 1948, p. 23). That is to say that, unlike the situation in Tucumán, in San Luis professional guidance appeared less related to the field of work and more to that of education, even though both fields may have been related.

The professional guidance activities described above, plus all those contemplated by the Department of Educational Psychology and Professional Guidance, posed the problem of training specialized technical personnel. To this end, Plácido Horas himself promoted the creation of an undergraduate program entitled *Specialization in Psychology*, based in three complementary aspects. On the one hand, the background of similar programs in Spain, France, and the USA. Second, the development of psychology in Argentina. Finally, “the relationship between training in psychology and the objectives of the 2nd Five-Year Plan” (Klappenbach, 1995, p. 242).

The Demise of Psychotechnics and Professional Guidance and the Emergence of a New Professional Role in the Field of Psychology: The Psychologist

A fundamental change for what we have been analyzing is that in 1954 the First Argentine Congress of Psychology was organized in Tucumán, with strong support from the Federal Administration (Dagfal, 2009). There, in a Commission in which participated, among others, Plácido Horas, Oscar Oñativia, Ricardo Moreno, the creation of psychology or psychologist programs in national universities was recommended. Undergraduate Psychology Programs were conceived and planned in Argentina in the context of a planning Federal Administration. Not only the old Programs in Psychotechnics and Professional Guidance, but also the new program in psychology recommended during the First Argentine Congress of Psychology, held in Tucumán. An interesting question is that the congress recommended not a program in Psychology, but a university program for *professional psychologist* (Anónimo, 1954a, p. 122). In other words, the application of psychological knowledge by a professional psychologist was emphasized more than psychological knowledge in itself.

Under the invocation of that congress, between 1954 and 1964, the first 14 undergraduate psychology programs were organized in the country: six in national universities, six in private universities and two in provincial institutions (Klappenbach, 2018) (see Table 9.1).

However, the social and political context had changed substantially. It is not simple to synthesize all the changes that followed the fall of the Peronist administration in September 1955. But at least it is possible to point out those changes that had a direct or indirect impact on the undergraduate psychology programs that were beginning to be organized.

Table 9.1 First undergraduate Programs in Psychology at Argentine universities (1954–1964)

Foundation date	City	University
1955 (April)	Rosario	National University of Litoral. After 1955 coup d'état it was reorganized in 1956
1956 (March)	Buenos Aires	University del Salvador (originally a Jesuit university)
1956 (April)	Córdoba	National University of Córdoba. Although the initial degree was intended to be Professor and Doctor on Psychology and Pedagogy, the resolution of April 1957 enabled the degree of Graduate (<i>Licenciado</i>) in Psychology and Pedagogy. In December 1958 the two programs were separate
1957 (March)	Buenos Aires	University of Buenos Aires
1958 (February)	San Luis	National University of Cuyo
1958 (November)	La Plata	National University of La Plata
1959 (August)	Tucumán	National University of Tucumán
1959 (August)	Córdoba	Catholic University of Córdoba (Jesuit university). It was closed in 1976 during the military dictatorship and reopened in 2005
1960 (May)	Mar del Plata	National University of Mar del Plata. In 1960 it began as a program of the Institute of Educational Sciences. In 1966 it was incorporated to the Provincial University of Mar del Plata. It was closed in 1976 during the military dictatorship and reopened in 1985 within the National University
1961 (March)	Buenos Aires	Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina. From 1961 to 1969 it was part of the Free Faculty of Psychology, institution annexed to the University
1962 (March)	Buenos Aires	University from the Argentine Social Museum
1963 (March)	Tucumán	Saint Thomas Aquinas University of the North
1963 (Agosto)	Mendoza	Faculty of School Anthropology. It depended on the General Administration of Schools at the Province of Mendoza and had the scope of a provincial university. It was definitively closed in 1977
1964 (March)	Buenos Aires	John F. Kennedy University of Argentina

Note. Source: Adapted from H. Klappenbach (2008, p. 21) with minor modifications in H. Klappenbach & C. Fierro (2021, p. 117) and new minor modifications by the author in this table. Adapted with permission

In the last 20 years one of the topics analyzed in the new social historiography in Argentina is related to Peronism from 1946 to 1955. While up to the 1990s, historiographic interpretations of Peronism reproduced political positions, in the last years a more precise analysis of the primary sources was privileged, and Peronism was incorporated into the topics of academic historiography (Acha & Quiroga, 2012). At the intersection of a social and institutional history of psychology, on the one hand, and that of a history of planification during the Peronist administration, it

is possible to analyze with a different light the emergence of the first undergraduate programs in the field of psychology in Argentina. And, of course, the fall of those programs after the fall of Peronism.

The first military President after the *coup d'état* in September 1955, known as *Revolución Libertadora* (Liberating Revolution), was the General Eduardo Lonardi. But in November 1955 he was replaced by General Aramburu, who began the so-called *desperonización* (i.e., de-Peronization) of society and public administration:

There was no single way of understanding the *desperonization* of politics, society, and culture (Spinelli, 2005). The one that predominated from Aramburu's government proscribed the Peronist party, which began with the Decree 3855 of November 24, 1955 (República Argentina, 1955b), but concluded with the well-known Decree 4161 of March 5, 1956, that came to prohibit the different elements and symbols related to the "deposed regime." Article 1 of the above mentioned decree prohibited throughout the country the use "for the purpose of Peronist ideological affirmation ... of images, symbols, signs, significant expressions, doctrines, articles and artistic works, which claim such character" (República Argentina, 1956b, p. 1). Other expressions of the *desperonization* can be seen in the prohibition of union activity, the revocation of the 1949 constitution, and the creation of multiple investigative commissions at the national, provincial, and even municipal levels. (Klappenbach & Fierro, 2021, p. 118)

It is necessary to observe that such investigating commissions, were absolutely outside of the ordinary justice system and the courts (Ferreira, 2016). Within national universities, the Decree 478 of October 14th, 1955 declared in Commission all the university personnel with the objective "to choose professors in the most responsible and fair manner" (Decreto 478, 1955). So, professors who obtained an appointment during Peronist administration were laid off. Previously, all national universities were intervened. In most cases the interventions were justified with arguments on "university disorganization, lack of academic freedom, and suppression of university autonomy" (Klappenbach & Fierro, 2021, p. 118).

In connection with industrial and labor changes, important modifications took place after 1955. One of them, was the increase in the average size of industrial companies. Companies with more than 200 workers, representing 29% in 1954, reached 40% in 1964 (Lewis, 1990). For its part, it was emphasized what became known as "dynamic industries," that is, industries with a lot of technological development in the iron, steel, petrochemical, rubber, mechanical and car sectors instead of the "traditional industries": food, textiles, tobacco, etc. And another key point, was that most of the industrial and laboral changes were the result of foreign investments and multinational corporations. In 1958 the new foreign investments were of 3 million dollars; in 1959 of 36 million; in 1960 of 106 million and in 1961 of 188 million dollars (Lewis, 1990, p. 298). These data are relevant, not because it is intended to sustain an exclusively economic causation of historical processes, but because they help us to understand the consequences of these changes and to analyze their repercussions, not always direct, on the issues of our interest, in this case, the transformation of the graduation profile in the first programs in the field of psychology. It has been analyzed that the greater dependence on foreign investment in peripheral or dependent countries implies a greater dependence on the international economy and this necessarily weakens the power of the nation state, even when the

state continues to intervene in the economy (Faletto, 2014). In the particular case of the so called Liberating Revolution and its continuation and subsequent transformation in the so called developmentalist model, there was a “change within the accumulation model that would modify the bases of social supports that characterized the market-internist model” (Fair, 2009, p. 525). In a classic text, Celso Furtado analyzed the changes in cultural and consumption patterns in peripheral or underdeveloped societies produced by *modernization*:

Unlike the developed economies, in which the dynamic factor is a coordinated process of new consumption patterns (private or public) and technological innovations, these two primary factors interacting with regard to conditions in the system as a whole, in the underdeveloped economy it is the imposition of consumption patterns from outside that constitutes the main dynamic factor ... In the situation of underdevelopment this process is only fully carried out with respect to the population group which is integrated in the “modern” sector ... It is appropriate, therefore, to conclude that the introduction of new consumption patterns among the rich groups constitutes the real primary factor (besides State action) in the “development” of the so called underdeveloped economies. (Furtado, 1971, p. 11)

In Argentina, Portantiero asked about the changes promoted by a “modern industry strongly integrated with foreign capital at the centre not only of economic life but also of new cultural values” (Portantiero, 1989, p. 20). Juan Carlos Portantiero also highlighted the role of the young middle classes. From his point of view, around 1960 an “industrial culture” had been installed in Argentina, together with the expansion of art and culture in which “*psychoanalysis* burst on the scene like an avalanche” (Portantiero, 1989, p. 21; emphasis added).

The economic transformations and the new culture of modernity not only promoted the irruption of psychoanalysis as an avalanche. Other profound transformations occurred at the level of everyday life. The Uruguayan historian Isabella Cosse defined several of these changes with the concept of *discrete revolution* (Cosse, 2010). Such a revolution included the expansion of psychotherapy that implied a reorientation of subjectivity and intimacy, the circulation of the “psychoanalytic vulgate” as Pujol called it (Pujol, 2007, p. 298), family planning and the split between sexuality and procreation favored by the wide diffusion of the pill (Felitti, 2012; Pujol, 2007).

In that context, psychotechnics and professional guidance remained on the side of a tradition that had to replace. The rhetoric of modernity demanded a reorientation also in psychology, something that the new undergraduate programs in psychology were going to carry out, propped up by that *avalanche of psychoanalysis* described by Portantiero (Klappenbach, 2018).

In such a climate of ideas, it is necessary to underline some modifications that occurred directly in the field of psychology.

First, the displacement from *professional guidance*, especially collective to the model of *vocational guidance*, individually and from a clinical and mainly psychoanalytical approach. The perspective of *vocational guidance* that began to take place in the 1960s and 1970s in Argentina was based on a radical differentiation between two possible approaches of vocational guidance: the *actuarial* modality and the *clinical* modality. Such distinction implied an explicit questioning of

psychotechnics, which, in Bohoslavsky's opinion, was close to the "*Examen de Ingenios*" that Huarte de San Juan wrote in 1575: "This [actuarial] modality is related to North American psychotechnics and the differential psychology of the beginning of the century" (Bohoslavsky, 1979, p. 15).

Second, directly related to the above, the shift from *psychotechnics*, considered as a whole as a Taylorist expression, and its replacement by the *psychodiagnostic process*, centered on the individual and psychoanalytically oriented. A well-known text edited by Siquier de Ocampo, García Arzeno and collaborators began, once again, with a veiled questioning to psychotechnics:

La concepción del proceso psicodiagnóstico, tal como lo postulamos en esta obra, es relativamente nueva. Tradicionalmente se lo ha considerado "desde afuera" como una situación en la que el psicólogo le toma un test a alguien y en esos términos de formula la derivación. ... De este modo el psicólogo ha funcionado como alguien que aprendió lo mejor que pudo a administrar un test [The conception of the psychodiagnostic process, as we postulate in this work, is relatively new. Traditionally it has been considered "from the outside" as a situation in which the psychologist takes a test from someone and in those terms formulates the derivation ... In this way the psychologist has functioned as someone who learned as best to administer a test.] (Siquier de Ocampo, García Arzeno, & Grassano de Pícollo, 1976, p. 13)

Third, the abandonment of the French psychological matrix, centered on the study of observable and operationalizable behavior, the perspective that Dagfal (2002) called *conduite à la française*, different in turn from American behaviorism, and its replacement by the *psychoanalytic matrix*, centered on making the unconscious conscious, which is ultimately only contrastable in the individual psychoanalytic experience.

It could be argued that the decisive change between psychotechnics and professional guidance, and even between the recommendations of that psychology congress held in Tucumán, on the one hand, and on the other, the new undergraduate programs in psychology that began to be implemented after the fall of the peronist administration, was given by a graduate profile that had the clinical as his or her central objective and psychoanalysis as the basis of his or her practice. However, *clinic* was not understood as a branch of psychology. On the contrary, the clinic was the foundation of all the field of psychology. Psychology, then, left its place in the world of the federal or provincial administration planning and found its best development as a liberal profession, at the service of the subjectivity of the individuals.

A renowned psychoanalyst and professor of the undergraduate psychology program at the University of Buenos Aires, José Bleger, explained the scope of this clinical perspective:

La psicología clínica es siempre el campo y el método más directo y apropiado de acceso a la conducta de los seres humanos y a su personalidad. Hasta ahora, la psicología experimental le es tributaria. Cuando la psicología experimental se "libera" de la actitud clínica y del método clínico, ocurre que el psicólogo deja de estudiar seres humanos para estudiar la técnica que emplea. Esto es muy frecuente, especialmente con los *psicotécnicos* que terminan estudiando el test y para ello se sirven de seres humanos, en lugar de servirse del test para estudiar los seres humanos. [Clinical psychology is always the field and the most direct and appropriate method of access to the behavior of human beings and their personality. So

far, experimental psychology is tributary to it. When experimental psychology “liberates” itself from the clinical attitude and the clinical method, it happens that the psychologist stops studying human beings in order to study the technique he or she employs. This is very frequent, *especially with psychotechnicians* who end up studying the test and for this purpose use human beings, instead of using the test to study human beings.] (Bleger, 1964, p. 179; emphasis added)

Bleger not only emphasized the clinical perspective for the whole of psychology but also pointed out that psychoanalysis coincided with the total field of psychology. In that sense, students in psychology programs did not need to study other schools or systems or perspectives of psychology. He also stated that psychology was merely a trade (Bleger, 1962). As a trade then, psychology was no longer a science and for that reason required that the knowledge of psychology be provided by psychoanalysis.

From Bleger’s foundation, the scope of psychoanalysis coincides with that of general psychology. That is, psychoanalysis can be applied to all human phenomena. From the moment psychoanalysis became the referential schema of psychology, the overlap between psychology and psychoanalysis became complete. It is true that Bleger also questioned psychology conceived as a liberal profession based on the individual practice of psychoanalysis. He even considered that if undergraduate programs in psychology were centered on the training of psychotherapists, they would be a failure from the social point of view. In his view, the psychologist’s main role was in *psychohygiene* (Bleger, 1966). Nevertheless, Bleger centrally contributed to the rise of psychoanalysis in psychology and to the demise of psychotechnics and professional guidance in Argentina.

Moreover, the appropriation of psychoanalysis is one of the central keys to the identity of the Argentine psychologist throughout its vast geography. The profession of the psychologist has grown in a remarkable way since the 1960s. The latest available survey indicated that in 2015 there were 101,217 psychologists in Argentina. Of these, almost half (48,000) were in the city of Buenos Aires, the country’s capital, with a population of 3,054,267 inhabitants. In other words, in the city of Buenos Aires, there is one psychologist for every 64 inhabitants (Alonso & Klinar, 2016). According to World Health Organization, with 222 psychologists per 100,000 inhabitants, Argentina has the highest rate in the whole world, above the Netherlands (123 psychologists per 100,000 inhabitants), Finland (109), Israel (88), Norway (73), Germany (50), Canada (49), France (49), and the United States (30) (World Health Organization, 2019).

In summary, it is necessary to underline, once again, that this extraordinary growth of the profession of psychologist in Argentina, which began around 1960, was only possible after a sharp break with the knowledge and practices in the field of psychotechnics that had been characteristic of the 1940s. It is possible to state that the profession of psychologist in Argentina was not the result of the evolution of the practice of psychotechnics and professional guidance. On the contrary, the psychologist’s profession originated in the ignorance and, in fact, the *rejection* of the psychotechnical practices of the previous years. In both cases, there was an intimate interweaving between professional practices and cultural and political conditions. Just as psychotechnics required its own special knowledge and skills, the

new profession of the psychologist required new knowledge, which was mainly provided by psychoanalysis, whether Freudian, Kleinian or Lacanian.

So, psychoanalysis largely biased psychologist profession in the last half century, may be in a manner that it is not easy to find in other parts of the world. This is all the more surprising considering that German has not been a widely spoken language in Argentina. On the contrary, Freud's work has been known basically in Spanish translations and in a few cases in the English translation of the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, edited in 24 volumes by James Strachey. And since the 1970s, the work of Jacques Lacan significantly biased the psychoanalysis appropriated by Argentine psychologists. And even though French has been a frequent language in the cultural elites of Argentina, the massiveness of Lacan's work has also circulated in Spanish translations.

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