

# Psychoanalyzing intelligence: Béla Székely's *Los Tests*

Victoria Molinari (\*)

(\*) [orcid.org/0000-0002-9257-8939](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9257-8939). CONICET, UBA, UNLP, Buenos Aires, Argentina.  
[victoria.molinari16@gmail.com](mailto:victoria.molinari16@gmail.com)

Dynamis  
[0211-9536] 2020; 40(2): 375-398  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.30827/dynamis.v40i2.17971>

Fecha de recepción: 9 de noviembre de 2019  
Fecha de aceptación: 28 de marzo de 2020

**SUMMARY:** 1.—Introduction. 2.—Who was Béla Székely? 3.—Psychology, education, and mental testing in Argentina. 4.—Re-defining intelligence. 5.—Conclusions.

**ABSTRACT:** This paper aims to analyze the definition of intelligence that appeared in the book *Los Tests* (1946) written by Béla Székely, a Hungarian psychologist who emigrated to Argentina in 1938. Although Székely's work was mainly related to psychoanalysis and child psychology, the publication of this compilation of psychometric tests became one of his most influential works, in which he based his observations on the ideas of Wilhelm Stern, Sigmund Freud, and Alfred Adler. The methodology used in this article is based on a qualitative and interpretative analysis of bibliographical sources from the perspectives of the critical history of psychology and intellectual history in Argentina in the 1930s and 1940s. In using this approach, I analyze what other specialists thought of intelligence, in contrast to the ideas presented by Székely. The article approaches the issue first by briefly presenting the author in question, and his position within Hungarian and Argentinian intellectual groups. Then, it studies general understandings of 'intelligence' and 'intellectual level' in Argentina around the time that Székely's book made its first appearance and, finally, it examines to what extent his viewpoint was different. The articulation between epistemological and historical discussions allows us to reflect not only on the transformations present in scientific constructs such as intelligence but also on the implications they had within the scientific community and on a wider social and political level. If intelligence was considered to be a neutral concept, then a mere compilation of tests would be enough for its dissemination. Székely's book made an impact because it contributed to the availability of testing technology, the popularization of said technology, and the intelligence concept.

**KEYWORDS:** intelligence, history of psychology, psychoanalysis, Argentina.

## 1. Introduction (\*)

Intelligence measurement has always been the subject of controversy, mainly because of the wide range of aspects it can encompass. At the beginning of the twentieth century, human differences could be classified and managed thanks to psychometric testing. In Argentina, intelligence tests were usually the subject of debate and, following Alfred Binet's warnings<sup>1</sup>, specialists advised that they be used with care and accompanied by some other form of judgment. However, the definition of the construct being measured was more problematic still —though professionals seldom argued openly about it, what they understood as intelligence, intellectual level, genius, or retardation varied greatly according to the professional area and period of study. In the 1930s and 1940s, the definition of intelligence began to move away from its more biological meaning and started to include social and even spiritual factors, yet rarely included any psychoanalytic explanation<sup>2</sup>. In this way, Béla Székely's work on the subject stood out, though this is not what he was known for.

Székely was a journalist and psychologist born in Transylvania in 1891. He had a very prolific intellectual and political body of work in Hungary up until he emigrated to Argentina in 1938, where he started working with several psychoanalysts affiliated with leftist ideology<sup>3</sup>. The singularity of his approach relied on the fact that he based his observations about intelligence and child development on the ideas of Wilhelm Stern, Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, and Marxist views of psychology. Though Béla Székely's work was mostly related to psychoanalysis and child psychology, one of his most influential publications was a compilation of psychometric tests, «The Tests»

---

(\*) This article is part of a four-year research project, UNLP S050, «Psychology and social order: theoretical and political controversies in psychological interventions in Argentina (1900-1990)», and three-year project «Centers and peripheries: circulation, reception and the transformation of psychology, psychiatry and psychoanalysis knowledge (1900-1990)», UBACyT 20020170100602BA. The research is funded by a postdoctoral scholarship from the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET). A previous version of this paper was discussed at the 38th ESHHS conference. Central European University, Budapest, Hungary.

1. Binet, Alfred & Simon, Theodore. Le développement de l'intelligence chez les enfants. L'année psychologique. 1908; 14: 1-94
2. Molinari, Victoria. Historia de las concepciones de inteligencia en la Argentina. Universidad de Buenos Aires; 2019.
3. Hopfengärtner, Johanna. Apuntes para una biografía de Bela Székely (1892-1955). Revista de Psicología. 2011; 12: 187-210.

(*Los tests*)<sup>4</sup>, first published in 1946 and later in the *Diccionario enciclopédico de la Psique* [Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Psyche] published in 1950. The first edition focused mainly on intelligence measurement, while the second and third editions included other personality and projective tests, such as the Rorschach inkblot test.

This article is part of wider research centered on the study of historical changes to the definition of intelligence in Argentina during the mid-twentieth century. Intelligence testing has been widely studied, especially focusing on the implications it has on the population through social discrimination<sup>5</sup>. In Argentina, there has been additional study focused on the more practical aspects of intelligence (or aptitude) testing and its impacts, especially on children<sup>6</sup>. However, there has not been much work on the conceptualization of intelligence, though it is generally agreed that intelligence must be understood as a historical rather than a natural, psychological category<sup>7</sup>. This article

- 
4. Carpintero Capell, Heliodoro, González Calderón, María José and del Barrio Gándara, María Victoria. Bela Székely: Su libro «Los Tests» en el contexto latinoamericano. *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología*. 2011; 43 (2): 357-68.
  5. Carson, John. *The measure of merit: Talents, intelligence, and inequality in the French and American Republics, 1750-1940*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007; Jacó-Vilela, Ana María. Psychological measurement in Brazil in the 1920s and 1930s. *History of psychology*. 2014; 17 (3): 237-48, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035333>; Danziger, Kurt. *Naming the Mind: How Psychology Found Its Language*. London: SAGE Publications; 1997; Daston, Lorraine. The naturalized female intellect. *Science in context*. 1992; 5 (2): 209-235, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0269889700001162>; Sokal, Michael. *Psychological testing and American society, 1890-1930*. New York: Rutgers University Press; 1990.
  6. Bisig, Nidia Elinor. La infancia abandonada-delincente en el discurso académico. del siglo XX - Córdoba Argentina. In: XXVII Congreso de la Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología. VIII Jornadas de Sociología de la Universidad de Buenos Aires. Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología. Buenos Aires; 2009; Talak, Ana María. Historia de las «aptitudes» en la psicología argentina. In: *Historias de la Ciencia Argentina II*. César Lorenzano, ed. Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, 2005, p. 375-385; Allevi, José Ignacio. Infancias deficientes y anormales: Iniciativas psiquiátrico-pedagógicas entre la Academia, la Beneficencia y el Estado en Rosario, Argentina (1920-1940). *Revista de Historia de la Psicología*. 2017; 38 (1): 27-34; Barrancos, Dora. La construcción del otro asimétrico: Mitos científicos entre los siglos XIX y XX. *Revista Argentina de Sociología*. 2004; 2 (2): 7-26; Kaplan, Carina Viviana. *Talents, dones e inteligencias: el fracaso escolar no es un destino*. Buenos Aires: Colihue, 2008.
  7. Müllberger, Annette. The need for contextual approaches to the history of mental testing. *History of psychology*. 2014; 17 (3): 177-86, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037487>; Carson, John. Mental testing in the early twentieth century: internationalizing the mental testing story. *History of psychology*. 2014; 17 (3): 249-55, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037475>; Smith, Roger. *Between Mind and Nature: A History of Psychology*. London: Reaktion; 2013; Nicolas, Serge et al. Sick? Or slow? On the origins of intelligence as a psychological object. *Intelligence*. 2013; 41 (5): 699-711, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intell.2013.08.006>.

will specifically address this issue through the qualitative and interpretative analysis of bibliographical sources from a mixed framework which combines the critical history of psychology and intellectual history<sup>8</sup>. This framework provides valuable tools for understanding what Székely thought of intelligence and for evaluating his contributions to local psychology without falling into mere contextual descriptions or personal celebrations. With intellectual history, we focus on the specific historical conditions in which certain concepts or ideas are presented, as well as dealing with possible transformations<sup>9</sup>. The critical history of psychology seeks to question the reification of «natural» psychological concepts, highlighting both social determinations and experts' interests in the construction of psychological knowledge<sup>10</sup>.

This article examines Székely's definition of intelligence and contrasts it with mainstream psychological understandings of intelligence at the time. We focus on the first edition of his book (*Los Tests*) because the definition he gave of intelligence remained unchanged in the following editions. Furthermore, due to the inclusion of other personality tests, we could argue that intelligence lost its primacy in later editions of the book. Three main aspects of Székely's definition stood out: a) where «classic» definitions of intelligence considered mental capacity in a restrictive manner (mainly from a biological perspective), Székely conceptualized it as a foundation and simply one factor in overall «mental disposition»; b) his theories did not abide by mental age but were instead based on the psychosexual stages described by Freud's psychoanalysis and Adler's individual psychology; and c) class determinations played an important part in intelligence for Székely, whereby he sought the causes for a poor mental disposition in poor living conditions. Furthermore, he appealed to the concrete relationship of the individual to their surroundings instead of taking a more idealistic view of intelligence. His work has only been scarcely analyzed and analysis has mostly been done from the perspective of Székely as a «curious» figure in history and the reception of psychoanalysis or within

---

8. Whatmore, R.; Young, B. *Palgrave advances in intellectual history*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; 2006; Szabón, José. *El desarrollo de la «intellectual history» y la problemática histórico-filosófica, en Nietzsche en Francia y otros estudios de historia intelectual*. Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes; 2009; Skinner, Quentin. *Lenguaje, política e historia*. Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes; 2007;

9. Altamirano, Carlos. *Para un programa de historia intelectual y otros ensayos*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI; 2005.

10. Danziger, Kurt. *Problematic encounter: Talks on Psychology and History*. 2010; Martin, Olivier. *Sociología de las ciencias*. Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión; 2003.

discussion of the early stages of the professionalization of psychology in South America<sup>11</sup>. Although the impact of «The Tests» (*Los Tests*) has been taken into consideration in these historical studies<sup>12</sup>, it is necessary to consider what Székely thought of intelligence and why his reflections were mostly ignored.

The first publication of his book must be situated in a particular moment in the history of psychology, not only for Argentina but also internationally. Namely, the incipient paradigm change from mental hygiene to the mental health movement, wherein social sciences and psychoanalysis (rather than merely biology) began having a more important part in the explanation of mental phenomena<sup>13</sup>. In Argentina, intelligence testing became more relevant than before, particularly in the 1940s due to a shift in economic policies that aimed at an industrial model and required the selection of qualified workers —implying the expansion of professional guidance through mental testing.

Although Székely contested the biological definition of intelligence, he still translated and transcribed many classical tests which considered intelligence and mental capacity to be a natural ability. This raises one important issue: was intelligence such a malleable concept that it could be measured and classified regardless of its definition? This seems to have been the understanding of many authors at the time, considering that they did not reflected on test standardization or even an exact definition of the construct<sup>14</sup>. This problem allows for the study of a specific psychological technology, its applications, and its circulation. The present article approaches the issue first by briefly presenting the author in question, to understand where he

- 
11. Erős, Ferenc. Zionism, marxism, and psychoanalysis: Hungarian (jewish) intellectuals in Transylvania and in Hungary after 1918. In: *Zwischen Hoffnung Und Verzweilung. Psychoanalyse in Polen Im Polnisch-Deutsch-Jüdischen Kulturkontext 1930-1939*. Cracow, 2017; Dagfal, Alejandro. *Entre París y Buenos Aires. La invención del psicólogo (1942-1966)*. Buenos Aires: Paidós; 2009; Klappenbach, Hugo. *La Psicología en Argentina: 1940-1958. Tensiones entre una psicología de corte filosófico y una psicología aplicada* [doctoral thesis]. Universidad de Buenos Aires; 1999; León, Ramón. *Notas acerca de psicólogos y teorías psicológicas de Europa Oriental en la historia de la psicología de América Del Sur*. *Liberabit*. 2014; 20 (1): 55-72; Hopfengärtner, n. 2.
  12. Carpintero Capell, González Calderón, and del Barrio Gándara, n. 4.
  13. Vezzetti, Hugo. *Psiquiatría, psicoanálisis y cultura comunista. Batallas ideológicas en la Guerra Fría*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI; 2016.
  14. See for example, Ciampi, Lanfranco. *Sobre la niñez anormal y retardada*. *Boletín del Instituto Psiquiátrico*. 1931; 3 (10-11): 184-89; Mercante, Víctor. *La investigación psicopedagógica y los tests. Atrasados, normales y superdotados*. *Anales de Biotipología, Eugenesia y Medicina Social*. 1933; 1 (12): 4-5; Rossi, Arturo. *Los tests mentales*. *Anales de Biotipología, Eugenesia y Medicina Social*. 1940; 7 (91): 4-6.

stood within Hungarian and Argentinian intellectual groups. It then studies general understandings of «intelligence» and «intellectual level» in Argentina around the time Székely's book made its first appearance and, finally, examines what was different about Székely's viewpoint. The articulation between epistemological and historical discussions allows us to reflect not only on the transformations present in scientific constructs such as intelligence but also on the implications they had within the scientific community and on a wider social and political level. If intelligence was considered to be a neutral concept, then a mere compilation of tests would be enough for its dissemination. Székely's book made an impact because it contributed to the availability of testing technology, the popularization of said technology, and intelligence. Finally, it works as a good jumping-off point to analyze the proposed social order by the Government.

## 2. Who was Béla Székely?

Székely (1892-1955; see fig. 1) studied in Nagyvárad and Budapest where he worked as a journalist for the Zionist and leftists' newspapers *Új Kelet* [New East] and *Keleti újság* [Eastern Newspaper]. In the late 1920s, he finally moved to Budapest where he reportedly studied psychoanalysis and Adlerian individual psychology. While there is no definite proof of these studies<sup>15</sup>, during the 1930s Székely published two books on psychoanalysis which focused on educational psychology and childhood sexuality<sup>16</sup>. Psychoanalysis was already strongly established in Budapest at the time due to the influence of Sándor Ferenczi. In 1927, the Hungarian Association for Individual Psychology was founded. Székely became acquainted with its founders and was later invited to give lectures and tend to patients<sup>17</sup>. Though he was closer to Adlerian

- 
15. Although there are no official sources that can confirm these interactions, in the prologue to *Los Tests*, Alfredo Calcagno stated that Székely studied with Wilhelm Stern, Otto Wiegmann, Karl and Charlotte Bühler, and Alfred Adler. The definition of intelligence analyzed in this article shows the knowledge he had of these personalities and their work. Székely, Béla. *Los Tests. Manual de pruebas psicométricas de inteligencia y de aptitudes*. Buenos Aires: Kapelus; 1946.
  16. Székely, Béla. *A Te Gyereked... A Modern Nevelés Kézikönyve*. [Your Child... A Handbook of Modern Education]. Budapest: Pantheon Books; 1934; Székely, Béla. *A Gyermekévek Szexualitása*. [The Sexuality of Infantile Years] Budapest: Pantheon Books; 1935.
  17. Szokolszky, Ágnes. Hungarian psychology in context. Reclaiming the past. *Hungarian Studies*. 2016; 30 (1): 17-56, [https://www.academia.edu/28285368/Hungarian\\_psychology\\_in\\_context\\_Reclaiming\\_the\\_past](https://www.academia.edu/28285368/Hungarian_psychology_in_context_Reclaiming_the_past)

theories, he demonstrated knowledge of pedagogical psychoanalysis —which was gaining strength in Budapest, especially through the works of Mihály and Alice Bálint and their conceptualization of the child's active participation in the object relation theory<sup>18</sup>. He also published several articles on education, sexual repression, and antisemitism, later publishing a book<sup>19</sup> on the topic wherein he understood anti-Semitism to be «the narcissism of minor differences» (following the work of Sigmund Freud's mass psychology). In this book, he also considered Wilhelm Reich's views on race and sexual repression and the formation of rigid and authoritarian personalities, including a Marxist analysis of antisemitism which emphasized political and economic factors.



Fig. 1. Béla Székely.

Source: Új Kelet cionista újság, 1919 (dominio público).

In 1938, Székely moved to Buenos Aires, Argentina, likely due to the introduction of the first anti-Jewish law in Hungary. He then tried to work on psychoanalysis and participated in several conferences in the *Colegio Libre de Estudios Superiores*, where many leftist and anti-fascist intellectuals congregated (including psychiatrists Gregorio Bermann or Jorge Thenon, who were also interested in dynamic psychiatry)<sup>20</sup>. Székely participated in the first meeting to create the Argentinian Psychoanalytic Association (APA) but was disregarded due to his lack of a medical degree and his eclectic views on psychoanalysis<sup>21</sup>. In the 1940s he founded the Sigmund Freud Institute, which was financed by two Jewish philanthropic organizations and served

- 
18. Erős, n. 10; Borgos, Anna. Women in the history of Hungarian psychoanalysis. *European Yearbook of the History of Psychology*. 2017; 3: 155-80.
  19. Székely, Béla. *Az antiszemitizmus és története*. [Antisemitism and Its History]. Budapest: Tabor; 1936.
  20. García, Luciano Nicolás. *La recepción de la psicología soviética en la Argentina: Lecturas y apropiaciones en psicología, psiquiatría y psicoanálisis (1936-1991)*. Universidad de Buenos Aires; 2012, p. 123-30.
  21. Hopfengärtner, n. 3.

as a psycho-pedagogical center for children. The center's activities were mainly focused on education and testing and had little to do with Freudian psychoanalysis per se. Instead, they concentrated more on Adler's individual psychology and the Rorschach's test. Székely also worked in the National League of Mental Hygiene with a school for parents, and published the Spanish version of his books on child psychology<sup>22</sup>. In her biography of Székely, Johanna Hopfengärtner points out how isolated Székely became throughout these years. Although he gained contact with many prominent figures in the psychological and, more importantly, psychoanalytic world, he was quickly pushed aside for varying (not always clear) reasons. Some of the most relevant examples include his failed relationship with Angel Garma, the first president of the Argentinian Psychoanalytical Association (APA), who rejected Székely's membership in the association in part because of the latter's affiliation with Reich's ideas<sup>23</sup>. Another interesting example was Székely's bad rapport with Gregorio Bermann. Despite having worked together and having similar views on psychoanalysis and leftist ideology, the two later became rivals, which had a very negative impact on Székely's ability to engage in the intellectual milieu. Also, Jaime Bernstein, a prominent psychologist who taught in the University of the Litoral and founded the publishing company Paidós, worked with Székely at the Sigmund Freud Institute performing mental evaluation and intelligence testing. Although working with Székely had a deep impact on Bernstein, when he later became a university professor, Bernstein advised his students not to use Székely's book<sup>24</sup>, since Székely had devoted his career to psychotherapy and education from an Adlerian perspective.

In the 1950s, Székely traveled to Brazil several times, where he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Salvador in Bahia. In certain circles, however, he was poorly regarded on account of his lack of a medical degree. Some specialists thought that his book on tests was just a compilation which had no real scientific or original value, with the fact

---

22. Erős, n. 11.

23. Reich was expelled from the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA) because of Ernest Jones' alleged political neutrality and rejection of Freud-Marxism. Jones sponsored the creation of the APA with Garma's presidency.

24. Klappenbach, n. 10, p. 315. Although it is not clear why Bernstein did this, it is possible that, first, he was trying to enhance his own publishing enterprise and, second, if Paidós was mostly inclined to psychiatry, he could have considered Székely's book to be intended for educational purposes only.



that he was not a physician making it even less serious<sup>25</sup>. Even so, Székely's experience in Brazil had such an impact on him that he decided to convert to Catholicism. In 1954, he moved to Chile, where he organized the Psychology Department in the Catholic University of Santiago de Chile but was promptly replaced by theologian Eduardo Rosales<sup>26</sup>. Székely then returned to Argentina and died the following year.

All in all, one of the characteristics of Székely's thinking was his eclectic and integrative views on psychology and Marxism. These were especially prominent in his work on anti-Semitism<sup>27</sup> and, as we will see later, in his definition of intelligence.

### 3. Psychology, education, and mental testing in Argentina

Intelligence in Argentina was a highly regarded concept in the first half of the twentieth century, even though there weren't many efforts to measure it consistently across the population. This meant that professionals from education and psychiatry used the term to classify people but these classifications or diagnoses were generally made by mere observation rather than rigorous testing. Still, specialists were very much aware of the publication of actual intelligence tests and praised the work done by Binet, Terman, and others<sup>28</sup>.

Up until 1930, intelligence was considered to mainly be a biological and inherited ability useful for evolution<sup>29</sup>. Most Argentine specialists were not strict hereditists however, and thus they considered intellectual level to be

- 
25. León, Ramón; Jacó-Vilela, Ana María. «Usted Es Mi Colega Más Cercano»: La correspondencia entre Walter Blumenfeld (Lima, Perú) y Bettina Katzenstein (Sao Paulo, Brasil) (1936-1965). *Revista de Historia de La Psicología*. 2018; 39 (4): 56, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5093/rhp2018a19>.
  26. Parra, Diego. Un análisis historiográfico sobre las relaciones entre psicología y educación en Chile (1889-1973). *Revista de Historia de La Psicología*. 2015; 36 (2): 95-114.
  27. Hopfengärtner, n. 3.
  28. Ciampi, Lanfranco. Sobre el cociente de la inteligencia. *El Monitor de la educación común*. 1922; 9: 114-20; Morzone, Luis. Conferencia sobre enseñanza de anormales. 43° Conferencia. *Tests Mentales. El Monitor de la educación común*. 1930: 95-101; Nelson, Ernesto. Un test mental para retardados y para niños analfabetos. *Revista de Psiquiatría y Criminología*. 1937; 2 (7): 3-26; Tobar García, Carolina. Las diferencias individuales en la escuela primaria. *Anales de Biotipología, Eugenesia y Medicina Social*. 1933; 1 (16): 19-20.
  29. See for example Mercante, Víctor. Medios de adaptación social inferior de los retardado y de los tarados mentales. *Revista de Criminología, Psiquiatría y Medicina Legal*. 1924; 1: 309-18; Ingenieros, José. *El hombre mediocre*. 3.ª ed., Buenos Aires: Losada; 1917.

something that could be improved (although not significantly). This had very important implications for dealing with any deviation from normal intelligence level. Instead of implementing politics of isolation or sterilization, specialists thought that the feeble-minded [débil mental] should attend special schools in order to be better adapted to society. In these schools, education focused mainly on the body. Since medicine was an important tool to interpret human behavior, intelligence was also medicalized (whether as a school or a psychiatric problem)<sup>30</sup>. Thus, when intelligence was deficient one of the main aspects of focus was the bodily health of the individual, which was considered to be the reason that the person could not reach a normal development. As Dr. Luis Cassinelli, medical school inspector, put it: «Physical conditions have a direct influence over the intellectual and moral ones, without body health the work of the mind is impossible»<sup>31</sup>. His opinion was shared among most specialists during the first decades of the twentieth century, which is why most efforts were devoted to improving physical health conditions such as nutrition, sun exposure, exercise, and general hygiene<sup>32</sup>. If a child had any problems adapting in school, they were sent to these special institutions or else fell behind their classmates and no further attention was put on them.

In the 1930s and 1940s, social sciences and psychoanalysis became an asset in the interpretation of mental issues related to intellectual level. The *Liga Nacional de Higiene Mental* [National League for Mental Hygiene] formed officially in 1929 and focused on a psychiatric view of intelligence and feebleness. Lanfranco Ciampi, a disciple of Sante de Sanctis and the director of one of the branches of the Mental Hygiene League, stated that although the *feeble* could be treated through labor therapy, their condition was incurable<sup>33</sup>. Adaptation could never be complete due to biological disadvantages<sup>34</sup>. The Asociación Argentina de Biotipología, Eugenesia, y Medicina Social (AABEMS)

- 
30. Di Liscia, María Silvia; Salto, Graciela Nélica. Higienismo, educación y discurso en la Argentina (1870-1940). La Pampa: Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de La Pampa, 2004.
  31. Cassinelli, Luis R.. Higiene escolar (consideraciones sobre niños débiles físicos y psíquicos). Antropometría del escolar argentino. Buenos Aires: Imp. López; 1916, p. 32. This and all following translations from primary sources are mine.
  32. Calvo, Edelmiro. La educación debe ser: social, homogénea y unica? Archivos de Pedagogía y Ciencias Afines. 1910: 74-80; Letelier, Valentín. De las formas didácticas y de los anormales. Archivos de Pedagogía y Ciencias Afines. 1911: 224-73.
  33. Ciampi, Lanfranco. Una institución y un programa. Boletín del Instituto Psiquiátrico. 1938; 2 (23): 112.
  34. Bosch, Gonzalo. Anormalidades de la personalidad, Anales de Biotipología, Eugenesia y Medicina Social. 1933; 1 (3): 3.

[Argentine Association of Biotypology, Eugenics, and Social Medicine] formed in 1932. In Argentina, biotypology was an important movement in which science and religion became intertwined. Since they adhered to Italian biotypology and orthogenesis<sup>35</sup>, most specialists understood intelligence to be a natural and spiritual ability that could be controlled with eugenics through marriage regulations and the appointment of each person to tasks suiting their strengths within society<sup>36</sup>. Arturo Rossi, the director of the AABEMS defined intelligence as the comprehension, analysis, and synthesis of the intelligible<sup>37</sup>. Intellectual level played an equally important role in personality as morale, morphology, and humor, all of which were strongly determined by genetic inheritance and by religious considerations about the soul. The Mental Hygiene League and the AABEMS dealt with intelligence in a different manner but still as a medical and biological concept. Where the former focused on treatment, the latter tried to provide a solution for the governing of healthy population.

Some professionals were more inclined to consider intelligence to be a secondary factor in psychological issues —one that could be strongly related to social class and not as much to hereditary conditions. Two of the most influential figures representing this position were Gregorio Bermann and Telma Reca<sup>38</sup>. Overall, they had similar ideas to Székely, even if they did not provide a *definition* as Székely did. Both Bermann and Reca considered intelligence to be something that should be measured with proper technology. Likewise, even if mental deficiency played an important role in social adaptation (especially in criminality), they considered intelligence to be secondary to

- 
35. Italian Biotypology was based on endocrinology to establish biotypes through the integration of mind and body. This integration of the mental and the physical was also explained by Thomistic Psychology and Holistic Medicine. Intelligence was one of the four main factors that constituted the biotype. Orthogenesis was the method by which Nicola Pende, its referent, proposed to rectify bad biotypes with the objective to «build the normal man». Pende, 1943, quoted in Galera, Andrés. *Hacia una fisiología del delito: El modelo biotipológico de Nicola Pende*. In: Miranda, Marisa; Vallejo, Gustavo, eds. *Darwinismo social y eugenesia en el mundo latino*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2005; p. 373.
  36. Molinari, Victoria. *Medición de inteligencia, normalización y fascismo en la Argentina de los años treinta*. *Acta Psiquiátrica y Psicológica de América Latina*. 2018; 64 (3): 198-208.
  37. Rossi, Arturo. *Tratado teórico práctico de biotipología y ortogénesis*, Tomo 1. Buenos Aires: Editorial Ideas; 1944, p. 240.
  38. Bermann, Gregorio. *El determinismo en la ciencia y en la vida*. Buenos Aires: Nosotros, 1920; Reca, Telma. *Delincuencia infantil en los Estados Unidos y en la Argentina*. Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1932.

personality<sup>39</sup>. Similar to Székely, Bermann referred to Adler's individual psychology to explain a child's reaction (such as envy, hatred, or cruelty)<sup>40</sup> to their environment and how that reaction affected the development of their personality. Bermann also thought that other character traits could have an influence on intelligence: «Precisely, in the ones affected in the feelings sphere, alterations exert an inhibition over intelligence and reason, which impedes or devalues an adequate answer»<sup>41</sup>. The main difference here from Székely, as we will see, is that the Hungarian used psychoanalysis and individual psychology to explain the development of intelligence in particular.

As Argentina aimed to become more industrialized, anthropometric and psychometric studies became a highly regarded asset. However, though some tests were translated and used, there was no large-scale tool for specialists to access and use in their daily practices. This is where the impact of Székely's book becomes relevant, not as a theoretical reference but as a very practical resource. Even so, Székely offered not only a compendium of tests but a very clear definition of intelligence —one which was ignored not only by his contemporaries but also by historical studies about him.

To summarize, the timing of the publication would be crucial to its success. First, the country was fairly interested in implementing scientific tools for the organization and administration of the masses. Second, the mental hygiene movement and the incipient mental health movement played a large role in the possibility for the use of intelligence and personality tests and, also, each offered a theoretical background that enabled different interpretations of the concept and the treatment of any deviation from normal intelligence<sup>42</sup>. In the rise of the mental health movement, we can find the nest for Székely's work and its public acceptance, due to the boom of mental testing and the possibility that specialists from different areas (education, psychiatry, psychology) could communicate with a common language provided by a common technology. As we will now see, Székely's definition included a social interpretation of

---

39. Reca, Telma. Cociente evolutivo en la 1° y 2° infancia, edad pre-escolar. Investigación realizada sobre 140 niños de 1° infancia y 409 de 2° infancia. en *Actas y trabajos del Primer Congreso Nacional de Puericultura - Tomo I*. Buenos Aires: Imprenta Alfredo Frascoli. 1941, p. 281.

40. Bermann, Gregorio. *Los menores desamparados y delinquentes en Córdoba*. Talleres gráficos de la Penitenciaría Nacional; 1933, p. 149.

41. Bermann, n. 40, p. 138.

42. Vezzetti, n. 13; Rose, Nikolas. *Governing the soul. The shaping of the private self*. London and New York: Routledge; 1990.

intelligence and class determinations, and a somewhat counter-definition of hereditist interpretations featuring a new understanding of mental age.

#### 4. Redefining intelligence

Székely's book (*Los Tests*, see fig. 2) went through three editions: the first one was published in 1946, while the third edition appeared in 1966 after the author's death and was completed by psychologist and pedagogue, Alfredo Calcagno. Calcagno was the Dean of the School of Humanities at the University of La Plata and was in charge of the editorial series «Library of Educational Sciences», for the publisher Kapelusz. Kapelusz was known for the publication of psychometric tests, whereas its main competitor, Paidós, was mainly focused on projective tests and the diffusion of psychosociology<sup>43</sup>. Calcagno's editorial series began with the *Manual de orientación profesional* [Manual for professional orientation] by Spanish psychologist Emilio Mira y López<sup>44</sup>, and was followed by Székely's «The Tests» (*Los Tests*). The third edition was most popular, mainly because it included the collaboration of other relevant authors and presented several heterogeneous —and ready to use— intelligence and personality tests. The first edition was the only version that provided a detailed

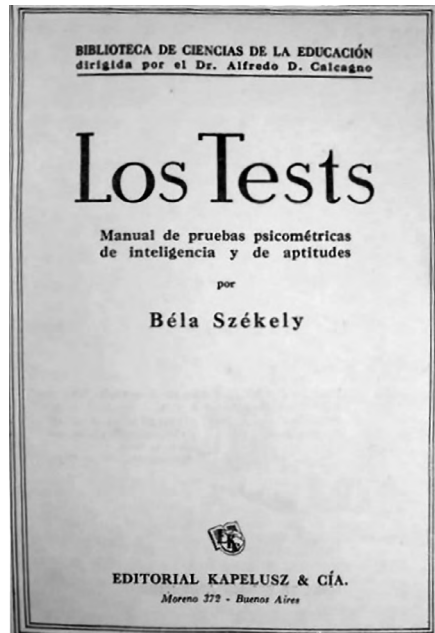


Fig. 2. Cover page: Székely, Béla. *Los Tests*. Székely, Béla. *Los Tests*. Manual de Pruebas Psicométricas de Inteligencia y de Aptitudes. Buenos Aires: Kapelusz; 1946.

43. Dagfal, n. 11.

44. Klappenbach, n. 11.

definition of intelligence, whereas the latter editions did not dwell upon this. In the end, this work served the purpose of disseminating intelligence tests when they were gaining popularity but did little to help his image as a serious psychologist. Székely targeted his book mainly at teachers and parents, not only at professionals with specific training in psychology. The practical use of intelligence tests was crucial to him because it had a direct impact on a child's life, and thus he aimed his work at the people who surrounded the child – teachers and parents.

In his definition of intelligence, Székely pointed out that measuring intelligence was limited to performance and was not the same as mental capacity in the ontological sense:

«By intelligence, we understand the *relationship* between an individual and the reality of life. But this relationship is not just determined by mental capacity, it also includes affective factors. We know «we are not the owners of our own home» (Freud) since we do not freely master our mental capacities [...] in consequence, mental capacity can be a perfect tool, but it depends on intelligence, the use that the individual does of it. In the past, intelligence was the equivalent of mental capacity, giving the latter supremacy it does not have in the psyche»<sup>45</sup>.

He then stated, quoting Stern, that intelligence was just a «means or instrument» but not a general purpose that determined someone's life.

To truly grasp Székely's notion of intelligence, we will address three characteristics more thoroughly:

a) The role of intelligence in mental disposition. The main aspect here is the relationship of the individual to concrete and real life, and the fact that this relationship includes emotional as well as cognitive factors. First of all, we can trace this thinking to Wilhelm Stern's notion of intelligence, which Székely quotes and references throughout the book. Stern conceived of intelligence as the general adaptability to new life conditions and problems<sup>46</sup>. In turn, Székely spoke of Stern's mental disposition to distinguish the overall personality of a person and the role intelligence played within it. Mental disposition

---

45. Székely, n. 15, p. 7, italics in the original text. This and all following quotes from Székely's book are taken from the first edition and were translated by the author.

46. Stern, Wilhelm. The psychological methods of testing intelligence. Baltimore: Warwick & York; 1914.

represented an innate mental energy that could only manifest in interaction with an individual's social surroundings. To explain this, Székely resorted to Darwinian evolutionary theory, referring to those mental faculties useful for adaptation. But for Székely, intelligence was just a component of this mental disposition that appeared in specific situations. He also referred to Koffka and Köhler's studies of intelligence among primates, which they used to explain their focus on human's ability to learn rather than *not learn*, meaning that humans would incorporate knowledge no matter the circumstances due to their inherent mental plasticity. But to Székely, it was more complex; a child had resources to learn new things and therefore increase their intellectual level *according to the task* they had to solve and their concrete life conditions.

Székely was critical of the use of tests for the sole purpose of numerical classification and thought that the evaluation of intelligence had to take into account other personality traits or a deeper knowledge of a child's personal story. Other specialists agreed with him on this matter, since intelligence tests were beginning to be used for diagnosis and vocational orientation<sup>47</sup>. However, this issue still presented a challenge when dealing with a clear definition, not just of intelligence itself but also of deficiency and the need for special education or medical attention. Székely also stated that there weren't many tests available that measured the whole psyche, so «we must limit ourselves to intelligence tests [...] if they are applied properly, they can be interpreted qualitatively»<sup>48</sup>.

Székely often referred to healthy children in his writing and was particularly interested in differentiating them from the *mentally retarded* or feeble [retrasado o débil mental]. In Argentina, this represented a quite novel approach, since most intelligence tests were aimed at identifying the latter. Even if, as we have previously analyzed, experts believed in the education of the *abnormal*, intellectual level was seen as a ceiling —special education could help but it had clear limits. Székely did not consider intelligence level to be the «ceiling» but the «ground» on which an individual could be educated and from which to improve his general capacities.

Furthermore, Székely used psychoanalysis to conceptualize intelligence and explain the difference between the normal and the abnormal. As we

---

47. Reca, Telma. La educación de niños anormales. *El Monitor de la educación común*. 1944: 42-45; Vespa, Zoraida. Ensayo de organización científica en una escuela de ambiente pauperrimo. *Anales de Psicotecnia*. 1941; 1: 25-43.

48. Székely, n. 15, p. 13. Italics in the original text.

have seen, he quoted Freud to justify the idea that we are not the masters of our mental abilities, since other affective factors are also at stake. This is quite important because intelligent actions were supposed to help a person adapt to the world and were mainly linked to conscious decisions. To Székely, there would be a part of the psyche that was not completely conscious and which could either harm or enhance the intelligent disposition. But his main interest was on Adler and the inferiority complex, explaining that intellectual performance was strictly dependent on the relationship between the child and their surroundings.

«When one measures intelligence through the individual's reaction to new situations, we must not forget that, it's sometimes society —or better said its representative, family— the one impeding the acquisition of these experiences, and sometimes what leads to others in which the individual clashes with real life. These frictions produce *behavioral disorders*, and the manifestation of mental capacities is recognized by every intelligent educator, but this criterion belongs also to the problem of *child neurosis*»<sup>49</sup>.

He continued on to explain that intelligence could not be measured if «psychic factors» were excluded and encouraged teachers to use their «psychological intuition» to interpret test results. He did not explain what this intuition entailed but later insisted that a new definition of intelligence should include a dynamic view on the subject that included cognitive, physical, and emotional elements. Within these dynamic considerations, he pointed out that cognitive factors included several aptitudes that helped in the acquisition of new experiences and the organization of such experiences to solve problems and adapt to social life. This leads us to the second point:

b) Intellectual level and psychosexual development. Székely agreed that there was some hereditary compound to intelligence which he called «collective intelligence», explained with Haeckel's theory of recapitulation and based on Freud's view of mental predisposition. This view not only entailed that humans contained important experiences as a part of their hereditary disposition but was also based on a biological tendency to economize energy. In contrast to commonly believed notions that children possessed a primitive form of intelligence, Székely thought that a child's intellectual level contained previous human experiences, which coexisted in the mind with new content

---

49. Székely, n. 15, p. 14. Italics in the original text.



(as Freud stated). That phenomenon was simply explained by the economy of energy, meaning that the individual saved energy by going through the same psychological paths as its antecessors. This opened the debate of chronological age versus mental age. Following from the biological disposition of intelligence, it was expected that intelligence would incrementally increase by age and maturity. However, after Binet and Simon posited the question of mental age, it was assumed that intellectual level did not always coincide with physical growth<sup>50</sup>.

In 1940, Székely had already addressed this issue in *Del niño al hombre. Guía para padres y maestros sobre la educación de los niños. Moderno tratado de psicología infantil* [From child to man. Guide for parents and teachers about child education. Modern treaty of child psychology] published by Claridad, an openly leftist publisher that aided in circulating Freud's ideas to the general public. As the title suggests, the guide covered a wide variety of topics in developmental psychology, written in a simplified way for a lay audience. One of the chapters was dedicated to the «dumb child» [el niño tonto] and questioned its existence. Székely suggested that intelligence was a spiritual factor, using the term «spiritual» as a synonym for mental but without theoretical precision as to why. He presented the early evolution of intelligence as closely related to the evolution of «affection». This connection was loosely based on Piaget, Freud, and (probably) on psychoanalytic pedagogy, especially on the origin of drive and its difference from instinct. In such a manner, Székely introduced child intelligence as the identification of social rules through *love* and imitation of significant others:

«In the same manner that the child has renounced to the liberation from a part of his instincts, he also renounces to pre-logical thought to achieve, instead, the harsh reality of what adults call intelligence. *Being intelligent is an adult measurement, never of the child*»<sup>51</sup>.

Intellectual development followed the same growth process of the unconscious, described by Freud as a phylogenetic recapitulation. This is quite important given that Székely would return to this notion to explain the relationship between intelligence and social class. Briefly, Freud used and

---

50. Binet; Simon, n. 1.

51. Székely, Béla. *Del niño al hombre. Guía para padres y maestros sobre la educación de los niños. Moderno tratado de Psicología Infantil*. Buenos Aires: Claridad; 1940, p. 165. Italics in the original text.

defended Haeckel's biogenetic law to explain the evolution of the psyche, with the exception that, in the mind, primitive thought coexisted with the unconscious instead of being replaced by new ideas<sup>52</sup>. Székely used exactly this explanation for intelligence, considering that one could never really dispose of primitive or pre-logical thought as it coexisted with new learning, and it also cohabited with affection and «neurosis», becoming entangled. He referred to Adler's «lifeline» to explain this unity and posited that when spiritual development stopped so would intellectual growth, generating a *dumb child*. Interestingly, he proposed that by surpassing spiritual repression, a child could thrive within their intellectual level (which should not be compared to an adult). The assimilation between intellectual and spiritual life, therefore, meant that *dumbness* was, in fact, another expression of neurosis and that it could not be treated with education but with love and stimuli to boost the child's confidence. He also quoted Adler by saying that hereditary predisposition was less important than nurturing experiences.

Accordingly, Székely stated that mental age wouldn't be the best way to identify intellectual level, because the kind of interaction that a person had with the world was determined by their relation to others and by their psychosexual development. First, he noted that intellectual maturity was related to sexual maturity:

«Freud thinks that in the primitive man, sexual development ended between the ages of 5 and 6 and that that development has been postponed later until 12-14 years old. This deferment paralyzes sexual development at 5-6 years old and produces the period named *latency* —paralyzation of development—, to reach suddenly sexual maturity at 13-14 years old. Modern psychology agrees that the development of psychic life ends at 5-6 years old, and everything that happens later isn't more than the repetition, utilization, and grouping of acquired elements. We should ask ourselves if this does not apply also to intelligence. Thus, the dilation of intelligence development until 14-16 years old will also be a consequence of life in society, as is *latency* in sexual development»<sup>53</sup>.

He also quoted Stern on this, since Stern too considered emotional life to play a very important role in the development of intellectual level. This was not only because of individual experiences but rather the common belief that

---

52. Sulloway, Frank J. Freud, Biologist of the mind: Beyond the psychoanalytic legend. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.

53. Székely, n. 15, p. 20. Italics in the original text.

children experienced lower intelligence at particular points of their life, such as 3 or 6 years old, because of a more prolific affective life. Meanwhile, puberty decreased intelligence because of higher excitability and emotiveness. So, for Székely, if age was an important factor influencing intelligence, psychosexual development—as an integral part of emotional life—could be crucial in understanding test results beyond IQ.

It's important to consider the relationship between Stern and Adler's ideas to better understand Székely. Stern thought that individual development occurred as a whole, contrary to an atomistic or dualist view. Therefore, he saw the child as complex and multi-determined, but also teleological and striving for organization, which is why it was important for him to conduct analysis on a case-by-case basis and focus on individual life experiences. This vision was also shared by Alfred Adler in his conception of «individual psychology»<sup>54</sup>, and was important for Székely in explaining intellectual level and differences amongst people. Székely tried to show that even two people with the same intellectual level could have different ways of expressing intelligence because of personality. Considering personality as a whole implied that innate factors were combined with environmental elements. But the environment was also determined by disposition, therefore disposition subscribed to the teleology of personality. How was this compatible with the impression that intelligence was not a limitation but an element that constituted mental capacity? Székely explained that intelligence was the ability to acquire new experiences, such that this ability was not fixed but did contribute to the maturation of personality. If psychosexual stages were closely related to the development of intelligence, and, also, intelligence played a crucial part in acquiring new experiences, then it all came together to define the personality as a whole (according to holist psychology, as defined by Stern and Adler). This is why intelligence testing was useful for the definition of character:

«The interpretation of intelligence *tests* allows us to determine types of intelligence, such as in characterology one can distinguish different types of characters. Being psychic and mental life a unit, the character would be the whole integral unit, and what we separate from it with the name *intelligence*, no more than *one of its ways of manifestation*. Even if for every character type

---

54. DeRobertis, Eugene M. William Stern: Forerunner of Human Science child developmental thought. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*. 2011; 42 (2): 157-73, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156916211X599744>.

there is a type of intelligence, the character is central and intelligence, secondary, and we can only appreciate it within the *unity* of character. As intelligence has a more limited field of action, it is easier to determine than character; this, in fact, comprises the whole field of psychomental life [vida psíquicomental]»<sup>55</sup>.

If intelligence tests were important for the determination of personality, then the implication was that intellectual development was relevant to Székely on an individual scale and not only of population importance, as other specialists who adhered to biotypology<sup>56</sup> believed. This also points to an overestimation by Székely of what intelligence tests actually tested, since most of them were designed to measure only intellectual level and not personality as a whole. Considering what was meant by intelligence constitutes a crucial point for the history of such technology.

Lastly, Székely considered intelligence testing to be more useful for the determination of normal intelligence and that mental deficiency was more related to emotion, such that instead of solely proposing an educational treatment such as mental orthopedics or labor-therapy (as was commonly used at the time)<sup>57</sup>, he was inclined to the use of psychotherapy. He also thought that testing in education could complement teachers' opinions and that testing was important for the classification of children and the place they should take up in schools.

c) Social class and intelligence. When speaking of social class, the debate between heredity and education becomes most relevant. We have already stated that at this point in history the strongest inclinations towards heredity (or even eugenics) had become somewhat diluted, and social determinations were thought to play a more important role in intellectual level. We have also explained that in Argentina, environmental factors were already considered to be quite important, sometimes even more so than genetics. However, the environment was not necessarily equivalent to social class, and Székely made a strong argument for that. He believed, with others like his mentor Stern, that heredity in intelligence mainly represented past experiences that served as a known psychological path and made the acquisition of some experiences easier for the child. He stated that normal development of the intellectual

---

55. Székely, n. 15, p. 102. Italics in the original text.

56. Rossi, n. 37.

57. <sup>57</sup> Molinari, n. 2. p. 146-199.

level could be negatively impacted by unfavorable conditions. But, taking into account that he considered intelligence to be a performance that was strictly related to concrete life situations, Székely thought that lower-income children also had an opportunity to thrive in complex circumstances, like making a living through adversity. This meant that he conceived a political human environment that was coherent with Marxist psychology, Adler's thesis, and also with the epistemological change brought by the post-war era.

If intelligence was a dynamic force, the three elements (physical, emotional, and cognitive) had to be consolidated properly. Otherwise, even if a person were given a proper education, their mental structure could collapse. This mental structure, and its corresponding superstructure, was formed by phylogenetic experience and shaped by the requirements of society: «superstructure is sometimes supported with such strength on the base, that it cracks, and the visible and invisible building of the child's intelligence *falls apart*»<sup>58</sup>.

On one hand, this quote explains the importance of education and life experiences as formative but dependent on phylogenetic disposition. On the other hand, disposition, «the building of intelligence», was also linked to the individual's relationship to significant others and the organization of personality, explained by Freud and Adler. Both factors were built upon social conditions and the opportunities presented within each family. For instance, Székely used Terman's findings on class and intelligence to explain that children in favorable socioeconomic classes had a more developed sense of language and therefore more comprehensive linguistic growth<sup>59</sup>. Alongside Stern, Székely believed that if someone was not required to use their intelligence, then their intellectual level would not develop. Thus, if there were proper stimuli then differences found between different classes would be practically non-existent<sup>60</sup>.

The relationship between social class and intelligence often entailed one important question: does intelligence determine social class or the other way around? This question frequently lay behind articles devoted to intelligence at the time and though the rise of social sciences brought new reflections

---

58. Székely, n. 15, p. 28. Italics in the original text.

59. Székely, n. 15, p. 27.

60. Székely also explained gender differences with this theory of usage or training, so that if some intelligence tests favored men over women, the differences could only be explained by of the roles they were expected to perform in society and not by biological differences.

on this matter, it remained unresolved. Székely thought, of course, that class determined intelligence and not the other way around. He thought that test results had to be properly standardized when comparing two different groups and raised concerns when comparing, for example, children from New York and children from Chaco, a rather impoverished Argentinian province. However, he did not include any sort of local standard in *Los Tests* publication. This was a common problem at the time and has been pointed out by other analyses of the topic<sup>61</sup>. There are two ways of interpreting this phenomenon. One possible answer would be to merely put the tests out in the hands of the public. Intelligence tests started to appear in common magazines, directed at parents almost as a form of entertainment as well as a quick and simple diagnosis which parents, particularly mothers, could apply to make sure their child was «normal». The other important factor with regard to this seemingly innocuous circulation of mental tests, however, was the intention toward homogenization and governing according to a global standard. This separated the «object-test» from the epistemological object it was supposed to be measuring, such that it became quite difficult to avoid comparing the New York and Chaco children<sup>62</sup>.

## 5. Conclusions

This analysis of Székely's definition of intelligence has shown what was original about his work and approach to the measurement of intellectual level—and ultimately upbringing or the treatment of feebleness. It has also highlighted that his book gained popularity *despite* his definition, due to a favorable context that was avid for technology that would ultimately aid in the organization of society. This context consisted first, globally, of the rise of social sciences, psychoanalysis, psychometrics, and special education, that was not only focusing on intelligence but also character and personality. Second, nationally and regionally, it consisted of specific institutions for the professional guidance being organized and seeking a precise technology for doing so, even as society was beginning to receive such technology and knowledge as a part

---

61. Carpintero Capell, González Calderón, and del Barrio Gándara, n. 4.

62. Espeland, Wendy Nelson; Stevens, Mitchell L. Commensuration as a social process. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 1998; 24: 313-43, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.313>; Molinari, n. 1, p. 225.

of their everyday lives. Székely was able to insert himself into this niche and gain some notoriety beyond the intellectual world.

His definition combined intelligence and personality in a way that permitted the measurement of both at the same time, instead of using a test for each. If intellectual level was dependent on concrete life conditions, social class, and sexual maturity, then it became possible to have a global view of the person which in turn allowed for more testing and a more thorough investigation of the mind. As Székely stated in the prologue of the first edition of his book, testing was intended to be a tool for teachers and experts to measure intelligence. He warned of the futility of intelligence testing when taken as a whole, decontextualized value. Still, within his book he gathered and collected a considerable number of tests, regardless of the definition of intelligence that laid beneath them —many examples of which did not coincide with his views. This could have happened, first, because intelligence was (and is) epistemologically obscure, therefore constituting an object that admitted contradictory forms of measurement. Second, we could argue that Székely was most interested in satisfying the incipient demand for psychological testing and finding a way to articulate psychoanalytic theory with intellectual problems in schools.

Székely always maintained his psychoanalytic views despite being rejected from most psychoanalytic circles and institutions. Perhaps the rejection he suffered from multiple intellectuals and professionals was the reason his work had a somewhat limited impact, only on educational psychology and just as a scientific popularizer. This raises the issue of reception and the circulation of knowledge. While his definition combined different intelligence theories, his readings had practically no impact. Therefore, it is difficult to place Székely as a reference for the works of Wilhelm Stern or Alfred Adler, though he did seem to represent a debate that was relevant in Hungary (particularly regarding the combination of pedagogy and psychoanalysis). Yet the fact that he had some connections in the educational world helped in the dissemination of his work and his focus on general aspects of psychology —particularly after separating from Angel Garma or Gregorio Bermann— made it possible for a lay audience, as well as teachers, to engage in psychological knowledge. Finally, while his lack of medical degree isolated him from the therapeutic practice, it brought him close to other professional circles within psychology. It is also notable that despite sometimes appearing to be the pariah of the Argentinian intellectual world at the time, his work was ultimately completed by colleagues and collaborators after his death, which helped popularize his books.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the anonymous referees of this paper for their suggestions and corrections. I also thank the editorial team of this monographic issue and the attendants of the 38th ESHHS conference for their useful comments. ■