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PAOLO SCOTTON*

THE CULTIVATION OF HUMANITIES IN THE GLOBAL SOCIETY**

ON ORTEGA Y GASSET'S INSTITUTE OF HUMANITIES

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Abstract: Once he returned to Madrid from his long exile, between 1948 and 1950 José Ortega y Gasset founded the Instituto de Humanidades (Institute of Humanities). This non-formal educational institution was conceived as a counterpoint to the cultural hegemony of the Francoist regime. This article aims to shed light on this usually neglected project developed by Ortega y Gasset during the last years of his intellectual career. A project that can be said to represent one of the most significant realizations of his pedagogical meditations on the role of humanistic education and philosophy in society, a recurrent topic of his writings at least since his Misión de la Universidad (Mission of the University). This case study is particularly relevant since the Institute constituted both a significant attempt to define the role of Western cultural tradition in the second post-war period and to defend the need for freedom of expression even under a censorious dictatorship. Moreover, this experiment was strictly entangled with the process of internationalization in education, which was promoting the construction of a global peace after the end of the Second World War. A project that still inspires the agenda of several international agencies, such as UNESCO.

Keywords: Ortega y Gasset, Institute of Humanities, Pedagogy, Internationalization, Global Education.

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THE GROUND CONDITIONS FOR THE BIRTH OF THE INSTITUTE OF HUMANITIES

During his whole life, José Ortega y Gasset combined his activities as a philosopher and university professor with the implementation of different cultural and political projects (Atencia, ed., 2015; Scotton, 2014). Such public engagement never ceased throughout his entire career, even when the political circumstances seemed to render it impossible (Scotton, 2019).

This was also the case of the Instituto de Humanidades (IoH) that Ortega established in Madrid in 1948, while the Francoist regime was

*Paolo Scotton, PhD, Professor at the Department of Theory and History of Education, University of Barcelona (Barcelona, Spain), p.scotton@ub.edu, ORCID: 0000-0002-3553-8076.

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dominating the Spanish cultural and social scenario (Claret Miranda, 2006). Ortega's main aim was to return through this project to playing a public role as an outstanding intellectual in his home country without being assimilated to the ideology of the new political regime. For this reason, he chose not to give lessons at the university — the institution in which he had been working for almost thirty years — accepting the difficult task of building a new educational institute with a different scope and purpose with respect to the official academia. An academia that, by that time, was marked by an intransigent national-catholic ideology (Moreno Pestaña, 2013; Scotton, 2020).

After more than ten years of exile, Ortega reestablished his relationships with the Spanish academic and political establishment (Gracia, 2014: 615). The regime was aware of the fact that the Madrilenian philosopher would not have been easily assimilated into its ideology. However, his mere presence in the country was proven to guarantee relief in relation to the international perception of the country as far as its freedom of expression was concerned (Güell, 2009). For these reasons, when Ortega decided to create in Madrid his new IoH, his activities were neither supported nor completely ostracized by the Spanish dictatorship. As one of his disciples and cofounders of the IoH, Julian Marías, wrote (Marías, 1983), the censorship of the propaganda obliged all the newspapers to dedicate exclusively very few and descriptive lines to this new Orteguian intellectual project. However, the intimate circle that surrounded this activity could count on the sympathy of some members of the establishment that had a very influential role within the regime propaganda (Cerezo González Cuevas, 2009: 111).

The absence of official support implied a lack of economic aid. Thus, this initiative had to depend on the matriculation fees of its students and participants. However, the poor material conditions of the Spanish population in those years would not permit a vast participation in these meetings, as had been wished by the proponents of the Institute. For this reason, they not only decided to award some funding to people in need or with a particular merit, but they also decided to include a series of free talks and public speeches to expand the audience of these colloquia. This decision responded to a specific desire manifested by Ortega, who wanted to attract those who were more likely to be excluded from the possibility of acquiring a decent education, i. e., university students educated by a contemptible propaganda and members of the working class.

After having passed the control of the censorship,¹ on November 6, 1948, the 24-page manifesto of the IoH was rendered public through two different reviews: *Ínsula* and the *Revista de Psicología General y Aplicada*. Moreover, it was also published and sold in different bookshops in Madrid and other Spanish cities, with a circulation of 1000 copies. After its publication, Ortega received several manifestations of interest from all over Spain. Not only by the members of upper society (ambassadors, professors, politicians, ministers, or university students), but also by middle-class people who had longed for the return of the philosopher.² Indeed, there was great expectation around the positive effects that the Institute could have brought about in the Spanish cultural atmosphere. However, at the same time, there was also some scepticism over the possibility that Ortega and his collaborators could have for really favouring the enhancement of humanities within an obscurantist society that was manipulating any form of authentic intellectual freedom.

THE ROLE OF HUMANITIES AFTER WWII: A LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUE

The status of humanities and philosophy in the second post-war period was a crucial preoccupation not only for Ortega and his circle of disciples, but also, generally speaking, for many intellectuals on a global scale. As Karl Jaspers wrote in 1951,

human existence is becoming mass existence. The individual loses himself or herself in types that impose themselves due to modern literature, cinema, and newspapers, and this is mainly due to all things becoming flat in daily life (man's habitus). In his desolation, he moves towards a self-reappraisal connected with a we by participating in a presumably powerful force of the mass (Jaspers, 1951: 25).

How education and humanistic culture could answer this problematic state of affairs was the dilemma Ortega was facing, at least since his most famous books published during the upheaval of the totalitarian regimes in Europe: *Misión de la Universidad* and *Rebelión de las Masas*. In that context, *Misión de la Universidad* not only constituted a pedagogical text,

¹ *Instancia en solicitud de autorización para imprimir la obra "Prospecto del Instituto de Humanidades,"* in General Archive of Administration, Exp. 5376-48 Sig 21/08499. According to the censor (Batanero), the manifesto: "no contiene nada censurable. Se limita a exponer la razón del título y contenido a desarrollar en la actividad del centro de cultura e investigación que crean, programa, matrícula etc."

² Numerous letters can be consulted in the Archive of the Ortega y Gasset Foundation in Madrid, showing the support of many people from very different backgrounds for this new project implemented by the Spanish philosopher.

but also a political one. In its introduction, Ortega presented himself as a spiritual guide for his students, as an heir of the tradition of pedagogical renewal started by the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. IV, 1034–1035). Accordingly, the university reform was considered a priority to counter what he interpreted as the supremacy of an undisciplined mass that had entered this educational institution: university students were part of this mass. However, Ortega's diagnosis was not as pessimistic as it could appear. Indeed, whereas *Rebelión de las Masas* constitutes the *pars destruens* of Ortega's vision of democracy, *Misión de la Universidad* was its *pars construens*. The university was meant to assume a new social responsibility, changing its functions and goals by constructing a barrier against the hyper-democratic and irrational character of the masses. Reaching this goal would have been rendered possible through the construction of a comprehensive understanding of the scientific and social world and by the following transmission of a systematic culture, conceived as "a system of vital ideas possessed by each historical epoch" (ibid.: Vol. IV, 568). To do this, Ortega thought it would have been necessary to rest on a basic pedagogical principle: the principle of economy. The university had to guarantee a basic understanding of the main scientific questions in order to offer everyone the minimum background indispensable for taking an active and meaningful part in society and in the public debate.

This political issue concerning education appeared to be even more urgent and significant in the post-WWII scenario, as can be seen by taking into consideration the Prospecto of the IoH. Indeed, its theoretical preamble is constituted by a long meditation on the meaning of the word "humanities" in the European cultural and academic tradition. In particular, Ortega rejects both the French definition of humanities, conceived as moral or political sciences, and the German tradition that perceived humanities in terms of *Geisteswissenschaften*, i. e., spiritual sciences. Indeed, the political circumstances marked by the experience of the Weimar Republic and the consequent consolidation of national socialism in Germany had contributed to creating a very different connotation for the concepts of *Geisteswissenschaften* and *Bildung*, that is, the education of humankind, passing from being conceived as a path of reform and amelioration to being identified as acculturation and indoctrination. As Gadamer wrote some years later, "the demagogic barbarism that is breaking into German culture" had perverted the meaning of *Bildung* in such a way that it was rendered useless to talk about the freedom of self-determination and improvement, individually and collectively speaking (Gadamer, Giralt, 1990: 152). These critical remarks

were evidently already present in the intellectual debate soon after the end of WWII and, for this reason, Ortega was striving to offer a new and different definition of the humanities, trying to dissociate from this long tradition. For doing this, he adopted the Roman sense of the word (Amoedo, 2001: 116) and defined humanities as the totality of the human facts alongside the expertise and research of these facts conducted by scholars in those fields (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. VI, 538).

This premise reveals at least two important and apparently opposed aspects related to the project carried out by Ortega y Gasset in those years: a) the holistic and international scope of his theoretical analysis and practical activity; b) the intention to dialogue with the context of the post-war society and the new global educational trends, making them meaningful in relation to the Spanish public opinion. These two purposes were both implicitly presented in the invitation to the Spanish public that Ortega included in the *Prospecto*. Regarding the first aspect, Ortega pointed out the necessity of defining the humanities as interdisciplinary tools that are subsumed under a unifying philosophical concept. This implied the need to adopt different approaches such as those provided by linguistics, philology, ethnology, historiography — or, as Ortega called it, historiology — and economics. As a matter of fact, the philosopher presented the IoH as a collaborative project rendered possible by the activities of different scholars and, hopefully, students, aimed at analysing relevant problems from diverse perspectives with the purpose of shedding light on a complex and fragmented reality. This vindication of a universal and holistic vision of culture had been at the centre of Ortega's meditation, at least since his *Misión de la Universidad*, when he was trying to counter the risks of academic specialism, understood as a dangerous instance of intellectual barbarism. In that case, Ortega had openly criticized the common attitude of his colleagues within academia, who only focused on their micro-research without taking into account the problems faced by the society in which they lived. Contrary to this tendency, as Graham (Graham, 2001: 426) correctly put it, the prospectus of the IoH represented an “essay on interdisciplinary” both in principle and in practice. The holistic and international scope of the project was also manifested by the overwhelming number of foreign intellectuals from different fields of knowledge whom Ortega wanted to invite to take part in the activities of the Institute. Among them were Gabriel Marcel, Heinz Heimsoeth, Wilhelm Röpke, Arnold Toynbee, Pierre Jobit, Ernst Fritz, and many others. The second of the aforementioned features is evident in the recurrent references made by Ortega to the Spanish scenario.

Not only for his continuous criticisms of the scholastic tradition, but first and foremost for the direct invitation he made to the Spanish audience to collaborate on his project. However, Ortega was aware of the political prudence he had to observe to avoid the regime's censorship. For this reason, on the one hand, he vindicated the aristocratic character of such an intellectual project, which, according to him, aimed neither to proselytize Spanish society to a new creed nor to influence national life. On the other hand, he overtly hoped for the possibility of kindling a widespread interest towards his new project among civil society.

No desdeñamos al público, lo que sería una actitud estúpida. Lo que hacemos es no contar con él, porque, queramos o no, ya lo hemos dicho, la mayor parte de nuestras labores excluye su participación, y además porque no se le puede pedir ni constancia ni dedicación. Lo que haremos, si esa anormal abundancia de oyentes afluyese a algún curso, sería trasladar éste a un local de ocasión, suficientemente amplio, fuera de nuestro domicilio en Aula Nueva (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. VI, 543).

Significantly enough, Ortega proved to be able to capture the interest of a great audience, and this permitted the full development of all the IoH's foreseen activities during its first year. In particular, during the course of 1948–1949, it included four courses, two research seminars, and four colloquia. The courses took place once per week and ran for one to three months, from December to March. The themes were: Universal history (Ortega y Gasset), Arabism and classical philology (Emilio García Gómez), The historical method of generations (Maras), and The culture of Mohenjo-Daro (Benito Gaya). The two research seminars focused, respectively, on the works of Goya (Ortega y Gasset and Valentín de Sambricio) and on the empirical application of the historical method of generation (Marías). Lastly, the four colloquia dealt with themes of economy (the social structure of price), philology and linguistics (modism), and philosophy (the Clouds of Aristophanes). Moreover, the activities of the IoH were supplemented by the publication of a Bulletin, which provided short information regarding its program and also invited its readers to take part in an active debate over the Institute.

In the first of these short publications, Ortega explained the reasons for the tripartite organization of the activities of the Institute and, in particular, the importance of the colloquia as experimental forms of teaching and learning. These were conceived as dialogues among scholars and a restricted audience of experts with the attempt of practicing an in-depth investigation on specific

themes by adopting an interdisciplinary method. This methodology was conceived as the best means for countering the inadequacy of modern science, characterized by extreme specialization and the consequent impossibility of reaching comprehensive knowledge on any substantial problem. By joining different perspectives, according to Ortega, it could have been possible to acquire an ampler view since:

Si se quiere que las disciplinas de Humanidades vuelvan a cobrar su auténtico vigor, es preciso intentar la reintegración de la ciencia en su unidad orgánica, procurando compensar por todos los medios posibles su dispersión especialista que es, por otra parte, ineludible (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. IX, 1179).

The IoH constituted Ortega's response to the question of the role of the humanities in society. A question he faced during the course of his whole life but that, by 1948, had acquired a new radicality, since new problems were emerging, concerning the cultural situation of both his country — deprived of real democratic participation — and the globe, where intellectuals were trying to regain credibility after the drama of WWII that they partially felt responsible for. Indeed, intellectuals had suffered a loss of prestige. As a response to this state of affairs, Ortega thought it was necessary to pave the way for a new and different relationship between philosophers and civil society. A relationship that implied a different understanding and transmission of the cultural tradition purported by a humanistic education.

EXPERIENCING THE CULTURAL LEGACY. ON ORTEGA'S HISTORIOLOGY

The first course Ortega taught at the IoH dealt with the book *A Study of History* by Arnold Toynbee. This book ultimately served Ortega as a pretext to talk about some topics he had treated during the whole decade of the '40s. These can be summarized into two main strands: a) the concern for the development of a new theory of history (*historiología*) that, by substituting the traditional and conservative *Bildung*, could be able to establish a dynamic and fruitful connection between the personal existence of individuals and the social life of the community; b) the related socio-political problem of the way in which social consensus is built; i. e., the problem of political legitimacy and political reformism. The confrontation with the recent publication of the British intellectual gave Ortega the possibility to delve into such historiographical and sociological problems, revealing a new worry related to the theoretical premises of the new global order that was developing after the end of WWII.

The general framework within which Ortega developed his ideas was the constant confrontation with recent internationalism. This new trend, according to him, was setting the agenda of the intellectual and political debate during the second post-war period, constituting the theoretical ground that legitimated the creation of supranational entities responsible for the regulation of different national interests. The unification of the whole world population under the name of a unique civilization was, according to the philosopher, an unrealistic political idea and a blatant cultural error. This was not due to the fact that the different National States still constituted the basis of different collective histories and worldviews, being diverse systems of beliefs that regulated the lives of every individual in a given place and moment. Accordingly, Nations, to Ortega, represented the basis of social consensus forging a collective consciousness (Aguilar, 1998: 117–120). For this reason, globalization, according to Ortega, did not straightforwardly imply the homogenization and sharing of a unified system of beliefs, since the material change of the conditions of living had to be combined with the common faith in a shared past, able to sustain the future co-existence of a community of individual beings. As a consequence, the problem posed by Ortega did have an international and political facet: how, within a new global society, could social consensus be built and maintained? And what, if any, would have been the role of humanistic culture in this process?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to focus on two main aspects of Ortega's lessons at the IoH: a) his "historiology"; and b) his theory of social consensus. According to the Madrilenian philosopher, all relations of power are grounded in historical premises (Ferreiro Lavedán, 2012), and for this reason, to understand them, it is necessary to dig into the history of the particular society they refer to. Ortega distinguishes between history as erudition (historiography) and history as human self-comprehension (historiology). It is evident that it is the latter that he tried to promote throughout the IoH. In fact, as he said, the IoH "Es un instituto de historia, mas por historia entiendo el estudio de la realidad humana desde el más remoto pasado hasta los hombres hoy vivientes, inclusive" (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. IX, 1253). History is conceived by the philosopher as a meaningful narration of the past, which is manifested through a linguistic sedimentation that gives birth to a social reality through acts of speech. Through this definition, he underlined the importance of philology for shedding light on the past and, consequently, for understanding the present (Cruz, 2014). At the same time, language to him is a social phenomenon that forges the social world. Due to this multidimensional essence of history and the

impossibility of confining it to the past — since history is always actualized through a narrative process and implements performative acts of speech — historiology is intrinsically linked with the construction of social consensus, thought of as a dynamic force. As Ortega put it:

La razón histórica, que no consiste en inducir ni en deducir sino lisamente en narrar, es la única capaz de entender las realidades humanas porque la contextura de éstas es histórica, es historicidad. [...] De lo dicho se desprende que toda realidad humana, por su historicidad, consiste en venir de algo pasado e ir hacia algo futuro (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. IX, 1266).

Relating these epistemological considerations with their political implications leads to thinking that legitimacy cannot be grounded on a social contract, a system of abstract rules set once and for all, but rather on a stratified set of historically developed practices that need to be continuously recast by individuals and which had to develop from a common ground. A ground that could become a wish: an active principle of cooperation. Thus, consensus, according to Ortega, is not a mere agreement among the members of a society on a specific theme, but rather the expression of a shared and more profound *Weltanschauung* based on a common background.

Significantly enough, in the same years in which Ortega was developing his theory, Ludwig Wittgenstein was delving into the epistemological analysis of common sense. Similarly, though from a different perspective, the Austrian philosopher too pointed out the importance of the historical tradition as the basic grounds of a world vision. As he put it,

I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself with its correctness, nor do I have it because I am satisfied with its correctness. No, it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false (Wittgenstein, 1969: 15).

According to Ortega, this shared background (what he called a system of beliefs) was what ultimately grounded and rendered possible all social relations, sustaining the system of law, the norms, and the political institutions (Salas, 2016). Accordingly, he dissociated from other sociologists and political theorists, such as Kelsen, who assigned to the law a rational foundation, affirming that the legitimacy of political power is grounded “en cierta situación total de la vida humana colectiva. De aquí que al quebrarse la creencia común se resquebraje la legitimidad” (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. IX, 1321). Consequently, according to Ortega, laws are neither grounded in a fixed set of rules and principles nor in a violent imposition. On the

contrary, they are based on an in-progress set of habits and social convictions that citizens, through their participation in the historical flux, are ultimately responsible for. This process of building consensus represented, according to the philosopher, the crucial problem that Western civilization was facing during the second post-war period, and to this question he devoted the second of the courses he gave at the IoH: *Man and People*.

FROM HISTORIOLOGY TO SOCIOLOGY

In November 1949, Ortega started his second course at the IoH. The great affluence of the audience rendered it necessary to change the location of the conference; neither the Aula Nueva nor the Hall of the Unión Mercantil could host the event. For this reason, the lessons took place in the Barceló cinema. For that occasion, Ortega planned twelve lessons on sociology. According to the program, these would have been the topics to be developed: 1: The human being, human life; 2: The human being, we; 3: The people; 4: The greeting; 5: The speech of the people, the language; 6: The social gathering; 7: The state; 8: The right; 9: The society and its form; 10: Nation, ultra-nation, and inter-nation; 11: Animal and human societies; 12: Humanity.

The topics were at the centre of Ortega's preoccupation at least since the second half of the '30s, since his conference in Rotterdam in 1936 on the relation between individual and collective life (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. IX, 203–217). In spite of this long elaboration, the course he presented at the institute was an on-going project that he continued to ameliorate and partially change in the following years and during different conferences he gave during the '50s. During his lectures at the IoH, he completed only the first half of the themes he had planned. Moreover, the final and more ample version of the book he was preparing during 1954–55, which should have been composed of 15 or 18 chapters, would not be completed. By that time, he was planning not to publish the book in Spain due to censorship, but rather in America, the Netherlands, or Germany.

His sociological interest arose with particular emphasis during the years of the Spanish civil war and the following global conflict, as proved by the very first lesson of this course, entitled *Ensimismamiento y Alteración*. The confusion and disorientation he perceived during the upheaval of the totalitarian regimes all over Europe and the appearance of violence at a global scale caused what he called an “ineptitud sociológica” (ibid.: Vol. x, 142). To counter it, Ortega thought it was necessary to develop a new social theory. The basic premise that sustains his reasoning is that whereas all personal and interpersonal relations are grounded on a rational basis,

social norms — uses — are characterized by an absence of rationality, being imposed behaviours that, customarily, each and every one adopts in her social and public life without thinking about the reasons grounding her actions. The move from the individual actions (rational) to the social ones (a-rational or irrational) exhibits a progressive reduction in the conscious involvement of the person who accomplishes those actions. As Ortega put it, “La colectividad es, sí, algo humano; pero es lo humano sin el hombre, lo humano sin espíritu, lo humano sin alma, lo humano deshumanizado” (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. x, 257). In other words, all social actions lack the two main characteristics of human ones, i. e., the comprehension of the reasons beneath the performed act, and the free desire to accomplish it (ibid.: Vol. x, 266).

This basic distinction traced by Ortega between human and social actions brings about further consequences in relation to the way in which he conceives the creation and legitimacy of political power. In fact, given the irrationality and mechanical character of social existence, rather than a rational system of rules set at a particular moment by a definite group of people, social relations are more effectively regulated by costumes, habits, uses, and commonly accepted rules of thumb. These are also called by Ortega “beliefs” (*creencias*), as opposed to ideas. Social uses, norms, and institutions, according to Ortega, put pressure on the subject by directly or indirectly imposing a certain way of behaving. This common way of acting implies some positive consequences: for instance, it permits to foresee the behaviours of other social agents, and, in addition, it renders possible the development of society according to a coherent project. A social norm, to Ortega, actively operates within society when it is concretely used. In this respect, he speaks of social norms as *vigencias*, since they impose themselves in the concrete world and are effectively present and active within society. This implies that the legitimacy of a society is not grounded on something like a social contract, but rather on the validity of this system of *vigencias*. As Ortega put it:

El fenómeno sociológico fundamental que es la vigencia y que se da no sólo en la opinión sino en todo uso, que es, por tanto, el carácter más sustantivo del hecho social y de la sociedad como conjunto de hechos sociales, la vigencia, no consiste en la adhesión individual, tanto o cuanto numerosa (ibid.: Vol. x, 319).

The power of the State is consequently grounded on a consensus that depends on the a-rational adoption of a set of beliefs. The production of such a set of beliefs does not obey the same procedures that regulate the

creation of rights. To explain this point, Ortega traces a distinction between strong and weak uses. Whereas the State and the Right belong to the former, public opinion, i. e., the compact system of beliefs that grounds social norms, pertains to the latter. This does not mean that the forces related to the weak uses are inferior to those of the strong ones. What is really weak or strong is the eventual sanction that can be imposed on the person who does not respect such use. In the case of strong uses, such as an imposed law, the sanction is more rigid and stronger since the infringement of that law would determine the repressive intervention of the state. On the contrary, the sanction implied by not respecting a weak use does not cause coercive repression by the State nor the imposition of a precise sanction (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. X, 293). Thus, to Ortega, State and Society have to be thought of as two different entities. Whereas the first is the expression of a fixed set of positive rules established by a government at a given time, the second would be the result of a long process of crystallization of ideas that have been proven to be effective in the real world. Social norms being the result of a process of consolidation of uses considered to be valid for their pragmatic outcomes, the fact that they are respected per se would manifest the existence of a common public opinion, which is responsible for the legitimacy of political power, or, to put it differently, which renders possible the existence of a stable form of social coexistence. Thus, the problem of guaranteeing the legitimacy of a political power clearly emerges not only when strong and weak uses evidently diverge, but also and foremost in all those cases in which no shared system of beliefs is present within a society and, as a consequence, there is no public opinion (common sense).

Evidently enough, the two courses Ortega taught at the IoH were very tightly intertwined. The historical essence of human beings constituted the premise for comprehending the social dimension of what can be defined as a collective intentionality. This affirmation can be elucidated by taking into consideration one aspect that both courses analyse from different perspectives, i. e., the nature of language. This topic would later be connected to Ortega's central argument in defence of the cultivation of the humanities as a social and political necessity.

Language serves Ortega as an excellent example for illustrating what a social use actually is. In fact, it possesses a double nature: on the one hand, it is an imposed set of grammatical, phonetic, syntactic, and pragmatic rules external to the individual. On the other hand, it is also the most effective means by which each person can express herself, and consequently, it is perceived as a private and intimate aspect of one's own personality. However,

language is not created, but rather learned by individuals, being the product of a long-lasting historical process of changes and adjustments that leaves very little room for freedom. The colloquium on modisms that took place in the IoH, i. e., on slangs and figures of speech, is particularly interesting in this respect, since it investigated the reasons that determine the meaning of an expression that, per se, would not be intelligible without taking into account its social use. This apparent inexplicability implies the activation of a rational process by an a-rational speaker, aimed at clarifying the way in which a particular expression acquired a specific meaning through its use, and is then generally adopted without thinking about it. This “narration” represents the only way through which a social use, that is imposed on individuals and unconsciously used by them, could acquire a sense for their lives (Lévêque, 2008). Through the case of language and its philological study, Ortega exemplifies how it could be possible to rationally motivate a social use by comprehending its history (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. X, 275–276).

In addition, Ortega goes further, using the example of language, in order to delve into the sociological problem of political legitimacy. In particular, he affirmed that language is both an imposed norm and a reality that can change over time through the intervention of its speakers. To Ortega, this evolution would be regulated by a precise dynamic, according to which a group of very proficient speakers would be able to influence the use of the language by dominating its rules and attributing a proper meaning to new words that would later enter into the common use of language of lower classes (ibid.: Vol. X, 297–298). By applying these theses on the creation and transmission of a language to his sociological perspective, in the second course of the IoH, Ortega places the responsibility of this change on intellectual activity. Social uses are not considered irrational per se, since they had been previously created through a rational activity before passing through a long process in which they lost their proper rational meaning, gaining, at the same time, force and validity (*vigencia*) through their a-rational, massive application.

Such a framework set by Ortega ultimately poses a question that he felt was extremely urgent: how would it be possible to set up a new system of uses and beliefs when the old ones had lost their validity? The solution Ortega offered to this question was based on the role he assigned to intellectuals in society. Since the ‘30s, and then even more explicitly after the end of WWII, Ortega had been vindicating the role of intellectuals and education in shaping the public opinion, since education and, in particular, the humanities, would

have been crucial in forging the system of beliefs endorsed by a given society. At the aforementioned conference in Rotterdam in 1936 he pronounced:

Yo esperaba, yo espero aún que Europa, llegada a plena madurez, ya que ha creado tan maravillosas técnicas para dominar la naturaleza corporal, sepa tratar parejamente lo social y cree técnicas peculiares para someter la fuerza elemental de lo colectivo a la voluntad del hombre responsable (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. IX, 217).

THE REFORM OF HUMANITIES IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

During his whole life, Ortega strongly refused to conceive of philosophy as something separate from the life of human beings, as an academic practice that has to deal with erudite questions. Indeed, to Ortega, philosophy and humanities were indispensable both for comprehending the society in which one lives and for reforming it. Through the cultivation of the humanities, he thought it was possible to respond to the perceived crisis of value in the post-war society and, at the same time, to offer meaningful arguments for the importance of cultivating citizens capable of countering populisms and totalitarianisms (Simeoni, 2013). Ortega's meditations on these topics became more and more frequent during the '50s, soon after the closing of the IoH, which interrupted its activities in the summer of 1950.

The theory of education and the cultural activity developed by Ortega in the succeeding years was developed through a series of relevant conferences and publications he gave worldwide. The way of dealing with this topic was strictly related to the international attempt to build a new global peace through education and the intervention of new supranational institutions that were being created after the end of WWII. Ortega's frequent travels abroad during the 1950s, in Germany, Switzerland, England, Portugal, Italy, Argentina, and the USA, gave him the possibility to express his ideas and, at the same time, to try to influence the opinions of other intellectuals and political actors on these topics. As already seen, the IoH aroused significant global interest in a context in which the process of internationalization in education was taking place. In particular, Ortega's proposal coincided with two important international phenomena which contributed to making his project very attractive outside the Spanish border. The first was the creation of UNESCO on November 16th, 1946, which determined a growing attention towards the definition of the basic guidelines of a global education for peace promoted by Western countries (Singh, 2011). The second, strictly related to the previous one, was the radicalization of the Cold War and the consequent desire of the US to establish its cultural and political

superiority on a global scale. The Machiavellian pragmatism of American internationalization during those years (Mazower, 2012) was supported by a very effective cultural strategy. As Alfred Reisch (Reisch, 2013) proved, America tried to win the Cold War also through a cultural policy, with the help of books as the most effective tools to spread ideas and values among people living in communist and non-communist countries. Since its creation, UNESCO, more than by neutral philanthropic aims, had been moved by the political wish to build a culture of peace able to counter the German model. As stated by the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education, the ancestor of UNESCO, "It is essential that in the new Europe Allied Scientific Culture and outlook shall replace the German." In 1948, UNESCO published a solemn appeal against the idea that wars are inevitable, a document that invited all cultural promoters, such as teachers, scientists, artists, writers, and journalists, to spread the values of peace and democracy in order to counter the "pernicious idea that war is inevitable." The organization, supported by some private foundations and public institutions, was not only a brain trust in scientific knowledge, but also actively engaged in the promotion of specific educational policies with the aim of propagating its ideology (Casual, 2005: 42).

Ortega's educational proposals did find very responsive ground, particularly in the US. More precisely, thanks to the mediation of Robert Maynard Hutchins, professor at the University of Chicago and founder of the Aspen Institute in Colorado, since the '30s, Hutchins has been focusing on the importance of liberal education as a means for the development of a peaceful and wealthy society (Hutchins, 1936). In particular, he proposed a reform of the American educational system that resounded Ortega's proposal as presented in the *Misión de la Universidad* (Pascual Martín & Scotton, 2024). Ortega referred to Hutchins, who had invited him to Colorado, as "el gran innovador de la enseñanza universitaria en los Estados Unidos" (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. X, 15). He thought he had found a very valuable ally in his defence of a renewal of humanistic education. Since 1949, when The Gaither Commission submitted its recommendations to the Foundation's Board of Trustees of the Ford Foundation, this Foundation has started to implement its activities with the specific aim of promoting the development of peace, democracy, economics, education, and behavioural sciences. Hutchins, in 1950, became associate director of the Ford Foundation. The collaboration with Hutchins and his entourage at the University of Chicago, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Ford Foundation, would be extremely fruitful for the creation of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic

Studies. Through this new Institute, Hutchins wanted to offer a series of undergraduate courses, adult education, and philosophical seminars. Ortega was adopted as one of the intellectual references of this new cultural project, and, given both its theoretical insights and the expertise he demonstrated with the development of the IoH, he was asked to give advice and guidance on the structure of this new school.

In a long letter in response to this inquiry, Ortega provided the basic principles of his pedagogical theory in relation to the importance of cultivating humanities in such a changing international context. Ortega's argument was based on a fundamental premise: the humanities were particularly needed in the second post-war age, both for cultural and political purposes. His defence of the humanities was primarily conceived as a form of resistance, motivated by the growing relevance acquired by natural science in high school and university education. A supremacy that mirrored the statement of proposal of the very director of UNESCO, Julian Huxley (Huxley, 1946), who sustained the ideal of an evolutionary humanism oriented towards the scientific progress and the technical development of society. As Ortega put it,

There is in America an extremely unbalanced state as regards education in favour of naturalistic (not humanistic), physical, biological, and technical education.³

Ortega's suggestion was that of promoting a cultivation of the humanities that could counter these technological trends, in particular by changing: 1) their scope, 2) their teaching-learning methodology 3) their ends. Concerning the last of these aspects, the ultimate goal of the Aspen Institute as an Institute for humanistic studies, according to Ortega, would have been that of fostering the creation of a new intellectual and social elite able to influence, as Ortega put it, "en todos los órdenes de la vida de los Estados Unidos" (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. X, 51). This political aim can be summarized in the attempt to forge the new intellectual elite of the country, able to reason on the new set of ideas indispensable to responding to the crisis of beliefs and uses society was facing. This goal could have been reached, according to the philosopher, only by adopting a new teaching-learning methodology based on the cohabitation of teachers and students in the same institution. This cohabitation would have promoted what Ortega called "elegance." With this word, he indicated the ability to be able to fruitfully take part in intellectual conversations with a unified

³Letter by Ortega to Walter Paepcke, in Archive Ortega y Gasset, *Fundación Ortega y Gasset-Gregorio Marañón*, PB-370/1, pp. 3-4.

and interdisciplinary vision. In Ortega's description of the positive climate of this mutual interchange of ideas that should have characterized the students' and teachers' experience at the Aspen Institute, emerges the nostalgic memory of the atmosphere he had experienced, firstly as a young student and later as a professor, in different teaching institutions informed by the innovative methodologies promoted by the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*. By recalling what he suggested in *Misión de la Universidad*, Ortega underlined the importance of promoting an education that could reach a meaningful synthesis of different subjects and transmit to the students the knowledge indispensable for comprehending the society in which they live. And for this purpose, humanities were needed since, as Ortega put it, their scope

Se trataría de enseñar a leer, esto es, a absorber de verdad un libro importante. Por tanto, aplicando también a la lectura los principios de concentración o condensación y de síntesis. Se trata de ensayar una educación y una cultura que sean puro nervio, sin tejido adiposo y exuberancias linfáticas (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. X, 46).

This attentive attitude that the reading activity would promote was conceived by Ortega as the necessary prerequisite for the advancement of a more cultivated society.

CULTIVATING HUMANITIES FOR PROMOTING SOCIAL COEXISTENCE AND POLITICAL DIALOGUE

The IoH contributed to giving Ortega y Gasset great notoriety outside the Spanish border. Since the beginning of the Institute's activities, Ortega has been invited to give lectures and conferences all around the world. These conferences permitted him to clarify his thinking on the role of the humanities in the second post-war period. In particular, once he noted the growing trend towards the internationalization of education, Ortega affirmed the necessity to shape the European identity and construct a new form of super-national coexistence between the citizens of different countries through the development of a reformed version of humanistic education (Beneyto, 2005). To do so, he underlined the need to adopt his historiological and philological methods (García Balaguer, 2020). This was what Ortega argued on a particularly significant occasion, i. e., a discourse he gave in 1949 at the *Freie Universität* in Berlin. The city and the audience — the new generation of young German students of the humanistic faculties — had a clear symbolic connotation. On such an occasion, Ortega provocatively

affirmed that democracy was neither an absolute value nor an unproblematic form of government. As Ortega put it: “la democracia, si no es contenida por otras fuerzas ajenas a ella, lleva al absolutismo mayoritario” (Ortega y Gasset, 2004/2010: Vol. VI, 569). According to Ortega, strengthening these external forces was the responsibility of humanistic education. As he said: “no vale hablar de ideas u opiniones donde no se admite una instancia que las regula, una serie de normas a que en la discusión cabe apelar. Estas normas son los principios de la cultura” (ibid.: Vol. IV, 417).

According to Ortega, to ameliorate a situation marked by populisms and by a superficial or limited practice of public debate, it would have been necessary to provide a cultural solution. Thus, he defended the importance of humanistic education, not arguing for a generic defence of the positive values of the humanities per se, since the vague idea that the study of philosophy, or more generally speaking, of the humanities, would fashion better people and a better society was rejected by the Spanish philosopher exactly for the same reasons that he proposed a new form of humanistic education: because of its historical failures. These failures, however, did not prove the inadequacy of humanistic education as a whole, but rather only of a particular model. For this reason, Ortega proposed to start with the revitalization of the humanistic culture conceived as “la única adecuada a un ente como el hombre, que en medio de un mundo en constante movimiento es él mismo móvil” (ibid.: Vol. VI, 573). This concept of humanistic education as an on-going process of personal awareness and responsibility called for the practice of an interdisciplinary approach that considered each individual as an *integrum*. This pedagogical concern was mirrored by a political one: just some months before Ortega’s conference in Berlin, the Council of Europe had been created. The creation of the European community fascinated Ortega, who, on different occasions, such as his conference entitled *Europa meditatio quaedam*, focused on this new phenomenon of cultural and political unification. In fact, in a moment in which, as Ortega wrote, Europe was dissociated (ibid.: Vol. X, 126), it was crucial to understand how such a new social community could have been built. Since sociability had been put into question or, as in the case of the European Union, had to be built, he deemed necessary the intervention of humanistic education as a means of socialization, since only educated people could take part in the “project of future coexistence” that a nation ultimately is (Llano Alonso, 2010), and Europe should have been conceived as a confederation of national states.

As proven by the case of the IoH he founded in Madrid after the end of WWII, Ortega’s pedagogical proposal during those years was basically

aimed at setting the grounds for the practice of social coexistence among citizens on a global scale that refused the risk of a hyper-democracy, or what has been defined as the democracy of the public (Manin, 2010), calling for the development of a more reflective and participatory process of decision-making. Thus, Ortega argued for the need to reform the humanities, in particular their way of being taught, through a holistic and interdisciplinary method. The relationship he established between individuals and society and his reflection on the importance of education in promoting a responsible form of political participation ultimately converge in his attention towards the importance of creating occasions to debate in the public arena, both among intellectuals and common citizens. Accordingly, in his late years, he focused on the importance of language and rhetoric. In fact, the reform of the humanities he longed for during many years should have started by assigning a prominent role to the study of language, in its philological and historical dimension, as the basis for comprehending the past and present of a global humanity, and projecting its future.

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ПАОЛО СКОТТОН

PhD, ПРОФЕССОР;

ДЕПАРТАМЕНТ ТЕОРИИ И ИСТОРИИ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ, УНИВЕРСИТЕТ БАРСЕЛОНЫ (БАРСЕЛОНА);

ORCID: 0000-0002-3553-8076

РАЗВИТИЕ ГУМАНИТАРНЫХ НАУК В ГЛОБАЛЬНОМ ОБЩЕСТВЕ

ОБ ИНСТИТУТЕ ГУМАНИТАРНЫХ НАУК ОРТЕГИ-И-ГАССЕТА

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Аннотация: После возвращения в Мадрид из долгого изгнания, между 1948 и 1950 годами, Хосе Ортега-и-Гассет основал Институт гуманитарных наук (Instituto de Humanidades). Эта неформальная образовательная организация была задумана как противовес культурной гегемонии франкистского режима. Настоящая статья стремится пролить свет на этот часто упускаемый из виду проект, разработанный Ортегой-и-Гассетом в последние годы его интеллектуальной карьеры. Этот проект можно считать одной из самых значительных реализаций его педагогических размышлений о роли гуманитарного образования и философии в обществе — теме, которая неоднократно поднималась в его трудах, начиная как минимум с работы «Миссия университета» (Misión de la Universidad). Этот кейс особенно важен, поскольку Институт представлял собой как значительную попытку определить роль западной культурной традиции во второй послевоенный период, так и защиту необходимости свободы выражения мнений даже в условиях репрессивной диктатуры. Кроме того, этот эксперимент был тесно связан с процессом интернационализации образования, направленным на создание глобального мира после окончания Второй мировой войны. Проект, который до сих пор вдохновляет повестку дня ряда международных организаций, таких как ЮНЕСКО.

Ключевые слова: Ортега-и-Гассет, Институт гуманитарных наук, Педагогика, Интернационализация, Глобальное образование.

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