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THE INFLUENCE OF THE 1898 DISASTER AND THE IDEOLOGY OF THE GERMAN MANDARINS IN THE GENESIS OF ORTEGA Y GASSET'S THEORY OF GENERATIONS**

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Abstract: In this article I will address, on the basis of a very specific case, the way in which the social trajectory of philosophers and the processes of the collective definition of philosophical products are expressed in key categories of philosophical discourse, that is, in the symbolic forms proper to the social practice we call philosophy. To do so, I will show that the formative period of the young Ortega is crossed by two fundamental social experiences that were interpreted in a generational key: the 1898 Disaster and contact with the German mandarin ideology. I also hope to show that these experiences were incorporated or translated into the central categories of the philosopher, who was then just beginning to take his first steps in the Spanish political and intellectual field. Later, these categories would become, among other symbolic forms, part of his mature theory of generations. The aim of this article is to point out how the residues of these two experiences permeate his theory through these key categories. In doing so, I would like to focus on two ways of research: 1) deepening a better understanding of his work through the sociology of philosophy and 2) warning against the risk of uncritically incorporating such residues in an unreflective application of Ortega's theory of generations to the present day.

Keywords: Ortega y Gasset, Theory of Generations, Mandarin Ideology, Sociology of Philosophy, Generation of '14.

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INTRODUCTION

A study interested in the relevance of Ortega y Gasset's theory of generations must fundamentally consider two levels: the consistency of its internal logic and its heuristic potential for historical knowledge. However, these two lines of research cannot be approached with guarantees without a well-informed grasp of Ortega's intellectual sources, which constitute the horizon

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of meaning for the development of the theory in question. Nor can we ignore the most relevant theoretical alternatives that, implicitly or explicitly, function as referents in an analysis that is inevitably comparative: which theory of generations best explains the historical or cultural phenomena? These last two questions are part of the usual concerns in philosophy and the history of philosophy. However, Ortega y Gasset's theory of generations, like any cultural product, is also the result of a whole network of conscious and unconscious choices, as well as of socio-historical conditioning factors that are only suggested by the literalness of the text. Thus, when Ortega theorizes about generations, he talks about the need to transform the dominant conception of the history of his time; but he also expresses his position as an introducer of German philosophy and science in Spain, criticises the *caciquismo* of the Restoration and the egalitarianism of the workers' movement, and defends the preeminence of the cultural capital in politics. The study of this link between the philosopher's social experience and his theoretical elaboration enriches the understanding of his work and broadens the horizon of meaning to which I referred earlier, which is essential for a serious analysis of the topicality of any philosopher.

In previous research (Costa Delgado, 2019), I have tried to objectify the social conditions of cultural production and political work of the Generation of '14, to which Ortega belongs. José Luis Moreno Pestaña (Moreno Pestaña, 2005: 22) defines, based on Bourdieu and Spinoza, three axes that should guide a sociology of philosophy: "the social trajectory of the producers, the specific symbolic forms in which they must express themselves and the processes of collective definition of philosophical products." In my book (Costa Delgado, 2019) I am largely concerned with the first and third axes. In this article, as I said in the abstract, I will deal with the genesis of some of the fundamental symbolic forms of Ortega's theory of generations. In this way, I do nothing other than follow the recommendations of Ortega himself (Ortega y Gasset, 2004d: 369), a philosopher enormously sensitive to the historicity of thought:

Ordinarily, the history of ideas, for example, of philosophical systems, presents them as emerging from each other by virtue of a magical emanatism. It is a spectral and adynamic history inspired by the intellectualist error that attributes to intelligence a substantivity and independence that it does not have. Presumably, if the historians of ideas, especially of philosophies, had been historians by vocation and not rather men of science and philosophers, they would not have fallen so deeply into this error and would have resisted believing that intelligence functions

on its own, when it is so obvious that it is governed by the profound needs of our life, that its exercise is nothing but a reaction to man's pre-intellectual needs.¹

THE 1898 DISASTER AS A FOUNDING EVENT OF THE GENERATION OF '14:
FROM SPANISH FAILURE TO GERMAN SCIENCE

Present in Ortega's work from as early as 1903 (Ortega y Gasset, 2004e: 14) was the conviction that a major social change was underway in Spain, characterised in terms of a modernisation consisting of political and economic rationalisation and technical specialisation. In other words, the prescription could be defined as a bureaucratic reform of the state and the deepening of the division of labour. The first mention is to be found in a critique of an article by Francisco Grandmontagne, which characterised the situation in Spain along the lines of other writers of the Generation of '98: backwardness, oligarchy and *caciquismo*. Ortega replied through qualifying the diagnosis by positively valuing the industrious and hard-working north as opposed to the provincials who sought the favour of the Court, while praising those who went to Madrid exclusively to train and sit for Civil Service competitive examinations, instead of "employing other tortuous procedures to secure their livelihood" (ibid.). In other words, he defended a bureaucratic and capitalist modernisation which he proposed as an alternative to an outdated imperial past: "It is high time that we recognised political economy and the art of commerce as nourishing sciences and that they come to occupy in our activity the place left empty by the withered theological and historical dreamings" (ibid.: 15). For the young Ortega, from his earliest writings, cultural capital — sanctioned in this quotation by means of educational qualifications and competitive examinations — is presented as a guarantee against the clientelism characteristic of the Restoration, a necessary mediation for access to the Civil Service and a legitimate way of guaranteeing a high social status.

In this article, age has already appeared as a factor that differentiated a group in which Ortega included himself from the elders who recreated themselves in the lamentation of Spanish failure. The previous generation had also experienced the "Disaster," of course, but among the young it had produced, according to Ortega, a very different effect: a lasting impression at the key moment of their early education. That impression left a residue of distrust that marked a radical generational break: they did not need

¹All translations of Ortega's quotations are the author's own work.

anyone to explain Spain's failure to them, since they themselves had grown up with that certainty:

The impressions of disaster on those of us who have opened our eyes of curiosity to the time of failure will not be easily or quickly erased. In that age that demands confidence in everything, that forges an ideal out of any piece of anything, we have seen nothing but agonies and breakdowns (Ortega y Gasset, 2004e: 14).

The impact of the 1898 Disaster as a foundational event of his generation is an argument and a symbolic reference that Ortega would later recover in *Vieja y nueva política* and, in general, quite frequently rely on during these early years when he spoke of politics whilst addressing people of his generational position,² that is, people of a similar age who could be incorporated into his generational project. For example, at the end of his series of articles on the new politics in *El Imparcial* in the summer of 1908:

I maintain the full hope that many Spaniards born at the same time as me, and open to the curiosity at the time when the seals of historical justice were placed on our ancestral home, declared insolvent, will feel, as I feel, at every hour, every minute, an ethnic shame that burns their entrails and tortures their imagination. [...] This was the first political emotion we received, and it will act on our lives like a vicious constellation: vicious for us, but, I hope without pride, favourable for our race (Ortega y Gasset, 2004f: 208).

The first trip to Germany was a key factor in modifying the sense of this young Ortega's modernising zeal, although the reference to 1898 was still present. Those who travelled outside Spain for training emerged in a privileged position for the new political and intellectual situation, like Ortega and many of the members of the Generation of '14.³ In Ortega's case, the choice of Germany as a destination endowed the modernising project with very specific content. In *Notas de Berlín*, sent to *El Imparcial* from

²I take Karl Mannheim's (Mannheim, 1993) concept of generational position, whose theoretical framework I develop and adapt to the specific case of the Generation of '14 in Costa (Costa Delgado, 2019: 15–52).

³In Costa (ibid.: 196–208) I show the importance of study trips for this Generation, explaining their incidence in the configuration of a generational philosophical norm: 15 of the 23 Philosophy students who signed the generational manifestos of 1910 and 1913 obtained pensions for studies abroad. For more information on university study trips at the time and the *Junta de Ampliación de Estudios* see: Caballero and Azcuénaga (Caballero Garrido & Azcuénaga Cavia, eds., 2010), Sánchez Sánchez (Sánchez Sánchez, ed., 2012), Sánchez Ron (Sánchez Ron, 1988), and García Velasco and Sánchez Ron (García Velasco & Sánchez Ron, 2010).

Germany in 1905, during a visit by King Alfonso XIII, the young philosopher took the opportunity to propose for the first time what would later become a generational key: the import and adaptation of German culture to Spanish reality as a fundamental element for modernising Spain. This text already contained elements such as public education as a springboard for modernisation — with particular emphasis on the university — cultural capital as a measure of progress, pedagogy as the main factor of political transformation and also the proviso that the German cultural orientation did not also imply political leadership, since Ortega was not convinced by the Kaiser's imperial model⁴:

Germany cannot provide us with political leadership; we are called from elsewhere. But Germany, on the other hand, is precisely the nation whose influence on our moral and intellectual leadership will be most fruitful for us. [...] The Germans are not Germans, they have become Germans in fifty years. This is what we have to learn in Germany and will only learn there: the way to become Spanish in a short time, the great German secret, the method. Public education is the spring of that secret.

[...]

The thinking of our rulers, if it is to begin to build solidly, must above all concern itself with the German school and the German University. And not to copy them, which would be the gravest mistake, but to place itself before the problem of Spanish culture in the same way that the Germanic legislators placed themselves before the German one. Study them well, increase the number of professors and granted students, have a moment of decision to set aside the old pedagogical ideas (Ortega y Gasset, 2004c: 51–52).

After his trip to Germany, Ortega insisted on turning the training acquired there into a generational differential factor. The philosopher reworked the demands already present in the Spanish political-intellectual panorama with categories imported from Germany, incorporating some novel elements and, in the process, building his own space in the Spanish intellectual and political field. Thus, Joaquín Costa's *escuela y despena* project was no longer enough: both issues depended on a deeper renewal of Culture according to neo-Kantian philosophy, understanding culture as *Kultur* according to the characteristically German opposition between *Kultur* and *Civilisation*,

⁴The opposition between scientific Germany and political Germany is something that Ortega develops in his 1908 article *Las dos Alemanias* (Ortega y Gasset, 2004h: 133–135), although it was commonplace in European culture at the time, especially after Germany's victory in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871.

which I will discuss in the following section. As Zamora Bonilla (Zamora Bonilla, 2002: 60–61) comments:

The traditional Spanish subjectivism wanted to be overcome by an ethical and objective idealism mixed with pedagogical socialism capable of achieving a culture of universal values based on science, understood according to the parameters of the physical-natural method. Ortega thought that idealism was to work on reality in order to found ideality, opposing “a world that must be” to the world that is.

This was one of the main reproaches that Ortega began to make to Costa’s regenerationism: education and technique were necessary, but the Aragonese was wrong not to understand that they were the product of Culture: “to burden the pronunciation on one thing or another decides the success” (Ortega y Gasset, 2004b: 190). Ortega’s trip to Germany substantially modified his initial discourse, very similar to Costa’s, and allowed him to construct his own version of European salvation for Spanish backwardness: it was no longer a matter of exclusively importing technology, industry and commerce as factors of modernisation, but of seeing how the integral cultural model of Germany could be adapted to Spain, considering also the important presence of philosophy and humanistic studies in the education of German students.

This new element gave theoretical content to an opposition specifically formulated in terms of age vis-à-vis the Generation of ’98. This opposition, it is important to note, was already present in the 1903 article on Grandmontagne. In other words, it predated the German experience and its effects. It was after the first trip to Germany, as can be seen in the 1906 articles on *The Spanish University and the German University*, that Ortega incorporated the content of his German education into the generational discourse, adding to a generational experience that had already been previously affirmed an intellectual and political programme that accentuated that difference and sought to legitimise the aspirations of the young philosopher. In the articles of 1906, Ortega defended the need for a cultural reform whose main vehicle should be the university (Ortega y Gasset, 2004g: 68–69). To this end, it was necessary to eradicate university scholasticism, yes, but also those who were fascinated only by the technical aspects of European progress. He criticised the latter by holding up the German education system as a virtuous example:

Yes, sir; in Germany, in the Gymnasiums, six years of Latin! or seven! and, to make matters worse, six years of Greek. It is probable that no Spaniard, apart from Mr. Alemany and Don Julio Cejador, has wasted six years in learning Greek, and yet there are fewer cogwheels and fewer sera in Spain than in Germany.

[...]

Like this enmity against classical and artistic education, there are many others that will appear, born of laziness in learning, of the bad faith of some ingenious writers, who are hindered by Greek and Latin, because they did not learn it in time, and of the perennial breeding ground of coffee *arbitristas* and Athenaeum orators, ex-scientific and ex-literary.

[...]

Let it be known, then, that civilisation is not practicality. That culture is not technicism. That if a symbol of modern Europe were to be carved out, perhaps a reaper and a dynamo would appear on it, but not alone: together we would have to put Momsen's glasses, Darwin's hammer and Wundt's pencil (Ortega y Gasset, 2004g: 68).

In this fragment, Ortega was attacking a previous generational unit which formed part of a mode of the intellectual generation of which the philosopher felt he was heir, but which was being radically transformed. With this move, he was introducing, still in a diffuse way, a new polemic in the intellectual field: a new generational connection — a debate around new positions — from which perhaps a new mode of intellectual generation could result.⁵ The stake was clear: Ortega differentiated himself from previous importers of European science into Spain. And he did not limit himself to Joaquín Costa: the attack on Krausism, personified in Julián Sanz del Río, could be seen in phrases such as this: “a Spaniard goes out of Spain, travels through Germany or Belgium or England, and on his return to Tierra de Campos brings back material to talk about for half a century. And not to comment on the advances of Europe and lament the backwardness of Spain, but to marvel at how advanced Spain is” (ibid.: 67).

The effects of the trip to Germany were not only evident in rhetorical games or in the content of the discourse. Before his first visit to Germany, the first journalistic articles that Ortega had published were oriented towards a reflection on literature and on literary authors, with certain pills of philosophy, fundamentally — though not limited to — Nietzsche, and French historiography (Taine and Renan). These literary works and their authors not only constituted the subject of his reflections, but often also inspired his arguments and the style in which he expressed himself. In view of this, it can

⁵Again, I refer to Mannheim (Mannheim, 1993) and my introduction to *La educación política de las masas* (Costa Delgado, 2019: 15–52) for the concepts of generational unit, generational connection and mode of generation. For the latter, see also Mauger (Mauger, 2013; 2015).

be argued that Ortega might well have developed his philosophical vocation in a style similar to that of Unamuno or Eugenio d'Ors, which I have defined elsewhere as “literary philosophy” (Costa Delgado, 2019: 209–224), and which Abellán (Abellán, 1997: 27), among others, extends to the Generation of '98 as a whole. Even after his first visit to Germany, Zamora Bonilla (Zamora Bonilla, 2002: 53) stresses the influence on Ortega's prose of the “essayistic and libertine style of Simmel, without notes or quotations or references” and “of Spanish writers such as Unamuno.” This is undoubtedly true: the young man from Madrid could not completely distance himself from the dominant intellectual environment in Spain, where he wanted to make a breakthrough. He chose the style which, as he understood it, was most suited to the task he had set himself, that of importing German idealism. However, despite his recourse to the essay and his distance from German academic orthodoxy, the formal differences with Unamuno's philosophy are notable. Ortega himself was aware of his evolution, as reflected in his 1907 article *Teoría del clasicismo* (Ortega y Gasset, 2004k: 121): his commitment to philosophy and science meant that he underwent intense, disciplined training in order to adopt their method, abandoning the intellectual production understood as mere subjective expression and, in parallel, aesthetic judgement as an ideal. Zamora Bonilla (Zamora Bonilla, 2002: 41) comments on this same transformation on the basis of the private correspondence that the young Ortega wrote to his father during his first year in Germany: “he then transformed his intention of living ‘existence more as an artist, as a literary man’ into a life of slow, scientific study, with ‘an infinite, vital yearning to seek the truth, to seek it even though it does not exist’.” This “conversion” from the literary to the scientific, accelerated by a training trip abroad, recalls similar generational experiences, such as that of Victoriano García Martí in Paris or that of Maeztu in England (García Martí, 1941: 72, 101; Villacañas, 2000; Costa Delgado, 2019: 196–208). In this sense, Ortega's philosophical approach must be seen as part of a generational project that was committed to the specialisation of the different disciplines within an increasingly autonomous Spanish intellectual field, despite the fact that Ortega was undoubtedly more than equipped in style, literary erudition and editorial contacts to play the card of literary philosophy:

The rational is what constitutes the civil, the juridical; it is the terrain in which individual differences can be assembled and united in a city, in a juridical society, passing from the jungle to the citizen. Aesthetic judgement, on the other hand, is in itself irrational: it is decided by that lump of the individual which is unassimilable

for the concept, elusive, brave, irreducible to the legitimate action of science. Like all the young Spaniards of this time,⁶ I have waged a long war against my ego to throw it, like a bad dog, from the fanatics consecrated to logic and ethics, to speculative life and moral life: howling the little dog of myself, it has gone to take refuge in the splendid democracy of aesthetics (Ortega y Gasset, 2004k: 121).

We can see in the quotation a use of metaphors and adjectives with a strong political charge, something recurrent in Ortega. In this case, the philosopher's elitist idea of democracy⁷ is applied to aesthetics: it is the judgement that is within the reach of anyone, that does not require submission to a discipline. Science, logic or ethics, on the contrary, would then be regulated spaces, only accessible to those who choose to submit to their rules. In other words, to those who have disciplined themselves in order to obtain—in Ortega's opinion—a more modern, objectifiable version of cultural capital, necessary for Spain.

In the continuation of the article quoted above, Ortega (*ibid.*: 123) insisted on the importance of the trip to Europe for his new intellectual direction, citing some of the characteristic features of the Generation of '98, such as *casticismo*:

I have been *casticista*, and I have even given birth to a certain confession of Celtiberianism that you made to me years ago [...]. On returning from some pilgrimages through Scythian lands, I have become convinced that there already exists in Spain a very strong current of affirmation of the house and of the sentimental tradition. Since the enrichment of the national conscience should be our rule, I believe, Brother Cendoya, that the time has come for us to stop being casticists.

He also took the opportunity to dissociate himself from the Institutionists, referring to Cossío's book on El Greco as the greatest exponent of Spanish *casticismo* (*ibid.*: 124). The new generation, Ortega said, should not insist on the same direction, but explore a path of its own that passed through classicism: the norm, the ideal, which had its origin in Greece and its actuality in German science and philosophy.

The result of this process of discipline and distancing is, however, somewhat ambiguous. Ortega's articles written in the interval between his stays

⁶Here again, there is a reference to a generational position and project beyond his individual trajectory.

⁷For Ortega Greece was an "aristocratic demos" (Ortega y Gasset, 2004k: 122), although this model could also serve as an example for socialists if they undertook the formation of a working class elite.

in Germany and 1914 reflect an undoubted philosophical training and scientific concerns, corroborating the philosopher's assertions. But we must not forget that his first great work was *Meditaciones del Quijote*,⁸ where he opted for literature as an object of philosophical reflection. Gil Villegas (Gil Villegas, 1996: 225–376) connects this approach to philosophy through aesthetics with the position of outsiders in Germany, mainly young intellectuals from the European periphery, such as Ortega himself and the Hungarian Lukács. So, although it is undeniable that the German training marked a break with respect to the way in which Ortega's first intellectual vocation materialised, his preoccupation with literature continued to play an important role both in his first steps in philosophy and throughout his life, in his peculiar philosophical style.

THE RESIDUES OF MANDARIN IDEOLOGY IN THE IMPORTATION OF GERMAN KULTUR

In order to put into practice this project of importing and adapting the German *Kultur*, Ortega varied the tactics to be followed depending on the immediate political situation and the audience, while maintaining the basic idea common to this period of his youth. In 1908, before the Assembly for the Progress of the Sciences, he argued that, given Spain's backwardness and the impunity of political corruption, the strategy had to be long-term and the most immediate priority was to form a scientific elite as a basis for a subsequent pedagogical task:

The Spanish problem is, certainly, a pedagogical problem; but what is genuine, what is characteristic of our pedagogical problem, is that we first need to educate a few men of science, to arouse even a shadow of scientific concerns, and without this prior work the rest of the pedagogical action will be vain, impossible, meaningless. I believe that something analogous to what I am saying could be the precise formula for europeanisation (Ortega y Gasset, 2004b: 186).

Popular education was to be left for later:

We must improve ourselves without taking care to improve the people first. We who are responsible must be the virtue of our people and they must be able to say to us, like Shelley of a person he loved: "You are my best self" (ibid.: 189).

⁸This was undoubtedly Ortega's first major work, although earlier articles such as the series *Arte de este mundo y del otro* (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a: 434–450), published in *El Imparcial* in 1911, also show the persistence of his attention towards aesthetics as an object of philosophical reflection.

The formulation is reminiscent of passages in *Vieja y nueva política*, with the appeal addressed to the “minorities who live in intellectual occupations” (Ortega y Gasset, 2004n: 723–724); but this generational group corresponds to a later phase and the motives for which the philosopher addresses this specific public are not exactly the same. This text shows an attitude of resignation in the face of the immediate political situation that changed the following year with the political impact of the *Semana Trágica* and the subsequent Republican-Socialist Conjunction. The manifestos and generational groups responded to this new situation, in which the path of institutional political insertion opened up, oscillating between a more popular and a more elitist vocation for integration, depending on whether they were closer to the PSOE or to the possibility opened up by the Reformist Party in 1913 (Costa Delgado, 2019: 141–191).

For the formation of this Spanish cultural elite with a scientific basis, two tasks were necessary: sending young Spaniards abroad for training and importing from the most advanced countries all that was necessary to reproduce in Spain an autochthonous version of European culture: techniques, materials, but also inspiration for a comprehensive cultural reform. In his first two articles in 1909 in *El Imparcial*, Ortega (Ortega y Gasset, 2004j,l) called for an up-to-date scientific library and for more financial aid for research and study abroad. Europe was, for Ortega, synonymous with science and, as we have seen, in his case science referred to Germany, not to England or France, although for the philosopher both nations also had an enviable cultural life. It was in Germany that they had managed to develop a more impersonal, more reflective method and, therefore, more suitable for importation to Spain (Ortega y Gasset, 2004m: 462). Such a method could be accommodated to the Spanish national idiosyncrasy without the need to import with it other uses that were not desirable, retaining its purely intellectual advantage: “the Germanic style is neither attractive nor powerful: we will learn his sciences, which retain hardly anything of the one who produced them, which are pure reason, method, universal and unconditioned reality, and we will leave aside the Tudesque *pathos*” (ibid.).

What was the peculiarity of the German method? To explain this, Ortega frequently used the characteristically German opposition between *Kultur*, understood as the essential contribution of a nation to the progress of humanity, which “refers substantially to spiritual, artistic and religious facts” that “express the peculiarity of a people,” and Civilisation, understood in German-speaking usage as “a second-degree value,” which “affects only the exteriority of human beings” (Elias, 2009: 84–85). This opposition, which

originated in the eighteenth century and was revived in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Germany in connection with the rivalry with France and England (Elias, 2009: 83–113), was a central element in Ortega's claim of a conception of progress that was not limited to technical and material aspects and aspired to a broader cultural reform that also included philosophy — especially ethics — the human sciences and classical studies. At the same time, given that culture (*Kultur*) acquires in this theoretical framework the character of expression of a national essence, its development in Spain required interpreters — Spaniards — capable of such a task of creative adaptation.

Norbert Elias (ibid.) studied the sociogenesis of the concepts of culture and civilisation in Germany and France. His thesis is that the weak German courts of the eighteenth century were unable to sustain and foster an indigenous German culture. The relative economic poverty of Germany at the time and the active involvement of the German aristocracy in the public functions of the small courts made them very reluctant to welcome bourgeois intellectuals into their midst. In addition, the German commercial and artisanal bourgeoisie was underdeveloped. For all these reasons, the German bourgeois intelligentsia of the second half of the eighteenth century, marginal and dispersed throughout a politically fragmented territory with no hope of gaining access to political power and thus taking refuge in the universities, formed their own version of German culture (*Kultur*). This was directed towards a genuinely German spiritual, ethical and scientific ideal, as opposed to the customs of the small German courts (*civilisation*) which imitated the great absolutist court of the time, the French court. Court civilisation was thus associated with effective political power and the symbols of its privileged status, and not with the manners and customs considered characteristic of the German people as a whole. In France, on the other hand, the court was able to assimilate the talents of the middle classes, such as Diderot and Voltaire. Later, after the French Revolution, the German opposition *Kultur/Civilisation*, which originally corresponded to the opposition between bourgeois intellectuals and Frenchified courtiers, came to be seen as an expression of a national opposition between Germany and France (ibid.: 110).

Fritz Ringer (Ringer, 1995), for his part, studied the ideology of the mandarins of the German university that Ortega knew, which was completely traversed in its frameworks of mental perception and representation by the opposition described by Norbert Elias. In his work, Ringer points out that Germany:

led the rest of Europe in creating a modern system of higher education and research, just as England led the industrial revolution. This resulted in a particularly well established upper middle class in Germany long before its position was abruptly threatened by rapid industrialisation and political democratisation after 1870 (Ringer, 1995: 13–14).

The picture described by Ringer corresponds well with Elias's image of a German bourgeoisie, radically opposed to the aristocracy and driven to build its own national identity under the banner of culture, although Ringer refers to a later stage of the process. According to Ringer (*ibid.*: 23): "in this situation, educational level and professional status can become the only important basis for social advancement, capable of rivalling the aristocracy." The slow transformation of the various German feudal courts into a unified monarchy in a modern bureaucratic state favoured the development of an elite of mandarins with a strong self-consciousness and who based their legitimacy on culture, understood as both cultural capital and *Kultur*: an element of social distinction, which allowed access to a privileged social status, and, inseparably, a fundamental factor in the integral formation of the person, which was understood as an ethical rather than a logical choice (*ibid.*: 97–98). Thus, the defence of German philosophical idealism underlying the ideology of the mandarins was not a strictly philosophical question: "idealism was, from the beginning, as much a creed as a philosophy. [...] For all these men, the new philosophy was an expression of strong personal convictions. It reflected their conception of learning, their ideals of education and culture" (*ibid.*: 104–105). Like Elias, Ringer stresses that this ideology presented an aggressive side when it manifested itself against the aristocracy and the remnants of feudalism, and a conservative side when it identified the social and political demands of the popular classes as the main risk:

The fact is that Sombart and many of his colleagues wrote with the unconscious arrogance of men who, until quite recently, had been completely accustomed to setting the cultural standards of their nation. They behaved as if "the masses" actually prevented them from listening to Haydn in privacy or cultivating their own "subjective *Geist*". In a curious way, the whole theory of cultural decadence was a projection of the intellectuals' personal fears and doubts about the rest of society (*ibid.*: 256).

In view of Ringer's reconstruction of the German tradition, the influence of this German academic ideology on Ortega's philosophy, politics and representation of the world is evident. Therefore, if we want to study Ortega's importation of German philosophy, we cannot only deal with the influence of

doctrines labelled as philosophical—for example, that of idealism through the neo-Kantians, characteristic of the period immediately after the first stays in Germany—we must also take into account how and how much of this mandarin ideology arrives in Spain together with this philosophy and through the own life experience of those who import it. We should not think of the influence of this ideology as a solidly articulated doctrine that is systematically transmitted, nor, on the contrary, as a vague nebula that would infect, like a virus, the purity of the philosophical content. Ideology is also expressed through the philosophical content itself and through the representation that intellectuals make of their place in the world. In order to study the weight of this ideological influence, we must first of all objectify it. For example, through the use of conceptual oppositions that have a special weight in organising the image that intellectuals have of themselves and their task, as is the case with the aforementioned *Kultur/Civilisation* pair. This opposition had its correlate in the form of a political theory that considered the Anglo-French liberal-progressive representation of humanity as the sum of equal human beings in the abstract to be erroneous. Instead, it postulated a historically situated concept of individuality:

The issue can be clarified by the following analogy. Members of an orchestra play different parts, each following a score suited to the unique qualities of their instrument. The music thus produced is not composed of identical components. [...] The total performance depends on the simultaneous realisation of different goals by numerous participants, each of whom strives for a limited kind of perfection in the performance of his own part, according to his best ability (Ringer, 1995: 109).

This way of understanding culture, on the one hand, placed history at the centre of cultural analysis, something that would be very present in Ortega's later philosophy; on the other hand, it could lead to certain essentialist positions that passed for historicist when speaking of the perspectives of a nation or a social group as if they were psychological characterisations of individuals, a question equally present in Ortega's philosophy, for example in his theory of generations.

German mandarin ideology also resonates in the tone of Ortega's anti-Marxist stance and in his repeated insistence that economics and politics are subordinate spheres of the social: culture (*Kultur*) is the essence of a nation, which is expressed in each of its practices, while other dimensions of human activity, particularly those linked to what is connoted as instrumental or utilitarian, refer to a civilising veneer that forms part of a secondary order, *civilisation*:

The mandarins [...] refused to regard economic activity as anything other than a means to higher ends. Their point of view was neither that of the businessman nor that of the worker. For them, the whole productive sector of industry and commerce only was one among several parts of the machinery of society, and even a relatively subordinate part. This explains their methodological emphasis on the non-economic context of everyday life (Ringer, 1995: 147).

In the light of this analysis, the type of cultural or intellectual reform that Ortega advocated in his generational programme, set out in the first part of the article, must be related, at the same time, to his social position in Spain — a young “media philosopher,” installed in the centre of the Madrid bourgeoisie and importer of European avant-garde culture — to the content of the imported philosophy — neo-Kantian idealism — and to the mandarin ideology characteristic of the German professors. As can be seen, intellectual importation goes far beyond the mere translation of texts and its study cannot be limited to them.

Ringer’s (ibid.: 10) basic definition of the German mandarins corresponds to the aspirations and self-representation of the members of the social group articulated as the Generation of ’14 in Spain: “a social and cultural elite that owes its status primarily to educational qualifications, rather than to hereditary rights or wealth.” Both Ortega’s discourse and the sociological composition of the generational unit (Costa Delgado, 2019: 77–139) show how this is indeed characterised by the affirmation of cultural capital as an element of social distinction, as opposed to inheritance and wealth, from above, but also to the “masses,” from below. What happened is that, in the Spanish context of the early twentieth century, the social recognition of this group was much more precarious, the group itself was smaller in number and aggressively against the socio-political model of the Restoration. Ortega’s position is in some respects comparable to that of the “modernist mandarins,” who tried to adapt their legacy to modern times and sought to do so by relying on the liberals, advocating a non-Marxist social reformism. Ortega, in his initial phase, was even more democratic and optimistic about the possibilities of reform than these modernist mandarins, although, as I have already mentioned, with a variable tone closely linked to the immediate political situation.⁹

⁹Thus, the *Semana Trágica* and the Republican-Socialist Conjunction coincided with a brief rapprochement between Ortega, the PSOE and Lerroux’s Radical Party; while the gesture that Alfonso XIII made to Melquíades Álvarez’s Reformist Party in one of the crises of the turnist government was accompanied by Ortega’s rapprochement with this party in 1913, together with many other intellectuals of his generational unit.

There are, therefore, certain parallels between the sociogenesis of the German *Kultur/Civilisation* opposition and the situation of the Generation of '14 in Spain at the beginning of the twentieth century. An in-depth analysis of these parallels would explain the affinities that made possible the translation of German mandarin ideology to Spain. However, there are also important differences. Undoubtedly, the way in which German political unity and national identity were configured, fundamental in the studies of Elias and Ringer, have little to do with the Spanish case. Nor is the stage of development of the Spanish bourgeoisie at the beginning of the twentieth century comparable to that of Germany, or the degree of centralisation of intellectual life in the capital, which was much higher in Spain.

These differences between the German and Spanish cases can also be expressed in temporal terms. The association between the cultivated bourgeoisie, which owed its rising social status to its cultural capital, and an increasingly bureaucratized state began to be solidly forged in Prussia from the end of the eighteenth century. Then, the link “between the common-sense rationality of the new philosophy and the emerging system of absolute monarchy” (Ringer, 1995: 31) enabled the social ascent of the mandarins. In Spain, the process was initially similar to the French case as described by Elias (Elias, 2009: 114–129), associated with enlightened despotism, although with a much smaller social base. The liberal revolution, however, followed a very different course in Spain: the slow and difficult construction of the new State did indeed entail a radical transformation of the educational system, and the beginning of the long history of Krausism in Spain: the sending of Julián Sanz del Río precisely to Germany, is one of the milestones that connect the construction of the liberal State with the development of the autonomy of the intellectual field in Spain. But the Catholic Church, in a strategy aimed at compensating for its loss of economic and political power in the new regime, competed fiercely and successfully for the control of the material bases of intellectual production.¹⁰ This prolonged dispute, together with economic backwardness and recurrent political interventions in the Spanish intellectual field, made it difficult for the bourgeois intelligentsia to acquire an autonomous position supported by the State. Consequently, at the beginning of the twentieth century, there was nothing similar in Spain to either the German mandarins or the intellectual elite of the Third French

¹⁰On the relationship between the struggle for control over the material bases of intellectual production and the secularisation of philosophy in Modernity, from a sociology of philosophy perspective, see Collins (Collins, 2005: 525–619).

Republic, but rather the aspiration of generating a similar body, allying temporarily with social and political forces that were also interested in economic, cultural and political reform of the State, albeit with different objectives in the long term.

The comparatively limited degree of autonomy of the Spanish intellectual field at the time also explains why the strict division existing in German society between the academic and journalistic worlds described by Ringer¹¹ came as a pleasant surprise to Ortega, who aspired to reproduce it in Spain. On his return, however, he regretted having to content himself with transferring to the press tribunes an imitation of the intellectual discussion to which he aspired: in Spain at the beginning of the century, although journalists and academics had a different social status, they often shared the same social spaces and took part in the same debates, both intellectual and political. This was a difficult fit with the mandarin ideology rooted in the German academic tradition, which pretended itself to be outside—or rather above—the superficial vicissitudes of politics.

These differences explain why some aspects of the opposition between *Kultur* and *Civilisation* appear very nuanced in Ortega. For him, the question of technical and material progress formed a fundamental part of the generational project, and subordination to a broader cultural ideal was not posed as an opposition, but rather as a complementary, though urgently necessary, part of the same process. Thus, Ringer's (Ringer, 1995: 9) observation that highlights as one of the fundamental characteristics of the German mandarin's ideology "the consistent repudiation of instrumental or 'utilitarian' knowledge, the associated contrast between 'culture' and 'civilisation'," is not applicable to the case of the Spanish philosopher. Ringer (ibid.: 19) argues that rapid industrial and economic development generated among the German educated elites "a justifiable fear of the loss of their values and in particular of traditional values. They suspected that their own scale of personal cultivation values would come to be regarded as outdated and irrelevant." Ortega, in his youthful texts, but also in mature works such as *La rebelión de las masas*, expressed this structural unease of German intellectuals at the beginning of the century in a peculiar way: combining the demand for a comprehensive cultural reform to face a critical situation—first Spanish, then, in the 1920s, European—with the concession of an important space in his analysis to the positive aspects of the

¹¹"The general impression is given that there was a clear separation between the academic elite and the unofficial and disconnected intelligentsia" (Ringer, 1995: 68).

disturbing phenomenon. This partially positive assessment must be seen in relation to the particular position of the Spanish intellectual elites at the beginning of the twentieth century: they did not constitute a relatively cohesive and solidly established body before the abrupt socio-economic transformation of industrialisation, as in the German case; it was precisely the gradual Spanish industrial and economic development, together with the political transformations associated with it, which served as a catalyst for their demand for greater social recognition and intellectual autonomy. This process, which can be described as a transformation of the mode of intellectual generation, did not begin with the Generation of '14, although this generational unit gave it an important impetus that began to be articulated, as I have explained above, around the effects of the 1898 Disaster. The symbolic closure of the Spanish imperial past associated with that event did not, however, entail the suppression of the great opposition that ran through the Spanish intellectual and political field of the time: the imperial past was still symbolically alive, embodied in institutions—such as the Catholic Church, which was particularly active in the intellectual field—and in political and intellectual traditions that claimed to be heirs to that legacy and to the values associated with that idea of Spain. Faced with different ways of expressing this position, such as neo-scholasticism, traditionalism or *casticismo*, the young Generation of '14 positioned itself mainly on the side of the version of Spain's modernisation that concerns us here: emancipation from the old empire by taking as a reference point a particular adaptation of the European cultural and material present. This is what José Gaos was referring to when he stated that “Spain is the last colony of itself [...] the only Latin American nation which, from the common imperial past, has yet to become independent, not only spiritually, but also politically” (Gaos, 1945: 28).

Consequently, the objectives of the critique of the mandarin ideology were embodied in different figures in Germany and Spain, but the ideology was translatable because it allowed for structural homologies based on a system of oppositions with very similar values. At the top, in the case of eighteenth-century Germany, an inbred and Frenchified nobility that monopolised the courts of the German principalities and reproduced a “false culture” copied from abroad; in the case of early twentieth-century Spain, the Church and a political and intellectual elite spuriously sustained by the clientelistic networks of *caciquismo*, an “official Spain that obstinately prolongs the gestures of a defunct age” as opposed to “another aspiring, germinal Spain, a vital Spain, perhaps not very strong, but vital, sincere, honest, which,

hindered by the other, does not manage to enter fully into history” (Ortega y Gasset, 2004n: 714). Below, already at the beginning of the twentieth-century, the social forces unleashed by the industrial revolution in Germany directly threatened the social and institutional position of the mandarins, integrated throughout the nineteenth-century in the growing bureaucracy of an expanding authoritarian monarchy; in Spain, those same social forces—more reduced—did not lose their threatening character, but for most of the young Generation of '14, they still represented a hope of political renewal that could serve the purposes of the aspiring mandarins. This optimistic outlook would begin to change in some cases, such as that of Ortega, only a decade later. For the time being, in a precarious alliance, they denounced the Canovist system as corrupt and arbitrary and the Church as a source of ignorance and backwardness. Faced with these common enemies, the Generation of '14 defended the rationality and modernity of an organised bureaucratic system that rewarded efficiency and talent, understanding as such the social properties embodied by the group that aspired to control that bureaucracy, the most important component of which was cultural capital.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite these differences, and although the study of the parallels would require a more detailed analysis, I would like to emphasize that the ideological framework of the German mandarins conditioned, or perhaps we could say conveyed, the way in which Ortega reworked his distance from the hegemonic intellectual praxis of the previous generation in Spain. In a double intellectual and political bet, he sought to dissociate himself from it by seeking the support of a bourgeois, Madrid-based, rationalist intelligentsia, partly educated abroad and rejecting the system of *caciquismo*. In the process of importation, the mandarin ideological framework lost its link with specifically German social and historical aspects, which ceased to make sense to the new recipients. On the other hand, it acquired new connotations typical of the importing intellectual field, combining with other elements that structured it: for example, the Europe/Spain opposition, central in the polemic between Ortega and Unamuno (Costa Delgado, 2019: 204–206); the opposition between academics and journalists, fundamental in the relationship between Ortega and Maeztu (*ibid.*: 227–262); or the conflictive connection to the political power of the Restoration, which meant that at least until 1917, when the revolutionary threat became more evident (Elorza, 1984: 117–171), Ortega, together with most of the generational unit, was situated in a more progressive position, willing to seek alliances

with socialists and republicans. Despite the losses and acquisitions that occurred in the process of importation, the translation made sense because there were certain common elements between the two fields—German and Spanish—that made understanding possible.

Throughout the article I have shown how, already in Ortega y Gasset's early publications, it is possible to trace the elements of both an intellectual and a political programme for the modernisation of Spain. The strategic lines of this programme consisted of rationalising the State and deepening the division of labour, modelled on the main European powers of the time. The impact of the 1898 Disaster generated a struggle for the appropriation of the meaning of the event, which many interpreted as a political opportunity. Ortega, together with a small group of aspiring intellectuals and politicians of his age, elaborated a generational reading, trying to symbolically link the fate of Spain to the group's expectations for the future. As Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 2012) points out with regard to the construction of the modern State, the rationalisation or bureaucratisation of the State advances when a group of agents with political capacity—frequently with the support of a fraction of intellectuals—manages to impose a particular point of view as universal within the framework of a territory and, simultaneously, generates a normative space in which they themselves are in a privileged position. In other words, they are agents with an interest in the universal. In this sense, Ortega's discourse on the modernisation of Spain is totally traversed by the pretension of establishing cultural capital as the ultimate criterion of distinction in the intellectual and political fields.

Ortega's stays in Germany at the beginning of the century brought him into contact with neo-Kantianism, but also with the ideology of the German mandarins, studied by Norbert Elias and Fritz Ringer. This contact modulated his generational programme in some fundamental aspects. It legitimised and gave theoretical and practical content to a representation of society divided into elites and masses on the basis of cultural capital. It also offered a theoretical solution to the typical problem of the modern "intellectual": How to reconcile the demand for intellectual autonomy with the claim to legitimise political intervention by means of an intellectual authority, when by definition this is invested in opposition to politics? The *Kultur/Civilisation* dialectic offered a way out: a true intellectual—and even more so a philosopher—should not aspire to fragmented knowledge, but to transmute his scientific specialisation into cultural totalisation, to become a privileged interpreter of the general interest, of the universal,

also in politics. Obviously, there is a correlation between this dialectic and cultural elitism.

At the same time, the importation of mandarin ideology into Spain was not mechanical. The notable political, economic and intellectual differences between Germany and Spain at the beginning of the twentieth-century meant that the programme of the Generation of '14 was much less conservative in tone than the German academic norm. Nevertheless, the key categories of that ideological framework proved flexible enough to be adaptable to that new social reality.

With this paper, in addition to shedding light on the influence of this double generational experience on Ortega's theory, I would like to point out, on a more general level, the importance of historicising the categories with which we construct our own philosophical discourse. I firmly believe that Ortega's theory of generations has an enormous heuristic potential, provided that it is critically updated. Such a critical disposition involves subjecting its entire conceptual framework to close scrutiny, including the denaturalisation of such established oppositions as elite/mass and such suggestive definitions of the intellectual task as that derived from the *Kultur/Civilisation* dialectic, in order to understand what, in its concrete formulation, they owe to a very specific historical context. Only in this way, and never with full guarantees, will we be able to avoid bringing to the present, along with the theory, some clandestine passengers from another era.

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Costa Delgado J. [Коста Дельгадо Х.] The Influence of the 1898 Disaster and the Ideology of the German Mandarins in the Genesis of Ortega y Gasset's Theory of Generations [Влияние Катастрофы 1898 года и идеологии немецких мандаринов на становление теории поколений Ортеги-и-Гассета] // Философия. Журнал Высшей школы экономики. — 2024. — Т. 8, № 4. — Р. 104–127.

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ВЛИЯНИЕ КАТАСТРОФЫ 1898 ГОДА И ИДЕОЛОГИИ НЕМЕЦКИХ МАНДАРИНОВ НА СТАНОВЛЕНИЕ ТЕОРИИ ПОКОЛЕНИЙ ОРТЕГИ-И-ГАССЕТА

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Аннотация: В этой статье я рассмотрю на основе конкретного случая то, как социальная траектория философов и процессы коллективного определения философских продуктов находят выражение в ключевых категориях философского дискурса, то есть в символических формах, присущих социальной практике, которую мы называем философией. Для этого я покажу, что формативный период молодого Ортеги был пронизан двумя фундаментальными социальными переживаниями, которые интерпретировались через призму поколения: Катастрофа 1898 года и контакт с идеологией немецких мандаринов. Я также постараюсь показать, что эти переживания были включены или переведены в центральные категории философа, который только начинал свои первые шаги

в испанском политическом и интеллектуальном поле. Впоследствии эти категории стали частью, наряду с другими символическими формами, его зрелой теории поколений. Цель этой статьи состоит в том, чтобы указать, как остаточные элементы этих двух переживаний проникают в его теорию через эти ключевые категории. Делая это, я хотел бы открыть два направления для исследований: 1) углубить понимание его работы через социологию философии и 2) предостеречь от риска некритического включения таких остаточных элементов в некритическое применение теории поколений Ортеги к современности.

Ключевые слова: Ортега-и-Гассет, теория поколений, идеология мандаринов, социология философии, поколение '14.

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