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A Broken World. Some Notes on Manuel Sacristán as a Reader of Ortega**

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Abstract: By reconstructing the reading of *Mission of the University* found in *The University and the Division of Labor*, we will carry out a critical juxtaposition between the views of José Ortega y Gasset and Manuel Sacristán, emphasizing the critical notes made by the latter, using as a guiding thread the issue of the division of labor, which is implicit in Ortega's text. In the second stage of our discussion, we will seek to clarify how and to what extent Ortega's text influences Sacristán's conception of dialectics.

Keywords: Ortega, Sacristán, University, Dialectics, Elites, Division of Labor.

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Scientific truth is an exact truth, but incomplete and provisional, which is necessarily integrated into another type of truth—ultimate and complete, though inexact—which could appropriately be called "myth." Scientific truth, therefore, floats within mythology, and science itself, as a whole, is a myth: the admirable European myth.

José Ortega y Gasset, El origen deportivo del Estado

INTRODUCTION

It is striking how the bibliography consulted on *Misión de la universidad* (Forment, 1999; Fortuño Llorens, 2015; Lledó, 1984; López Alós, 2004; Zamora Bonilla, 2004) contains little to no references to the classic study by Manuel Sacristán (Madrid, 1925 – Barcelona, 1985) titled *La universidad y la división del trabajo.*¹This omission is notable because this "material,"²

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¹We find an exception in the pages dedicated to Ortega's text in the book *Ortega y Gasset*. *Una experiencia filosófica española* by José Luis Villacañas (Villacañas, 2023: 700, 708).

²⁴Este texto [...] constituye lo que en la tradición del movimiento obrero se llama un *material*, un texto escrito como base para la discusión, útil solo para unos hombres de un ambiente determinado" (Sacristán, 1985a: 98–99).

written in the heat of post-1968 university conflicts³ constitutes a precise reconstruction of Ortega's book—praiseworthy for its rigorous consistency as much as its sharp, immanent critique of Ortega's position. Sacristán confronts Ortega's theses with their implicit and naturalized⁴ assumptions, particularly the absence of an explicit social analysis capable of accounting for the structural causes underpinning the crisis of the Spanish university. Sacristán aims to capture the truth embedded in Ortega's theses in order to preserve it, while also discarding anything that might stem not from accurate description, but from Ortega's axiological framework—from his outdated militant liberalism—rather than from the substance of the issue he addresses.⁵

No less noteworthy, it must be said, is the scant attention — at least as far as we know — that studies of Sacristán's legacy have paid to systematically establishing the connections between the theoretical core of his approach (the conception of dialectics) and some of Ortega's statements about culture,

³"En su última fase, el sesentayochismo español fue una escolástica congestionada, falsamente marxista, que hablaba constantemente de abolir allí mismo la Universidad y la división del trabajo, mientras la tasa de crecimiento del PNB español rebasaba ampliamente la media europea, el régimen alcanzaba sus puntas más altas de adhesión pasiva (la llamada "despolitización" popular) y la correlación de fuerzas era tal que ni siquiera se podía resistir medianamente a la represión fascista" (Sacristán, 1985a: 99).

In 1966, Sacristán played a prominent role in founding the Sindicato Democrático de Estudiantes de la Universidad de Barcelona, drafting its introductory document, the *Manifiesto por una Universidad Democrática* (Sacristán, 1985b: 50–61), and actively participating in the so-called *Capuchinada*, the first act of the union, which culminated in a sit-in at the Capuchin monastery in Sarrià. On this episode, see Sarrión, 2022: 186; Capella, 2005: 88–90.

It is worth recalling that *Misión de la universidad* (1930) also responded to a context of university agitation. In May 1928, Primo de Rivera's dictatorship passed a decree-law seeking to equate degrees issued by private religious university institutions (*El Escorial* and *Deusto*) with those granted by public universities. This sparked student protests, particularly from the recently founded (1927) Federación Universitaria Escolar (FUE), leading to Ortega's resignation in July 1929. After 18 years of service, he left his chair in metaphysics at the Central University in protest against the dictatorship's repressive response to student demands. See Fortuño Llorens, 2015: 17–18; Zamora Bonilla, 2002: 280–281; Zamora Bonilla, 2004: 740.

⁴In the text at hand, Sacristán applies this model of "immanent critique" not only to Ortega, but also to the leftists who advocated for the immediate abolition of the university and the division of labor. To this end, he conducts a rich reflection on the Hegelian-Marxian concept of *Aufhebung*, aiming to determine what can be abolished and what must be preserved in the "division of labor," in order to clarify what type of university could realistically be aspired to, given the correlations of forces present in his time. Cf. Sacristán, 1985a: 120–121.

⁵On Ortega's exalted liberalism, the final lines of Section VIII of the first part of *La* rebelión de las masas (Ortega y Gasset, 2009: 130) are paradigmatic. For a critical approach to Ortega's reverential admiration for "doctrinaire liberalism" à la Guizot or à la Royer-Collard, see (Domènech, 2006).

totality, and synthesis. These are found not only in *Misión de la universidad* but also in other works by Ortega. 6

Accordingly, this article seeks to serve as just one initial tessera in a larger mosaic. Taking as its starting point the texts of both thinkers dedicated to the mission of the university, it aims to outline the guiding lines of a future study whose goal will be to elucidate the precise details of Ortega's influence on Sacristán's conception of dialectics. To this end, we will proceed in two steps. The first part of our paper proposes an obvious yet necessary task: to reconstruct some of the main lines of Ortega's argument and their appropriation in *La universidad y la división del trabajo*. In the second part of our discussion, we will examine the specific affinities between this approach and Sacristán's conception of dialectics.

MISIÓN DE LA UNIVERSIDAD

Ortega identifies, as a prelude to the university reform, the necessity of defining the specific mission of this institution, that is, to "give it its authenticity and not insist on it being what it is not, falsifying its inexorable destiny with our arbitrary desire" (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 69). This approach excludes mimesis as a method, as it is not about reproducing foreign models implemented in the great European nations as paradigms in Spanish soil. Rather, it is about carrying out a profound and sincere exegesis of our own circumstance to arrive at conclusions "after personal combat with the very substantive issue" (ibid.).

The anti-mimetic approach of Ortega's reflection, the search for the "own destiny" of the nation and its institutions, already implies certain

⁶I myself (Garrido, 2021: 257–258) have, in the past, fallen into the error of underestimating the influence Ortega may have had on Sacristán's dialectics, at the time seeking improbable sources which, while plausible, could not replace the evident connection between Sacristán's reflection and the work of the philosopher of El Escorial. José Sarrión (Sarrión, 2017: 239) has briefly pointed out the connection between Sacristán's thought and certain themes in Ortega's philosophy. Miguel Manzanera also studies Ortega's influence on a young Sacristán, aligned with a political-intellectual tradition that might be termed "left-wing Ortega followers."

An exception among attempts at systematic confrontation between Ortega and Sacristán can be found in the works of José Luis Moreno Pestaña (Moreno Pestaña, 2011: 2013), who, after a detailed study, comes to see Sacristán's proposal as a "specification of Ortega's project" (ibid.: 252), and of Ascensión Cambrón (Cambrón, 2015). However, neither undertakes an exhaustive confrontation between the two authors — a task which, for that matter, we will also not be able to carry out in this paper. Fernández Buey (Fernández Buey, 2015: 76), meanwhile, analyzes Ortega's and Sacristán's readings side by side, even tentatively suggesting — again briefly— the connection between Ortega's approach and the issue of dialectics: "an approach, within the framework of the analysis of the university's functions, to a classic problem: the opposition between analytical knowledge and a synthetic-generalizing vision." methodological issues that are relevant for defining the object at hand. For instance:

A fundamental error that must be eradicated from minds is the belief that nations are great because their schools [...] are good. This is a remnant of the "idealistic" piety of the last century. It attributes to schools a strength they neither have nor can have (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 70).

The forcefulness of the thesis does not deter Sacristán (Sacristán, 1985a: 111), who points out a certain stumble by Ortega into the same "idealistic piety" he critiques. This stumble occurs only a few pages later, when Ortega announces the project of "reconstructing from the scattered pieces—*disiecta membra*— the vital unity of the European man," a project that culminates in the following corollary: "Who can do this if not the university?" (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 83). In this rhetorical question, which seems to highlight the transformative power and causal priority of culture, Sacristán's disagreement takes root:

The "spontaneous" idealism of the modern European intellectual [e. g., Ortega] ignores that it is the inorganic atomization of the social base that prevents an integrated ideological superstructure, allowing only the proliferation of shift-ing ideologies characteristic of the superstructural capitalist world (Sacristán, 1985a: 111).

In other words: for Sacristán, the division of labor, a problem implicitly addressed in Ortega's text in its dual variants—technical (specialism) and social (formation of ruling classes)—must be the starting point for understanding the university crisis. This change of perspective entails acknowledging that the crisis stems from current transformations in the social structure. Precisely for this reason, it cannot be resolved through a reform focused on returning the institution to its medieval origins⁷ but only through aligning itself "with the times," which cannot avoid confrontation with these structural transformations. Such a shift, Sacristán believes, requires taking to their ultimate consequences what Ortega's text allows us to glimpse: "the relationship between the university problem and the critical fragmented situation of mature capitalist culture" (ibid.: 101).

Ortega gestures in this direction, but when he must confront this problem, he anticipates his own position inconsistently, forced to take a step back and

⁷"La nostalgia, consciente o no, de la integrada *cultura* europea pre-capitalista, de un mundo los suficientemente "formado" [...] como para que la variedad de los individuos y paisajes no impidiera percibir inequívocamente los valores y las jerarquías" (Sacristán, 1985a: 106). reserve his reflections for another occasion.⁸ This position—the intention to extend university education to the working masses—remains undeveloped, but if we keep it in mind, it reveals certain inconsistencies with the flow of his text. Let us anticipate them: by assuming the formation of the ruling class — currently the bourgeoisie (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 80) — as the genuine "mission" of the university, Ortega complicates the understanding of the exclusion of workers as a class as a fact that could be remedied through expanded access to higher education. On the contrary, the worker emerges more as the historical figure embodying the fundamental distinction between those who command and those who obey—the true leitmotif of Ortega's social philosophy.⁹

And yet, for Ortega commanding does not solely — or even primarily — consist of issuing martial orders¹⁰ but also pertains to the ways of achieving consensus and producing a shared public opinion among the cultured ruling class, and while workers may command (Villacañas, 2023: 80), and Ortega himself considers it desirable for them to access education to do so (ibid.: 73-74), we cannot ignore the consequences analytically contained in the semantics of command. The organization of society as an exchange of command and obedience implies a relational structure in which the virtual

⁸⁶Todos los que reciben enseñanza superior no son todos los que podían y debían recibirla; son sólo los hijos de clases acomodadas. La universidad significa un privilegio difícilmente justificable y sostenible. Tema: los obreros en la Universidad. Quede intacto. Por dos razones: Primera, si se cree debido, como yo creo, llevar al obrero el saber universitario es porque este se considera valioso y deseable [...] Segunda, la tarea de hacer porosa la Universidad al obrero es en mínima parte cuestión de la Universidad y es casi totalmente cuestión del Estado" (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 73–74).

⁹In *España invertebrada*, Ortega had spoken with crystal clarity on the matter: "Where there is no minority acting upon a collective mass, and a mass that knows how to accept the influence of a minority, there is no society, or one is very close to there not being one" (Ortega y Gasset, 2020: 98). We are fully aware that Ortega's approach is, to some extent, incommensurable with Marxian social theory and that Ortega explicitly distanced himself from it (Ortega y Gasset, 2009: 78). This could be raised as an objection to Sacristán's approach and to our critical observations.

However, it is equally true that it is Ortega who raises the labor question and recognizes the obviousness of bourgeois rule in the societies of his time. While Ortega appears faithful to his *aristocratismo del espíritu* when referring to certain workers who "also rule now and share control with the bourgeoisie" (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 80), it is also true, as Sacristán reproaches him, that Ortega does not seem capable of drawing any consequences from the existence of bourgeois and workers. He treats their coexistence as if the forms of their relationships were not embedded in a logic of exploitation and asymmetrical socialization that would be relevant to the issue at hand.

¹⁰Cfr. Villacañas, 2023: 703.

universalization of the university advocated by Ortega encounters its limit in the classist structure enshrining the social division of labor: the specifically capitalist form of the social transcendental in which some must command and others must obey.

We will return to this, but following the order of Ortega's exposition, we must still recall that for Ortega, the university is, *in primis*, an organizational device for the technical division of labor (professional) in relatively complex societies. In other words, its contemporary function is to train specialists (generally intellectual workers),¹¹ whether in the particular form of accessing the system of needs embodied in the "professional," the average type of university graduate, or in the even more peculiar—superior by its object, not by its practitioners, who represent "a mode of existence as limited as any other" (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 98)—form of scientific work, with its equally fragmenting and differentiating power corresponding to its analytical methods.¹² Thus, Ortega can synthesize his initial approach to university functions with the following formula: "Higher education consists, then, of professionalism and research" (Villacañas, 2023: 75).

Strictly speaking, the university must focus its efforts on the first part of its dual role, namely, teaching. To achieve this, the institution must center its attention on the average student, making them its "unit of measure" and designing teaching programs around what they can effectively learn (ibid.: 92ff.). This means selecting, from the overwhelming amount of knowledge produced by specialized research in each field, only what an average student can learn to perform their profession. This emphasis implies that, strictly speaking, scientific research cannot constitute the core of the university, as it is not the occupation of the average person but of a minority. Failing to recognize this and privileging research — an academic task that, rather than teaching what has already been discovered, involves "posing problems, working on solving them, and reaching a solution" (ibid.: 96) — has exac-

¹¹It is well known that the critique of specialism, one of the forms of particularism identified in *España invertebrada* (Ortega y Gasset, 2020: 72) as the quintessential malady of Spanish reality, is one of the guiding ideas of *La rebelión de las masas* and a characteristic trait of the *hombre-masa* studied by Ortega. For him, the contemporary professional practices "their profession with a state of mind essentially identical to that of someone content to use an automobile or buy a tube of aspirin, without the slightest inner solidarity with the destiny of science, of civilization" (Ortega y Gasset, 2009: 139; cf. ibid.: 159–163). On the continuity between *La rebelión de las masas* and *Misión de la universidad* through the problem of specialism, see Villacañas (Villacañas, 2023: 700).

¹²On how the *hombre-masa* is, to a large extent, a result of the processes triggered both by science and specialization, see Villacañas (ibid.: 703).

erbated the tendency to overlook what Ortega considers the university's principal task: the transmission of culture.

Thus, in addition to training professionals and conducting scientific research, the university is tasked with transmitting the most advanced culture of its time — what Ortega defines as the "system of ideas about the world and humanity" that individuals must possess to "effectively direct their existence": "clear and firm ideas about the Universe, positive convictions about what things and the world are. The ensemble, the system of these, is culture in the true sense of the word" (Villacañas, 2023: 77).¹³ Culture, then, serves a dual purpose that, as we will see, reappears in Sacristán's version of dialectical synthesis: the cartographic conception and practical vocation of culture, and the necessity of "living up to the ideas of the time."

Let us revisit the first point later and focus now on the second. In *La rebelión de las masas*, Ortega argued that what "each generation calls 'our time' always has a certain altitude: it rises above yesterday, holds even, or falls below" (Ortega y Gasset, 2009: 88). This altitude is a qualitative, not merely chronological, determination of the value attributed to the present. After analyzing the two fundamental attitudes toward the past—nostalgia for its superiority or relief at leaving such a difficult time behind—Ortega

¹³The system of ideas we call culture can be considered an anthropological universal, as every man and woman, by being alive and by living in the characteristic way of human life meaning a life that is both *bios* and *zoé*, both biography and biology (and, to adhere to Ortega's framework, more the former than the latter (Ortega y Gasset, 2009: 132; Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 105)) — participates in a specific culture, a certain system of ideas that serves as orientation in their life project. "No life is possible, sublime or base, discreet or foolish, that does not essentially consist in conducting itself according to a plan" (ibid.).

However, it would be naive to reduce Ortega's approach to a simple pluralism of worldviews, to an egalitarian perspective bordering on relativism, whose institutional translation would certify the *isegoría* of worldviews. As Sacristán points out, "only by reducing cultural social reality to the subculture of the hegemonic educated bourgeoisie can the idea of 'teaching a culture' make sense" (Sacristán, 1985a: 107–108). The entire dialectic of docility and exemplarity that is intrinsic to Ortega's elitism, which naturally ties into the importance of teaching leadership, would otherwise be rendered meaningless. No, Ortega is consistent in his views: what the ruling elite must learn is a developed system of ideas— the most developed system of its time not just any ideas circulating in society:

"The vast majority of these convictions or 'ideas' are not fabricated Robinson Crusoe-style by an individual but are received from their historical environment, from their time. In every era, there are naturally very different systems of convictions. Some are rusty and clumsy survivals of other times. But there is always a system of living ideas that represents the highest level of the time, a system that is fully current. That system is culture. Whoever falls below it, whoever lives by archaic ideas, condemns themselves to a lesser life—more difficult, painful, and crude" (ibid.: 106, emphasis ours). notes that the period he lived in followed "a time of fullness," giving the present the aura of "decline" (Ortega y Gasset, 2009: 91). Reflecting on the fullness of the 19th century, Ortega concludes that it revolved around what he calls "modern culture." The loss of this modern culture, a hard-won achievement of immediate ancestors, forces a break from a world that was always the same, where "nothing new could happen," and "tomorrow would be, in all essentials, the same as today" (ibid.: 93). Faced with the horizon opened by this loss and the eruption of the unpredictable, "the true fullness of life" becomes apparent (ibid.).

In light of this diagnosis, it is no surprise that the social crisis affecting Europe in the 1920s, according to *Misión de la universidad*, stems significantly from the lack of culture—the fact that the average citizen does not possess "the vital system of ideas about the world and humanity appropriate to the time" (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 78). This connects to the university because this "new barbarian" is "primarily the professional" (ibid.: 79), the average type whose education—at the expense of the university's old task of transmitting the era's high culture—has become its central focus. Ortega notes that this specialist is "wiser than ever, but also more uncultured" (ibid.)¹⁴. They deeply understand their narrow niche of expertise but are incapable of forming a global image that would allow them to navigate an increasingly complex world rationally, rather than through arbitrary extrapolations based on their limited knowledge or through outright irrationalities and outdated conceptions.

Considering these contemporary problems, Ortega proposes to address them by asserting that "the primary and central function of the university is the teaching of the great cultural disciplines" (ibid.: 95). This education would enable those who learn them, as cultured individuals, to fully "live up to the times." To this end, Ortega provides a catalog of disciplines in which this new Goethe, this Leonardo of mass society, must be minimally versed:

- (1) The physical image of the world (Physics);
- (2) The fundamental topics of organic life (Biology);
- (3) The historical process of the human species (History);
- (4) The structure and functioning of social life (Sociology);

¹⁴He revisits the idea from *La rebelión de las masas*: "He is not wise because he formally ignores everything outside his specialty; but neither is he ignorant, because he is 'a man of science' and knows his tiny portion of the universe very well. We must say that he is a wise ignoramus, which is exceedingly grave, as it means he is someone who, in all matters he is ignorant of, will behave not as an ignorant person but with all the arrogance of someone who is a sage in his specific field" (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 161).

Culture, distinct from science and professional training, does not require the average student to become a specialist in each of these subjects. Instead, it aims for them to acquire a general cultural foundation.¹⁵ Being cultured means that their judgments do not contradict the "principles, modes of knowledge, and ultimate conclusions" (Villacañas, 2023: 111) of the most advanced findings across various fields, even if the graduate cannot typically reproduce or explain the state of the art in each area. Using a term from his contemporary Antonio Gramsci, this entails creating a shared discipline a cultivated common sense— that breaks with the spontaneous, inherently Ptolemaic mindset (Gramsci, 2023; Vol. 2, 658).¹⁶

The achievement of this global image, which Ortega equates with culture, does not coincide with scientific research or professional training. These develop through methodologically regulated, analytical procedures. Culture, on the other hand, as a system of ideas forming a coherent totality meant to guide individuals rationally and consistently in the social sphere—grounding their evaluations and pursuing their goals with an accurate worldview—must be the result of a synthetic effort counteracting the dispersion characteristic of increasingly specialized knowledge:

The current dispersion and complexity of scientific work must not continue without being compensated by another type of scientific work, inspired by an opposite interest: the concentration and simplification of knowledge. It is necessary to cultivate and refine a specific type of talent: synthesizers (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 111).

¹⁵Villacañas has summarized this idea by asserting that in the *Facultad de cultura*, the sciences must be approached from their vital content (Villacañas, 2023; 706).

¹⁶It would be worth delving deeper into the affinities between Ortega's approach and that of Gramsci—hinted at, for example, in José Luis Villacañas's study (ibid.: 700)—in search of common sources that go beyond a generic *Stimmung* of the era. Certainly, thinkers like Croce or Sorel could explain some of the truly remarkable affinities, but a meticulous philological study is required to trace the shared connections that might account for such parallels, particularly at the level of describing the layers of common sense. Consider the strict synonymy between the "rusty survival of other times" (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 106), as referenced in note 13, and Gramsci's phrase "fossilized layers [of worldviews] that reflect the conditions of past life" (Gramsci, 2023: Vol. 3, 763).

The Sacristán text under discussion, with its emphasis on the issue of hegemony, could be seen as an initial confrontation between Ortega and Gramsci. However, since it is "only" a "material," it is more of a practical application of both thinkers to interpret the contemporary circumstances of Sacristán's time. A preliminary attempt at the type of contrast that interests us here can be found in Scotton, 2013. These talents, *stricto sensu*, will also be specialists, but specialists "in constructing a totality" (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 114), in creating "vigorous syntheses and systematizations of knowledge" (ibid.: 113). This brings Ortega to the core of his institutional reform proposal: the creation of a "*Facultad* of culture," through which all specialists would pass, serving as the nucleus of the university and thus providing an institutional translation of his diagnosis of Europe's present maladies.

This global image, which, as we have seen, must provide a cartographic principle, constitutes the third function of the university. As Ortega writes, "society needs good professionals [...] but needs even more to ensure competence in another kind of profession: that of ruling" (ibid.: 79–80). And to rule, it is necessary for the ruler to have guidance that is both up-to-date and realistic — a description of the world as a whole. With this return to the problem of ruling, we close the circle of our argument and arrive at Sacristán's main point of dissent:

In every society, someone rules — whether a group, a class, the few, or the many. By ruling, I do not mean so much the juridical exercise of authority as the diffuse pressure and influence over the social body. Today, in European societies, the bourgeois classes rule, and most of their members are professionals. It is therefore crucial for these professionals, beyond their specific professions, to be capable of living and exerting vital influence at the level of their time (ibid.).

The fact is that today the bourgeoisie rule does not grant Ortega's elitism¹⁷ — essentially a meritocratic and demophobic aristocratism, consistent with his liberal principles and often flirting with the sociological organicism¹⁸ that inspired fascist corporatism — an essentialist character or a preference for that social class. The distinction between elite and mass, between select minority and social majority, is, as we have said, a constant in politics¹⁹ a premise that can take various forms but cannot and should not be eliminated without risking a crisis as profound as the one plaguing interwar

 $^{17} \rm{The}$ best study we have on this topic is Sánchez Cámara, 1986. On the link between fascist ideology and the medievalizing critique of capitalism — which seeks to put everyone in their place to restore the organic unity lost to capital — see Sacristán, 1985a: 109.

¹⁸⁶There will be, therefore, national health to the extent that each of these classes and rewards has a living awareness that it is merely an inseparable fragment, a member of the public body" (Ortega y Gasset, 2020: 72). The influence of Scheler's sociological models on Ortega is discussed by Domènech (Domènech, 2006: 342), Lledó (Lledó, 1984: 15–16), and Sánchez Cámara (Sánchez Cámara, 1986: 202).

 19 For the defense of "radical aristocratism," that is, factual and ineradicable rather than normatively desirable—although one might assume that, because it is ineradicable, it is also desirable—see Ortega y Gasset, 2009: 81–82; Ortega y Gasset, 2020: 105–108.

Europe. As Ortega himself puts it: "If tomorrow the workers rule, the issue will be the same: they will have to rule from the heights of their time; otherwise, they will be replaced" (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 80)²⁰.

In other words, Ortega can accept the existence of workers and even their governance, provided they are willing to become an elite and to reason within the language of power — a universal political Esperanto. This, however, entails renouncing the universalism that forms the core of the emancipatory program, not just of socialism but of the millenary democratic tradition and its specifically modern form rooted in the Enlightenment principle of autonomy: that the people, as a political subject, can simultaneously be the subject and object of governance, recognizing in the law the fruit of their will and rejecting as law any mandate tainted by heteronomy. For this, representation must not be the privilege of narrow elites but rather the heavy burden of individuals, accessible even to the free poor, tasked with the monumental challenge of representing the will of an inclusive "all" that includes themselves.

This is, evidently, an ideal of deep roots. Ortega opposes it with his own ideal, equally utopian. What is at stake here is not the sociological

²⁰In reality, the inclusion of workers in institutions that had previously been barred to them marks the true "altura de los tiempos" that Ortega's text acknowledges but does not take to its ultimate consequences. The fragmentation inherent to specialism is, in fact, the corollary of certain social transformations within the productive apparatus — consider, for instance, the brutal form of specialization represented by the Taylor system or its relatives developed by Ford or Bedeaux and implemented everywhere during Ortega's time — whose consequences exacerbate the proletarianization of large social strata.

To think that the effects of such a profound morphological transformation could be mitigated through a state reform limited to guaranteeing the inclusion of workers in the university without altering the university's structure except in a regressive sense, that is, making it once again fulfill past functions it had abandoned — has rightly been described as utopian. For Sacristán's critique of utopianism, in its dual nature as both a critique of the present and a refusal to transform it immanently by leveraging its own negativity, see Sacristán, 1985a: 106. See also Fernández Buey, 2015: 86.

Furthermore, Ortega's utopianism is very much characteristic of the elitist liberalism of the interwar period, shared with other liberals à la Croce, nostalgic for the 19th-century situation that combined the forms of civil society typical of competitive capitalism with a political society structured around a parliamentary system in which the parties of notables converged: those clercs who, in Ortega's ideal type, would form the select minority. This institutional framework, along with all the nostalgias of the cultured professional—so reminiscent of the Hegelian system of needs or Proudhonian society of artisans—becomes obsolete with the unstoppable advance of monopoly capital, contemporary with the consolidation of mass parties—both socialist (and ultimately communist) as well as democratic-Catholic. This consolidation is linked to the extension of suffrage through the most varied forms of class struggle and peasant mobilization during the First World War.

and political realism of these visions but understanding which principle elitism or universalism—can inspire institutions and political programs that constitute a civilizational advance. Realism, at best, would lead us to acknowledge that elites exist, but from that fact, it is the task of political reflection to decide whether to eternalize the phenomenon, treating it as a neutral reality, or to regard it as a problem to combat and minimize, as though it could be eradicated.²¹ Thus, the issue, as Sacristán recognized, pertains not to the object itself but to the perspective of its observer.

This shift toward the enunciative position leads Sacristán to observe in Ortega's perspective a "liberal tendency to resolve [the problem of social experience's fragmentation] through a paradoxical conversion of traditional humanism into a new specialty [which] often takes the form of a dichotomy between wisdom or global knowledge and fragmentary understanding" (Sacristán, 1985a: 102). In other words, it would involve creating a social group—the culture masters—that, without fulfilling any productive role, would feed the enlightened layer, serving only as an integrative support for the ruling class (cf. ibid.: 108).

In other words, the cultural creator would compensate for the fragmentation of knowledge produced by hyper-specialized scientific research and the professional division of labor through a manageable cultural synthesis that the ruling class could use in governance. Culture, as the antithesis of barbarism, is the keystone of a non-egalitarian integration, capable of containing social antagonism. Fundamentally, it is about guaranteeing the hegemony of a particular group, a government based on consensus and

²¹Certainly, Ortega y Gasset, 2020: 105ff had flatly rejected such approaches—"there is no more talk about whether or not the political constitution, from a moral or justice perspective, should be aristocratic. Instead of first analyzing what it is, the inescapable conditions of each reality, one immediately proceeds to dictate how things should be"—but in a way that canonizes *what is*, the elitist structure of reality, as the only thing that "can be." Antoni Domènech (Domènech, 2006: 377–378) has pointed out the conservative, if not outright reactionary, lineage of critical motives against the "ought," so fashionable in 19th-century nostalgias for the Ancien Régime.

It must be said here that the perspective that starts from *what is* does not necessarily have to abandon the juxtaposition of normative approaches, as long as these are viewed as competing programs that different factions strive to make prevail. There is nothing to object to Ortega's assertion that "only what can be ought to be, and only what operates within the conditions of what is can be," but, since *what is* does not univocally determine the possibilities of *what can be*, there will always be several competing *oughts* in every historical period. Most importantly, there will be no way to justify the a priori exclusion of a particular *ought* unless one enjoys the prerogative of knowing the entire range of combinatory possibilities offered by human sociality. legitimized by a principle Ortega anchors in a culture up-to-date with the times — that is, sufficient to neutralize the specific intensity of class struggle in interwar Europe (and particularly in Spain during the 1920s and 1930s).

The capitalist fragmentation of feudal organicity is a transversal object of reflection throughout Sacristán's work.²² While Sacristán recognizes the need for totalizing syntheses to satisfy the cartographic principle, he is equally aware that this capitalist fragmentation of traditional societies is also the result of the generalization of the principle of formal freedom inherent to the historical imposition of the capitalist mode of production. This freedom, though truncated by its formal nature, is nonetheless an indispensable starting point, born against the feudal organism, from which to construct concrete totalities capable of guiding social praxis.

Here, Sacristán and Ortega converge. The point where they diverge is in their acknowledgment that the cultural totality aspired to by the philosopher of El Escorial is impossible without altering the structural foundations that produce dispersion. By failing to accept this premise, Ortega's conception of hegemony as "asymmetrical interdependence" reinforces the very scheme it aims to remedy. Thus, the *Facultad* of culture becomes the source of hegemonic-consensual domination ultimately guaranteed by the state. In this sense, the university is no more than a refinement of the crude spiritual power the press wields over public opinion (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 119–121; Sacristán, 1984a: 114).

Sacristán, however, does not see the principle that consecrates social division — and, therefore, the existence of the state and the hegemony carrying the principle of heteronomy — as eternal. Nonetheless, he starts from Ortega's reading to address the issues of his time, including the post-1968 student movement's goal of abolishing the division of labor. For Sacristán, such abolition is simply impossible, primarily because the complexity of contemporary societies excludes the possibility of eliminating the technical division of labor, i. e., specialization. However, it is possible to conceive of a division of labor that does not entail a classist structure governed by the blind laws of the economy (but by planning) and curbs the automatic conversion of social power into political dominance. That these

 $^{^{22}}$ See, for example, his beautiful treatment of this topic in relation to post-Kantian German philosophy, acknowledging, in a manner characteristic of him, the element of truth contained even within the mystifications of Romanticism, in the text titled *Al pie del Sinaí romántico* (Sacristán, 1984a: 346ff).

tendencies were inscribed as possibilities in his present²³ is evidenced by the high rates of youth unemployment at the end of the 1960s, which appeared to be the direct consequence of industrial innovation, leading to significant turnover rates in the workforce. These transformations were tied both to the deskilling of productive tasks and to the increasing access of popular strata to university education. The democratization of the university provided the conditions to envision its transcendence — not as such, since certain technical knowledge must still be transmitted — but as a "factor of the class-based division of labor," as a mechanism for "producing hegemony through the formation of an elite and the formulation of criteria of culture, behavior, distinction [and] prestige" (Sacristán, 1985a: 134).

Thus, what was incompatible with the socialist perspective was the mission of the university identified by Ortega: the teaching of culture intended to underpin the dialectic of docility and exemplarity. This principle needed to be opposed with one that did not reinforce "the class-based, hierarchical, and fixed division of labor, which in the large capitalist industry" was already "contradicting the mobility and consciousness of the workers" (ibid.: 137). The goal was not to eliminate all social differences but rather to ensure that inequalities among social agents were no longer a direct expression of inherited social organization. A genuine meritocracy — a term consistent with Ortega's conception of aristocratism (Ortega y Gasset, 2009: 119) would have to be founded on a division of labor that was non-hierarchical, purely functional, in which "the distribution of tasks ceases to be mediated by individuals' status and is determined solely by collective functionality, without material or formally coercive fixation of individuals" (ibid.: 141).

The context of university democratization in which Sacristán operates gives rise to a crisis of expectations, a dislocation between the education of graduates and society's ability to integrate them into positions corresponding to the status their degrees should guarantee. In this phenomenon, we can discern a possible trend toward the general devaluation of the exchange value of university degrees and, consequently, their devaluation "as components of the capitalist social organization" (ibid.: 144). From this follows the

 23 It is worth noting, as Sacristán emphasizes heavily, that the crisis facing the university institution of his time highlights tendencies that could be exploited in a socialist direction, such as the one he proposes. This does not mean that such a crisis, by any necessity, is destined to be resolved in a socially progressive way. In fact, the relevance of Sacristán's text lies not so much in his strategic proposal for the student movement—seen from today, it has largely become irrelevant—but rather in his ability to foresee tendencies of recomposition that have been consolidated with the advancement of the neoliberal university.

possibility that the pursuit of increasingly higher levels of education may not only respond to financial motives but also to the genuine aspiration to expand one's cultural foundation. Certainly, Sacristán errs on the side of a certain anthropological optimism, underestimating the alienating potential of the *low-cost culture* offered ubiquitously by the so-called culture industry, which caters to citizens' cultural impulses. More generally, he assumes an interest in what could be called *high culture*, an interest that appears to be far from universally shared, even if the material conditions to free up time from the workday were provided.

Nonetheless, given Sacristán's description, the hypothesis of a crisis in the social hierarchy legitimized by university degrees seems justifiable. If confirmed, this would imply that the hierarchy would lose part of its legitimacy, leaving it supported only by the heavy inertia of tradition and the brute force of precedence — that is, having been the first to occupy a position. If this is the case, with the loss of its legitimizing function, the traditional role of the university diagnosed by Ortega — namely, the production of hegemony in the traditional sense of governance — would also collapse. According to Sacristán, the crises in professional and scientific training would then be mere symptoms of this broader phenomenon.

However, Sacristán is aware that a forward escape could be orchestrated by the ruling classes to ride out the crisis without altering the very social structure that generates it. Faced with the obsolescence of the hierarchy resulting from the development of advanced capitalist social formations, an attempt could well be made to preserve privileges and the inertia granting them legitimacy through the recomposition of "the traditional university by introducing or reinforcing horizontal barriers that produce even more stratification, intra-university class structures: first-class, second-class, and third-class graduates" (Sacristán, 1985a: 150).

Numerous contemporary phenomena confirm Sacristán's prediction. Examples include the enormous proliferation of degree programs (Cambrón, 2015: 480–482), the pronounced rise in private universities, and the processes of competency-based education and lifelong learning, which place the burden of always-incomplete training on students. This, in turn, serves as a pretext for justifying their limited integration into the labor market.²⁴ Meanwhile,

 24 It should be noted in passing that the current brutal subordination of the university to a market that is clearly unable to absorb the masses coming from higher education stands in stark contrast to Ortega's approach. His focus was on the average student, making the definitive and complete transmission of the necessary competencies the goal of education.

the devaluation of degrees continues: their exchange value is, in general, progressively diminishing, and their use value is also eroded due to the increasing bureaucratization and precarization that affect the tasks the university performs, tasks that Ortega considered secondary.

THE SACRISTANIAN DIALECTIC

Emilio Lledó, in his text on *Misión de la universidad*, situates Ortega's reflection in the tradition of Carl Heinrich Becker. The former Prussian Minister of Culture had, even before Ortega, advocated the need to develop vigorous syntheses that reconcile the necessity of transmitting the foundational elements of curricula dedicated to professional education with the freedom of creative research. To this end, against specialism, Becker saw in the teaching of philosophy, politics, sociology, and history the bridges that could mediate between the specialist and their era, proposing the creation of "a chair of *Weltanschauungsphilosophie*, a kind of philosophy of worldviews" (Lledó, 1984: 14-15)²⁵. The concept of culture in *Misión de la universidad* revives this Diltheyan idea, no longer as a worldview but rather as a "system of living ideas" (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 80, 104, 106), a "system of ideas about the world" (ibid.: 77), or "clear ideas about the universe, positive convictions about what things and the world are" (ibid.). Thus, the Madrid philosopher asserts:

Culture is the system of living ideas that each era possesses. Better yet: the system of ideas from which the era lives. Because there is no remedy, no possible escape: humanity always lives from a set of specific ideas, which constitute the foundation upon which its existence rests. These, which I call "living ideas or ideas we live by," are, no more and no less, the repertoire of our actual convictions about what the world is, who our neighbors are, and the hierarchy of values held by things and actions: which are more estimable, which are less (ibid.: 104).

Certainly, the reference to life, to a "life [that] cannot wait for the sciences to scientifically explain the universe" (ibid.: 107), seems to anticipate the issue of praxis — a central theme for Manuel Sacristán — and serves as a safeguard against the speculative tendencies of philosophy, protecting it from becoming an inert network of transhistorical ideas detached from its grounding in the immanence of human life.

²⁵We follow the report on Becker's proposal from the article by Lledó (Lledó, 1984) to which we have referred. The works of the German author considered in that study are: *Gedanken zur Hochschulreform* (1919) and *Vom Wesen der deutschen Universität* (1925).

However, Ortega's text also contains an internal tension that again seems to involve the "spontaneous idealism of the European intellectual," of which Sacristán, as we have seen, accused him. Ortega's formulation in the cited passage tends toward a relationship between experience and thought that, using a somewhat academic term, we could call *a*-dialectical (in the specific sense that the second term provides the foundation from which the first develops, but not vice versa). Here, Ortega's traditional perspectivism seems to fade, as it appears — if we are faithful to the text — that life unfolds from a given set of ideas, but not that thought emerges from a specific vital situation. This suggests a separation between theory and practice, a speculative resolution of real antagonisms (a traditional pitfall of idealist traditions) entirely consistent with the limitations of his proposed university reform: the powerless *Facultad* of culture against the cyclopean task imposed by the modern division of labor.

Be that as it may, we must now demonstrate the isomorphism between Ortega's text and Sacristán's approach to dialectics — a relationship not always free, even when reversed, from the tension between theory and practice discovered in Ortega (Garrido, 2021: 275–276). One of Sacristán's central texts on this subject, *La tarea de Engels en el Anti-Dühring*,²⁶ begins precisely with the aforementioned issue of worldview:

A worldview is not knowledge; it is not knowledge in the sense that positive science is. It is a series of principles that account for the behavior of a subject, sometimes without the subject formulating them explicitly (Sacristán, 2009b: 76).

As we can see, this definition of worldview reproduces two Ortegaean themes we have already addressed. First, the relationship between culture and action (or life, or praxis, or behavior), which now appears inverted, granting priority to action, as it is this that the worldview seeks to explain. Second, Sacristán revisits another issue Ortega raised: the distinction between culture as a general worldview and science understood as positive knowledge specialized in studying a particular object.

Regarding the latter, Ortega had already noted that "culture [...] skims from science what is vitally necessary to interpret our existence," but without conflating the two or denying that *there are entire parts of science that are not culture* (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 107). The distinction is obvious if we

²⁶Preface for the translation of the Engelsian classic, which we owe to Sacristán himself and which was published in 1964. On the relevance of Sacristán's text on Engels, both in the Spanish context and in his own intellectual evolution, see, respectively: Morán (Morán, 2017: 841–842) and Vázquez García (Vázquez, 2009: 343).

consider that "culture needs [...] to possess a complete idea of the world and of humanity; it cannot stop, as science does, where the methods of absolute theoretical rigor happen to end" (Ortega y Gasset, 2015). There is thus a qualitative difference between the analytical approach inherent in the production of scientifically rigorous knowledge and the synthetic practice aimed at generating cultural products that compensate for their inexactness with functionality.

This dual movement recurs in the paths Sacristán's treatment of dialectics takes, allowing us to clarify its specific insertion into the Kampfplatz of contemporary Marxism. Against attempts to sanctify the scientific status of Marxist doctrine, championed by notable figures like Louis Althusser or Galvano Della Volpe, Sacristán sides with the opposite position: "The Marxist classics are classics of a worldview, not of a specific scientific-positive theory" (Sacristán, 2009b: 87). In other words, what defines Marxism is not the establishment of a series of methodologically verifiable theses with an unalterable truth value (an orthodoxy, to put it in political terms) over time. On the contrary, for Sacristán, Marxism is a worldview—or at least a fraction of the socialist worldview—a framework of axiologically charged ideas (guided by principles of social equality based on the positive freedom of subordinate classes) that guides decision-making and interprets the findings of positive sciences. In this sense, the results of scientific analysis describe a grammar of facts to which realistic political praxis must adhere, but they do not restrict social actors' scope of action to a single possibility. Instead, they open up space for a plurality of worldviews that interpret reality from different values and act accordingly. Marxism is just one of these.

According to Sacristán, what is specific to the Marxist worldview— even within the broader socialist tradition, with which it shares values— is its fidelity to the materialist principle of immanence, to the task of elaborating the dialectical synthesis, the concrete totality in which "theory and practice are united," "without introducing any data beyond the materialist ones of reductive analysis" (ibid.: 82). The Marxist worldview, as scientific socialism, must exclude by principle any descriptive content that does not stem from the results of positive sciences (or that is incompatible with them), articulating these results into a worldview prepared to guide practice based on the values mentioned above.

This conception of Marxism resonates with one of the peculiar ways of being "in tune with the times" found in *Misión de la universidad*: "in our era, the content of culture largely comes from science" (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 107). As Ortega added, in line with Sacristán's perspective: "what

has been said is enough to make clear that culture is not science. The fact that today more faith is placed in science than in anything else is not itself a scientific fact but rather a vital faith" (Ortega y Gasset, 2015).

From all this arises the intrinsic overlap between the Marxist worldview and transformative practice. In a 1968 text titled *El género literario del Marx maduro*, Sacristán names this union "revolutionary praxeology." There, he identifies Marx's central aim as "grounding and rationally formulating a project for transforming society" (Sacristán, 2009a: 371). This task necessarily requires the author to master as much scientific knowledge as possible, without reducing the endeavor to mere education. The specific link that Marxism, as "revolutionary praxeology," establishes with science is one of "supraordination," meaning that the need to align practical goals with the rational descriptive framework derived from the sciences involves "the clarification and foundation of [revolutionary] practice" through theory (ibid.: 372).

Thus, the relationship between theory and practice, between the merely descriptive elements of reality and action founded upon them, grants the former—a realistic description integrated into a worldview—a cartographic, orientational function. This principle of cartography, as we saw, was also attributed by Ortega to the type of synthesis that culture should embody, a practical tool capable of organizing the chaos of life:

Life is chaos, a wild jungle, a confusion. Humanity gets lost in it. But the mind [...] works to find "paths," "roads" through the jungle; that is: clear and firm ideas about the Universe, positive convictions about what things and the world are. The whole, the system of these, is culture in the true sense of the word [...]. Culture is what saves from the shipwreck of life, what allows humanity to live without its life becoming a senseless tragedy or radical degradation (Ortega y Gasset, 2015: 77).

Finally, upon close examination, the synthesis Ortega proposes as the task of the *Facultad* of culture—a synthesis that draws from the results of physics, biology, history, sociology, and philosophy—is entirely compatible with the principle of supraordination between positive knowledge and praxeological totalization. From this overlap, Sacristán also developed a university reform proposa—though not comprehensive, as Ortega's was, but limited to the role philosophy should occupy in the Spanish university system. In this proposal, the echoes of Ortega's ideas in *Misión de la universidad* are not difficult to discern. Sacristán's brief text, published in 1968, is titled *Sobre el lugar de la filosofía en los estudios superiores*. We speak of echoes of Ortega's proposal because there is, in my view, a certain formal affinity between the two authors' proposals, even though, in terms of content, Sacristán launches a nearly explicit critique of Ortega's text, anticipating his later critique in *La universidad y la división del trabajo*:

It is possible that there never was, or that there existed only for a couple of decades, an organization of culture that gave academic philosophy the possibility of effectively and monopolistically performing the function of ideological direction of society (Sacristán, 1984b: 360).

In this distancing, we also see how Sacristán replaces the role Ortega attributed to culture in general with that of academic philosophy, which, in Ortega's argument, was only one component of the synthesis. Philosophy is thus left in a no-man's-land: it can no longer provide substantive propositions to be incorporated into the dominant worldview in a society, nor can it serve as the organizing principle of that worldview. In this sense, it is not comparable to other disciplines, not a worldview, not positive knowledge, nor a "substantive knowledge superior to positive sciences" (ibid.: 357). If philosophy is to retain a space between worldviews and scientific description, it must be conceived as a practice of "reflection on the foundations, methods, and perspectives of theoretical, pre-theoretical, and practical knowledge and *poiesis*" (ibid.).

Consequently, philosophy becomes a second-order reflection, unrelated to transmitting a canon containing the substantive theses about the ultimate nature of being crafted by the high culture of each era. For this reason, maintaining philosophy sections on equal footing with faculties that develop and transmit the knowledge of various positive sciences becomes senseless. However, since, as noted, there is still a practice that "may discreetly be called philosophical" (ibid.: 357), it is worth accompanying the elimination of the philosophy degree with the "organization of a general institute of philosophy," or, "to put it in decree-law terms: having eliminated the philosophy degree, the doctorate must be reorganized" (ibid.: 368).

The central characteristic of this, as it pertains to our interests, would be that "the only title issued by the institute — the doctorate in philosophy presupposes the attainment of another degree — specifically, a degree in some specialty — which the institute cannot provide" (ibid.: 369). Thus, the supraordination between philosophy and other disciplines, which makes the former a second-order reflection taking the latter as its object, here assumes an institutional form in which the institute as a whole inherits Ortega's function of synthesizing the most advanced research results of the time, while renouncing the claim that this synthesis offers the cultural level appropriate for the ruling class. Certainly, it is difficult—and would be elitist—to suggest that social practice, whether revolutionary or conservative, should be measured against the synthesis orchestrated by the reflections of philosophy doctorates. Sacristán's argument suggests that worldviews effectively in operation originate outside academia and, consistent with Ortega's aspirations for the ruling class, that the program and practice of scientific socialism should not aim for exhaustive reflection on the various positive sciences but, at most, for non-contradiction with their results.

That Sacristán, while reproducing part of Ortega's argument, cannot reach the same conclusion, already tells us something about the different normative principles governing each thinker's reasoning. It also speaks to the historical distance separating interwar Europe and the twilight of the *Trente Glorieuses*, marked by the devaluation of the traditional intellectual's role in shaping public opinion, as well as the difficulty of establishing a unified public opinion itself. The pluralism of worldviews formed outside academia, competing for an increasingly complex hegemony, seems implicit in Sacristán's reflection, which takes its starting point from Ortega. Nonetheless, the eclipse of the social centrality, once held by traditional intellectuals, does not, Sacristán believes, justify abandoning the space in which philosophy might still have meaning. It does not warrant succumbing to the spectacle of the philosopher as a "knower of Being in general without knowing anything serious about any particular being" (Sacristán, 1984b: 365).

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Garrido A. F. [Гарридо А. Ф.] A Broken World. Some Notes on Manuel Sacristán as a Reader of Ortega [Разбитый мир. Несколько заметок о Мануэле Сакристане как читателе Ортеги] // Философия. Журнал Высшей школы экономики. — 2024. — Т. 8, № 4. — Р. 182–204.

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Развитый мир. Несколько заметок о Мануэле Сакристане как читателе Ортеги

Получено: 06.09.2024. Рецензировано: 15.11.2024. Принято: 24.11.2024.

Аннотация: Реконструируя прочтение «Миссии университета», представленное в тексте «Университет и разделение труда», мы проведем критическое сопоставление позиций Хосе Ортеги-и-Гассета и Мануэля Сакристана, выделяя критические замечания, на которые указывает последний. В качестве центральной темы анализа выступает вопрос о разделении труда, который подразумевается в тексте Ортеги. Во второй части нашего исследования мы постараемся выяснить, как и в какой степени текст Ортеги влияет на понимание диалектики Сакристаном.

Ключевые слова: Ортега-и-Гассет, Мануэль Сакристан, Университет, диалектика, элиты, разделение труда.

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