

## FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS ON ALFRED ADLER AND ORTEGA Y GASSET

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The Greek Stoics had the idea that there was a universal human reason, common to all men of all ages and races, which produces, of necessity, common thoughts, the so-called *koinai énnōiai*. Therefore we should not be surprised that sometimes different thinkers, in different lands, should arrive at similar conclusions. I fully agree with Dr. Roy D. Waldman's (12) thesis that there is a remarkable convergence of the concepts of Alfred Adler and those of José Ortega y Gasset. For a long time I have been of the opinion that these two thinkers—the one a psychiatrist, the other a philosopher—should be considered as great educators of modern man.

### FUTURE ORIENTATION

While I have not found any references to Adler in Ortega's work, I am not surprised that in his interview with Dr. Oliver Brachfeld (3) the Spanish philosopher had enthusiastically sided with Adler's Individual Psychology. In this interview Ortega insisted on the significance of "each man's vital goals" (*die vitalen Ziele jedes Menschen*) for the understanding of a person's conduct. This kind of return of an anticipated future toward the present, which characterizes Adler's Individual Psychology, has its parallel in Ortega's philosophy when it proclaims that "nothing has meaning to man except in terms of the future" (*nada tiene sentido para el hombre sino en función del porvenir*, 7, iv, p. 266).

Ortega did not limit this principle to the individual but transposed it to the realm of collectivities, where it forms the foundation of his "futuristic" philosophy of history. According to the latter it is the project of a common future which models nations, counter-current like, and only this idea of a common goal explains a nation's conduct, as in Adler's doctrine the individual's goal and personal life plan explain a person's conduct.

### MENTAL HEALTH AND NOBLE MAN

There exists also an evident parallelism between Adler's life plan (*Lebensplan*) and Ortega's project (*proyecto*). Both are characterized by a goal, on which man's health depends, in Ortega's case man's

moral health, in Adler's, man's mental *and* moral health. And there exists not only an analogy between Adler's "neurotic" and Ortega's "mass-man"—which Dr. Waldman has discussed—but also between Adler's "mentally healthy" and Ortega's "noble" man.

Ortega designates as noble those men who always demand more from themselves, who live under the bondage of self-imposed tasks and imperatives, devoting their lives to higher ideals. To Ortega ethics is basically this voluntary submission to such tasks and norms, the consciousness of serving and having obligations. The mass-man, on the contrary, believes that he has only rights and no obligations, and he is satisfied with what he is, content to remain what he is. While the life of the *élite* is devoted to an effort and always tries to surpass itself, the mass-man is inert. It is because of its inertia rather than because of its multitude that the populace is called "mass."

Long before Sartre, Ortega insisted on the necessity of man's "engagement" or commitment to a definite project. Without a project, life is debased, demoralized, he said rightfully. He showed convincingly that this was true not only for individual lives but also for the lives of collectivities. To Ortega a State was, above all, a project of action, of collaboration. "A State is neither consanguinity, nor linguistic unity, nor territorial unity . . . It is pure dynamism—the will to do something together" (7, iv, p. 258).

Now, Adler's mentally healthy man is the one who, instead of striving for personal power, develops *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, community feeling—that very feeling which is the presupposition of Ortega's "will to do something together" (*la voluntad de hacer algo en común*), of his "program of collaboration," which is, in his eyes, the State. Besides, both Adler's community feeling, or social interest, and Ortega's submission of a noble life to self-imposed tasks, norms, and ideals are tantamount to the overcoming of self-centeredness and the acceptance of supra-personal principles. Both attitudes raise man to higher levels of morality.

#### NEUROTIC AND MASS-MAN

To Adler, however, the development of community feeling was not only an educational, moral requirement, but a therapeutic necessity. For there exists an intimate link between extreme egoism and mental illness. Henrik Ibsen must have known it, for he wrote that marvelous scene in the lunatic asylum in Cairo, where the arch-egoist Peer Gynt is crowned "Emperor of the Self." In this scene of his *Peer*

*Gynt* drama Ibsen showed where the paroxism of man's egoistic striving for power leads: to insanity, to madness. Lunacy is, indeed, the egoist's paradise, where he can realize his most daring dreams, which a normal man would be ashamed to confess.

It should be noted, however, that there seems to exist one great difference between Adler's neurotic and Ortega's mass-man. While the neurotic has a definite life plan at the service of his goal of superiority, a plan of retreat, of failure, and of escape from responsibility, the mass-man is rather characterized by a total lack of a life plan. Ortega says this very clearly: "*El hombre-masa es el hombre cuya vida carece de proyectos y va a la deriva*" (1, p. 63)—the mass-man is the man whose life is devoid of projects, and he drifts.

Yet, when we analyze the mass-man's strivings more closely, we find that, after all, he does have at least a hidden, half-conscious life plan, dictated by his superiority goal. Ortega admits it implicitly when he characterizes the mass-man by the following traits: "He ends up by really believing that he alone exists and gets used to not taking into account other people, especially not anybody as superior to him" (1, pp. 69-70). Here we have come closer to a portrait of Adler's neurotic. In comparing a certain type of mass-man to a "*niño mimado*," or pampered child, Ortega is also very close to Adler, who has shown how easily the pampered child develops into a full grown neurotic. Ortega characterizes the pampered child by unlimited desires, "radical ingratitude towards all that has made possible the ease of his existence," the belief "that everything is permitted to him and that he has no obligations" (2, pp. 58-59).

#### STAND TOWARD EXISTENTIALISM

Regarding Ortega's existentialism I have shown in my book on Sartre (8) to what extent Ortega must be considered a forerunner of Heidegger's and Sartre's existentialist philosophies. In this book I also showed the large extent to which Adler's ideas are to be found in Sartre. There are definite existentialist features in Ortega's philosophy, especially his historicism and perspectivism. But, as I pointed out elsewhere (9), other parts of Ortega's philosophy—especially his theory of values—are definitely essentialistic.

In his posthumous works (5, and especially 6) Ortega's attacks against existentialism had become so violent that one of Ortega's former students and friend, Professor Fernando Vela, came to the overhasty conclusion that Ortega should be credited with having "liber-

ated" us from existentialism (11, p. 41). In the light of these publications the problem of Ortega's relation to existentialism had to be re-examined. My resulting observations are presented in a chapter of my most recent book (10).

To this I should now like to add that some of Ortega's differences from existentialism noted in this chapter are very much in line with the differences of Adler's Individual Psychology from existentialism. Ortega's objection to the very terms "to exist" and "existence" for not being as natural as the term "life," would most likely have been shared by Adler in whose writings only the latter is to be found. Adler would also have supported Ortega's objections against the romanticism and histrionics of Kierkegaard; against the general obscurity of language of the existentialists which Ortega considered a mere form of snobbishness; and against the irrational emotionalism of pure existentialism.

#### POLITICAL POSITION

Ortega's political involvement has sometimes been overstated. I should therefore like to take this occasion to make a few comments on this. While supporting the liberal democracy represented by the Spanish republican government, Ortega abhorred "direct action," which, unfortunately, did occur during the republic, especially on the part of the anarchists. Ortega never engaged in politics, in which he saw "*el imperio de la mentira*" (7, ii, p. 16)—the realm of the lie. Some Spanish republicans reproached Ortega for always standing aside during the revolution, for being the eternal "spectator," who published his observations under the characteristic heading of "*El Espectador*" (4).

I believe that at the end of the Civil War Ortega left Spain voluntarily, because he did not want to live and work under a Fascist government. He was not forced to leave. When he returned to Spain in 1945 after his voluntary exile in Portugal, Holland, and Argentina, he was not at all molested. In fact the Franco government invited him to reoccupy his chair at the University of Madrid. But he declined this offer, on ideological grounds. Today, one of Madrid's most splendid arteries bears Ortega's name.

#### SUMMARY

The author has long been aware of similarities between Ortega y Gasset's and Alfred Adler's views, such as the parallelism between

the former's "project" and the latter's "life plan," the importance of a commitment to some principles beyond the self, the return of an anticipated future toward the present, which explains the conduct of nations in Ortega's philosophy of history and a person's behavior in Adler's Individual Psychology. The two thinkers share also differences with existentialism, because of the obscurity of its language and its irrational emotionalism. There is also the reference to the pampered child as representative of the non-contributing types which Ortega called the mass-man, and Adler the neurotic. The author insists likewise on a similarity between Adler's mentally healthy and Ortega's "noble" man. He points out that Ortega's State as "program of collaboration" would be impossible without Adler's "community feeling." Ortega's position toward politics and Franco's regime is briefly described as ideological rather than activist.

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