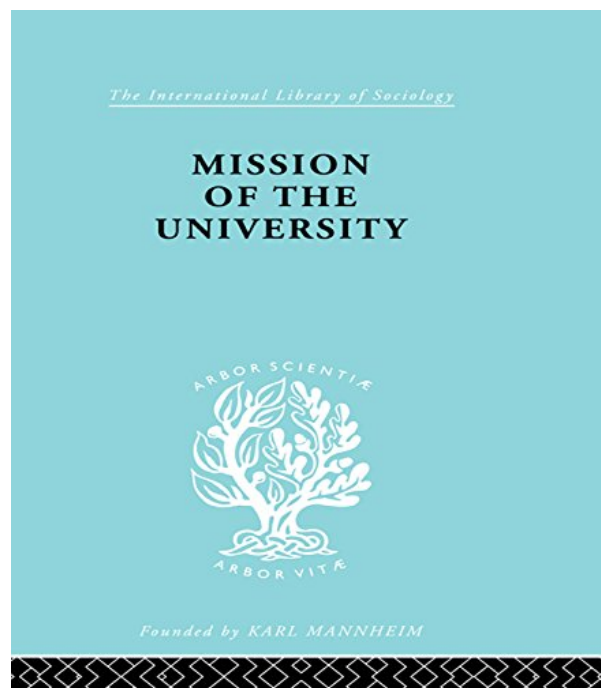


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Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

Original Language: Spanish

About the Author

José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955) was a philosopher and for many years held the chair of metaphysics at the University of Madrid. His other books include *The Revolt of the Masses*, *Man and People*, *Meditations on Quixote*, and *What is Philosophy?*

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Quick Note On Ortega's "Mission of the University"

By FB

Ortega y Gasset's "Mission of the University" is a classic work.

It should be on required reading list of any teacher hosting a class on the topic of education. It is insightful, incisive and prescient.

But it also it readabe. And the years have made it even more relevant. Don't miss it. And keep returning to it. And if you are a publisher, re-issue it.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

THE SPANISH PHILOSOPHER POSES THIS QUESTION

By Steven H Propp

José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) was a Spanish philosopher and essayist; he also wrote *The Revolt of the Masses*, *What Is Philosophy?*, *An Interpretation of Universal History*, *History as a System and Other Essays Toward a Philosophy of History*, *Meditations on Quixote*, etc.

He wrote in the introductory section of this 1930 book, “The Federación Universitaria Escolar of Madrid asked me to give a lecture on some topic related to the reforms of higher education. The very poor acoustics of the Paraninfo, however, prevented me from developing adequately the theme of my lecture. This circumstance prompted me afterward to rewrite somewhat more simply the notes I had taken with me... And here you have the result. It will be seen that except for an introduction... I have kept rigorously to what I consider the crucial question.”

In the first chapter, he states, “I say, then, that the circumstances offer a magnificent opportunity for a thorough reform of the Spanish state and university. But the reform of the one and of the other waits to be done by SOMEONE. Is there such a one in Spain today? By that I do not mean an individual, of course, one of those mythical creatures usually referred to, by a misapprehension, as a Great Man. History is not made by one man---however great he may be. History is not like a sonnet; nor is it a game of solitaire. It is made by many people: by groups of people endowed, collectively, with the necessary qualities.” (Pg. 17)

He observes, “Today, the societies in Europe are governed by the bourgeois classes, whose majority is composed of professional men. It is of the first importance to these societies, therefore, that these professional people, aside from their several professions, possess the power to make their lives a vital influence, in harmony with the height of their times. Hence it is imperative to set up once more, in the university, the teaching of the culture, the system of vital ideas, which the age has attained. This is the basic function of the university. This is what the university must be, above all else.” (Pg. 40)

He admits, “Have we answered our question, What is the mission of the university? By no means: we have only massed together what the university of today believes to be its business, and one thing which, in our judgment, it is not doing but must do. We have prepared the question: no more than that.” (Pg. 43)

He suggests, “The conclusion seems to me inescapable, that we must turn the present university upside down, so to speak, and stand it upon precisely the opposite principle. Instead of teaching what OUGHT to be taught, according to some utopian desire, we must teach only what CAN be taught; that is, what CAN BE LEARNED.” (Pg. 45)

He asserts, “The trend toward a university dominated by ‘inquiry’ has been disastrous. It has led to the elimination of the prime concern: culture. It has deflected attention from the problem of how to best train future professionals for their professions.” (Pg. 64)

He states, “We are passing at present... through an age of terrific UN-CULTURE. Never perhaps has the ordinary man been so far below his times and what they demand of him. Never has the civilized world so abounded in falsified, cheated lives. Almost nobody is poised squarely upon his proper and authentic place in life. Man is habituated to living on subterfuges with which he deceives himself, conjuring up around him a very simple and arbitrary world, in spite of the admonitions of an active conscience which forces him to observe that his real world, the world that corresponds to the whole of actuality, is one of enormous complexity and grim urgency. But... he is afraid to admit this real world, which would make great demands on him. He prefers to falsify his life, and keep it sealed up in the cocoon of his fictitious, oversimplified concept of the world.” (Pg. 74-75)

This book will be of great interest to anyone studying Ortega and the development of his thought.

2 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Gasset wins Again

By Clarissa Cunningham

For anyone with an interest in the purpose and objectives of higher education, read some pages from the Spanish Philosopher of the early 1900s.

Accessible and highly intellectual (at the same time) this book is great for the philosophy student, or any grad student/future professor in any field.

It should be part of the modern debate over the purpose of the university: Should learning train the mind to think or act as mere training for the "real world?"

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