

GENERATIONS (\*)  
A CRITIQUE AND  
RECONSTRUCTION

by

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In recent years increased attention has been given by a wider public to "generations" — the word being used at this point in an unspecific sense —. This undoubtedly is due to the internationally wide-spread revolt against parental authority, that of older people, and of the "establishment," as it is usually called, by adolescents and young people at the start of their professional or vocational lives. Few journalists or public speakers, using the word, realize that in the last about one hundred and fifty years the term has been used also in their research by social scientists and historians. In that period, slowly — perhaps too slowly — subsumable facts have come under observation.

Under these circumstances it is fortunate that the reputable Spanish philosopher and social scientist Julian Mariñas (born in 1914), a former student of Ortega y Gasset, has written a book

(\*) This paper was already completed when there appeared in the *American Historical Review*, vol. 78, no. 5 (December 1973), pp. 1353 ff., an article by Professor Alan B. Spitzer entitled "The Historical Problem of Generations." There is some overlapping with the present one; but the approaches and methods used differ widely. Therefore I was not induced, let alone forced, to change a single line. Both Spitzer's and my paper start from a book by the Spanish philosopher and social scientist, Mariñas, to be cited forthwith. The latter contains an extensive bibliography of the older pertinent literature, while Spitzer's bibliographical footnotes are particularly valuable for the citation of the more recent writings in the field. Mariñas's and Spitzer's citations taken together cover the area of research so completely that I feel relieved from the obligation to add another bibliography to my essay.

As a matter of fact, Spitzer's and my paper are somewhat complementary, although I do not always agree with him.

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entitled *El metodo historico de las generaciones* (Madrid, 1961). (1) This book translated by Harold C. Raley, has been published by the University of Alabama Press in 1970 under the title *Generations, a Historical Method*. The correctness of the translation is assumed, but the title is somewhat misleading. The author did not focus his interest on those methodological, let alone epistemological, questions which the modern practicing sociologist or historian has to answer for himself, when applying the concept of "generation" as an analytical tool in pertinent empirical research. Chapter VI of Mariás's book, entitled "The Historical Method" is, in fact, philosophy, or better metaphysics, of history, a type of approach which historians uniformly reject.

The first four chapters of the book (150 pages) are a history of the concept of "generations", written in the style of a traditional history of philosophy or of economic thought, and their value lies in the survey of the extant scholarly literature on generations in English, French, German, and Spanish. To the extent that the citations and quotations are critically analyzed, the analysis is philosophical rather than sociological or historical. A lengthy bibliography, admittedly incomplete, is added; it enhances the value of the work, since no other equally extensive one is available in an English publication. Yet the book demands a good deal of criticism. (2)

## I

My first objection is to the author's starting from a word, the word "generation", instead of from the different phenomena for

(1) Mariás's article "Generations, I, The Concept" in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. VI, pp. 88-92, is essentially an abbreviating sketch of his book. The German *Handwörterbuch der Sozialwissenschaften* does not contain a piece on generations.

(2) The first to present a survey of the history of the concept of "generation" was François MENTRE in his thèse *Les Générations sociales*, (Paris, 1920). Another one is in PETERSEN, Julius, *Die literarischen Generationen* (Berlin, 1930), pp. 10-29.

which it has been used. (3) As is to be shown, there were four phenomena which were so labeled; each one had and holds its specific significance. This fact, overlooked by Mariñas, will be brought out by a different organization of his material. Only when rearranged does it become meaningful. (4)

1.) According to Mariñas, August Comte (1798-1857) initiated the scientific study of generations; James Stuart Mill (1806-1873) followed suit. Both recognized that "generations" could be seen as social phenomena but, like every trail blazer in new areas of research, they suffered from lack of conceptual conciseness. Analyzing what they actually may have meant, I have come to the conclusion that it

(3) For what the word "generation" means in the vernacular see *The Oxford Dictionary*, IV, pp. 106, 107; *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 2d éd. (Paris, 1884), I, p. 821; LITTRE, E., *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française* (Paris, 1882), II, p. 1855. Since in German the word is a *Fremdwort*, it is not in GRIMMS' *Deutscher Wörterbuch* but in SCHULZ, Hans, *Deutsches Fremdwörterbuch*, I (Strassburg, 1913), p. 242.

(4) The reviewer has been interested in "generations" for about forty years, and the only reason why he did not devote more of his time to pertinent empirical research is because he had to migrate from one culture (Germany) to another (the United States). He tested the theory of "historical generations" (see below page 248) first in a German book published in 1935 prior to his emigration. He presented the theory in English in the introduction of a book of 1940 which he does not cite because it does not satisfy him today. He also attempted in that book to present the leading American steel industrialists as members of certain historical generations.

Thereafter historical generations were treated in the following papers, none of which is in Mariñas's bibliography.

"The Business Leader as a 'Daimonic' Figure" in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, XII (1953), nos. 1 and 2, Reprinted in *Steeped in Two Cultures* (New York, Hauper and Row, 1971); "Die Entwicklung der amerikanischen Reklame, im Lichte zeitgenössischer Selbstzeugnisse" in *Jahrbuch der Absatz- und Verbrauchsforschung*, XI (1965); "German Literary Expressionism and its Publishers" in *Harvard Library Bulletin*, XVII (1969); "Work Left Undone" in *ibid.*, XXI (1973).

Almost every item in English, French, or German, which Mariñas cites or quotes in the text was read by the reviewer some time in the last forty years. He did not reread them unless he was in doubt about some statements. This approach seems justified because this paper is not an independent piece of research but a review article. When he refers to pages in Mariñas's book, it means that the work under discussion was not reread. Otherwise the reference is to the original.

was age groups (*Altersklassen*) that they have had in mind. (5) Both interpreted "generations", i.e., successive age groups, as the carriers of cultural change; and in modern terms age groups could be defined as bundles of birth cohorts. Justin Dromel (b. in 1826), a Marseilles lawyer and political writer, thought along the same lines and distinguished five age groups as playing specific political roles, those up to the age of twenty-one, twenty-one to twenty-five (comprising two age groups), and over sixty-five, respectively. (6)

2.) The word "generation" is used also for a biological (genealogical) phenomenon. And in this sense the term is self-explanatory. An exponent of the biological (genealogical) generation concept was the Austrian-born German historian and genealogist, Ottokar Lorenz (1832-1907). He, in turn, took off from the writings of Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), who himself did not cut through the vague connotation which the word had in the vernacular. According to the Austrian historian, Adam Wandruszka, it was Ottokar Lorenz who developed Ranke's *Gedanken über die Bedeutung der Generationen für die geschichtliche Periodisierung zu einer Generationenlehre und kam von hier in die Genealogie*. (7)

The biological (genealogical) concept of "generations" remains indispensable for the sociologist and social historian dealing with family structures and for the political historian treating certain aspects of the Middle Ages and early modern times. In those periods the course of history was determined by monarchs and their advisers or by cooperating or mutually antagonistic patrician families as in Venice, in Swiss towns and *Orte* (later called cantons), and in German Imperial towns (*Reichsstädte*). Likewise, the economic historian cannot dispense with the biological generation concept.

(5) MARIAS, *op.cit.*, pp. 20-27. He cites for Comte *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830-1842) vol. II, pp. 447, 448, vol. IV, pp. 635 ff; and for John Stuart Mill *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive* (London, 1843), Book VI, chapter 10, parts 2, 3, 4, 6.

(6) MARIAS, *op.cit.*, pp. 28-35. Mariás's admiration for the contribution of Comte and Mill may find its explanation in the fact that age groups (*Altersklassen*) played a role in Orega's thinking also. He distinguished five of fifteen years each. See *ibid.*, p. 96 and below page 250.

(7) For Ranke, see MARIAS, *op.cit.*, pp. 57-60; for Ottokar Lorenz, *ibid.*, pp. 60-65. WANDRUSZKA's article is in *Osterreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815-1950*, V (Wien, 1972) pp. 318, 319. Lorenz's pertinent books are *Die Geschichtswissenschaft in Hauptrichtungen und Aufgaben kritisch erörtert* (Berlin, 1886); *Leopold von Ranke, die Generationslehre und der Geschichtsunterricht* (Berlin, 1891); *Lehrbuch der gesamten wissenschaftlichen Genealogie* (Berlin, 1898).

Medieval and early modern trading enterprises, just as crafts shops, were more often than not bequeathed from one biological generation to the next, and similar transfers still occur in modern family enterprises. Concurrently, the economic historian may need the age-group concept also. In mercantile enterprises it was very common that aging senior partners took into the firms younger men as junior partners making them often enough sons-in-laws also. Obviously in such cases two concepts of "generation" overlap in reality.

3.) In the writings of some scholars the term "generation" has a temporal connotation, which is adumbrated by the popular practice of calling the time span covered by the life of those born in about the same years a "generation." (8). In this connection we return once more to August Comte and James Stuart Mill. The former considered the "ordinary duration of life" (what we would call today the life expectancy of birth) as an essential element in the historical process. Thence it was not difficult to arrive at the idea of "generational intervals" regulated by "common longevity". Unfortunately, the concept lacks distinctness. Mill, taking up the idea, defines such intervals as the time "during which a new set of human beings have been educated, have grown up from childhood, and taken possession of society." (9) Obviously no practicing sociologist or historian could approach empirical material with such a hazy concept, hazy because the continuity of births is not taken into consideration.

The first who developed a scholarly tool with any precision out of those suggestions was the statesman and professor at the University of Tübingen, Gustav Rümelin (1815-1889). He did so in his paper "Über den Begriff und die Dauer einer Generation." Thus, since Rümelin's contribution we possess the statistical concept of generation; "the mean of the age differences between parents and children during a given period," the mean being about thirty years. We find Rümelin's ideas, differently phrased, in the writings of his younger contemporary Wilhelm Dilthey, whose main contribution lay in a different direction, as will be shown shortly. (10)

(8) *Oxford English Dictionary*.

(9) MARIAS, *op.cit.*, pp. 23, 25.

(10) As to Rümelin, see MARIAS, *op.cit.*, pp. 47-50; the quotation is on page 48. For Dilthey, see *ibid.*, p. 55 and for the original source, see below, page 249 and footnote 14.

To be operative, the concept had to be refined. Today statisticians distinguish between male and female generations, the former being the mean age distance between fathers and sons which, to repeat, is some thirty years, while the mean age difference between mothers and daughters, because of the lower marriage age of women, is shorter. Thus a statement that three male or four female biological generations make up one hundred years is meaningful. With modern statistical methods questions of this character are answerable and the answers can be valuable to demographic historians.

In the 1930's the temporal (statistical) concept of "generation" was further refined by Stella Seeberg in her article "Generationsdauer und Bevölkerungsvermehrung" in *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, vol. 144, pp. 606 ff. (11) She defines *Generationsdauer* by the formula : duration of a generation =

$$\frac{\text{marriage age of men} + \text{marriage age of women}}{2} + 5$$

Where the constant 5 comes from is not explained.

4.) In the course of the twentieth century still another scholarly concept of generation has come into use. It has been characterized as "social" or "historical" generation; Julius Petersen spoke of the *geistesgeschichtliche Generationenbegriff*. (12) Eduard Wechsler, who is discussed later, denominated it *Jugendreihe*, which earlier I translated into "group of coevals." I shall use these designations synonymously, and from now on the emphasis of the paper will be put on this concept of generation. It involved from one of the meanings which the word had in English, French, and German vernacular : "the whole body of individuals born at the same time," as the *Oxford English Dictionary* has it.

The concept of social (historical) generation has its pre-history, yet intuition rather than rational argument stood at its cradle. Comte and Mill, inarticulate and imprecise as they were, undoubtedly envisioned the generation as a *social* phenomenon, as has been started before. This was an achievement for the time, opening a road

(11) The paper is not mentioned by Mariás.

(12) PETERSEN, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

into the future. The great figure in mathematical economics, Antoine Cournot (1801-1877), discovered that generations overlap. That is, he also had a social, as opposed to a biological, phenomenon in his mind.

Finally, Giuseppe Ferrari (1812-1876), an Italian living in Paris as a prolific political writer, defined the generation as "men who are born and die in the same years and who, whether friends or enemies, belong to the same society." (13) These were certainly steps in the right direction.

Yet the history, as opposed to the pre-history of the concept of social (historical) generations, began only in 1875, when the great Berlin philosopher of history, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), wrote in his essay "Über das Studium der Geschichte der Wissenschaften vom Menschen, der Gesellschaft und dem Staat" : "Generation (ist) eine Bezeichnung für ein *Verhältnis der Gleichzeitigkeit von Individuen*; diejenigen, welche gewissermassen nebeneinander emporwuchsen d.h. ein gemeinsames Kindesalter hatten, ein gemeinsames Jünglingsalter, deren Zeitraum männlicher Kraft teilweise zusammenfiel, bezeichnen wir als dieselbe Generation. Hieraus ergibt sich dann die Verknüpfung solcher Personen durch ein tieferes Verhältnis. Diejenigen, welche in den Jahren der Empfänglichkeit dieselben leitenden Einwirkungen erfahren, machen zusammen eine Generation aus. So gefasst, bildet eine Generation einen engeren Kreis von Individuen, welche durch Abhängigkeit von denselben grossen Tatsachen und Veränderungen, wie sie in dem Zeitalter ihrer Empfänglichkeit auftraten, trotz der Verschiedenheit hinzutretender anderer Faktoren zu einem homogenen Ganzen verbunden sind."

Here we have for the first time an operational, although not yet perfect formulation of what was then a newly observed social phenomenon; and Dilthey immediately applied the concept in ordering empirical data in the field of cultural history. (15)

(13) MARIAS, *op.cit.*, pp. 38-47; the quotation is on p. 43. Mariás enumerates Ferrari's writings.

(14) The paper is reprinted in DILTHEY's *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart and Göttingen, 1957), vol. V, p. 37.

(15) Mariás treats Dilthey on pp. 50-57.

II

According to Mariás, Ortega played the decisive role in the development in the twentieth century of the (new) concept of generation. It is this claim to which my second objection pertains. Mariás contends that a theory of generations could have been elaborated only within the framework of a philosophy of life (practiced, for example, by Dilthey, Bergson, Ortega, and Mariás himself) as opposed to the traditional *Bewusstseinsphilosophie*. From the philosophical point of view this statement may be unchallengeable. But I think that any philosophically untrained historian can see the phenomenon, if only he adheres to a *Weltanschauung* which considers history as an open-end process and human beings as playing a role therein. On the other hand, I agree with Mariás that the concept of social (historical) generations demands that the connection with the biological generation concept be broken, which --incidentally-- Dilthey had already achieved. This cut is demanded because of the continuity of births so that dividing lines, or better, border zones *sui generis*, between historical generations must be found. This matter will be discussed in more detail later (16). Neither Ortega nor Mariás solved the problem.

As a matter of fact, Ortega's teaching is a mix of philosophy and theory proper; what it gains in breadth, it loses in applicability for empirical research, and this is what concerns me greatly. The language is hard to understand for sociologists, unless they are trained in philosophy, and even more difficult for historians. Moreover some claims are grossly overstated. As late as 1967, the year in which the Spanish edition of Mariás's book appeared, he dared claim that Ortega's theory on generations is "the only one in existence." "...almost as soon as the theory was a possibility it was indeed formulated --possible without a year's delay." This statement is unacceptable in view of Dilthey's contribution of 1875 and later years; and it conflicts with an assertion by Mariás himself, that it took ten years from 1923-1933 for Ortega's theory to mature. Later Mariás states that Ortega's theory is "the first worthy of its name," that it has the advantage of explaining what "generations are, why they exist, and how they are determined." (17) These claims will be deflated as we go along.

(16) See below.

(17) MARIAS, *op.cit.*, pp. 87, 153, article in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*.

According to Mariás, Ortega's "*doctrine*" (Italics by the reviewer) "[did] arise out of a general theory... [and] is rooted in a metaphysics." While not necessarily objectionable, when metaphysics is taken to mean *Weltanschauung*, the use of the term was certainly unwise. It is bound to frighten historians and social scientists and is liable to keep them from familiarizing themselves with what is or at least can be made into an analytical tool. Ortega's teaching could appear to them as a sirensong, and once it is called a doctrine, the potential interest in it might be killed. To be sure, in a later publication of Mariás the idea of "doctrine" is abandoned and Ortega's teaching is made to appear as a mere series of challenges to historians and as an invitation to rethink older habits of thought. (18).

From expressing doubts about the propriety of the epistemological basis of Ortega's ideas we are now shifting to his theory as opposed to his philosophy. These are, of course, different things, although Mariás does not keep them apart. This theory, besides not being operational, suffers from a serious deficiency. Ortega, metaphysician that he is, cannot find empirically the border zones between succeeding groups of coevals and so falls back on the theory of age groups and on an orgy of speculation, as is later discussed in detail.

What, then, is the teaching? "A generation is a human variety;" "each generation represents a certain vital level...;" the concept "implies primarily only two requisites: to be of the same age and to have some vital contact." (19) Thus the generation is defined as "the sum total of those who are coetaneous in a circle of current existence." But that is not enough. What counts is the fact that co-nationals, i.e., people at least potentially in contact and able to communicate, born in the same span of time grow up under similar conditions which exert a formative influence on them. Stopping at the point at which Ortega stops opens the road to astrological mysticism and outright confusion.

The following quotations are qualifications of Ortega's unsatisfactory definition:

"... generations are born one of another, so that a new generation finds itself amidst the forms of experience bequeathed by (18) MARIAS, *op.cit.*, pp. 69, 87, article in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, VI, p. 90.

(19) MARIAS, *op.cit.*, pp. 94, 97, 98. Attention is drawn to the similarity of Ortega's and Ferrari's concepts; for the latter's, see above, page 249.

those past. For each generation, then, living is a two-dimensional task; one of those consists of receiving what the preceding generation has lived, ideas, values, institutions, etc.; the other, of allowing its own spontaneous impulses to be expressed" (Ortega). "For a generation is not a matter of individual life but of the objective structures of the historical world" (Marías). "Generations affect life in its totality" (Marías). The idea of generations is "the visual organ with which historical reality can be seen in its real and vibrant authenticity" (Ortega). "The same event happening to two different generations is a vital and hence historical reality which is completely different in each case" (Ortega). Let me make it clear that I am far from criticising such formulations of Ortega's philosophy. I entirely understand it. What I criticize is the limitation of the definition and the lack of operational value of this mix of philosophy and theory (20).

### III

Marías overvaluation of Ortega's blinds him to the great achievement of the sociologist Karl Mannheim (1893-1947). Mannheim provided us with the very operational tool needed in

(20) MARIAS, *op.cit.*, pp. 94, 95, 100-102. To understand the problem of social (historical) generations and to evaluate Ortega's standing within the development not only with the reviewer's eyes but also with those of a recognized scholar of the very period in which the new phenomenon came into focus, there follows the short but understanding presentation by Julius Petersen, historian of literature at the University of Berlin (*op.cit.*, p. 10).

"Der geistesgeschichtliche Generationsbegriff, wie ihn etwa der spanische Philosoph José Ortega y Gasset formuliert hat, als "dynamische Verschmelzung von Masse und Individuum", als "ein neuer, in sich geschlossener sozialer Körper mit seiner eigenen erlauchten Minderheit und seiner eigenen Masse, der mit vorgegebener vitaler Geschwindigkeit und Richtung in den Kreis des Daseins hineingeschleudert ist", schließt beides in sich: Gleichaltrigkeit und Gleichrichtung. Aber es ist eine verschiedene Ursächlichkeit, ob die Gleichrichtung aus der Gleichaltrigkeit hervorgeht, oder ob die ungefähr Gleichaltrigen in eine bestehende Strömung hineinwachsen und dank ihrer Gleichaltrigkeit zur selben Zeit von ihr erfaßt werden. Es ist, mit einem Wort, die Frage, ob die Generationseinheit geboren wird oder sich bildet. Hier trennen sich zwei verschiedene Richtungen der Generationsforschung: für die eine ist, äußerlich gesehen, die Tabelle der Geburtsdaten Material und Ausgangspunkt; für die andere die Chronologie der literarischen Erscheinungen, aus denen sich der Zeitpunkt des gleichzeitig auftretenden neuen Willens ergibt."

empirical research on social (historical) generations, and his paper of 1928 antedated by a lustrum the ultimate completion of Ortega's theory. While Mariás devotes 49 pages to Ortega, Karl Mannheim gets 60 lines (21). Mannheim and the men who first tried empirical research in our area, namely Kummer (b. in 1865), who is not even mentioned in the text, Petersen (1878-1941), Pinder (1878-1947), and Wechsler (b. in 1869) are treated under the head "Vicissitudes of the Generational Theme in Our Century." (22)

When one reads attentively this chapter of the book under review, one gets at the root of the argument. Mariás accused Mannheim and the practioners who in the twentieth century tried to get at the pertinent facts and to establish them in limited areas (history of art or of literature) of not knowing enough about philosophy; and, in turn, I criticize Ortega and his prophet Mariás of not knowing enough history and because their philosophy-theory is not operational and therefore of no help for historians. In this respect Mannheim's sociological theory is far superior to that of the Spanish philosophers. It was the sociologist who also made us see the philosophical background of the various approaches to the generational problem. He realized that the English and French writers on the subject were rooted in Positivism and had tied their presentations to the idea of progress. In contrast the various German authors on the subject started their investigations in the spirit of Historicism. This seems to be the reason why the historically fruitful development of the theme, bypassing the Spanish philosophers, went

(21) For Ortega, see pp. 68-106 and 158-169; for Mannheim, pp. 124-127.

(22) See p. 107. Friedrich KUMMER wrote *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts, dargestellt nach Generationen* (Dresden, 1909), 2nd ed. in two volumes (Dresden, 1922). For Kummer, a journalist, his book was a labor of love, and it is quite remarkable in view of the early date of publication. He writes on p. 21: "Eine Generation... umfast alle etwa gleichzeitig lebenden Menschen (he should have said : alle etwa gleichzeitig geborenen Menschen), die aus den gleichen wirtschaftlichen, politischen, und gesellschaftlichen Zuständen hervorgegangen sind und daher mit verwandter Weltanschauung, Bildung, Moral und Kunstempfindung ausgestattet sind." Kummer counted three to five such generations for hunderd years (pp. 3-5). In fact there were many more, as will be shown.

Petersen's book is cited in footnote 2, (Mariás treats him on pp. 119-124). For Pinder see the presentation below, page 255 and for his works, footnote 26. Wechsler is treated in section IV of this paper; his writings are cited at their appropriate places.

straight from Dilthey to Mannheim who as a sociologist could contribute what empiricistically oriented historians could not. Ortega, as Petersen showed, was in some respects quite close to Historicism whose limitations he saw; but Mariñas, at least, has not cut loose from Positivism. This is evident from his admiration for Comte and Mill and his citation of Emile Littré's *Paroles de philosophie positive* (Paris 1860).

It appears inopportune to present here at some length Mannheim's theory of social (historical) generations; it is almost fifty years old, after all. Moreover, we are not so much interested in intellectual history as in the evolution of an analytical tool for historical research. Finally, any social scientist or historian who wants to apply the tool must start from Mannheim's article anyway (23). But Mannheim analyses so well the preconditions under which social (historical) generations could come into existence in our civilization that the passage is reprinted here. Human civilizations are characterized --so he says-- by the following facts (24) :

- a) durch das stete Neueinsetzen neuer Kulturträger;
- b) durch den Abgang der früheren Kulturträger;
- c) durch die Tatsache, dass die Träger eines jeweiligen Generationszusammenhanges nur an einem zeitlich begrenzten Abschnitt des Geschichtsprozesses partizipieren;
- d) durch die Notwendigkeit des steten Tradierens (Übertragens) der akkumulierten Kulturgüter;
- e) durch die Kontinuierlichkeit des Generationswechsels.

For the rest, it will be described in the next section how social (historical) generations appear as tools for empirical research to an economic and social historian whose original indebtedness is to Mannheim and Wechsler (25). Their theories will shine through his presentation.

Before we do so, we have to say a few words about the most important one of the early attempts to write history (actually art

(23) MANNHEIM, Karl, "Das Problem der Generationen" in *Kölner Vierteljahrshefte für Soziologie*, vol. VII (1928), pp. 157 ff., 307 ff.

(24) MANNHEIM, *op.cit.*, p. 175.

(25) *Die Generation als Jugendreihe und ihr Kampf um die Denkform* (Leipzig, 1930).

history) on the basis of the new concept. It was made by Wilhelm Pinder. His book has shortcomings, noted by Mannheim, and there were both enthusiastic and unfriendly reactions at the time of its publication (26). Part of the trouble was due to Pinder's lack of knowledge of whatever theory was available when he finished his manuscript (27). But on his own he came to understand the problem perfectly as can be seen from a splendid formulation which has become indispensable to anybody now going into the field. Pinder's phrase "die 'Ungleichzeitigkeit' des Gleichzeitigen" is hard to untranslate into English. The translator of Mariás's book renders it, obviously following Mariás's own formulation, as the "contemporaneity of that which is not coetaneous" (p. 114). I have to reject this formulation. It resulted from Ortega's overstressing coetaneity as such and from his considering it constitutive for the phenomenon of generations (28). The German phrase clearly refers to a social phenomenon (to social institutions, structures, ideas, and their objectifications), while the word "coetaneity" (*Gleichaltrigkeit*) can refer also to individuals. Yet Mariás and his translator in defense could show that Pinder himself at one point uses the phrase *gleichzeitig und gleichaltrig* (new edition, pp. 46 ff.); but for him it was only the start of the argument. Unfortunately, by rejecting that formulation I have to fall back on the awkward word "coevality" (29), have to juxtapose contemporaneity and coevality

(26) Mariás treats Pinder on pp. 112-119. See his book *Das Problem der Generation in der Kunstgeschichte Europas* (Berlin, 1926) and his article "Kunstgeschichte nach Generationen; zwischen Philosophie und Kunst" in *Johann Volkelt zum 100. Lehrsemester dargebracht* [Festschrift Volkelt] (Leipzig, 1926). I have used for this paper the new edition of Pinder's book (München, 1961). For a contemporary critical review article, see EBERLEIN, Kurt Karl, "Das Problem der Generationen" in *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. 137 (1927/28), pp. 257 ff. The item is not in Mariás bibliography.

(27) Foreward to the first edition of 1926, reprinted in the new edition on pp. 13, 14.

(28) See my objections on page 250 above.

(29) According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the word appeared first in 1644, was used in the early nineteenth century but it is hardly known today. Yet it can still be found in *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language*.

and translate : the contemporaneity of that which is not coeval. It was also necessary to turn Pinder's phrase around but with no loss to the original meaning.

Of course, Pinder has worked out his concept in scholarly terms. I prefer to show its significance in simple ones. Let us for the sake of the explanation take periods of rapid change, and for historians, using the concept of historical generations, style change is, of course, due to the entry into a particular culture of new groups of coevals. Such periods were, for example, the earlier decades of the Renaissance, or the late decades of the *Ancien Régime* when Rococo gave way to what was later called *Empire*. In the former period there will have been in Germany in the same year, say 1525, an artist of fifty carving a Gothic madonna and a young one of twenty-five painting in what is supposed to be a classical attire a Greek philosopher. Or take the year 1785 : in that year an old man may paint a Rococo portrait and a young man a picture presenting an episode from Roman history with a simplicity totally alien to the Rococo. These works of art are in the respective years contemporary, but they are not coeval in that they are the works of men in different ages, belonging to different generations; they represent different historical (style) periods.

Pinder's magnificent vision has a side effect. The historian will have to abandon the idea of *Zeitgeist* because it has no counterpart in reality. There only exists the *Geist* of a generation. But if one wants to save the term, one has to define *Zeitgeist* as what simultaneously living groups of coevals have in common by the way of ideas, ideals, goals, behavior patterns, etc.

#### IV

##### 1

Social (historical) generations are not theoretical or philosophical constructs but realities which can be made the subject of empirical investigations by social scientists and historians. Pertinent philosophy provides no more than a background, and generational theory is a model which, in the sense of Max Weber, serves the empirical researcher as a tool or flashlight and for purposes of comparison. The generations' function is that of carriers of

cultural development. Individuals determine the fate of their group of coevals but are simultaneously held bound by them. This interaction remains to be studied theoretically and empirically.

In sociological terms, the group of coevals --this phrase will from now on be used more often for what earlier has been called social (historical) generation-- is a stratum and as such comparable with the proletariat, for a stratum is defined by its location in the social space. In contrast to the proletariat, a temporal overtone is audible when we speak of the group of coevals. Yet as in the case of the proletariat, the stratum includes what is sociologically a group: the class-conscious proletariat here, the leading and creative elite of the generation there. The group-conscious members of the generational elite are aware of the spiritual or intellectual bond that forges them into a kind of community, particularly in times of so-called youth movements. With the rising educational level of a population an ever larger percentage thereof is drawn into the self-conscious nucleus of the generation.

The general community thus originating is a community of problems, not a community of solutions. Therefore contradictions and internal conflict are characteristic of historical generations. Born within the same span of time young men and women grow up under the pressure of certain political, social, religious, and intellectual conditions. These they have inherited and they are not free to reject the inheritance. They have to take over. But they can react against the pressure as children can react against their fathers, i.e., against the educational pressure exerted by the preceding biological generation. As cannot be stressed often enough, the revolt of contemporaries of age, if any, is not necessarily against their fathers as such but against their elders and for what they stand. The revolt is a social movement in which family experience may play a role consciously or sub-consciously. A statement emanating from spokesmen of the revolting American group of coevals of the mid-1960's clarifies this point: nobody above the age of thirty could be trusted. The respective fathers must have been by about fifty at the time. To repeat, not birth dates as such are decisive but the years of adolescence and early maturity through the pressure of the conditions then prevailing (30). Recent research has shown that

(30) As more women are groomed for leadership, the average age of females may become than that of males in one and the same group of coevals, due to their earlier maturity.

under particular circumstances such as war, famine, year-long absence of the fathers, e.g., through captivity, a state of affairs prevailing in their childhood can have a formative influence on boys and girls, similar to that exerted on adolescents in normal times.

It has been pointed out that age groups experience the outstanding events of their time in specific ways. It is the same war to which youngsters in school react with patriotic enthusiasm in which young manhood is decimated, while the survivors become revolutionists and pacifists. A still older age group is in command both at home and in the field, and those whose life curve has started to decline might despair of the death of the heir, or the loss of a fortune, or the destruction of all values grasped when the old men's group of coevals started in life. The fact that these age groups, seen from another angle, embrace a certain number of groups of coevals, each with its own ideas, ideals, and behavior patterns, gives a historical tinge to what is at its basis typical.

That birth dates are as such may not be essential is to be illumined by an observation of my own. Year ago, I studies French Impressionist painting in the light of the generational approach. Camille Pissaro (b. in 1830) did not seem to fit the pattern, for he painted like Claude Monet and Alfred Sisley (b. in 1840 and 1839, respectively), while Pissaro was a contemporary of Manet. Yet he did fit into the generational rhythm for a good reason. Born in one of the French colonies, he came to Paris only in 1840 and had his artistic education with men who were his juniors by about ten years. Thus the older man joined a group of coevals to which, at first sight, he would not seem to belong, and he helped them solve their problem, depicting light in painting (31).

Due to the continuity of births, which gives rise to social (historical) generations, these overlap, and the questions poses itself who of those born in the border zones join the older or the younger group of coevals, respectively. Some generalizing statements can be made. Well educated and early maturing adolescents will tend to go with the older, poorly educated and late maturing youngsters will tend to join the later one. But the social stratum to which a teenager belongs may play a role, if and when a choice is possible. Since

(31) This paragraph is aimed at MARIAS, *op.cit.*, p. 170, where he states : "We know with certainty... that those born in the same year belong to the same generation..."

sometimes groups of coevals represent particular social, political, economic or religious ideas, appealing to some but not to other youngsters, these may have such choice and actually choose according to the affinity they feel to older or younger men. It is an error to believe that always young men or women are in open revolt. They will see things somewhat differently from their fathers and the preceding groups of coevals. But their reaction may be the desire to push a development, already under way, faster or toward a slightly changed goal. They do not by necessity wish to turn in another or the opposite direction.

It sometimes happens that highly talented youngsters endowed with specialized gifts and inclinations are unable to find among those available a group of coevals in which they would feel at home; and their time is not even revolutionary. They may go to pieces while decades before or after they would have become great achievers. Posterity may give them their due. But whatever it does or leaves undone, in such cases one is entitled to speak of generational tragedy. Another kind of generational tragedy will be discussed later.

Groups of coevals are simultaneously social, national, and historical phenomena. To the extent that they are social phenomena, they have been discussed before (33). They develop in national cultures, for in the recent centuries all culture has been national culture (34). Interestingly enough, a few years ago this statement was challenged in a seminar by European students studying in America. In fact, it is possible that in Western and Central Europe, on the one hand, and within the Eastern bloc, on the other, future groups of coevals may tend to become internationalized to a certain extent.

Groups of coevals are also historical phenomena, as stated before. Only when the life expectancy at birth started increasing beyond what it had been up to the seventeenth century (some thirty years) did people of ages between one and eighty come to live side by side in large numbers. At the same time the development in all cultural areas began to quicken. This coincidence causes the rhythm of

(32) See below, page 256.

(33) See below, page 256.

(34) This statement contradicts MARIAS's *op.cit.*, p. 167, who sees generations as super-national European phenomena. Interaction of the various national groups of coevals is not denied. But I would interpret PINDER's material (*op.cit.*, pp. 24 ff.), which seems to point in that direction, as indicating a parallelism of the generational rhythm in the several European countries.

generations to arise. That is, since about the eighteenth century new groups of coevals have started out at more or less regular intervals, the exact length of which cannot be foretold. But the time gap tended to decrease from about ten years to about five years from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Pertinent German material seems to indicate that the generational rhythm in that country started before the middle of the eighteenth century. In view of the acceleration of the development in all fields since the middle of our century, one could have expected that groups of coevals do not longer have the time to form. But American observations of the last years seem to indicate that we are still in the grips of rhythm of about five years. The revolting group of coevals of the mid-sixties has been followed by a much quieter, more conservative one in the early seventies (35).

Let me stress, what appears to be most characteristic of present generational reality is the rhythm, this kind of cultural inhaling and exhaling. It is rather regular within limits but can be delayed in critical times, as it was in Germany because of World War I. From the late fifteenth century on specific historical generations can be observed, but the rhythm seems to be lacking as yet. Such generations were, for example, that which brought High-Renaissance painting into existence (Giorgione b. in 1478; Raffael b. in 1483; Michelangelo b. in 1488; Titian b. between 1487 and 1490) and the Reformation generation in Germany (Luther b. in 1483, Oecolampadius b. in 1482; Zwingly b. in 1484; Bugenhagen b. in 1485; Thomas M nzer b. between 1487 and 1490).

(35) To date the only American who has seen the generational problem and attempted empirical research in this area, was the Harvard historian Arthur Meier SCHLESINGER. Yet he had neither an analytical mind nor was he aware of generational theory as it existed at the time (1922), when he first published his paper "Radicalism and Conservatism in American History" in *New Viewpoints in American History*, pp. 113 ff. of the new edition (New York, 1948). A.M. Schlesinger (Sen.) viewed American history as the work of a "succession of eager new generations, ruthlessly elbowing aside older and effete generations." Thereby the pendulum swings continually from radicalism to conservatism and back again. Unfortunately his generations are not precisely delimited, let alone defined. But a recheck on the background of modern operational theory would be most promising.

It is needless to point out that empirical researchers in a new area are bound to come across all sorts of operational problems which must be solved in principle, so that newly discovered facts become understandable. Unwillingness to generalize leads to Empiricism which in the opening of an unexplored field is particularly unproductive. Such problems are here :

- a) the delimitation of particular groups of coevals;
- b) their denomination, and
- c) the determination of the interrelationship, if any, of the kindred facts covered by the various concepts of generation.

In all these cases we will have to expect deviations from the model.

a) As to the delimitation of particular groups of coevals, we are going to take up an earlier train of thought. Looking at birth dates alone would be misleading, although it might be a satisfactory start. As a matter of fact, two tasks have to be performed in close connection with each other: the one is description and characterization of particular generations, the other the subsumption of individuals under the one to which they seem to belong. Ortega solved both problems with one stroke. His recipe requires only adding the appropriate multiple of fifteen to the year 1626, in which Descartes had his thirtieth birthday, and we do not only know the "demarcation lines" between what he calls "generations" but also where everybody belongs (36). That may be all right for the historical metaphysicians, it is not enough for historians. First of all, there are in reality no demarcation lines, there are only border zones between the successive groups of coevals. To find them, one can take off from the theoretical assumption, verified for France and Germany, that in the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries social generations started at intervals of about ten years, but in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries at intervals of about five years. If one focuses at about such intervals on innovations, changes in behavior patterns, changes in fashions, best sellers, popular music, the appearance of sophisticated art and literature, and what have you, one can expect to find the border zones. Of course, the rhythm in other nations may have been different from that in France and Germany.

(36) MARIAS, *op.cit.*, p. 172. We will explain this procedure later; see below, page 264.

Once we have the structure, that is, a clear picture of the groups of coevals as they succeed each other, based on their specific empirically established characteristics, we have to find the proper pigeonholes for a host of individuals. It is not enough to glance at the birth dates of creative and articulate persons; autobiographies, letters, diaries, speeches, and biographies have to be consulted before one can be reasonably sure where the individual fits in. In the case of the outstanding leader or leaders of a generation, the researcher might be pretty certain where he belongs. I mean such men as Churchill or Goethe or Manet, to mention leaders in different fields; or a destroyer such as Hitler, one of Jakob Burckhardt's *terrible simplificateurs*. For the rest documentary evidence from any field whatsoever which might shed light on a particular generation will have to be consulted, such as poetry, paintings, architecture, pieces of research, and what have you. The newcomer to generational research will be surprised, when he discovers to what extent the approach and the methods of research in any field and the questions asked by coetaneous scholars are generation-determined. This holds true, for example, of the so-called "new" economic history.

An observation confusing at times is bound to trouble the investigator. One and the same cultural problem may come up in successive historical generations. German Expressionism started in painting and came to literature later (37); the development had gone the opposite way earlier in the era of Romanticism. Furthermore any cultural movement has its avant-garde, its main body, and its latecomers. International influences will be felt earlier here than there, because of the role of individuals and because the transfer of objectifications of their ideas may be slower here than there. Functions typical of age groups will result in the fact that the promoters of new movements, such as publishers, art dealers, museum directors, editors, etc. but also political propagandists appear in earlier groups of coevals than the great exponents of a movement. In other words, any cultural movement is carried by a cluster of generations.

What can be seen as a complication or as a deviation from the model, has led to a misunderstanding. There is only one national generational rhythm, and there are not different generational

(37) See my paper on Expressionism cited in footnote 4.

developments in the various fields. The *Geist* of a generation is one and the same and may well be what, in the bitter discussions prior to World War I, Karl Lamprecht called the *Diapason* which underlies all manifestations and objectifications of a generation. But, of course, one can study in monographs how the national rhythm worked itself out in various fields. At any rate, complications and deviations from the generational model, discovered in the empirical material, prove that we deal with reality, not with a theoretical structure.

Often the intention to delimit particular groups of coevals will go hand in hand with the search for their leading members, if there can be doubt who they were. The leader of a generation can be one of its members, as was Goethe among his contemporaries of age. But in many cases the leader was a member of an earlier one. This may be the consequence of the fact, just mentioned, that the first steps in a new direction are taken by an avant-garde in one cultural area rather than in others and come to the latter only somewhat belatedly. Vision comes before performance. Theoretically it would even be possible that a group of coevals, floundering, turns to a younger one for leadership. The suggestion may appear illogical, and I cannot think of an example. But there are strong and weak generations; under difficult circumstances there are embryonic starts and arrested developments, whereas a later generation blossoms, having started under more auspicious circumstances and being endowed with more genius. Things like that may have happened in Germany after the cultural destruction in the Third Reich and the devastation in World War II. One may also ask whether in our era of easy transportation and communication a foreigner can exert the decisive influence on a group of coevals abroad; and here we are back at the possibility of a limited internationalization, perhaps better Europaization of social (historical) generations. While this remains an open question at this moment, it is certain and has been established by Wechsler that one and the same genius can be a leader of more than one generation. Goethe led his contemporaries of age, those born around 1750, by *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* of 1774, the next, the Classical, generation by his *Iphigenie auf Tauris* of 1787, and finally the Romantic generations by his novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* of 1796.

b) An easily remembered denomination of the various groups of coevals, once delimited, will contribute to having the findings

accepted and become teachable. Several methods are available. Generations can be distinguished by the span of time within which the majority was born. Yet, in view of the fact that birth dates as such are not decisive, I am somewhat reluctant of using this method. For the purpose of distinction it appears preferable to take the time span during which the majority matured and the leaders conceived the problems they felt obliged to solve during their lives. It is about twenty years after the span of birth dates. So it would be legitimate to distinguish, when writing German history, between the generations of the 1770's, 1780's and 1790's.

But there are still other methods. One can label generations by means of their outstanding traits or achievements or problems mastered. Wechssler, for example, in a book of 1934 which cannot be praised, denominated those Germans who were born around 1775 as the first Romantic group of coevals; its members started their life work by 1795. Those born about 1785 were labeled the second Romantic generation. The one which followed, the men born in the last years of the eighteenth and the earliest years of the nineteenth century, shook of the Romantic fetters. It was characterized as the first Realistic *Jugendreihe* (38).

1906 is clearly the date at which a German group of coevals, disgusted with bourgeois culture, broke loose from it. It was this generation which created the contemporary German youth movement, the *Wandervogel*; deeply pessimistic about the European future, its leaders became pacifistic. In the literary field they embraced Expressionism. It could be called the generation of revolt against bourgeois culture or the Expressionist generation (39).

(38) WECHSSLER, Eduard, *Jugendreihen des deutschen Menschen 1733-1933* (Leipzig, 1934); the item is not in Mariás's bibliography.

(39) This may be the place to show at least in a footnote the difficulties of delimitation and denomination of successive groups of coevals. The revolting German generation of 1906 - so characterized, because this year saw the first Expressionist publications - embraced the majority of men born in the earlier 1880's. The later years of the decade was the border zone. Hans Blüher, who still in the Gymnasium, together with his friends, created the *Wandervogel*, the German youth movement, and became its first historian, was born as late as 1888. Obviously he had matured at a very early age. The men born in the late eighties and early nineties, to which I belong, formed the last German group of coevals prior to World War I. It seems to have made its start by 1912. *Geisteswissenschaftlich* oriented and idealistic it provided the *Kriegsfreiwillige* of 1914. To one's surprise one will find that Hitler's birthdate was 1889. He

Generations which have a widely visible outstanding leader can be designated either by his name, or by his name in conjunction with his generation-forming achievements, or alternatively by the latter alone. Goethe's generation (he was born in 1749) could just as well be called the Werther generation. It is not equally certain that one could call the first Romantic generation that of Wackenroder's "*Kunstliebender Klosterbruder*"; yet this work showed his coevals the problem to be solved, inviting them to turn from admiration for the Greek and Roman classics to that for the German Middle Ages and the Gothic style (40). It will be understood that we discuss here the denomination of generations not denying that there will be a good deal of argument in individual cases as to the appropriate designation.

c) Lack of empirical research in our area makes it difficult at this time to see in detail the interrelationship between social (historical) generations, age groups, and biological generations. We have mentioned earlier that the experience of one and the same event is shared both by age groups and groups of coevals. As the individual ages, so does his group of coevals with all its ideas and ideals. The typical reaction of age groups and the specific reaction of the group of coevals dovetail, a subject for empirical research. More important,

matured so late in his life that he joined those born in the second half of the 1890's, the generation that was formed by World War I. Erich Maria REMARQUE (b. in 1898) in his novel *Im Westen nichts Neues* shows how its members, many still teenagers, experienced the War. This then is the Nazi generation or Hitler generation which first proved its existence between about 1923 and 1925. Group conscious, it saw itself as a specific generation, as has been pointed out repeatedly. See, for example, part II of the article "Generations" in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. VI, pp. 92-95. Entitled "Political Generations" and written by Marvin RINTALA it is interesting but also suffers from lack of conceptual conciseness.

The German group of coevals following that of Hitler was formed by the youngsters born in the early 1900's. They had experienced the Revolution of 1918/19, famine, inflation, civil war, and national humiliation. They cursed their fate of having missed participation in the war. They provided the bulk of the SA, anxious to become the heroes of the next one. They showed their existence first in 1930 in the Nazi election victory of that year. There is no better generation document than Erich KASTNER's poem "Jahrgang 1899". See *Bei Durchsicht meiner Bücher* (Zürich, 1946), p. 97.

(40) Wilhelm WACKENRODER (1773-1798) wrote *Herzenergiessungen eines Kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, published in Berlin in 1797.

perhaps, is the fact that historical generations can cut right through biological generations. That is, brothers, sons of the same father, can belong to two different *successive* groups of coevals. (This is common when the age difference between them is considerable.) Two sons of King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia, the successive kings Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1795-1861) and Wilhelm I (1797-1888) belong to two historical generations. The former has often been called the Romanticist on the throne, the latter was typical of the realism of those born at the turn of the nineteenth century; but the age-distance between the two was only about two years.

When the historian deals with early modern monarchies of twentieth century dictatorships and studies the events with a view to their generational aspects, specific problems arise. If the monarch or dictator reaches a mature age, his coevals may dominate the scene for a long time. This holds true of Spain under Franco. I am not sufficiently familiar with Russian history to analyze what happened under the rule of the aging Stalin. If a monarch or dictator dies young, we may observe the opposite trend. A good example is provided by German history in the second half of the nineteenth century. Under the aging Emperor Wilhelm I who died aged ninety one, old men remained in power. Since his successor Emperor Friedrich III was dying of cancer when he came to the throne, his contemporaries of age, his group of coevals liberal in its typical approach, never assumed political responsibility, much to the detriment of the nation. His successor coming to power early in his life took with him his own group of coevals, which did not improve the situation. Here is another wide field for empirical research.

3

It is sad that our presentation has to close on a critical note. But successful empirical research in our area depend on removing thick fog that has enveloped a particular aspect of the generational problem. Scholars who approached it in the spirit of Positivism were wont to ask for the "duration" of a generation. The usual answer was: thirty years, and the thinking behind the answer ran as follows: The first thirty years of a man's life are taken up by his education. They are followed by another thirty years of achievement, while at the age of sixty a man usually leaves whatever

position he has acquired in life. This thirty-year rhythm has obviously nothing in common with the about thirty years being the mean age distance between fathers and sons, a context in which one can meaningfully ask for the duration of generations (41).

What is done if one periodizes by thirty years is a somewhat arbitrary delimitation of age groups. One sees changes at thirty years, as did Comte or (against his better insight) François Mentré; or at every twenty-five years, which was the vision of Emile Littré; or at every fifteen years as preferred by Ortega. The scientific value of such proposals is exceedingly small because of the continuity of births and the arbitrariness involved. At best such speculations determine age groups. We will see where this kind of thing leads to at worst (42).

It can be understood that Ortega fell into this trap. He was not a trained historian and lacked historical craftsmanship. Thus he was unable to establish by empirical historical methods border zones between historical generations, as any historian could, especially if he specializes in intellectual history. The result is the slip into an age group theory against which the unsatisfactory definition of "generations" based on coetaneity and coexistence did not protect him (43). He simply could not see the fundamental difference between age groups having unalterable functions within society and social (historical) generations determining how and toward which goals these functions are performed. It is the function which defines the age group; it is the approach to life, the way of thinking and acting, the behavior pattern which in combination are constitutive of the group of coevals. All these elements are acquired under the pressure of historical circumstances, while the functions of age groups have a God given basis, if one wants to speak in semi-religious terms. Or also, one could say : age groups are rooted in nature, social generations are rooted in history.

Ultimately Ortega's conceptual confusion led to what historians would consider disaster. Like others before him, believing in a

(41) See above, page 247.

(42) For Comte and Mentré, see MARIAS, *op.cit.*, pp. 24, 110; for Littré (1801-1881), *ibid.*, p. 28.

One finds Ortega's fifteen-year age groups in Mariás's chapter III dealing with "Ortega's Theory of Generations" (sic ! ) on page 96. Fifteen years each belong to childhood, youth initiation, dominance, and old age, respectively, making together seventy-five years.

(43) See above, page 250.

thirty-year duration of "generations", Ortega was enticed to periodize history by fifteen years. He began modestly enough looking at the nineteenth century; but thence he proceeded and periodized the whole of European history with Descartes's thirtieth birthday in 1626 as the key date, so that the preceding "generation" is dated to 1611 and the succeeding one to 1641. It is most painful to see Mariás, obviously in a spirit of loyalty, defending this kind of thing, although one can read between the lines how unhappy he felt. He would have done a better service to his erstwhile teacher by abandoning such historical speculation. He certainly, by further discrediting it, did a disservice to potential users of a promising tool (44).

The question of the "duration" of a "generation" based on the conceptual confusion of age groups and social (historical) generations should have been put to rest once and for all. It will probably prove to be a Jack in the Box for unhistorical minds. Actually, however, two other questions, temporal in character, can legitimately be asked. One is the question for the time elapsing between the start of succeeding groups of coevals. This matter has been taken up before (45). It has been shown that this time distance tended to shorten from about ten years in the eighteenth century to about five years in the twentieth. We may add that wars, which keep young people temporarily away from their chosen occupations, tend to increase the time gap, as was the case, for example, in Germany as the consequence of World War I. The last pre-War group of coevals was that of 1912, the next started only by 1925. It would be worthwhile investigating what the American Civil War did to the generational rhythm in the United States. On the whole, the speed of the rhythm is correlated to the speed of cultural development.

The second sensible question concerns the duration of the *dominance* of particular groups of coevals which has to be investigated from case to case. But a few generalizing statements are in order. In peaceful periods, bound to tend to conservatism, groups of coevals once in power can be expected to hold their power longer than they can in revolutionary eras. In these, younger groups of coevals have a greater chance of acquiring power at an early age; but

(44) MARIAS, *op.cit.*, pp. 155-161; he deals with "objections" on pp. 161 ff.

(45) See above, page 260.

they may lose it quickly to the next following generation in case of progressing radicalization or to an older one again in case of reaction. In wars, a particular group of coevals might have been decimated to the extent that the survivors can not easily push the older ones out of power; these go on dominating the stage comparatively long. We spoke of a "lost generation" in Germany after World War I and in America after World War II. Thus a particular group of coevals may never come to power.

Earlier the possibility of generational tragedy was discussed, the tragedy of individuals unable to find a niche for themselves (46). The available groups of coevals struggle toward goals or use approaches unacceptable to some young men and women. Or else, there is no demand for what they have to offer. Here we meet a very different kind of generational tragedy. It does not concern individuals but groups of coevals as such. Under normal circumstances a group of coevals begins to dominate the national culture when its majority has reached the age of forty. This implies that at the moment of victory, when a generation has become powerful enough to realize the ideas and ideals of its members, two or possibly even three younger groups of coevals stand ready to challenge the supremacy because they consider it a constraint on their own goals. That is, in the very hour in which a group of coevals becomes dominant, it is already in danger of being pushed to the wall by younger ones and faces certain defeat.

The generational rhythm stands also behind the forgetting of the historical past which goes on everywhere and at all times. It is, in fact, one of the many "daimonic" (creative-destructive) processes in historical life. Without forgetting there would be no change, only the dead end of an unceasing treadmill. On the other hand, forgetting endangers development by leading to the non-ending repetition of the same errors and crimes in history, another tragic element connected with the generational rhythm.

(46) See above, page 262.

*Fritz REDLICH*

**GENERATIES**

**KRITIEK EN RECONSTRUCTIE**

door

**Fritz REDLICH**

***SAMENVATTING***

De studie van Julian Marías die hier kritisch wordt toegelicht, biedt wel een nuttig overzicht van de evolutie van het wetenschappelijk begrip "generatie" maar de auteur is er zich niet van bewust dat de gebruikte term kan slaan op vier verschillende fenomenen. Daarbij stelt Julian Marías het zo voor alsof de filosoof Ortega y Gasset de enige is geweest die ooit een theorie over de generaties zou hebben ontworpen. Daarenboven is zijn theorie noch die van Ortega y Gasset operationeel en brengen die geen helder onderscheid tussen leeftijdsgroepen en sociale (historische) generaties. De fout ligt hem hierin dat Julian Marías geen rekening heeft gehouden met de merkwaardige bijdrage van Mannheim, Wechsler en Pinder en dat hij geweigerd heeft de overmoedige opstellingen van de filosoof Ortega y Gasset op de korrel te nemen.

In de laatste paragrafen ontwikkelen we een eigen theorie betreffende sociale (historische) generaties, theorie die zo operationeel mogelijk werd uitgebouwd. We deden hiervoor een beroep op de "vergeten" geleerden en menen hen op die wijze recht te doen voor de weinig heuse manier waarop ze door Julian Marías werden behandeld.

**GENERATIONS**

**CRITIQUE ET RECONSTRUCTION**

par

**Fritz REDLICH**

***RESUME***

Sans doute, l'étude de Julian Marías, que nous soumettons ici à un examen critique, offre-t-elle un aperçu utile de l'évolution de la notion scientifique de "génération", mais l'auteur ne se rend pas compte que le terme en question peut s'appliquer à quatre phénomènes différents. En outre, Julian Marías présente les choses comme si le philosophe Ortega y Gasset avait été le seul qui eût jamais conçu une théorie sur les générations. En plus, ni sa théorie à lui ni celle d'Ortega y Gasset ne sont opérationnelles et elles ne font pas non plus de distinction bien

nette entre les groupes d'âge et les générations sociales (historiques). L'erreur consiste dans le fait que Julian Mariás n'a pas tenu compte des remarquables contributions de Mannheim, Wechsler et Pinder et qu'il a refusé de mettre en doute les thèses présomptueuses du philosophe Ortega y Gasset.

Dans les derniers paragraphes, nous développons notre théorie à nous sur les générations sociales (historiques), théorie que nous avons élaborée de façon qu'elle soit aussi opérationnelle que possible. Dans ce but, nous nous sommes inspirés des savants "oubliés", auxquels nous croyons avoir ainsi rendu justice en compensation de la façon peu courtoise dont ils furent traités par Julian Mariás.