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Social Psychology at the Royal School of St Elizabeth in Madrid

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Abstract

This paper presents the major ideas on social psychology at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th at the Royal School of St Elizabeth (Real Colegio de Santa Isabel) in Madrid. First of all, the school reflects the different social strata: pupils from the upper and lower classes. Secondly, within the framework of a predominantly Christian culture, the interest in universal education was manifested in providing free education to the more disadvantaged pupils in Madrid at that time. It was a society that respected the social strata, projecting differential psychology of diverse characteristics depending on the social class. The pupils from the upper class received the type of education that reflected their social status, while the curriculum for the lower class reflected their own social status. These differences were mitigated as the culture gave rise to a global social psychology whose exponent is the school presented here.

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The Royal School of St Elizabeth in Madrid is one of the oldest schools in the capital of Spain, which is still in existence today. It was founded by Philip II of Spain in 1592 as an orphanage and run by the Augustinian Recollect nuns, who lived in the nearby convent, until 1649 when it passed into the hands of lay teachers. In 1863 the school was entrusted to the Daughters of Mary Escolapias congregation until 1876 (Sánchez Hernández, 1997, p.48).

The Assumptionist nuns took over the School in 1876 and it was set up for girls belonging to the *ruling class* (HCOL, 1876-1978, p.1), like the other schools run by the same Congregation in various countries of Europe (ACOSTA, 1931,p.22). However, from the very beginning the Assumptionist nuns started a free school in the same building for poor girls from the Lavapiés district. It can be affirmed that from a socio-psychological point of view there was segregation based on social class in the Royal School of St Elizabeth and it was possible to carry out differential psychology studies in this centre.

There were two entrances to the building; the main door with the coat of arms of Philip V on the lintel opened onto a hall that was tiled halfway up, with a commemorative plaque of the benefactor Carlos Borja y Centelles, who made significant improvements to the school during the 18th century. This was the entrance for the

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boarders and day pupils. The other entrance was on the other side of the building, below the governor's house and was a simple door which led to a few classrooms for the poor pupils of the Free School.

Two Sisters of the Assumption, Sister María Fuensanta and Sister Pilar and the many others who followed, were devoted exclusively to this stimulating and evangelical task until 1920 when Sister María Nieves took charge of the School, assisted by a lay sister who also taught and took care of the girls. There were 250 pupils (HCOL, 1876-1978, p. 1). From 1925, the pupils who received free schooling used the same uniform as the boarders (Annals of 1876-1996, 2 pp.259). This did not change essentially between 1876 and 1942 (Annals of 1876-1996, 5, p.6). The pupils of the Free School at Saint Elizabeth's did not mix with the fee-paying pupils until 1964. This meant that segregation lasted a long time.

After the Civil War of 1936-1939, one must stress the consolidation of another charitable initiative, a Sunday School founded in 1929 for young female workers and employees of St Elizabeth's, where sewing, typing, music theory and French were taught to those from the Free School who had finished their primary studies. On 30 April, 1945, Dolores Capdevila y Cardona received the *Pro Ecclesia et Romano Pontifice* medal for her collaboration in the Sunday School (Annals of 1876-1978, 5 p.133).

The Annals of St Elizabeth's offer more detailed information on the interest shown for the needy as well as the free school. From its inception, the boarders, who were from the upper class, spent one day making clothes for the poor, according to the school guidelines given to the parents who wanted to enrol their daughters.

The inauguration of the *Ropero de St Victoria* (the church organisation that delivers clothing among the poor), which had been in operation since 1927 to provide clothing to the needy, marked another milestone in social consciousness for St Elizabeth's pupils. The honorary president was Princess Beatriz, daughter of Alfonso XIII (Annals of 1876-1996 2, pp.303-325).

Since 1901, on the Epiphany, 6 January, the School had held a lottery or raffle to raise money for the poor. The drawing was sometimes presided by Princess María Paz, sister of Alfonso and Princess María Teresa, sister of Alfonso XIII (Annals of 1876-1978, 1 p. 202).

Another charitable initiative, of a spiritual nature, was promoted in 1934 by Mother Inés María Montes Jovellar, Superior of the School, through St Elizabeth's Catholic Action, which provided religious education to poor women and their children in the district (Annals of 1876-1978, 3 p. 147).

In the spring of 1942, the Bishop of Madrid-Alcalá asked the mothers of the pupils at St Elizabeth's to organise a *Ropero-Dispensario* (an establishment providing food and clothing for the poor) in La Elipa district of Madrid and where catechism was also taught (Annals of 1876-1978,4 p.386). The pupils contributed voluntarily by donating one *peseta* every Saturday.

To promote this project, on 29 April 1942 a meeting, chaired by Monsignor Eijo y Garay, bishop of Madrid-Alcalá, was held in the Church of St Francis the Great (San Francisco el Grande). Thanks to the efforts of the women convened and the support of Mr Piugdollers, a good friend of the School of the Assumption (Colegio de la Asunción), the prelate of Madrid was able to organise a provisional *Ropero-Dispensario* on November 19th of the same year to coincide with the feast of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, patron saint of the School. On 20 November 1945 the *Dispensario*, which was visited by the Home Secretary and Doctor Gómez Ulla among other personalities could be considered completed (Annals of 1876-1978 5, p.100).

These types of activities formed part of the collective social psychology of the ruling class in Spain at the beginning of the 20th century.

From what has been mentioned, it must be emphasized that at St Elizabeth's there was clear social segregation from the very beginning of the period analysed (1876). In one building different sections were used for classes for girls of the same age, but from different social classes. More than a century had to go by before this segregation came to an end.

The curriculum of the upper class girls (boarders and day pupils) was also different from that of the poor girls (day pupils); in the first case, the goal the Agustinian nuns had in mind when the school was founded, was to offer the teaching and knowledge that the society demanded. The Assumptionist nuns taught all the subjects themselves. English and French were taught by the nuns from the Orders of the respective countries, and all the lessons were in one language or the other at the higher levels, special attention being paid to Spanish and grammar.

It can be said, therefore, that at the higher levels at St Elizabeth's there was real *linguistic immersion*, especially for the boarders, which was very positive bearing in mind that we are talking about the 19th century.

The academic year at the end of the 19th century lasted 10 months, from October to July, and the basic subjects taught were: Spanish, French, English and needlework. In addition (paying separately) the girls could study what was termed *finishing classes*: music, singing, drawing, German, Italian and gymnastics.

On the other hand, secondary school education was not introduced at St Elizabeth's until 1927. That was the first year pupils had to take an entrance examination and when they finished secondary school they sat the examination at the Cisneros Institute in Madrid. In February 1929, at the request of many parents, secondary school education was definitively established at St Elizabeth's. Very soon, good results were obtained, since in 1931, for example, 60 pupils from the school passed their school leaver's exam with distinction. However, St Elizabeth's continued teaching general culture for those who did not wish to obtain the secondary school leaver's certificate (Annals of 1876-1996 2, p. 303).

With regard to the Free School, the poorer day pupils only attended primary school, but there is no record of the subjects taught in the Annals although the curriculum probably consisted of reading, writing and basic arithmetic. From 1925, the girls from the Free School began to wear the same uniform as those from The Royal School of St Elizabeth, a measure of social cohesion (HCOL, 11).

It is difficult to judge social segregation at the The Royal School of St Elizabeth from today's perspective. It must also be emphasised that we cannot feel responsible for how a pupil from the poor district of Lavapiés felt in the same class as a pupil from a well-off family from the rich district of Salamanca at the end of the 19th century. In all likelihood, they felt uncomfortable and preferred to be with those of their own kind. In addition, it should be noted that there was constant social awareness at the School of the Assumption through activities such as sewing, raffles, the Saturday *peseta*, the *dispensario*.

Once the pupils from the Free School finished primary school, they could enrol in the Sunday School, aimed at working women and maids, which, as previously mentioned, began in 1929. They were taught dressmaking, typing, music theory and French (Annals of 1876-1996, 2 p.238).

Another aspect of social collective psychology for the pupils of St Elizabeth's were the numerous visits the school received, evidence of which is found in the volumes of the school's *Annals*.

Between 1876 and 1945, the Papal Nuncio, representative of the Holy See in Spain, visited the school on twenty occasions. The first few visits of the secretary to the Nuncio, Mr Guidé, were in 1879 and 1880, followed by two visits by the Nuncio Angelo Bianchi that same year (1880).

Often, the papal legates presided over certain religious ceremonies such as first communions, Corpus Christi processions or novices taking their vows. This was the case of Nuncios Mariano Rampolla (1883, 1886), Angelo di Pietro (1890) or Aristide Rinaldini (1907). On other occasions, they visited St Elizabeth's to officiate at

funeral masses, like those of Pope Leon XIII by Nuncio Rinaldini in 1903, or Jaime Cardona y Tur, the Royal Chaplain buried in St Elizabeth's church, whose funeral service was officiated by Nuncio Federico Tedeschini (AGP PER 2611/39). These visits helped to strengthen the bond between the School and the authorities in Rome.

During the period considered for this study, the School and nuns at St Elizabeth's gladly received the visits of Mother María Eugenia de Jesús, founder of the Assumption Congregation, who was in Madrid in September 1878 and in October 1894. Later, Mother Superiors of the Assumption came to Madrid on thirteen occasions: Mother Marie Celestine del Buen Pastor (1898, 1900, 1902, 1905, 1911, 1913 y 1917) and Mother Joanna de L'Incarnation (1922, 1930, 1941, 1943 y 1944). In this way the ties were strengthened between the School and the Motherhouse of the Assumption Congregation.

The Royal Chaplains made 24 visits to the Royal School between 1876 and 1931. Cardinal Benavides y Navarrete were at St Elizabeth's in 1877, 1878 and 1890; Royal Chaplain Moreno Mazón visited on four occasions between 1881 and 1884. Before 1892 they had only visited the School on three occasions. From then on and until 1922, Royal Chaplain Jaime Cardona y Tur frequently visited the St Elizabeth's board of governors, of which he was head between 1877 and 1888. Between 1925 and 1931, the Royal Chaplains lavished attention on the School; they visited ten times, eight of which were by Royal Chaplain Muñoz Izquierdo. The visits helped to strengthen the relationship of the royal prelate and the Royal School.

Between 1885, the year the Diocese of Madrid-Alcalá was founded, and 1945, four of the seven prelates of Madrid visited the School: Monsignor Ciriaco María Sancha (1888 and 1891); Monsignor Victoriano Guisasola (1904 and 1905); Monsignor Prudencio Melo y Alcalde (1919 and 1922) and Monsignor Leopoldo Eijo y Garay (1926 and 1930).

The Royal School of St Elizabeth also received prelates from places where the Congregation had expanded to: this is the case of the Archbishop of Manila (1889, 1902 and 1907), and the Archbishops of Mondoñedo (1888), Tenerife (1905 and 1934), Oviedo (1889 and 1907) and León in Nicaragua (1913).

Special mention is made in the Annals of the frequent visits of another Spanish prelate, Monsignor Enrique Almaraz, who was the confessor to the Order of the Sisters of St Elizabeth between 1886 and 1893. He was appointed Bishop of Palencia (1893), Archbishop of Seville (1907), Cardinal (1911) and Archbishop of Toledo (1920). He visited the School on eleven occasions between 1895 and 1920. Another prelate linked to the School, Cardinal Casanova, confessor to the pupils in 1908, visited St Elizabeth's in 1927.

The School held fairly numerous receptions for religious Superiors such as the Abbot of Silos (1885 and 1903), the Superior of the Assumptionists Fathers (1885), the Provincial of the Jesuits (1914) or the Superior of the Dominicans (1926).

Moreover, between 1880 and 1915 St Elizabeth's received prelates from distant countries or unusual visitors for that time, such as a bishop from a Syrian denomination (1880), the Bishop of Bucharest (1882), an Australian Bishop (1883), the Armenian Patriarch (1903) or the Cardinal of Quebec (1915) (Annals of 1876-1978, 4, 113).

The girls at St Elizabeth's became so accustomed to the visits of the prelates, that they were psychologically predisposed to venerate, respect and obey them, according to the teachings of the School and the practical application which these pastoral visits made a reality.

Another great field of the collective social psychology of the pupils at The Royal School of St Elizabeth in Madrid was the visits of the royal family.

King Alfonso XIII had entrusted the Assumptionist nuns with running the School of the Assumption in 1876 (HCOL, (1876-1978). p.5), a royal foundation since Philip II established it in 1592.

The royal family still attends regularly prize-giving ceremonies, school plays or just for the pleasure of seeing the mother superiors and pupils at their everyday activities, to which they join in with simple and pleasant familiarity (HCOL, (1876-1978). 9). This summary of the history of the School in the 1920s, makes it easy to understand the relationship between the royal family and The Royal School of St Elizabeth.

Between the foundation of the School in 1876 and the advent of the Second Republic in 1931, the *Annals* of St Elizabeth's make reference to the following visits of the royal family:

- Princess Isabel (daughter of Isabel II): 11 visits between 1877 and 1926.
- Princess María de la Paz (daughter of Isabel II): 5 visits between 1879 and 1906.
- Princess Eulalia (daughter of Isabel II): 3 visits between 1879 and 1883.
- Alfonso XII (son of Isabel II and the crown prince): visited on 30-4-1883 and 6-7-1884.
- María de las Mercedes de Orleans y Borbón (first wife of Alfonso XII) visited on 4-12-1877 and 16-5-1878.
- María Cristina de Austria (second wife of Alfonso XII): 11 visits between 1883-1905; as queen mother, 5 visits up to 1926.
- Alfonso XIII, before reaching adulthood, 8 visits between 1894 and 1902; in 1904 he visited the School of Malaga. As king, he visited the School with Victoria Eugenia de Battenberg in 1914 and 1923.
- Princess M^a Mercedes de Borbón (sister of Alfonso XIII); 1 visit in 1896.
- Princess M^a Teresa de Borbón (sister of Alfonso XIII); 4 visits between 1896 and 1908.
- Reina Victoria Eugenia de Battenberg: visited in 1906, 1914, 1917.
- The children of Alfonso XIII and Victoria Eugenia when they were young: 1911, 1916, 1920, 1922.
- Princesses Beatriz and Cristina (daughters of Alfonso XIII and Victoria Eugenia): 1927, 1930.
- Princess Isabel Alfonsa (niece of Alfonso XIII). She was a boarder at the School during the 1911-1912 academic year.
- María de las Mercedes y Dolores de las Dos Sicilias y Orleans (*Annals* of 1876-1896, 2 pp. 139-160).

This social intercourse between the pupils at the School of the Assumption and the Spanish royal family was without doubt intense; this brought about, in the girls as well as the teachers and the families of the pupils, great devotion for the monarchy which, at the end of the 1920s, was going through a critical period with the establishment of the Second Spanish Republic.

The visits from the ecclesiastic and civil authorities to the pupils of the Royal School of Saint Elizabeth were doubtlessly another opportunity for these pupils to socialise and to become aware of the world of influence, be it religious or civil, to which they were destined as members of the designated *ruling classes*.

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