



Doctor Eduardo Bernabé Ordaz: An Exemplary Father for Cuban Psychologists

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Opinion

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Abbreviations: DTE: Department of Specialized Treatments; HPH: Havana Psychiatric Hospital.

Opinion

There are figures that the passage of time is blurring from the memory archive of peoples. Others, on the contrary, take root with such force that they remain registered forever in the poetic memory of humanity». That is the case of Dr. Eduardo Bernabé Ordaz Ducungé (1921-2006), described by professor and senior researcher Raúl Fuillerat Alfonso (1950-2015) as the «intellectual and spiritual father of island psychologists» This chronicle evokes the sacred memory of the founding director of the Havana Psychiatric Hospital, on the occasion of Parents' Day, in the year of the 101st anniversary of his birth.

According to Augusto Comte (1798-1857), «the history of a science is science itself. With support in that anthological phrase of the eminent French philosopher, to know the valuable contribution of that emblematic figure of Cuban and Ibero-American psychology to its improvement as a science and profession, it is essential to investigate the historical evolution of said discipline of neural and social sciences on the largest island of the Antilles.

Since January 9, 1959, the date on which the commander-physician of the Rebel Army assumed the direction of the old Hospital for the Insane in Cuba, described by Commander Fidel Castro Ruz (1926-2016) as «Dante's Hell», the material and spiritual conditions of life of the patients confined in that

warehouse for the mentally ill and they were guaranteed qualified medical attention, including —of course— psychological care.

On the other hand, their inviolable dignity was respected by treating them as human beings, who —for the sole fact of being human— deserve affection and consideration of all kinds. In research carried out on the history of the Havana Psychiatric Hospital (HPH), this chronicler has had access to documentary and oral sources that refer to the colonial and republican eras, but —as far as is known— in none of them is it made the slightest allusion to psychologists as members of the faculty of that misnamed «hospital for the insane.

Therefore, it is not until after the revolutionary dawn that the professor emeritus of the University Of Medical Sciences Of Havana created the Psychology service, which years later became the Department of Psychology, hierarchized by Dr. Noemí Pérez Valdés (1928-2008), professor emeritus at that higher medical education center.

With the unconditional support of Dr. Bernabé Ordaz, a great boost was given to the development of science that studies the laws, categories and principles on which the psychic and spiritual life of the human being is structured. In 1972, he promoted the First Internal Conference on Psychology, converted —in its own right— into a national congress of the specialty; in 1979 he supported the realization of the I National Congress of Health Psychology, which was hosted by the Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP), and in 1989 he was the main architect of the II Internal Conference on Psychology, in which psychologists and others participated mental health professionals in what is now the province of Havana.

An important contribution to the specialized bibliography was the publication of the fundamental works of the most illustrious representatives of Soviet Psychology. In 1959, he founded the Magazine of the Psychiatric Hospital of Havana, in whose pages psychologists had a space to divulge the results of their assistance, teaching-educational and investigative work in the field of Martí's science of the spirit.

Since the end of the 70s of the previous century, he served as director of the Psychology Bulletin (1978-1998), so that Cuban and foreign psychologists had their own press organ that recorded the fruitful theoretical-practical work of psychologists' professionals of this social-scientific discipline.

In 1978, he encouraged the preparation of the Cuban Glossary of Psychology; project unfortunately interrupted for reasons beyond his control. In 1988, the HPH, under the auspices of the Center for Psychodiagnostic and Didactic Testing in Bratislava (today the Czech Republic), created the National Center for Psychodiagnostic Testing. The headquarters of that center functioned in said institution until the beginning of the 1990s, when it disappeared as a result of the disintegration of the East European socialist bloc and the extinction of the Soviet Union.

In 1997, he created the Provincial Center for Rorschach Psychodiagnosis, located in the Department of Specialized Treatments (DTE). Until its dissolution at the dawn of the 21st century, in this academic-care context, the most complete and complex personality research method that exists, to date, in the field of neuroscience was taught and applied.

With that vision of the future that characterized him, he

made Psicoballet official and incorporated it as a department into the management structure; artistic-therapeutic project valued by the historical leader of the Cuban Revolution as an original contribution to the development of national psychology and culture.

Among other things, it should be noted the undisputed fact that Dr. Bernabé Ordaz supported-historically- not only the psychologists who worked in that mental health and psychosocial rehabilitation institution, but also all the psychologists in the country, and ardently defended both their occupational profile and their professional identity and inalienable rights as university graduates who live, love, create and dream in the Cuban archipelago. In addition, he became an enthusiastic organizer of the international conferences on Health Psychology (PSICOSALUD), which-since 1992- have been taking place in the Convention Center of the Wonder City.

To settle, only in part, that debt of gratitude that Cuban psychologists owed -and have- to Dr. Eduardo Bernabé Ordaz, the members of the Governing Board of the Cuban Society of Health Psychology decided, dissenting nemine, to grant him the category Honorary Member, for his decisive contribution to the development of Caribbean psychological science.

Within the PSICOSALUD 2008 event, an emotional homage of remembrance was paid to that leading figure of contemporary Cuban psychology, just as I humbly do today through this chronicle, to which he gave the best and purest of intellect and spirit at the service of humanity..., without expecting anything in return, only the immense satisfaction of a duty fulfilled.

Eternal glory to the intellectual and spiritual father of Cuban psychologists!

