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The Philosophy of Ortega y Gasset Reevaluated

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In a paper published in 1925, in *El Espectador*, titled "Vitalidad, Alma, Espíritu," Ortega speaks of the need for a topography (i.e., a description of the places) of our intimacy and divides internal phenomena into three types: vital, animated, and spiritual. This topography contrasts with the traditional division between soul and body, whose boundaries, says Ortega, are difficult to establish (Ortega y Gasset, 2004b: 568) and most of the time blurred in our actual behavior. Those three types differ in the spatial image that we can make of them and therefore in their relationship to the body. Vital phenomena, for example, manifest themselves in the body and can be located in different body zones: for instance, to thirst corresponds the well-known sensation of dryness of the mouth. In contrast, a spiritual phenomenon, like the discovery of a solution for a theorem, is not easy to connect to any part of the body.

Vital events are therefore phenomena—they have particular modalities of appearance—and not just facts subject to an explanation of a biological, physiological, or a similar nature. For example, we say that a tooth aches, but it aches not because it is the tooth or my brain that feel the ache, but myself. Pain always belongs to someone whose pain it is; to me, for instance, to whom it hurts and who says it is mine. The same could be said of the phenomenon of walking. My experience of walking is different from an anatomical or physiological description of it and from my seeing another person walk, which is only a visual phenomenon deprived of the particular muscular sensations that I feel when I walk. The muscular sensation itself is incommunicable to someone who sees me walking; it belongs to my body felt from within and not only seen from the outside. Ortega calls it the innerbody (Ortega y Gasset, 2004b: 571).

The distinction between the spiritual level and the animated level may not be very clear from the beginning. Ortega however underlines their different temporal structure. Spiritual phenomena are instantaneous—even if they may take some time to arise—but animated phenomena (those who concern our soul) usually unroll themselves in time. Two brief examples will prove it: I have the instantaneous evidence of the solution of a theorem, regardless the more or less extended period of

time I spent trying to find it; but love or hate unroll in time and may undergo several phases, distinct from each other in intensity. To sum up, we must distinguish:

1. A pure vital level that could also be labeled "animal" level: it's the level in which I experience a pain that hurts, hunger, or thirst.
2. An animated level: it's the level in which it makes sense to say "I am sad." It is only at this level that we can speak of someone's individuality (Ortega y Gasset, 2004b: 575). On the contrary, as long as pain pertains to my bodily condition, it must be common to all members of the species who share the identical bodily conditions. Similarly, the solution for a theorem is valid for every thinking being.
3. A spiritual or mental level: thinking is an act that I myself carry out; it is the higher personal act, but not an act of the individual. Spiritual acts have meanings that don't have their origin in the particular individual that is performing them. Meanings are always objective and universal.

Is Ortega saying that my personality is not my individuality? It seems to be the correct interpretation of what he says in (Ortega y Gasset, 2004b: 577). There are several things to note here: (1) A man may split in a part that feels, desires, etc. and in another part that analyzes this split (makes a "police surveillance," as Ortega says). (2) This part that analyzes or judges, although belonging to me, is involved in a certain anonymity. All judgments claim universality and depart from the conditions under which they were made. (3) This is a split between a part that executes acts and another whose execution consists in observing the executed acts of the former, which are the only really executive acts. Only to them corresponds man's natural tendency to be "turned outward." It seems then that I am not entirely myself neither when I feel a pain (that's only the vitalistic level of my own being) nor when I analyze it (i.e., when my spiritual level is functioning). Nevertheless, it's me who feels the pain, and it's also me who analyzes it. We have not yet obtained the correct point of view to address this issue the way it must be addressed. Further analyses are needed here. The problem, if I have understood Ortega correctly, seems to be this: I am not destined to live like someone who feels pleasure or displeasure or like someone whose main imperative is to seek states of pleasure and avoid states of pain. But neither am I destined to live like someone for whom pleasure and pain are not intrinsic parts of life, i.e., whose bodily condition is not something intrinsic to his own human condition, and only a mere contingent fact destined to be put aside in a form of life committed to the achievement of "higher values."

Moreover, these "higher values"—to which of course everybody must commit his own life—are not the product of theoretical or spiritual acts alone, although "spirit" is needed to acknowledge any hierarchy of values. Ortega speaks of the primary and deepest acts of consciousness that he labels acts of "evaluation"¹. However, I think Ortega means they are animic and not spiritual acts, since he says that desires

and intellections are grounded in them. According to this view, every man is a "regime of evaluations" (Ortega y Gasset, 2004c: 731), and all his activities are framed by his evaluative character.

1 Man's Need for Security

Ortega's anthropology, in my opinion, offers the basis for two key concepts of his philosophy of culture. The first is the concept of the "virtual," and the second is the concept of "security." I will try to show the deep relationship that exists between the two, although their provenance is different: the first brings us back to Husserl's thought at the time of the publication of the first volume of *Ideas*, while the second refers to Plato's theory of ideas. Until a few decades ago, it was not customary to relate Ortega's thinking to phenomenology, let alone consider Ortega a member of the phenomenological movement. As we have shown in previous chapters, this led to a somewhat distorted view of his philosophy. For the then dominant interpretation, Ortega would have evolved from a neo-Kantian training, received at the University of Marburg, to a philosophy of vital reason and, finally, to a philosophy of historical reason. And while no one was unaware of the important influence on Ortega of thinkers like Max Scheler or Martin Heidegger, it was, to believe the prevailing opinion, the influence of those aspects of Scheler's and Heidegger's thought that had deviated from the actual course taken by Husserl's phenomenology. If Ortega's phenomenology is not addressed from the viewpoint of phenomenology, serious misunderstandings will ensue. Namely, his indebtedness to Nietzsche and Simmel, which is nonetheless real, will be greatly exaggerated. But speaking about Ortega's relation to phenomenology doesn't mean that he is only resuming Husserl's or Heidegger's thesis about man. In the first place, because when Ortega began to address anthropological issues, Husserl's most important texts on culture had not yet been published, and Heidegger had not yet begun his philosophical career; in the second place—and that's the real important thing—because Ortega was just trying to apply the phenomenological method to those issues he believed (wrongly, but that's another story) were alien to the intentions and scope of Husserl's investigations.

I will start with some words about security. In 1912, just as his neo-Kantian phase, which begins with his first stay in Marburg around 1906, is about to end, Ortega makes a conference at the Ateneo of Madrid entitled "Plato's Idea" where, to explain what culture is, he uses the example of Plato's theory of ideas. I quote a brief passage from this conference, although it belongs to a phase of his thinking earlier than that I have been referring to, because it contains a theme that will reappear later when Ortega comes to phenomenology:

Confidence, tranquility, is the emotion in which one can anticipate what is likely to happen within an hour, tomorrow or later. If fear right now is not the dominant emotion in us, it is because we have confidence in the regularity of architectural laws and the municipal laws that oversee architectural laws. Why don't we fear that in a moment the ceiling of this room will come down? Seek the source of our relative tranquility and you will find it in absolute trust in the laws of mathematics and in a less absolute trust in municipal laws. (Ortega y Gasset, 2007a: 224)

¹ I am translating the Spanish word *estimación* (Ortega y Gasset, 2004c: 731). In the absence of precise references by Ortega, I risk the hypothesis that he is trying to give a Spanish equivalent to the German words *Beurteilung* and *Wertschätzung*, which appear very frequently in the works of Max Scheler.

Now, as early as 1910, i.e., even before his contact with phenomenology, in an essay entitled "Adam in Paradise," Ortega had already defended a very similar thesis. It is therefore a permanent feature of Ortega's philosophies of culture and of man and his philosophical trajectory, from youth to maturity, will only offer different formulations of it. In 1910, then, referring to logic, ethics, and aesthetics, which roughly correspond to the three parts into which the system of philosophy is divided according to Hermann Cohen, Ortega states that they are the three prejudices that elevate us above animality and allow us to make a judgment. (I note that in Spanish "judgment" is "juicio" and therefore it is easier to establish, as Ortega does, the relationship between prejudice and judgment.)

As a kind of parenthesis, let me say that this sharp opposition between animal life and human life needs to be mitigated. It agrees with a neo-Kantian idea of man, but a phenomenological inspection of the human way of being (and I mean by this, one that is not vitiated by a priori constructions) will easily acknowledge that higher functions, like theoretical thinking or evaluative processes, are grounded on more basic functions. Later in his more mature thought, Ortega will recognize this fact. In "Vitalidad, Alma, Espíritu," he will write: "The most sublime in our person is closely united to this animal underground, and it has no meaning to draw a line or frontier separating the former from the latter" (Ortega y Gasset, 2004b: 568). The issue, however, is more complicated than it seems at first sight. I have already said that, in a closer inspection, Ortega reckons that my existence as a person is not identical with my individuality.² I will come to this later and now I proceed.

Now, logic, ethics, and aesthetics were born because life puts several problems to man or, rather, because life has become problematic in him. (Life is not a problem for any animal species.) In 1932, in a paper about Goethe's centenary, Ortega says that each man is a survivor from a shipwreck and has to brace in order to stay above water. Culture is just this effort to brace and keep alive. Years later, in *El Hombre y la Gente*, Ortega retrieves this metaphor: each man is a survivor from a shipwreck, and each one's life is a permanent brace to stay above water. But we must not forget that *El Hombre y la Gente* is also the outcome of the painful experience of Ortega's exiles.³ During exile Ortega was not only forced to brace but was also forced to reexamine his life, the meaning of the mission of the educator of Spain he claimed for himself since his first juvenile writings in the family newspaper, his relation to the philosophical public and to public in general. Those dramatic years taught him that man is the being that must occasionally turn to the inside, instead of just carrying out an external activity. This turn to the inside was labelled, as we already mentioned before, *ensimismamiento*. Eye Fourmont

²To put it more directly, I will only say, for the moment, that the issue here is not quite identical with the classical problem of overcoming the anthropological dualism, of a Cartesian kind or other. About some of these problems cf. Ortega (2010b: 124).

³We will address Ortega's exiles in full length in chapter "Ortega's Exiles".

Giustiniani has recently claimed that *ensimismamiento* reflects Ortega's experiences in exile (Giustiniani, 2020: 35–36), and she may be right regarding the opportunity to forge a new concept, but not regarding what we could call the heart of the matter. *Ensimismamiento* is a general characteristic of human beings in situations of distress; it's what distinguishes man from animals who have no need to turn inside. By the same token, someone could also argue that Ortega's deep feeling of loneliness during his years of exile—far from the University and its intellectual life, far from friend and members of his close family, far from the Spanish public to which he addressed most of his books and newspaper articles—led him to regard loneliness as a fundamental category of existence. It would be also true. Nevertheless, it would be tantamount to forget that since he discovered the radical reality of each man's life (i.e., since at least 1914), he conveyed that no one can discharge himself of the responsibility of his actions, because agency is untransferable.

As early as 1930, in *The Rebellion of the Masses*, Ortega stated that life, individual or collective, is the only entity in the universe whose substance is danger (Ortega y Gasset, 2010b: 422). This does not mean, however, that life is subject to constant threats to the point that it can succumb at any moment, but that we never know exactly what is happening to us, that no moment in life necessarily links with the next, contrary to what happens in a causal chain, so that the present always remains indeterminate in relation to its preceding temporal phases, just as the future will always be indeterminate in relation to the present. Therefore, as long as we live, we find ourselves inserted in a metaphysical teeter (Ortega y Gasset, 2010b: 421) among several possibilities of opposite sign. Then, once life has become problematic, one can only face it by following the maxim *divide et impera*.

By dividing the whole of life into its constituent elements, logic will be the solution to the problems of the first level, that is, to the knowledge of what things are in general, the relations they maintain between themselves, and which are almost identical for all of them; ethics is the solution for second-level problems, that is, no longer for the explanation of the relationship between things, but instead between people, or between different psychic stages of the same person; aesthetics, finally, offers the solution to the problems of the third level. Our question now is: What kind of problems are these third-level problems? What more will there be in the world to understand besides things (and states of affairs) and people? I will have to postpone for a moment the approach to this question, in order to speak of the neo-Kantian philosophy of culture, at least as Ortega understood it. The critique of Neokantian aesthetics will play a fundamental role in his distancing from this philosophical current and in his approach to phenomenology. It is also as an outcome of aesthetic considerations that Ortega will first recognize the need to elaborate a new concept of being, which will have its expression in the philosophy of vital reason.

2 The Neokantian Philosophy of Man

As I said earlier, Ortega's anthropology is strongly linked with his philosophy of culture, and any evolution regarding the latter has direct consequences on the way he addresses the former. In a very nice paper, José Lasaga highlighted the fact that Ortega speaks of culture in terms of "salvation," i.e., culture saves man from his fragility, not by offering him a way to escape his own finitude (like the Don Quixote of Cervantes' novel aimed at), but instead by teaching him how to assume it (Lasaga Medina, 2005: 163). Although I think Lasaga is correct, I also think that he failed to give the due relevance to Ortega's changing position from Neokantianism to phenomenology. Both philosophies offered ways to salvation, but those ways were different. And, as we will see, those differences were closely linked with their differences regarding human life.

So Ortega's first systematic philosophy of man is Neokantian, strongly influenced by the teaching of Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp, whose lessons he attended at the University of Marburg. We can summarize Ortega's position in this youthful phase—until about 1912—by the following sentence: life is, first and foremost, universal life. In this simple sentence, which is mine and not Ortega's, but which I believe to be a correct synthesis of his thinking, we find the three constituents of philosophy of culture, which are, at the same time, the three tasks it has to achieve: (1) the cultural manifestations of a people must be directed toward the representation of the human individual free from the particularities of race and circumstance (as happens in the higher forms of painting and literature, for example, in a painting by Velasquez or Goya or in the *Quijote* of Cervantes). (2) Substantialist thinking must be purified by the concepts of relation, as happens in the categories of grammar and, above all, in the formal language of the physical-mathematical sciences. (3) The life of a people as a historical and cultural entity, the legitimacy of its institutions, and the characteristics of its public life are only justified in the light of its efforts to rise from particularity to universality. To each of these three tasks, we could easily oppose other three, stemming from a phenomenological and not a Neokantian philosophy of culture. For the moment, let's just take a look to the first task: to free men from the particularities of their circumstance or, in other words, to live in the universal. This can only mean not to be a real man, but a mere representative of humanity. We don't need to highlight the anthropological consequences of such a point of view. A phenomenological-based anthropology can only mean a complete overthrow of it.

On this subject, as is well known, Ortega, at least until the publication of the *Meditaciones del Quijote*, had several controversies with the main representatives of the so-called Generation of '98, whose main representatives were Miguel de Unamuno, Pío Baroja, Azorín, and Rafael de Maeztu. The meaning of these controversies is clear, as I have already shown in chapters "Spain Is the Problem; Europe Is the Solution" and "Ortega and Germany": it is necessary to raise Spanish life to the level that life has already achieved in other European peoples, the particularities of Spanish life must be overcome, particularities which, at the beginning of the

twentieth century, are only the backwardness of Spain and its inability to function as a nation. We can easily see how Ortega's theory of culture and anthropology are closely intertwined, both in his Neokantian and in his phenomenological phase. In the first, raising the Spanish cultural level meant to raise intellectual activities; the Spanish man needed to learn European science, its way of living, its hygienic habits. In the second, this program is not put aside, but rather incorporated in a broader program, where science is supplemented by a theory of values and hygienic habits are supplemented by rules of social conviviality, grounded, not in abstract laws, but on habitualities originating in the lifeworld.

The idea of a human endeavor that is justified by its *telos* or, rather, that is no more than a *telos* that perseveres to remain faithful to itself, an idea whose Neokantian origin would not be difficult to show, is very strong in the young Ortega. In the theory of knowledge which he develops in the years following his return to Spain, after the third sojourn in Germany, we find this idea with the utmost clarity. Thus, concluding a Cycle of Conferences pronounced in 1912 at the Ateneo of Madrid, entitled Current Trends in Philosophy, referring to the Kantian notion of thing-in-itself, Ortega states:

I believe that a detailed, strict, philological study of Kant undoubtedly leads to the claim that Kant by the thing-in-itself did not understand something transcendent to our knowledge, but rather the characteristic of the latter of never ending, in overcoming all its already conquered positions. (...) This dynamic and essential moment of knowledge, by virtue of which every concrete determination is only relative and surmountable, all concrete things are only what they are in relation to the conclusions set yesterday, set today, set tomorrow, is the thing-in-itself. (Ortega y Gasset, 2007b: 266)

It is precisely this insistence on the effort to overcome the positions already conquered that prevents Neokantian philosophy from paying attention to immediate life in the variety of its manifestations. Now, it happens that there is as much clarity in the universal as in the particular; it is only necessary to develop the organs that allow one to see both.

3 The Virtual

In order to understand the meaning of the concept of virtual, we will have to go, even briefly, through some of the fundamental theses of the phenomenology of perception, as it was elaborated by Husserl. Incidentally, I must say in advance that one of Ortega's merits was that he realized very early—soon after his first contacts with phenomenology—that some essential concepts of this philosophical movement had a much broader scope than those originally given to them by their founder. It may seem hazardous to argue that in 1914, in his *Meditaciones del Quijote*, Ortega was already in possession of the fundamental concepts for the constitution of a phenomenologically based philosophical anthropology and a phenomenology of culture, issues for which Husserl, engaged at the time in investigations of another kind, will

only turn his own attention almost 20 years later.⁴ And of course no one can ignore the fact that some themes of Ortega's anthropology, namely, the conflict between cultural imperatives and life imperatives, have philosophical sources other than phenomenology, for instance, Nietzsche's and Simmel's philosophies of life.⁵ I just want to stress the fact that some important anthropological issues that Ortega already addresses in his early philosophy will only be publicly presented, in the case of Husserl, in 1936 in the two essays on *The Crisis of European Sciences*, which Husserl published in the journal *Philosophia*, even if they were already emerging in the set of articles he wrote in 1923–1924 for the Japanese journal *Kaizo*.

Let's then go back to the phenomenological theory of perception. We can organize it—and probably also all the phenomenological philosophy, at least according to Robert Sokolowski—around three major themes: the relation of the visible with the invisible, of the one with the multiple, and of presence with absence. The well-known example of the perception of a cube, which Husserl presents in the *Cartesian Meditations*, illustrates well what I have just said. In a single intentional act, the visible part of the cube hides its invisible parts (even if we see three faces, the other three cannot be seen at the same time as the other); a single act refers to the multiplicity of possible acts, which will constitute the object as a unity of identical meaning; the parts immediately present to the eyes will always refer to those that are absent, waiting that a change of perspective will make them in turn present. The complete noema—that is, the cube actually intended in a single act—is, as such, the correlate of a multitude of possible acts. We are faced here with a first occurrence of the concept of virtual; and this kind of virtual does not consist, as it is sometimes said, “in what may be, but is not yet,” but, instead, in what, although hidden, already is and must be for the real to be what it really is and not something else. If, at the moment we perceive three faces of what we think to be a cube, the other three were not already waiting for a future act in order to be seen, it would not be a cube that we would be perceiving. (Which, incidentally, is always possible. In *Experience and Judgment*, Husserl offers us several examples of expectations that are not confirmed by the following acts that intend the same object.)

But the Husserlian theory of perception offers us other occurrences of the virtual, namely, through the notion of horizon intentionality. In fact, the previous example of the perception of a cube cannot be accepted without adding other explanatory elements of what we see. A cube will never be perceived outside a horizon that constitutes someone's actual field of visibility, even if it is precisely that field and not the object that is the focus of attention. But, as we know, our gaze can, at least

⁴ In fact, since 1908, Husserl had, for more than one time, lectured about ethics, and those lectures also addressed anthropological issues. But of course only Husserl's direct students were acquainted with them.

⁵ I will argue later that this conflict stems from a wrong interpretation of what is the meaning of life, i.e., a vitalist and non-phenomenological understanding of what life really means. I am not saying that Ortega interpreted life in a non-phenomenological fashion; on the contrary, I think he offers us some of the best phenomenological reflections about it. But I also think that the way he expresses his own phenomenological ideas about this issue is sometimes inadequate.

in principle, move freely from the cube to its surroundings and back again to the cube if so desired. The case of a virtual dimension of perception is even more evident here than in the previous example. In fact, if we ask whether the horizon exists or not, we will have some difficulty in answering. He does not have the same stable limits of all the things it encompasses. This has to do with our bodily condition. We are not purely contemplative egos, but egos that inhabit a body and have a sense of the distances, which are always dependent of the place where the body is. As a result, the horizon widens or narrows according to the movements we make as perceiving subjects.

4 The Embodied Self and Other Embodied Selves

There is an inescapable fact of enormous anthropological consequences: we are an embodied self, and the way things are perceived by us is its most striking consequence. Ortega stresses that only a lack of intellectual fairness, of which he accuses modern idealism (Ortega y Gasset, 2004b: 568), can overlook this fact. (I will set aside the too technical question of showing that this self of which I am speaking is not an empirical subject, but a transcendental subject and that the Husserlian transcendental subject can only be conceived in this way. This issue has to do with Ortega's overall interpretation of idealism and of phenomenology as a twentieth-century variant of idealism: what has already been said in our chapters “Ortega's Social Philosophy” will be enough for a correct understanding of what follows.) However, there is an issue that has to do with embodied selves other than mine that we must also address: how do I know they are actually selves and not for instance robots perfect enough to deceive me about their nonhuman character? Let's put the question in another way: what has Ortega to tell us about the intersubjective relation between embodied selves? Has this embodied character of human selves anything to do with intersubjectivity?

Prior to this, a former question. It has to do with the characterization of the other as a “danger,” which is one of the most salient features of the Ortegaian theory of intersubjectivity and far-reaching for the social ontology he offers us in *El Hombre y la Gente*. It gives Ortega, moreover, a particular place among the phenomenologists who addressed this theme, namely, Husserl and Alfred Schütz. As it is well known, for Alfred Schütz, the relationship with the other is marked by a process of typifications: this means that a set of sedimented experiences that are part of the stock of knowledge that the lifeworld makes available to us will predetermine our expectations regarding this relation and will give rise to a system of relevances through which we can know what we have in common with each other—that is, what is relevant to both of us—and what may set us apart. Now, it is true that Ortega takes up the notion of typification. However, he gives it a completely different scope. For, in his view, the set of intentional activities in which the other is constituted as such, that is, in which his initial anonymity and neutrality gain little by little

more precise contours, has its starting point in a presumption of threat and in distrust. Indeed, we can read in *El Hombre y la Gente*:

[...] We all have, in the stock our habitualized knowledge, a practical idea of man, of what his general possibilities of conduct are. However, this idea of possible human conduct, as a rule, has a terrible content. In fact, I have experienced that man is capable of everything—certainly of the absolute and perfect, but also and not less, of the most depraved. I have the experience of the kind, generous, intelligent man, but at his side I also have the experience of the thief—the thief of objects and the thief of ideas—the murderer, the envious, the wicked, the imbecile. As a result, before the pure and unknown other, I have to wait for the worst and anticipate that his reaction may be to injure me. (Ortega y Gasset, 2010a: 241)

I think we can read this text as a peculiar way of using the concept of virtual, of which we spoke in the previous section of this chapter. I think that when Ortega speaks of danger (even if the expected danger can turn out to be a favorable encounter), he wants to stress the fact that the intimacy of the other is, at the beginning, totally invisible for us. Only little by little will we get further acquaintance with him, thanks to his bodily movements and gestures, facial expressions, and uttered words. Husserl was not totally insensitive to this Ortegaian point of view, though with some nuances. In a 1933 text—the Manuscript A VII 9—he speaks of the clash between alien familiar worlds: for example, between his world as a son of small merchants in a small provincial town and the world of a Prussian aristocrat student at a military academy or between that of a German and that of a Chinese (Husserl, 2008: 162–163). Each of these worlds differs from the other not only in its present state but also in its past as well as in its horizon of future expectations. To belong to two worlds at the same time, that is, to participate in two structures of typification, is impossible, although an alien world is always a part of the one and only common world.

For Husserl, of course, there were transcendental questions prior to the ontological issues I have just outlined, namely, the constitution of the other as a member of the community of transcendental subjects, the question he intended to address in the fifth Cartesian Meditation. This issue is not even mentioned in these pages of Ortega. However, I would like to make a few more brief references before proceeding. Husserl's problem in the fifth Cartesian Meditation is that of the conditions for the possibility of constituting someone as an "other self"—an *alter ego*—capable of constituting like myself a world on the basis of which it becomes possible to say that there is a common world. We may ask this question once again in the language of Ortega: if everything appears in my life, how can appear in it a life that is not mine and nevertheless, as a life, is for itself a radical reality, of which I can make the experience? Now, in the natural attitude, this problem does not arise. We all live in the conviction that there are other men with whom we relate, that this relationship is established on the basis of communication and mutual understanding, and, also, that there is a set of intersubjectively shared (namely, linguistic) signs and symbols which function within the framework of institutions of which no one is individually the maker. Without going into unnecessary details on this subject, I stress only that neither for Schütz nor for Ortega does the question of intersubjectivity have a satisfactory solution in the way Husserl addresses it.

I think all this becomes clearer as we move on to a second set of problems. Putting aside the difficulties related to the second *epoché*, new difficulties appear when—regardless of the possibility of a reduction to the sphere of property—we move on to the next stage of the Husserlian argument and analyze the emergence of the other from the experience of another body as a body analogous to mine. Let us remember that, in Husserl's perspective, the recognition of the existence of a common world lies in the fact that, as Schütz says, my perspective and that of the other can become congruent from the moment I switch places with him and each other of us sees then what the other saw a moment ago. However, the essence of the difference between me and the other may not lie in the fact that my body is "here" for me and his Body is "their" (Schütz, 1990: 316). Husserl, as is well known, spoke of knowledge—though not of a reasoning—by analogy or an "analogizing apperception." Husserl's concern with showing us how the other man "appears"—that is, is constituted—is consistent with his intention to show us how another "constituent subjectivity," along with mine, can become involved in the process of constituting a common world. In any case, in this process, as Husserl describes it, I think we can recognize four phases:

1. In the first phase, there is the knowledge of my own self or of my own stream of consciousness.
2. Secondly, the recognition of my body as my somatic body.
3. Thirdly, the recognition of the other's somatic body by the analogizing apperception referred to above.
4. Finally, the presentification of another's psyche as something that inhabits that body and gives it that somatic body character that I experience.

This process, as it can be easily seen, resists in turn on four assumptions. Explaining them makes even more clear the difficulties that Husserl's theory faces, legitimizing the suspicions Schütz and Ortega put on it. The first assumption is that the knowledge of myself, or the solipsistic experience of myself, precedes the knowledge of the other; the second is that I must admit, in my primordial sphere, the appearance of other bodies prior to their constitution as somatic bodies as such (in other words, to admit them as mere physical bodies; this assumption is fundamental for Husserl's whole analysis not to be accused to fall into a vicious circle); the third is that it is through the body of the other that his psyche becomes present, which at the same time entails that his experience of his own body will be identical with the experience I have of mine; and finally, the fourth assumption is that for the constitution of the somatic body, neither the sexual difference nor, probably, the difference between human body and animal body is relevant. The third assumption is the most interesting and most charged with consequences. And the reason is that the presentation of the body of others will only correspond to the presentification of the psyche of others—that is, a presentation mediated by the immediate presentation of the somatic body, the only presentation that occurs, as it were, in flesh and blood—although in every experience the psyche and the body are always intertwined (Schütz, 1975: 62). In other words, throughout this process I transfer to the other the same structure

of lived experiences and the same units of value that characterize the experiences of my own ego (Husserl, 1950: 126).

But for Ortega, the fourth assumption is equally important. In fact, he seems to accuse Husserl of distinguishing my own body from an alien body, in the first place, because my body is here for me (*hic*) and the body of the other there (*illic*). But the reason for the distinction is, for Ortega, from the beginning, deeper and more radical. It is, he says, that I experience my body from within (Ortega y Gasset, 2010a: 221) and any other somatic body only from the outside. The pleasures and pains of others are inaccessible to me; likewise, the experience of owning a female body will always be inaccessible to a man; finally, the existence of certain similarities between a human body and an animal body could legitimize the conclusion that the latter hedges a psyche identical to mine.

5 Science, Life, and Authenticity

Nelson Orringer (1979: 142 ff.) finds certain similarities between Ortega's stylistic resources, particularly in the *Meditaciones del Quijote*, and Wilhelm Shapp's style in the *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*. In the first place, they both avoid a direct approach to their respective themes, preferring an indirect approach, a method that Ortega will later characterize as drawing "concentric circles of ever shorter radius." A direct approach is appropriate for science. According to Orringer (1979: 144), this means that science has to avoid some basic problems for which, according to the scientific method, there is no possible solution. That's probably what Ortega thinks about anthropological issues: science can offer a great amount of knowledge about man, but only the intuitive method of phenomenology will allow us to grasp the essence of man.

If we now turn the focus of our attention to what Ortega has to say about the fate of man in a world dominated by modern science, we will find, besides a diagnosis similar to Husserl's, also some interesting differences. Ortega stresses the fact that humanity faces a general crisis, i.e., a general feeling of the loss of meaning of its most ancient and most venerable institutions, beginning with politics and ending with science. In his 1940 Argentinian Lectures about *Historical Reason*, he argues that no one knows any more what to do in political matters but also in scientific matters. And he mentions what was then happening in mathematical logic, with the work of the Dutch mathematician Luitzen Brouwer (Ortega y Gasset, 2009a: 479). Later in the same Lectures, he speaks about the metaphorical character of scientific concepts, like the concept of wave in Broglie's quantum mechanics (Ortega y Gasset, 2009a: 495), which is only a symptom of the crisis of the modern idea according to which language and contents of thought can easily overlap. Brouwer's claims that mathematical thought is independent of mathematical language are, for Ortega, just another symptom. But even in common perception, we can find the same symptoms. The color of a particular orange is richer in intuitive content than the concept "orange color"; a color actually seen—or intuited—always has

gradations that the concept cannot determine (Ortega y Gasset, 2008a: 301). And so we come to what Ortega calls an "earthquake of reason." In order to understand and evaluate its effects, the Spanish philosopher, as I shall now explain, asks for the help of Husserl's phenomenological analysis.

In the Third Lesson of *Historical Reason* (a series of Lectures held in Lisbon in 1944, where he resumes some of the ideas of the old Argentinian Lectures), Ortega quotes at length the Preface to *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (Ortega y Gasset, 2009b: 664). I think we can specify the three main ideas of this text as follows: (1) Sciences have lost the faith in themselves and in their own achievements. (2) Sciences are no more considered the self-objectivation of human spirit, i.e., they no more perform the functions for which they existed for centuries. (3) In a world historically fashioned by scientific progress, at least since the beginnings of Modern Times, but that has become increasingly incomprehensible, men have lost faith in culture and now raise the following questions: "what for?" and "where to?"

All this has to do with what Ortega calls the problem of authenticity. And I am not thinking about what Heidegger says in *Being and Time* about authenticity, regardless the influence the reading of *Being and Time* may have had in Ortega. Authenticity, for Ortega, broadly speaking, means two different albeit closely connected things: first, that the kind of life one lives and the prospects one makes regarding the future are in accordance with his or her basic beliefs; second, that one's beliefs are in accordance with the tasks that the circumstance imposes upon him. For instance, I may, in my personal life, take profit of the technological advances that scientific progress has put at my disposal and, in line with this, even if I am not a professional scientist and have only rudimentary notions of physics, mathematics, or biology, be committed, in my own limited sphere of action, with the search of truth. That's what Husserl calls a life according to reason. Or I may not care about it, or proclaim that there is no truth and reason is only an effective means to ensure the survival of the species (which it certainly is), or even deplore the scientific progress of which I take advantage in my daily life.

We find here a concept of life that is not entirely coincident with—I am not saying it is opposed to—the concept we found earlier, with its strong Nietzschean reverberations.⁶ Indeed, this last concept can only be found in *El Tema de Nuestro Tiempo*, published in 1923, and in some essays of the same period. But as soon as 1929, in the Lectures titled *¿Qué es Filosofía?*, Ortega says not only that life as he means it is not the object of the biological sciences but also that it was a fatal error to call biology the science of life. The Greek word βίος meant not life in general (that modern biology studies) but the specific human way of living. Unfortunately, many of Ortega's interpreters and critics did not pay due attention to this warning, although one must reckon that Ortega himself was not always careful in handling his concept of life.

⁶In *El Hombre y la Gente*, Ortega will even say that Nietzsche completely missed the concept of life and his motto "live in danger" ignored the fact that life is in its substance danger. It is nonsense to make an imperative out of which is the way men live according to their own essence (2010a: 150).

Now, if with our previous considerations we just meant that an authentic life is a life according to the specific way humans must live, we would not tackle the issue completely. The reason is that this specific way is not something general. It means, first and foremost, to live according to one's own vocation. And one will never know what this vocation is unless one looks at his own self as situated in a circumstance that imposes upon each man a specific task. Of course, one can live without finding one's vocation,⁷ i.e., one can live without never knowing what one has to do. It seems that, for Ortega, Goethe was one of the most prominent examples of this dramatic fact, so more dramatic as he was indeed a great poet and thinker, endowed with remarkable intellectual capacities.

Like Husserl, Ortega acknowledges the fact that Greek civilization meant a long-lasting trend of thought whose main characteristics are clarity, rationality, and logical coherence (Ortega y Gasset, 2009b: 645). But Ortega also stresses the fact that this new form of life emerged from an older form of life and is characterized by two different but complementary attitudes: on the one hand the primacy of belief over reason and on the other hand the primacy of phantasy over the sense of reality. I won't address directly these issues in this chapter and will only remark that we have some difficulties here.

Regarding the first topic, the opposition of reason and belief, perhaps it cannot be addressed exactly as Ortega does, and we could defend that there are also reasonable beliefs in man's lifeworld experience, with its own so to speak epistemic justification. Husserl wrote some very nice pages about this, especially in the *Crisis* book. I am thinking, namely, about what he labels the "universal invariant style" of the lifeworld (Husserl, 1954: 29). I can only understand by this a set of rational beliefs that originate a horizon of expectations that are for the most part fulfilled. Perhaps, in spite of Ortega's conversion to phenomenology, some tenets of the Neokantian theory of culture never completely disappeared from his mature thought. That's a bit strange, as I will show in a moment, since the critique of Neokantianism played an important role in his philosophical evolution. As late as 1947, in his unfinished book *The Idea of Principle in Leibniz*, he maintained an opposition between beliefs and ideas (Ortega y Gasset, 2009c: 1131). Moreover, Ortega seems, sometimes, to look at the opposition between belief and reason as a kind of permanent struggle, in which epochs of reason come next to epochs of belief, before being overthrown by new epochs of belief, in a kind of cyclical process. This is particularly evident in a series of Lessons from 1948 about Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* (Ortega y Gasset, 2009d: 1201).

Now, regarding the second of the two Ortega's topics I mentioned above, the relations between phantasy and the awareness to what really exists in the world—in

other words, the sense of reality that prevails either in lifeworld experience or in scientific research—his position is not entirely coherent. It would be easy to show that Ortega sometimes admits that beliefs have their own sense of reality, their own kind of certitude, no less than allegedly scientific and solid knowledge, and also that phantasy is the necessary condition for the existence of ideas that are free from practical concerns and offer us only hypothetical knowledge. "Science is pure exact phantasy," says Ortega in 1947 (Ortega y Gasset, 2009c: 1133). In other words, when he addresses the intentional achievements of consciousness, he sometimes stresses the fact that lifeworld experiences consist of ethical acts (regardless their naivety), i.e., perceptions accompanied by belief; other times, he says they are mainly phantasies destined to be surmounted by other phantasies or other historical beliefs or even definitively removed by scientific or philosophical knowledge.

In the 1920s and 1930s, especially since the publication of *El Tema de Nuestro Tiempo*, in 1923, Ortega uses frequently a vitalistic jargon that can endanger a correct understanding of his thought, albeit his warnings against the temptation of understanding man like just one more zoological species and culture as a natural process. One has to know that Ortega was trying to avoid in the first place the danger of opposing the higher forms of culture (especially science and philosophy) and the historical and social milieu in which they arise, an opposition of which he accused—at least since 1911 and the papers he wrote about the Spanish painter Ignacio Zuloaga (San Martín, 1994: 27)—the Philosophy of Culture of the Neokantian School of Marburg. But Ortega's overall view of the fate of western culture in the twentieth century is very close to Husserl's, and his final conclusions are very similar to Husserl's: European science—and that means, reason in its higher and most sophisticated form—has lost all confidence in itself (Ortega y Gasset, 2009b: 665). What is at stake in our epoch, as Ortega stresses, is not what the common man thinks or believes about the value of science for the practical purposes of life. The crisis affects science in its very foundations. Concepts like matter, causality, and logical consistency, among others, became questionable, with quantum mechanics and intuitionistic mathematics, for instance. Perhaps we may call this crisis a crisis from above; but to this crisis is added a crisis from below, I mean, a crisis in the way science is understood and its achievements are evaluated in the lifeworld. Together, they make the one big crisis of western culture.

6 Individual Life as a Philosophical Problem

I said earlier that for Ortega, in 1910, aesthetics was the only way to answer a problem that neither logic (or theoretical philosophy) nor ethics were able to answer. It's now the time to resume this problem. The fact that Ortega changed his philosophical stance after 1912 has some relevance for the kind of answer he has to offer, but not for diagnosing the underlying issue. And this issue, in my opinion, has to do with the fact that we have not yet found the final clue to the essence of man when we say that he needs ideas and concepts to orient himself in the world he leaves in or that

⁷Perhaps it would be better to speak about the vocation the circumstance imposes upon each of us, to remain faithful to the etymology of the word that comes from the Latin word *vocare*, which means "to call." Of course, we face here the difficult issue of human freedom. I only remember that Ortega always criticized the idea that we are free just because we can randomly decide between two opposed alternatives. Listening to a call, which means deciding according to what someone has to do, due to his own system of preferences, is the real free act. See Cerezo (2011: 222 ff.).

he needs to evaluate things and events in order to make the best possible choices for his acts. For this reason, I am inclined to interpret Ortega's metaphor about man as a shipwrecked very much like I interpret Descartes' metaphor in the Second Metaphysical Meditation, when he says that his previous Meditation arose in him the sensation of having fallen in a very deep hole. That's why Ortega's position on this subject is very curious, as we will find in 1910 expressions almost identical to others we will find in 1914 in the *Meditaciones del Quijote* and even in 1923 in *El Tema de Nuestro Tiempo*. The differences are only evident to those who read these last two works from phenomenology, which, as is well known, not all Ortega's interpreters are willing to accept, but the similitudes are nonetheless real.

Let me start with the reference, in "Adam in Paradise," which belongs to what I have been calling the Neokantian phase of Ortega, to a sadness that is not sad, that is, to sadness as a psychological state that psychology takes as its subject of study. This sadness is not sad because it is no longer the individual sadness that is being felt by someone, with his own unique changes, and became a sort of universal sadness, defined and classified along with other moods, more or less unpleasant (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a: 67). This reference to a sadness that is not sad reminds us immediately of another reference, which Ortega makes in 1914, to a toothache that does not hurt. We have already asked what kind of pain this is. We answered it cannot be the pain one feels, but the pain that one reflects upon, from which, thanks to reflection, one has himself distanced. It is—in the case of this pain that does not hurt—a state of consciousness that we can no longer describe as "painful consciousness," but as awareness of a pain that has been felt. That is, we face a second consciousness that reflects on a first consciousness, having already lost the executive character of the latter. I think there are some misconceptions here about the nature of reflection, but that is not what matters to me. The problem is this: how do we restore this first, individual, unique consciousness that was lost both by science, which seeks the universal, and ethics, which seeks the relationship of an individual behavior to the universal moral law? Here is the third problem that life poses to itself: how to restore the individuality of life itself, how to prevent it from getting lost in the maelstrom of the fleeting experience that everyone, as he lives, has of his own states of mind? Or, in other words, as Ortega asks at the end of § VIII of "Adam in Paradise": where do the stones of the Sierra de Guadarrama exhibit their individuality, in mineralogy or in Velázquez's paintings?

It seems, then, that Neokantian philosophy, from a theoretical and practical point of view, cannot restore our individual life. It can only do so through its aesthetics. However even this aesthetics, as Ortega will come to recognize, only restores us to individual life insofar as it sees it in tension with its idea, which is not individual but universal. Basically, Neokantianism is just an expression of what Ortega calls the Germanic culture, the culture of the depths that hide behind the sensible appearances of things. Of course, depth is a dimension of reality as real as the surface that appears to everyone. Using another famous example of Ortega here, the flesh of an orange is as obvious as its peel, one referring to the other, although in one and the same intentional act it may not be possible to intend both at the same time. I will have to multiply my acts so that all the dimensions of the thing concerned—what

phenomenology calls the complete noema—both the latent and deep, as well as the patent or superficial, can be given to me. And it is from this phenomenological perspective that Ortega will see the failure of Neokantianism and its aesthetics. For, from the Neokantian point of view, if the dwarf Gregory el Botero does not represent an individuality in tension with his idea, then he will only represent an individuality reduced to his bare condition of a sociological document or a variety of a human type. If this were true, he will only represent the Spanish man's backwardness in relation to the European man, whose life is guided by the higher forms of culture.

7 Final Remarks

After having revisited the fundamental theses of Ortega's philosophy of man and culture, as well as his critiques of Neokantian philosophy and other varieties of idealism, we are in a position to understand his peculiar phenomenological position—that is, the philosophy of vital reason—which Ortega proposes for the first time, in a systematic fashion, in the *Meditaciones del Quijote*. In short, we could say: culture does not identify with immediate life, but it is not opposed to it either. (That is, it is not the execution of acts of consciousness, but it is not opposed to that performance.) Ortega states, as we have seen, that culture is security; in other words, culture is the whole of the ideas man had to create in order to be able to live, i.e., so that life may not be, as for Plato was the sensible world, just a flow of fleeting impressions and sensations. But there are, in Ortega's theory of culture, three aspects, above all, that deserve to stop them in order to conclude. First, culture, understood as a set of ideas that are useful for life, is an intersubjective creation that claims truth and objectivity. The fact that the products of higher culture—like physics, mathematics, or even philosophy—are universal means that they are the outcome of what all men have in common. On the other hand, culture is also a point of view about reality that may not exhaust what that reality is as a whole. However, if it is ultimately unable to do so, for reality always gives us perspective, like the orange of the example we gave above, what each culture says of reality must express what that reality is, with the risk that, by failing to do so, it will turn into a sham. (It should be kept in mind that for Ortega sincerity is a fundamental attribute of man.)

This brings us to a second aspect. Authentic culture, for Ortega, is an act of kindness or love, since it refers to dimensions of the human being that go beyond those abstract universals that result from the life of the spirit. Through culture—that is, through concepts—we express what in each particular thing goes beyond it and refers to everything else, constituting the depth dimension that is latent in what, in each, is evident when it is offered to a person's unqualified look. Culture is thus the virtual element that extends beyond the real, is the existence of one thing in all others and of all others in it, is the unitive force that Plato called Eros in the *Symposium* (Ortega y Gasset, 2008b: 782).

Finally, as a third aspect, which I have not developed but which is highlighted by my previous words: culture is also the answer to the human need to see things clearly. But, as is evident from what I said earlier, there is a clarity of superficial

things and a clarity of deep things, there is a clarity proper to impressions, and a clarity that signifies the calm spiritual possession of things (Ortega y Gasset, 2008b: 788). As Ortega states in the first pages of the "Preliminary Meditation" of the *Meditaciones del Quijote*, the depths of the forest surrounding the Escorial Monastery are no less clear than its borders, which can be seen before entering it; but the depths will gain clarity only if I have entered them, having previously developed the organ of sight capable of perceiving them. Ortega calls "culture" this clarity of vision. Culture is not life or its depths. But—in the nice expression that Ortega uses—it is the commentary on life, not in the sense of something accessory to it, but as life itself led to its fullness.

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1 Introduction

An attentive reading of Ortega's essay production easily leads us to conclude that art and aesthetics are vital components of his philosophical system. For the Spanish thinker, there is an intrinsic link between philosophy and art, given the need for philosophy, as radical knowledge, to comprehend all forms of human activity and creativity: science, morals, aesthetics, and religion. In fact, his writings on art and aesthetics must be understood in the light of philosophical, phenomenological, and anthropological principles that underpin his historical and vital reasons (Gutiérrez Pozo, 2000; Molinuevo, 1984; Villacanas, 2004; Morón Arroyo, 1968).

As a thinker in search of his own method and as an intellectual committed to national regeneration, Ortega worked solidly from his youth on reflecting on and searching for solutions to the problems of Spain, which he believed, mainly in his first phase, to reside in Europeanization (Ortega y Gasset, 2004c). To accomplish this purpose, Ortega builds a humanizing program of culture, which progressively completes itself in accordance with the evolution of his dialectical thinking and the modern currents of his time, between Neokantianism in the early years and Husserlian phenomenology in his intellectual affirmation and consolidation phases, between 1912 and 1955. Influenced by Edmund Husserl on the need to look for the truth as a vital imperative and for the evidence of facts; driven by Heidegger's concept of life as authentic existence; and moved by the Platonic idea of recognition with a view to the implementation of a national regeneration project, Ortega focuses on social reality, looking deeply at Spain as "a problem to solve, a duty to accomplish" ("Un problema a resolver, una tarea a cumplir, un edificio a levantar: esto es patria") (Ortega y Gasset, 2004b: 340). Seeking to understand the "vital sensibility" of his time (Ortega y Gasset, 2012c: 562), Ortega assigns his generation the task of bridging centuries in order to better prepare the following one to fulfill Spain, as expressed in the following sentence: "España es una cosa que hay que hacer. Y es