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# The Philosophy of Ortega y Gasset Reevaluated

Springer

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# Epilogue

## 1 Ortega's System of Philosophy

Ortega's philosophical life was not a very happy one. His endeavors to give his philosophy a systematic form and to display it systematically before the public were not successful. Moreover, his remarkable literary gifts often led people to think he was more a talented disseminator of philosophical, aesthetic, and scientific ideas than an original philosopher. In *The Idea of Principle in Leibniz* Ortega says sourly that none of his contemporaries tried to grasp the following single fact: his writings were not literature that looked like philosophy, but instead a systematic philosophy that offered itself under the guise of a literary text (Ortega y Gasset, 2009b: 1136). Of course, there are two distinct issues here. The first has to do with the essence of philosophy itself, the other with the method of its exposition.

One can always wonder if a certain philosophy could or could not be presented in a way different from the way the philosopher actually chose. For instance: could Plato display the content of the *Sophist* in the fashion of, say, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*? Or was it possible for Kant to write the *Critique of Pure Reason*, without losing some of its content, in the form of a platonic dialogue? Ortega never addressed this kind of problems directly, but we have enough references to them in his writings in order to be able to get a general idea of his thoughts on the issue. At least three different items must be stressed.

1. In the first place, his well-known statement, in *What is Philosophy?*, that clarity is the courtesy of the philosopher. Ortega seems to think that deep philosophical ideas can be displayed before a large audience in a way accessible to those that do not master completely philosophical technicalities.
2. In the second place, the mission Ortega assigned to philosophy and to philosophical activities in the specific Spanish context in which he lived. Spanish backwardness—at least so he thought—forced him to avoid the literary style of



C. Morujão et al., *The Philosophy of Ortega y Gasset Reevaluated*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79249-7_10

the philosophical handbook, accessible only to the specialist, and even to address the general public in newspaper articles.

3. In the third place, the systematic character Ortega always assigned to philosophy, that character that Neokantianism struggled to revive in the middle of the nineteenth century, regardless of its failure as just one more idealistic variant of modern philosophy. Notwithstanding, philosophy has a specific level, and that level is the level of systematic thought (Ortega y Gasset, 2009a: 136).

Accidental circumstances also prevented Ortega from achieving the degree of systematicity and coherence he longed to give to his thought. José Lasaga points out that Ortega, after returning to Spain following his second journey to Argentina, cherished the project of a scientific explanation of the philosophical ideas he was maturing at least since 1912 (Lasaga, 2013: 70). The Spanish political circumstances prevented him from carrying out this systematic program, which was only left halfway in the Lectures at the University of Madrid between 1929 and 1936, which we addressed in chapter "Ortega, Phenomenology and Idealism" of this book. Nevertheless, if Ortega didn't have then enough time to be a full-time philosopher—he founded with some friends a political party and was for a time deputy at the Spanish parliament —his political commitment was largely due to his philosophy and the way he looked at the mission philosophy had to accomplish.

Of course, if one wants to know whether Ortega has failed or not in his purpose of giving his own philosophy a systematic form, one must first state what is the meaning of the word "system." Morón Arroyo argues that the apparent systematicity of many scholastic handbooks was only due to the order of exposition of the philosophical matters; in fact, they lacked that inner systematicity that is the outcome of the relation between philosophical disciplines and life (Morón Arroyo, 1968: 62). So, only after defining the meaning of "system" will one be able to say whether Ortega could ever accomplish his project; perhaps many commentators would be more willing to argue that in its essence Ortega's thought lacked that kind of intimate unity that would allow him to give it the systematicity he was looking for. Morón Aroyo, in *El Sistema de Ortega y Gasset*, gives six possible definitions of the word "system." In my opinion, his definition n. 4 is the one that suits better to Ortega's philosophy: a system—he says—is the search for a radical reality in which all other realities find their source and regarding which they all appear as secondary.

Now, for Morón Arroyo the problem of the systematicity of Ortega's philosophy seems to be a pseudo-problem (Morón Arroyo, 1968: 65). I don't agree. Three different albeit closely interconnected things must be stressed: (1) for Ortega philosophy is system, as Neokantianism, but also German Idealism (despite its lack of a sincere effort to search for truth), has proven; (2) when he criticizes phenomenology he says that its weakness lies in a lack of systematicity, despite the rich analysis phenomenology has been able to offer; (3) life has an intrinsic systematicity and this systematicity is the basis on which to ground any philosophy that wants to achieve its goals as a radical science. Our initial problem has now shifted and must be formulated differently: how can life be systematic, since it is not some kind of universal and abstract entity, but instead, always individual life?



That is perhaps the hardest problem of Ortega's philosophy, which we have tried to address in chapter "Phenomenology Revisited". Reflection gives life its systematicity. Not only the occasional reflection about difficult issues in everyday life—what might be labeled "empirical reflection"—but above all life's permanent taking hold of itself, since its executivity (or its permanent "having to do") always leaves mnemic traits that afterwards can be traced back to the act that was being executed and to its outcome.[1] Consequently, decisions about future acts arise out of the sediment of the previous ones. But this is more than a psychological fact; it is the way life structures itself, posits itself as individual life—as an always untransferable life, as we tried to explain in chapter "Ortega's Philosophical Anthropology"—and posits everything else as appearing in it.

However, it is important to stress once more that if life is to be the systematic reality that gives a philosophy its systematic character, it cannot be biological life, opposed to culture. Ortega has highlighted the misunderstandings associated with the use of the word "biology"; no doubt biology is a science of life; however, biology addresses life from its "animal side," according to the way sciences like physics and chemistry fashioned its own concepts.[2] Biology can offer useful concepts to address life from a philosophical point of view, but men don't live according to those concepts, for two main reasons: in the first place, because the great majority of men (with the exception of professional biologists and other health sciences specialists) don't know them or don't understand their true meaning, in the second place, because they are cultural products that are likely to change with the progress of science.

Now, what is life if it is not the series of biological events? Is life, perhaps, a series of psychical events? A small paper Ortega wrote for the *Neuer Zürcher Zeitung* in 1932, commemorating the second centenary of Goethe's birth, will help us find the right answer. Some may be inclined to think that the authentic human life is the one we grasp when we look within ourselves: our judgments, our decisions, and our evaluations may seem more authentically ours than biological events, i.e., those events that have some connection with our bodily condition. However, judgments, decisions, and evaluations are a part of our true story or of our true self only if we look at them from the outside (Ortega y Gasset, 2006b: 148). It we chose to look at them from an alleged "inside" we will only see them as psychical phenomena, as something that happens "in the mind," more or less connected with bodily events and with real things, whether judged, decided, or evaluated. Looking from

[1] Ortega has two different concepts of reflection: the one we just mentioned (perhaps one could label it the correct one)—clearly stated at the end of his 1924 essay on Kant—and another one, on the basis of which he criticizes phenomenology. We talked about this in our chapters "Ortega, Phenomenology and Idealism" and "Phenomenology Revisited". We will come back to this again in the final section of this chapter.

[2] Ortega has clearly made these distinctions in 1929 in *What is Philosophy?*. Perhaps they were not clearly made in 1923 in *The Theme of our Time*, and this gave rise to an accusation of "biologism," perhaps not entirely unfair if we think of the way Ortega expressed his own ideas. About this issue see San Martín (2013: 57 ff.).

the outside means looking at them from the point of view of the project each human life is, in its struggle (Ortega labels it also its "having to do") with the circumstance.[3] As we saw in chapter "Historical Reason", Ortega calls the totality of these experiences—i.e., the fact that man lives in a world where he has a direct contact with things[4]—a biography. Only biographical life is systematic.

Of course, one must add that life is not immediately systematic for itself. Men live, most of the times, according to certain beliefs, sometimes are forced to brace (as Ortega used to say) to survive in the ocean of difficulties life brings, while other times they just feel lost and their lives seem meaningless. The systematicity of life—its categorial character, as we may say—needs to be unveiled by means of philosophical analysis. Besides, this need stems from the fact that "in the last three centuries" (Ortega y Gasset, 2008: 231) things have become confused. Idealism turned the meaning of life into something that only comes to light the moment I take consciousness of what my life is. Instead, for Ortega, the consciousness that I am, for instance, making a chair is so transcendent to my life as the chair itself, i.e., both take place in the world where I live. Moreover, Ortega stresses that what must be called human life is not only the life that happens in me or in another human being. My life, as any man's life, has two ingredients: me and my circumstance. Therefore, the decisive point, as this book tried to show in chapters "Ortega, Phenomenology and Idealism", "Phenomenology Revisited", and "Ortega's Social Philosophy", is the fact that these categories of life are the categories of a life that puts, at the same time, itself and the world.

## 2 Ortega and Politics: A Philosopher *in Partibus Infidelium*?

To retrieve the relations between Ortega's philosophy and his political commitments we must recall what was said in chapters "Spain Is the Problem; Europe Is the Solution" and "Ortega and Germany" about his personal and philosophical relations with the Generation of 98, especially with Miguel de Unamuno. In the years before the publication of the *Meditations on Quixote*, Ortega was no less politically active and with a no less sense of the urgency of his commitments, than in the early 30s. At the time, however, he was still under the influence of Neokantian philosophy and especially of Natorp's Social Pedagogy. Ortega called himself then a "liberal socialist." It is not clear that the expression meant for Ortega the same it means now at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Undoubtedly it meant for Ortega the adherence to a political program that assigned to the state the role of promoting, at the same time, civic education, economic progress, reinforcement of Spanish national identity, and the rise of the standard of living of the working classes. This political program stems directly from some basic Neokantian tenets, at least in the way Ortega understood them: the universal stands above the particular, the humanity stands above the individuals. We showed, especially in chapter "Ortega and Germany", how the first contacts with phenomenology, from 1912 onwards, contributed to a change in this point of view, a change that was particularly evident in Ortega's analysis of the paintings of Ignacio Zuloaga. That is the reason why the contact with Unamuno was so important for Ortega. Unamuno—who at the turn of the century had advocated a political and cultural program very similar to Ortega's program (Cerezo, 2011: 368–369), who was then even more intimately committed than Ortega with the Spanish Socialist Party—finally convinced him of the importance of the particular, of the necessity of giving reason of its existence, and of bringing it to the level of perfection it is able to attain, which may not be absolute perfection, but can at least be that level of perfection that makes it worth living for. That's what Ortega calls, following Plato—as we explained above, in chapter "Ortega and Germany"—to save the phenomena.[5]

If one reads everything Ortega wrote in the first years of the Spanish Republic—those writings are now gathered in Volume V of his *Complete Works*—one will probably regret that Ortega lost so much time addressing political issues. We can find there some interesting ideas about what he called the "decency" in political matters, an honest appeal to moderation, a clear analysis of the political proclamations full of rhetoric devices but devoid of ideas about what to do. Perhaps there is no more to find there. However, we must reckon that the aim Ortega tried to achieve writing them is in attunement with the mission he attributed to philosophy: to bring each thing or event to the maximum of perfection it can get. This mission was overtly proclaimed in the *Meditations on Quixote* and resumed a little before the proclamation of the Republic, in 1928, in the Prologue he wrote to the Spanish translation of Hegels' *Philosophy of History*.[6] Here, he writes that the insatisfaction that stems from the fact that things are not so perfect as they could be has a completely different nature than the apparently more radical insatisfaction of someone

[3] It's well known that Ortega wrote, in 1932, an essay on Goethe entitled "Pidiendo um Goethe desde dentro" (Ortega y Gasset, 2006a: 120–142). But this "from inside" (*desde dentro*) is in fact "from outside," not because Ortega tried to state a paradoxical idea, but because the "inside" of a person is the sum total of her undertakings in the "outside," i.e., the circumstance in which she lives. In the 1940 Buenos-Aires conference on the life and work of Luis Vives (which has already been mentioned above, in our chapter "Ortega's Exiles"), he resumes the same idea.

[4] We tried to show, in our chapters "Ortega, Phenomenology and Idealism" and "Phenomenology Revisited", that whenever Ortega claims that a direct contact with thing is the primary phenomenon, the one from which philosophy has to start, he is criticizing idealism, for which representation (or "consciousness of…") is the primary phenomenon.

[5] To my knowledge, there is no thorough investigation about the relations between Ortega and Plato. Plato was an important reference for Marburg Neokantianism. Ortega, however, will never follow Natorp's interpretation of Plato's theory of ideas, which consisted in making platonic ideas the equivalent of the complete possibility of determination of a phenomenon, in a Kantian sense. But Plato is important for him as the one who understood that the task of the philosopher is to grasp concepts—the philosopher is a kind of sportsman that hunts concepts—since they are the possibility of security in the middle of life's contingencies.

[6] This Prologue, published for the first time in *Revista de Occidente*, in February 1928, is now in Ortega's *Complete Works*, Volume V (Ortega y Gasset, 2006c: 229–247).

who refuses to see the hidden value everything has. Such a person only projects his own inferiority in what things show when they are viewed from without.

Ortega's political declarations and speeches of the years immediately before and after the proclamation of the Spanish Republic in 1931 were written a few years after the publication of *The Revolt of the Masses*, with the exception of its "Prologue to the French," written in exile. We should expect that his new conception of the role of the state, different from the role he attributed to it as a young "liberal socialist," came to the foreground and, at least to a certain extent, it does come. A new situation has arisen—Ortega states in *The Revolt of the Masses*—that could not be clearly seen before, although it was maturing for a long time: the connection between state power and a new anthropological type characterized by its lack of moral responsibility and contempt regarding any kind of effort to keep the inherited level of civilization. Sometimes there seems to be a kind of Nietzschean *pathos* in the way Ortega speaks about the role of the state and the harm it can do to social life. However, one must not forget that at the time of his first political initiatives Ortega accredited the state with a very important task: the task of rescuing the impotent Spanish nation, culturally and socially backward, and politically demoralized. Perhaps that's the reason why he speaks a lot of times of "nation" and not of state, sometimes in contexts where we expected him to talk about the state. To sum up, no clear-cut distinction between the two is made in his speeches and essays of the early 1930s.

So, until the dissolution of the political organization he created at the wake of the Spanish Republic, with some long-time friends and intellectual companions (like Gregório Marañon, among others), the *Agrupación al Servício de la República*, Ortega seems most of the times to speak indifferently of the nation or the state. However, some other times, for instance, in a newspaper article of December 1933, published in *El Sol*, state and nation do not coincide and even seem to be in conflict: private interests of opposed social and political nature—Ortega states—took hold of the state and, against this situation, it is urgent to affirm the moral values gathered around the idea of nation (Ortega y Gasset, 2006c: 286).[7] This issue deserves some attention. However, to address it we must also look to a paper written some years earlier, in 1927, although not of a strict political character, entitled "Mirabeau o el político." Sánchez Cámara (2005: 195) stresses the importance of this paper to a fair understanding of Ortega's political thought in the late twenties and the early thirties, even more so that some believe it could be presented as a proof of an antiliberal drive in Ortega's thought and of his move toward political conservatism.[8] In fact,

[7] Some years before, in 1923, Ortega said just the opposite, although the situation was not entirely the same. When the workers movement in Catalonia (led by anarcho-syndicalist unions, which means a political current strongly opposed to any form of state power) seemed to oppose its private interests to the interests of other parts of the society, Ortega urged for a moderate and competent state program, in order to keep the unity of Spanish society (2005b: 266).

[8] Exactly when Ortega's political thought underwent a conservative drive is a debatable issue. Perhaps we can retain the opinion of Jesús Álvarez that divides Ortega's political thought in three different phases: (1) the liberal socialist, until 1914; (2) the liberal properly, until his disenchantment with the Republic in the early thirties; (3) the liberal conservative, until his death in 1955 (Álvarez, 2013: 272 ff.). Pedro Cerezo seems to partake this opinion, although he evaluates differently the end of Ortega's public proclamations of his liberal creed at the beginning of the Civil War.



while Ortega stresses that the true politician is someone that grasps the dangers of a situation and installs order where there was none, he at the same time states that the knowledge of what to do with political power is also the politician's distinctive trait, namely, what separates him from the intellectual.

Mirabeau, although belonging to an epoch Ortega thinks surpassed, was not a "modern" politician, at least according to the slightly derogatory notion of "modern" Ortega's writings almost always convey. Modern politicians act as a consequence of ideas that were so to speak manufactured for their own perfection's sake, and not for the sake of reality. These ideas are revolutionary or utopian ideas. State power has become the means to get those ideas effective. That's the reason why Ortega argues in *The Rebellion of the Masses* that nowadays the greatest danger comes from the state. As I have shown in chapter "Ortega and Germany", Ortega, since his farewell to Neokantianism, thinks that the time of revolutionary or utopian ideas has come to an end, which does not mean that the time has come for reactionary ideas: in his own words, reactionary ideas are just the parasite of revolutionary ideas (Ortega y Gasset, 2005b: 631). Time has come for a different kind of ideas.

In short, I think that, when addressing political matters, Ortega is not *in partibus infidelium*. The reason is that, as we have seen, he looks at political ideas as an expression of the prevailing ways of thinking in a certain epoch. As he once said (Ortega y Gasset, 2005b: 626), one is not radical in politics if, first, one is not radical in thought. Radicalism in thought, however, is not only a characteristic, as one might be inclined to suppose, of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries political movements. In the first place, radicalism is the characteristic of the philosophers and scientists of the modern age. Descartes, Galileo, or Kant were radicals, since they believed that thought could fashion reality, tell reality what reality should be, in order for thought to know it and to act upon it. Theirs, however, contrary to contemporary radicalism, was a legitimate one, since it expressed the reaction against traditionalism, i.e., to a world vision that lived according to the past and did not reckon the validity of individual initiatives.

## 3 The Relevance of Ortega's Legacy

The philosophical community and the public that reads philosophical books have not always agreed on how to evaluate Ortega's philosophy. Is he a first-order philosopher or not? Let us reopen again Ortega's first book, *The Meditations on Quixote*. Reading the first four sections of the "Preliminary Meditation," a reader well informed about the most important philosophical issues of the beginning of the twentieth century could easily find there a clear and elegant presentation of some important themes debated in Husserl's first volume of *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure*

*Phenomenology*, regardless of this reader being a phenomenologist or not: namely, the distinction between facts and essences, the phenomenological reduction, the perspectivistic character of perception, among some others. Perhaps the same reader would argue that Ortega is only over-simplifying hard phenomenological issues. After all, in less than 20 pages it is very difficult, or even impossible, to address issues Husserl took more than 400 pages to address and, even then, in an incomplete and unsatisfactory way, as the historical development of his thought has shown. What chapters "Ortega, Phenomenology and Idealism" and "Phenomenology Revisited" of this book tried to show is that matters are much more complex and that our imaginary reader is just a superficial reader. The main reason is that this kind of reader overlooks the fact that in these 20 pages or so Ortega unveils an important characteristic of perception that, albeit not totally absent in Husserl's works at the time (namely, in *Ideas I*, which Ortega had read some months before the publication of the *Meditations*), was not clearly highlighted by Husserl himself.

It is no accident that the author of this "Preliminary Meditation" addresses the reader while he is himself walking in the woods of the El Escorial; during his walk he looks at the wood from within, has a certain perspective of it, hears different sounds whose origin he identifies and whose distance he tries to evaluate. Moreover, from the place he each moment occupies—getting successive perspectives from a totality he never grasps in its entirety—the trees he just saw and the ones he is about to see seem to extend beyond themselves in elusive forms that bring to his mind the nymphs of ancient mythology. Further in the same book, Ortega analyzes Dom Quijote's perception of the braces of a mill, where Dom Quijote believes to see the arms of a giant. What Ortega is trying to say is that what in each perception points beyond itself toward still unperceived perspectives—a huge problem in the phenomenological theory of perception—is always dependent on the cultural milieu of the perceiver. Today, we reckon that these ideas were not absent from Husserl's phenomenology, because we know the development of his thought and got the acquaintance of his unpublished manuscripts. That was not evident for Husserl's readers who approached his published works in 1914. Ortega was in the right track when he developed the phenomenological theory of perception in this direction. That is the first conclusion we can draw regarding the importance of Ortega's legacy.

Moreover, before venturing a final judgment about Ortega's philosophy, we better listen to his own words about the mission a man of letters assumes when he decides to write for the public. In the *Meditation on Technic*, he says:

> I have always thought that the mission of the man of letters is to forecast from far what will become a problem years later to his readers, and offer them in time, namely, before the debate comes out, clear ideas about the issue, so that they can come close to the fight with the peaceful mind of someone who, in principle, has already settled it. (Ortega y Gasset, 2006e: 553)

Occasionally, Ortega felt the necessity of justifying himself for his decision to be a public intellectual and undertake the task of raising the level of Spanish culture. *Meditation on Technic* was published (along with *Ensimismamiento y Alteración*) as a book in 1939, but it had already been published in newspaper form in 1935, in *La Nación*, and in fact the text stemmed from a Lecture in Santander in 1933. Between these two last dates, i.e., in 1934, in the unpublished "Prologue to Germans," Ortega comes to this issue again. The question he asks there—perhaps a question both for him and for his readers—is the following: why after several semesters of strictly scientific training in the German University have I returned to Spain to write articles in the newspapers (Ortega y Gasset, 2009a: 1135)? The answer to this question will help us understand why it has been sometimes so difficult to evaluate Ortega's philosophical level and the importance of his philosophical legacy. But we can already draw a second conclusion: philosophy for Ortega has a practical function and the philosopher cannot fall out of the problems of his time.[9]



The answer is given by Ortega himself, about 25 pages after raising the question. Meanwhile, he had to explain what was the kind of philosophy he found during his training in Germany and the reasons of his discontent with it. He had to tell the story of his discovery of the new philosophical continent in which life becomes the center of philosophical endeavors. Regardless of the role played by phenomenology in the discovery of this new continent—this issue has been addressed in chapters "Ortega, Phenomenology and Idealism", "Phenomenology Revisited", and "Ortega's Philosophical Anthropology"—the fact is that Ortega returns to Spain with a stock of new ideas, and it was for these ideas' sake that he decided to write articles for the newspapers. The fact is that these ideas had shown him that man lives in a circumstance—which is "the hand the universe holds to everyone" (Ortega y Gasset, 2009a: 161)—not in an environment, and that circumstance is also a landscape, i.e., a small piece of world that other human beings had made fit for dwelling. To show to his other fellow men the most appropriate way of perfecting this landscape is the philosopher's unavoidable responsibility.

We have already said that philosophy, for Ortega, means system. However, philosophy means also a certain level from which things can be seen as they are. In chapter "Ortega, Phenomenology and Idealism", we also said that Ortega calls this level the level of radical reality. Here a comparison may be of some help. Imagine that first I hear a friend talking about his new car, then I see a picture of the car, and next I have the opportunity of looking to that car with my own eyes. Which of these three experiences—each one meaning or intending the same thing—is the radical experience of the car? Although the answer seems obvious, let's look carefully at what is going on here. In the first place, we can get acquainted with the car by mere hearing someone talk about it. Perhaps the description fits some characteristics of the car, perhaps we misinterpreted some words and imagined some features that didn't match with the car's real features; perhaps my friend was overestimating his new car. The picture will certainly allow us to correct some wrong ideas. For

[9] Or, at least he thought, the Spanish philosopher cannot. We tried to show this in chapter "Spain Is the Problem; Europe Is the Solution". Perhaps in countries more developed from a cultural and social point-of-view than Spain, a philosopher can fall out of the problems of his nation. The young Ortega thought that could happen to a German philosopher, for instance, who was able to live his life (at the University, at home, in holidays) without bumping with the shortcomings of a backward nation.

instance, I can now see the kind of dark-red tonality that colors the car, while before its mere description had made me think of a light-red tonality that is not really his. But now at last I have the car in front of me: I can see it, I can touch it, I can enter inside, and perhaps I will be lucky enough to drive it a little.

It is useless to deepen our noematic analysis of this trivial experience in order to draw the following conclusion: only in the third place the car has really entered into my life. Life is not dealing with descriptions or looking at representations, which only give us things *in absentia*. (Of course, descriptions and representations are a part of life.) As a living subject, I am someone that always has to do something, that has to deal with things that may facilitate or otherwise hinder my projects. As Husserl put it, I am a transcendental subject endowed with a capacity the German philosopher characterized by the expression "I can." Ortega offered us excellent analysis of this capacity, although he wrongly thought that, in so doing, he was deviating from the idealistic path Husserl's phenomenology had taken.

However, let us take a second look to the above-mentioned experience: at last, I see my friend's car and can ascertain its real existence. From the analysis of this lived experience, it is possible to draw another conclusion. Seeing the car from the outside, I have some expectations that perhaps will not be fulfilled. Its behavior in curves will not be what I expected, or the car trunk may be too small for the luggage of all the family. What is noteworthy here is the fact that I cannot live without going, at every moment, a little beyond what is immediately given: the given, or the real, is surrounded by a "halo." Ortega, as we said more than once, called it the virtual. This "halo" is so intrinsically connected with the circumstance in which human beings live that it becomes inseparable from it and, to a certain extent, it is as present as the real. At a time, Ortega thought that the opposition between the real and the virtual was also the opposition between the Mediterranean and the Spanish spirit. The philosophy of vital reason, however, highlights that this opposition between the real and the virtual is in fact a fundamental anthropological dimension. Ortega showed that men live at the same time in both, and no other way of living is authentically human. And that is a third reason why I think we are still benefitting from his legacy.

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