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The Philosophy of Ortega y Gasset Reevaluated

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Ortega's Exiles

1 The Escape from Spain

Ortega fled from Spain in September 1936, in face of the serious threat of being shot by the partisans of the Republican Government. In fact, the daily newspaper *Claridad*, very close to the Spanish Communist Party, published an article where Ortega was accused of being the philosophical mentor of several intellectuals belonging to the nationalist side. After several dangerous adventures, he and his family were able to reach Marseille, in the south of France, from where they managed to reach Paris, after a brief stay in Grenoble. In spite of belonging, he and his wife, to the upper middle classes, they soon found out that the *peseta*, the monetary currency of a country ravaged by a Civil War, was highly undervalued. In order to survive, Ortega had to rely on his most close friends and on the royalties of the translations of his books. Some money came from two Argentinian friends, Victoria Ocampo and Elena Sansinena, the President of the Buenos Aires' Cultural Society "Amigos del Arte." Actually, Ortega was, at the eve of the Spanish Civil War, planning a long journey to Argentina. Political events and serious illnesses prevented him to do so in the scheduled time. He was to arrive at Buenos Aires, after a French and Dutch exile, only 3 years later.

During his long exile—he was only to return to Spain in 1946—Ortega kept silent about Spanish political events. In fact, he had already, before the beginning of the Civil War, ceased to intervene publicly, namely, by newspaper articles, a practice he had kept regularly since his youth.[1] Political dissatisfaction with the Spanish

[1] In a sketch, dated from March 1945 (Ortega y Gasset, 2009c: 703–706), in the last year of his exile in Portugal, of a projected series of newspaper articles that were never written, Ortega speaks about the difficulties in being understood in the public space. This sketch was entitled by the organizers of the *Obras Completas* "Llevo doze anõs de silencio," i.e., "'I've kept twelve years of silence'," which is in fact the first sentence of the text. This theme—the difficulties in being understood, in an epoch where there is much to say, but where, at the same time, people talk too much

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Republic, whose establishment Ortega at first saluted—but whose growing radicalism he looked as contrary to his liberal convictions—is probably the main reason. For this silence, he got huge criticisms even from people who were in general sympathetic to his philosophical ideas. During the Civil War, i.e., until March 1939, he refused to engage in any international campaign in favor of peace or in favor of any kind of political negotiations between the two conflicting parties. While some of his friends in exile[2] considered themselves as a part of a "third Spain"—among others his lifelong friend Gregório Marañon—Ortega thought that the mere thinking of mediating between the two factions in conflict was an ingenuity. Above all, he strongly disbelieved the possibility of a foreign intervention of the liberal western democracies in the Spanish affairs. It seems that for him the Spanish "affair" had roots too deep in the Spanish way of being and in Spanish history to be understood by well-intentioned foreigners. It may seem a rather pessimistic point of view, but it was in accordance with his general view about the cultural individuality of nations.

Once arrived in Argentina, in one of his first public activities there, he spoke of the "secret illusions and the secret anxieties of a people" (Ortega y Gasset, 2009b: 235); a nation, he added, is a *repertoire* of intimacies almost as impossible to unveil as the intimacies of a person. In fact, he was only repeating the words he wrote in the first of two articles published in October 1936 in the Argentinian newspaper *La Nación* about the impressions he got during his journey to the Netherlands. In fact, some months before his exile in France, Ortega had been invited to make a series of lectures in the Netherlands. In May 1936, he made four conferences in Rotterdam, Delft, Amsterdam, and Leyden. Only the first one, *El Hombre y la Gente*, was a new text, although some parts of it belonged to a conference with the same title held at Valladolid 2 years before. Still, important parts of the Rotterdam text were resumed in the French translation of *The Revolt of the Masses*, namely, in its "Prologue to the French," that Ortega dated of May 1937. At the beginning of the first article in *La Nación*, he speaks about the most elementary things that happen in the life of a people, which lie down under the surface of its public life, the only a foreigner can grasp without too much difficulties (Ortega y Gasset, 2006a: 401).[3]

without really listening to each other—was already addressed in the "Prologue to French" of the *Revolt of the Masses*, written during the first year of exile. I will come again in a moment to this issue.

[2] In this chapter we will speak interchangeably of exiled and immigrants. Although the two words today, at least in English and French, have two distinct meanings, this was not always the case in Ortega's time. He sometimes called himself an "immigrant," perhaps thinking about the similarities between his personal destiny and the destiny of the political immigrants during the French Revolution. Eve Fourmont Giustiniani mentions in her paper about Ortega's exile that he collected a great number of references about the situation of the French *émigrés* during the Revolution, sometimes accompanied by personal comments. Those texts are now in Ortega's assets in the Fundación Ortega y Gasset/Gregório Marañon, in Madrid (Giustiniani, 2020: 31–32).

[3] In these articles, that belong to Ortega's relatively scarce intellectual activity during 1937–1938, due certainly to the personal troubles that drove him to exile, we can find two important statements (Ortega y Gasset, 2006a: 401–402): the concept of race is of scarce utility to understand human affairs, since humanity is not just one zoological variety; everything that man is, is what he has come to be, so that "race" is at best the name for the point he has arrived at, at a certain historical moment. (Ortega calls this point *historia consolidada*.) We will address this issue in the chapter "Historical Reason".

2 Ortega in France

The French period was not one of the most productive of Ortega's life. There are good reasons for that: the financial difficulties that we mentioned above; the painful adaptation to a foreign milieu—Ortega's philosophical activity was always closely connected with his teaching at the University of Madrid; and his serious illness in 1937. In 1938, he published nothing, and the delicate chirurgical operation to which he was submitted forced him to long months of recovery, some of them he spent in Portugal, which he then visited for the first time. Anyway, at least two texts of this period deserve some attention: the abovementioned conference of Rotterdam and an interesting essay (although the issues addressed were not entirely original), published in *La Nación*, entitled "Bronca en la Física".[4]

Someone familiar with the more important (and more widely spread) texts of Ortega may perhaps not find the Rotterdam conference particularly interesting. Ortega is repeating himself. That happened too often during his philosophical career. However, he is repeating himself in new and tragic personal circumstances. The same words don't have the same weight. The conference begins with a reference to language. Since the conference was held in French, neither Ortega nor his audience were using their respective mother tongues. Trying to communicate something to someone is always a difficult task, but it becomes even greater when the *medium* is a foreign language. I think that what Ortega was trying to say is that any successful communication presupposes a certain community between the speaker and his or her addressee that goes far beyond the mutual understanding of the meaning of the words or a similar grammatical competence. There is always a certain amount of ingenuity from the part of those who think themselves able to speak to humanity in general.[5]

Regarding its content, the conference resumes a series of ideas whose origin goes back to Ortega's first book, *The Meditations on Quixote*, as he himself acknowledges (Ortega y Gasset, 2009a: 206); some others were recently stated in *The Revolt of the Masses*; but perhaps the most interesting ones are those Ortega will develop at length later in *Man and People*, the posthumous book that received the same title of the Rotterdam conference. However, when Ortega asks his audience, like he had done before, in 1932–1933, to the students of the University of Madrid when lecturing *The Principles of Metaphysics*: "why are you here?" (i.e., why have you decided to attend a philosophical conference?), we recall at once the dramatic personal and historical situation that gives this apparently trivial question a quite different accent.

[4] "Row in physics" is perhaps the best English translation of the Spanish title.

[5] See what Ortega says in (Ortega y Gasset, 2009a: 205) about Victor Hugo. The anecdote (probably false) about the way the French writer saluted the ambassador of Mesopotamia, addressing him as the representative of humanity, had already been told by Ortega in the past and will be told again in the future.

Two things must be stressed: Ortega's "here" was a foreign country, because a new circumstance had been imposed to him, having found untenable the conditions under which he was living in Spain; nevertheless, that new "here" did not remove him from the responsibility of trying to understand what was going on in the world and of trying to find the best way to act under these new circumstances.[6]

"Bronca en la Física" has been published as a series of articles in *La Nación*. The editors of Ortega's *Complete Work* (besides some minor linguistic corrections) did not add any critical notes to this text, mentioning only the fact that in each issue was written, under the title, the place and the date. For instance, in the first issue, "Paris, August 1937".[7] We already know that, for Ortega, modern physics (i.e., physics after Einstein's theory of relativity and quantum mechanics) was a sign of the end of modernity, since it implied a new concept of subject and above all a new way of looking at the relations between subject and object. Modern physics was one of the symptoms of what Ortega called "the XXth Century."

Now, why is there a row in physics? As we know, old habits die hard. And an old habit in physics—at least apparently as old as modern physics since the times of Galileo—advised physicists that science must begin with the observation of facts and that simple hypothesis should not be taken for well-established theories. However, in the issue of May 8 of 1937, a certain English physicist, Doctor Herbert Dingler, publishes a paper entitled "New Aristotelianism" where he accused physicist of abandoning those accepted ideas. The problem is—as Ortega remarks (Ortega y Gasset, 2006b: 421)—that they were never fully accepted, in spite of what Dingler said. Moreover, Galileo was accused by the Aristotelians of his time of not being entirely faithful to experience and preferring at times the mathematical reasoning. Notwithstanding, in classical physics there seemed to obtain a certain correspondence between the observed facts and the mathematical theories that allegedly explained them; that correspondence, Ortega adds in his second article (Ortega y Gasset, 2006b: 423), is broken in contemporary physics. On the one side we have a series of empirical observations and on the other side abstract mathematical formulas that must correspond to facts, albeit one does not know exactly how they do it or to what extent.[8]

It is not necessary to follow all Ortega's arguments against Dingler. However, some aspects of his arguments must be stressed. The articles of *La Nación*, as we said above, were written and published in 1937. Almost 25 years ago, Ortega said

[6] This conference has other interesting aspects. We won't address them here since they were already addressed in chapters "Ortega's Social Philosophy" and "Ortega's Philosophical Anthropology", namely, the main characteristics of man's being in the world, or "life as having to do" (Ortega y Gasset, 2009a: 209–210), the impersonality of social norms (Ortega y Gasset, 2009a: 213–214), and the apparent absence of meaning of some accepted social habits (Ortega y Gasset, 2009a: 215).

[7] The fourth issue was dated "Lisbon, September 1937." In fact, after having been subjected to a serious chirurgical operation, as we said above, Ortega, exiled in France, spent some weeks in Portugal in recovery.

[8] Later, in *The Idea of Principle in Leibniz*, Ortega will develop these ideas. See (Ortega y Gasset, 2009h: 944 ff.).

farewell to Neokantianism. Nevertheless, some aspects of his Neokantian training seem to be still present in his arguments against Dingler. Near the end of the second article, Ortega says that physics is the wonder of the western civilization, without it, western culture would not exist, nor perhaps philosophy. At the beginning of the third article (Ortega y Gasset, 2006b: 426), he resumes the same idea. At the same time, some fundamental phenomenological tenets seem to be also present; like Husserl, whose book from 1929 *Formal and Transcendental Logic* he had read, Ortega stresses the fact that the mathematical axioms and the general laws of physics don't stem directly from experience through generalization or induction. In fact, Ortega describes—without using the word—a process that Husserl labeled in 1929 "idealization." Even his final diagnosis—physics has not yet achieved fully clarity about itself—could be compared to Husserl's diagnosis in the *Crisis* articles of the previous year, which Ortega had not yet read at the time.

3 The Beginning of the Argentinian Exile

The Argentinian exile was not an easy one for Ortega, in spite of his previous illusions. Actually, Argentina had been a happy place for Ortega in the past, especially in 1916, when he visited the country for the first time. (He visited Argentina a second time in 1928.) His Lectures at the University of Buenos Aires, in 1916, meant the beginnings of phenomenology in Argentina and perhaps in South America. He was also a successful author there, and his books were well sold. But when he arrived for the third time, on the 29th of August 1939, times had changed. A place at the University was not easy to find (in fact it proved impossible), and the political and intellectual disputes between Spanish immigrants—escaping from the end of the Civil War and the victory of the nationalist army—were bitter and harsh. Besides, there were different kinds of immigrants: those who fled since the beginning of the war, those who fled during the war, and those who fled after it ended. Ortega and his family belonged to the first group, which means that his political opinions were suspicious, not only to other Spanish exiled but also to the Argentinian public opinion that had supported the Republican side. This was particularly true for the group of intellectuals that gathered around the journal *Sur*. Despite his friendship with Victoria Ocampo, a leading member of this group, Ortega's relations with it were almost always distant. When he left Argentina, in February 1942, he was even falsely accused by some of them of returning to Europe under Nazi protection only to resume his old Chair of Metaphysics, under Franco's nationalist regime, in the Central University of Madrid.

Moreover, regardless of differences in the social condition, those groups of immigrants were sometimes politically very different from each other; sometimes, at least according to Ortega, they didn't know exactly—and they didn't care—what were the exact political opinions of their antagonists. No wonder that in a superb text written in 1939, soon after arriving at Buenos Aires, the "Mediatación de la

Criolla,"[9] Ortega speaks about his condition of almost an outcast. In this text echoes the words he wrote at the beginning of his exile, in the "Prologue to the French," a kind of Preface he wrote in Netherlands for the French translation of the *Revolt of the Masses*. Says Ortega in 1939:

> The man who at this moment is drowning before you - before those who are hearing me throughout the wide Argentina - is me. Most of you did not know anything about me until this moment and most of those who know about me have never seen me and now they discover me the moment I disappear, in which I immerse myself in the invisible, I erase myself from the corporeal world as volatilized, and from me remains for you, and from me you only have a residual survival of me, something even less than a hand clenched in the see foam [...]. (Ortega y Gasset, 2009b: 231)

Ideas and Beliefs was written before Ortega arrived at Argentina but was partially published in the Argentinian newspaper *La Nación*,[10] in 1936. It was also the basis of his first Lectures after arriving at Buenos-Aires in 1939. The first edition of this text was published in a German translation in 1937, in the Journal *Europäische Revue*. Its title there was "Von der Lebensfunktion der Ideen" (San Martín, 1998: 216). Finally, the text appeared in Argentina as a book in 1940, as the first part of a future longer book with the same title. However, in the Prologue, Ortega says it is only the first chapter of a book he was writing at the moment, whose title would be *The Rise of Vital Reason*. This book was never written.

The main ideas developed in *Ideas and Beliefs* stem from the times before Ortega's exiles, and since we have already addressed them in previous chapters, we won't come back now in great detail to this issue. We have also mentioned some flows in Ortega's notion of belief. In the same fashion, in the Argentinian exile, Ortega seems to flow between a phenomenological notion of belief (i.e., beliefs as our basic but nonetheless rational systems of orientation) and a "historical" notion (Ortega y Gasset, 2006c: 667). So, in an otherwise very nice talk in the Institución Cultural Española, in November 1940, on the occasion of the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the death of Juan Luis Vives,[11] he says that every man lives from some basic beliefs about himself and the universe and only on the basis of these beliefs he is able to develop ideas and opinions. Solely on basic beliefs can be grounded a repertoire of ideas about what is possible or impossible and a system of evaluations that separates what is excellent and desirable from what is despicable

[9] The "Meditación de la Criolla" was a series of three radio Lectures held in Buenos Aires on the 22nd and 29th of November and on the 13th of December 1939.

[10] Although *La Nación* was at first a liberal conservative newspaper, in the course of time it became more and more close to the nationalist rebels in Spain and a supporter of General Francisco Franco, the chief of the nationalist army and future Spanish dictator.

[11] This is a very important talk, and we will come to it several times in this chapter. It offers a very good panorama of Ortega's ideas at the time, particularly about the notion of historical reason. However, it was intended for a large (albeit cultivated) audience. That's why Ortega says that the more informed philosophical listener must understand that in some serious matters he can only offer the conclusions and not all the premises. Nevertheless, he begs these listeners to believe that he has also the premises and can offer them if someone asks him.

and worthless. Accordingly, when those basic beliefs change—and since they appeared until then so evident that a clear distinction between beliefs and reality seemed impossible—our whole system of life is constrained to change (Ortega y Gasset, 2009d: 447).

However, it would be wrong to think that Ortega, in *Ideas y Creencias*, is only concerned with the epistemological side of the problem of their mutual relations. Although the philosopher has been deprived of his immediate audience, i.e., the Spanish people with which he could speak by means of the University lessons or the press, he thinks that he can play a similar role with the Argentinians, since they have to a great extent inherited the Spanish culture. Of course, we know that Ortega always stressed the fact that he could not address humanity since humanity actually doesn't exist. There are only peoples, with a certain history and a community of habits, and perhaps a set of identical perspectives regarding the future. Nevertheless, Argentina, like Spain, has an identity problem, a difficulty in making for itself a common basis of existence grounded in shared and accepted beliefs (Campomar, 2016: 312). He thought perhaps that Argentina had to solve the same problems he diagnosed in Spain at the time he wrote *España Invertebrada*. That's the role beliefs play in Ortega, and that's the reason why he can claim that beliefs are just ancient ideas that through time have lost their novelty and became consolidated as beliefs (Ortega y Gasset, 2009e: 482). Behind beliefs we can always uncover ideas that have lost its primal freshness. We find once more the problem of the relation between universal and particular that never ceased to occupy Ortega's mind—especially his theory of culture—since he gave his farewell to Neokantianism. New ideas have always the character of universality, since they oppose the ancient ones that meanwhile have become the "common good" of a particular nation. To find the right balance between these two opposed tendencies is the task of the political *elite*.[12]

4 El Hombre y la Gente

El Hombre y la Gente is the first important series of Lectures Ortega gave in Argentina in 1939. It took place in "Amigos del Libro" and begun on September 27 of that year. These Lectures are significantly different from those, with the same title, that were held after Ortega's return to Spain, of which we have already spoken in chapter "Ortega's Philosophical Anthropology". In these Argentinian Lectures,

[12] We must also mention the four articles in *La Nación*, from June, July, and August 1940, about the Roman Empire. Ortega is still thinking about Argentina's social situation and its deep divisions between the liberal elite of Buenos Aires, descending from the Spanish colonial settlers, and the small people of the Argentinian *Pampas*, with its large percentage of *mestizos*. He regarded this situation as very similar to the situation of Rome—i.e., the division between *senatus* and *populus*—in the last decades of the Republic.

the indirect reference to the contemporary events and even to the author's personal situation is much detailed. Ortega begins by stressing the radical insecurity of every human life, meaning not the fact that each man can die at any moment, but the fact that changing circumstances are the only thing in life that does not change (Ortega y Gasset, 2009c: 283). Anyway, the theme of these Lectures is the nature of society (or of the "social", as Ortega says most of the times), and the references to contemporary events or even to circumstances of the author's personal life have only one aim: to show that we live in the ignorance of what the "social" means and so we ignore the kind of threads that are woven between men by social existence. It is not only the middle class man that ignores what the "social" means (albeit he can speak relentlessly about it in the newspapers or in the coffeehouses); even those who were supposed to give us a correct definition of the social, i.e., sociologists, don't seem to have clear ideas about the issue.

We won't repeat here what has already been said in chapter "Ortega's Philosophical Anthropology" about Ortega's social thought. But two ideas deserve to be mentioned again. In the first place, Ortega resumes his old conception of life as a "having to do," from which results his definition of man as "someone who always has something to do," an inescapable task of choosing between several possibilities of action (Ortega y Gasset, 2009c: 298). Of course, a man can chose between creation and imitation, but the latter is no less a possibility than the former. And he stresses that this definition is the really adequate one, provided that we look to men's lives with an honest and unprejudiced vision, exempt of any false theory. In the second place, he comes again—as he has always done since 1914—to the relation between man and his circumstance, but now to underline the fact that in any circumstance we can find inanimate objects (like stones, for instance), animals, and other human beings, and the relation we establish with each of them is not the same. Strictly speaking, only with fellow men do we establish relations, although the analysis of the case of animals offers some difficulties. This is one of the central themes of Ortega's anthropology, and he will come to it again during his Argentinian exile, in the abovementioned talk on the occasion of the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the death of Juan Luis Vives. In his talk Ortega begins by stressing the fact that stones and animals have the whole of their beings given and fixed from the moment they begin to exist (Ortega y Gasset, 2009d: 443). For a stone to fall in a certain direction, he says, is pretty much the same as for a nightingale to begin to sing at a certain stage of its development.

Now, Ortega can draw an important conclusion. Society—although not visible as such—is not something mysterious that philosophers must uncover digging it out from the depths. It is the outcome of the common relations between men that have to live the radical reality of their own lives. Society is something that can be easily shown, it is no less patent than a lot of other things, provided we use the correct methodological—and Ortega here means phenomenological (Ortega y Gasset, 2009c: 325)—devices.

5 *Historical Reason*: The Last Lecture in the Faculty of Arts of Buenos Aires

The Argentinian Lectures on *Historical Reason*, from 1940, held in the Faculty of Arts of Buenos Aires, are one of Ortega's most important intellectual achievement before his return to Europe. The circumstances of the exile, the war that was ravaging the world for almost 3 years, perhaps also a bitter personal feeling of having been misunderstood regarding the fundamental tenets of his own philosophy—perhaps also a desire to justify his personal resolution to remain in exile, due to the international political situation in Europe and the outcome of the Civil War in Spain—can still today be deeply felt by the contemporary reader. Above all, Ortega comes again to the question of the meaning of philosophy and of the failure of the philosopher in the way he carries out his mission. Because as a man the philosopher is not different from the other men: he has to deal with things, to orient himself among them, or, as Ortega sometimes liked to say, he has to "rescue" himself and his circumstance. In fact, as Ortega says at the beginning of his first Lecture, man has once more lost himself and is looking for salvation. When that man is a philosopher, however, he knows—or at least endeavors to know—the essence of things (Campomar, 2016: 326). In a philosophical Chair, the philosopher is supposed to talk about essences, albeit the things he is speaking about are those very same things of which men are talking about, especially in times of distress—namely, the disagreement between nation, the war, or the exile—as was the case in 1940 (Ortega y Gasset, 2009e: 477).

So, as Marta Campomar correctly stresses, the tone of these Argentinian Lectures is centered in an analysis of the present: Ortega thinks that we need history to understand the present, i.e., we must know what happened in order to understand what is now going on. These ideas are also present in his Argentinian Lecture *Man and People*, resumed in Madrid after the exile. Man comes to life as in the middle of a shipwreck, and he has to brace in order to survive. However, the things he finds in life and which he needs to save himself are not just mere objects: they can facilitate or hinder human life, and that's why they deserve to be called by the Greek word *pragmata*.

Now, for Ortega, to live in the present means to live amid a crisis—not only a political crisis, but a general crisis affecting the totality of knowledge. As he says, physicists don't know what to do in physics (i.e., they are not sure of the value of their main concepts), mathematicians don't know what to do in mathematics, logicians don't know what to do in logic, they are not sure any more of the value of the main logical concepts, like Brouwer (Ortega y Gasset, 2009e:481) who put in question the logical value of the principle of the excluded middle. Ortega seems to have been impressed by Brouwer's criticisms to traditional logic, since he mentions Brouwer's ideas several times in his writings. Logic has to do with thinking, the privilege of that "reasonable animal" that we call "man"; perhaps he thought that the doubts about the way we think would also raise doubts about what we are.

The whole idea of these Lectures is not very original. One feels that Ortega needs to communicate the main tenets of the philosophical system he has built in the precedent decade. He has already done that elsewhere, namely, in *Ideas y Creencias*, but also in the talk about Luis Vives. Ortega is approaching his 60th anniversary, an age in which, as he himself has said several times, a man becomes an ancestor. It means that his generation does no longer occupy the forefront of the cultural battles. His personal future is also unpredictable. The possibility of his return to Spain is uncertain; Ortega is a republican, he saluted the establishment of the Spanish republic in 1931, and he strongly disliked the illiberal tendencies of Franco's regime. Anyway, we can synthesize his ideas in these Lectures in the three following topics:

1. Up to the present, European man lived in three different epochs: the ancient Greco-Roman culture, in which the meaning of life was given by the world and its eternal forms; the Middle Ages, in which the mean of life was given by God; and the modern world, in which the meaning of life was given by reason or, in other words, by man himself.
2. The former ideas may not seem very original, but Ortega has something more to say. Between those epochs we can find epochs of transition. In those epochs man is looking for a new meaning for life, since the ancient one is no longer at the height of the times. That's what happened in the period called Renaissance. Man no longer lives facing only God, although he still believes in his existence. However, the whole of his life no longer is solely determined by God and by the expectation of a super-mundane existence.
3. In each historical epoch, men live according to a certain system of beliefs. Nevertheless, history is not a succession of epochs with no relations between each other. One never gets rid of the past, and an epoch is always related to the proceeding one, at least in the sense that it refuses it.

Ciriaco Morón Arroyo argues that Ortega, at this moment of his intellectual evolution, looks at beliefs at the proper object of history, by which Morón Arroyo seems to mean historical science. In a previous moment—roughly corresponding to the time following the publication of *The Theme of our Time*, in 1923—the object of historical science was the changes in the general feeling toward life (Morón Arroyo, 1968: 296). Of course, the two moments are not really opposed, and one needs not to accept Morón Arroyo's theory about the phases of Ortega's development to acknowledge a difference between them. However, the explanation for this difference is perhaps much simpler. In 1923 Ortega was speaking from the standpoint of vital reason, and in 1940 he is speaking from the standpoint of historical reason (Ortega, 2005a: 604–605). That's why he needs to stress, in 1940, that beliefs can change and history—not in the first place the historical science (i.e., the history of *rerum gestarum*), but rather the *res gestae*—is history as long as beliefs are subject to change.

6 Argentinian Deceptions: The Return to Europe

Ortega always looked at his 3 years exile in Argentina as the worst period of his life. The coming to Portugal, where her daughter Soledad rented an apartment in Lisbon that the family kept until Ortega's death, meant a kind of relief. And although Ortega never cease completely his relations with some of his most intimate Argentinian friends, it's very significant that his departure to Lisbon, in February 1942, took all his friends by surprise, friends to whom he hardly said farewell (Campomar, 2016: 409). Significantly too he never returned to that country, where he had been so happy during his first two stays. We have already mentioned some reason for this deception, namely, the impossibility of finding an academic place in the Argentinian universities and the intrigues between Spanish *émigrés* and between himself and the intellectual elite of Buenos Aires. Money problems (especially after the "Espasa-Calpe affair") also played an important role, so much so that, once in Portugal, Ortega could more easily count with the support of his two sons that remained in the nationalist Spain.

However, we should also look for more deep reasons. Perhaps what we will say next is just trivial, but one should never forget that in the case of a philosopher—and in the opinion of the author of these lines Ortega is a very great philosopher—personal events and philosophical reflection go hand in hand. If things were different, the narrative of Socrates' death in Plato's *Phaedon*, or Plato's Seventh Letter, would remain unintelligible. In the case of Ortega, the Argentinian exile and the Argentinian political and cultural situation were the opportunity to test, so to speak, the ideas he had been developing in the previous years and that can be found in *The Revolt of the Masses* and *Man and People*. That's what we must see next.

The reader probably recalls two important social and political theses Ortega developed over the years: the fact that modernity means the belief in progress and the fact that the twentieth century lacks historical sensibility. The first fact is a historical belief; other epochs either didn't share that belief and looked rather pessimistically to the future or had a cyclical notion of historical development, in which epochs of progress and epochs of decay would alternate. The second fact—the lack of historical sensibility—is the natural consequence of the first. Progress is in a large measure scientific and technical progress, and it meant, in Europe and in the United States, for a large part of the population, the rising to a historical level from which it seems rather improbable to recede. We saw in chapter "Ortega's Social Philosophy" that this general albeit ungrounded conviction is the origin of the anthropological type Ortega labels the "mass-man." Now, Argentina seems the victim of the same illusions. More than that, Argentina doesn't benefit of a past similar to the European one; what for European nations is the outcome of a long historical effort can only be imported, with all the dangers attached to it. Ortega saw in the Argentinian intellectual *milieu* the rise of the same defects he had in *The Revolt of the Masses* detected in the European mass-man. Moreover, he thought that, due to the decay of Europe, swallowed by a bloody war, Argentinian intellectuals were just

hopping for the opportunity to replace Europe in what they looked as the leading cultural role Europe had played until then.[13]

Of course, this rather pessimistic outlook was not the main reason for Ortega's departure. The relations with the Argentinian's and the Spanish émigrés' intellectual milieus became bitter as time passed; the prospects of an academic career in the Argentinian universities were frustrated: financial problems were never overcome. Besides, there were also family motives. Europe meant being near to Spain, where his two elder sons had remained. Ortega was now grandfather, without knowing his grandson. So, in the middle of the war, with naval combats being carried out between the German submarine fleet and the allies, he crossed the Atlantic. His daughter Soledad had advanced him and his wife and already rented an apartment in Lisbon.

Ortega was not much happier in Lisbon than he had been in Argentina, although there the political disputes between Spanish émigrés were inexistent. At the time, the Portuguese dictatorship was largely favorable to the Spanish regime, and any public debate was impossible. Moreover, besides some personal friendships, Ortega's relation to the Portuguese intellectual and philosophical milieus was scarce. Although he held an important lecture on *Reason in History* in 1944—the only one he gave at the Department of Philosophy of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Lisbon—that was attended by two important Portuguese philosophers at the time (Delfim Santos and Vieira de Almeida), he was never able to make strong and enduring connections. A first sympathetic approach to his philosophy and his personality turned out in overt hostility. Vieira de Almeida even joked about Ortega's reference to Brouwer in his Third Lecture on *Historical Reason* (Ortega y Gasset, 2009f: 667).[14]

The contacts that he managed to establish, once in Lisbon, with his homeland took place primarily through friends and ex-students from Madrid, such as Julián Marías, Emílio Garcia Gómez, Dolores Franco, José Germain, or José Antonio Maravall. Through the Ambassador Nicolas Franco, he was in contact with some important Spanish intellectuals, who were invited to give conferences in Lisbon, like Dámaso Alonso, Antonio Tovar, and Pedro Laín Entralgo. Ortega enjoyed regular walks through downtown Lisbon alongside his Spanish compatriots Juan Carreras and Julio Camba. There are also records of his having met, on several occasions, the Romanian philosopher Mircea Eliade, who was also exiled in Lisbon. In his diary, written during the exile, Eliade confirmed the information that Ortega refused to regain his university position in Madrid, while maintaining a good

[13] Most of these harsh opinions were expressed in letters or in private conversations. In the second case, one must trust the individual memories of Ortega's friends, who kept a close contact with him until the end of his stay in Argentina or continued to exchange letters with him after the return to Europe. For an appraisal of all these testimonies, see Campomar, 2016: 403–413).

[14] Vieira de Almeida was at the time a full professor at the University of Lisbon. He was very close to the Vienna Circle and published some important works on logic and philosophy of knowledge. Although well-informed in philosophical matters, he was more of a dilettante than a philosopher. His courses were, so it seems, a kind of philosophical "happening," and he was always unable to carry out a syllabus until the end. He clearly did not understood how Ortega evaluated Brouwer's intuitionistic logic.

relationship with Spanish intellectuals such as jurist Luis Díez del Corral (Gracia, 2014: 576), a former student at the University of Madrid before the Civil War.

Ortega's home, at nº. 10 on Avenida 5 de Outubro in Lisbon, was his official residence until his death in 1955. There he installed part of his library and his office, where he kept a regular correspondence with the multiple translators and publishers of the international editions of his works. Ortega always looked at his stay in Portugal as temporary. That's one of the reasons why he never got significantly involved with the cultural environment. His ambiguous sociopolitical condition as someone who was a supporter of the founding of the II Republic in Spain, in 1931, and as someone who, following his departure from Madrid in 1936, became suspicious of counter-revolutionary sympathies by the Republican Government also did not enhance any steady and strong connection with Portuguese universities. Furthermore, while not an anticlerical, his neutrality before Catholicism did not favor any close contact to the Portuguese academic institutions under the regime of the Estado Novo (Amoedo, 2017: 13).

However, some of Ortega's Portuguese relations are worth mentioning. Writers and intellectuals such as Délio Santos or António Ferro, and the Director of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon, Oliveira Guimarães, kept a close contact with him. Vitorino Nemésio, a famous novelist and professor of Spanish literature in the Faculty of Letters, who, when a student at the University of Coimbra, had interviewed Ortega in Madrid, in 1924, was one of his Lisbon friends. However, in an article published in the journal *Seara Nova*, some years after the Madrid interview, Nemésio had shown how little he had understood Ortega's philosophy (Nemésio, 1929: 106–107). The reader grasps easily that Nemésio is mentioning Ortega's Lessons *What is Philosophy?*, but if Nemésio had actually attended them or is speaking by mere hearsaying is hard to tell. Trying to explain to his Portuguese readers the main tenets of Ortega's philosophy at the time, he says, for instance, that for the Spanish philosopher truth is always dependent on a point of view and one can change at will his point of view to obtain the truth that most suits him.

To get an idea of the social and cultural milieu that surrounded Ortega in Lisbon, it is also worth mentioning his regular gatherings in the *Caravela* teahouse, in Chiado, in downtown Lisbon. There he met classicist Pedro de Moura e Sá, poet Carlos Queirós, and newspaper columnist General Luís da Câmara Pina, advisor of the Bertrand bookstore and the Portuguese translator of *La Rebelión de las Masas* (Gracia, 2014: 575). With the passage of time, his social circle became reduced to the house of doctor Fernando Martins Pereira, a friend since his first journey to Portugal, in convalescence, following a surgery to remove gallstones. Moura de Sá bears witness to the social gatherings he would attend, with his wife Marta de Lima Mayer and his friends from *A Caravela*, in the residence of Martins Pereira, with lively debates about culture and intellectual life. He confessed his admiration for Ortega's thought and appreciated his endeavors to ensure that philosophy acquired "flesh and blood." In his work *Vida e Literatura*, he affirmed how Ortega, throughout this whole period, always showed a sense of gratitude, how his personality was deprived of any kind vanity or economic interests. In the way he understood things, he sought to give them the maximum of its potential expressiveness, adding a lyrical

facet to the vital and historical rationality (Amoedo, 2002: 142). Following 11 years of silence, he was welcomed in Spain with a large photograph in the *ABC* magazine, announcing his return through a public conference held at the Ateneo of Madrid in early May 1946. There was a full house to hear his "Idea of the theatre," which he had already presented at Lisbon's D. Maria II National Theatre, including such figures as Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Xavier Zubiri, and José María Alfaro (Gracia, 2014: 586).

Ortega also took advantage of the Lisbon exile to advance some literary work. In 1942, he wrote the prologue to the book *Veinte años de caza mayor* by Eduardo Yebes, reflecting on human life, on the diversity of perspectives through which reality is revealed, and on the methodological conditions of living a life according to reason. In 1943, he wrote another prologue for the book *Aventuras del Capitán Alonso de Contreras*, approaching notions of actions and adventure, and began his study of Velasquez's paintings, writing the text *Introducción a Velázquez*, the first of a series of articles dedicated to leading Spanish artists. In the same year, he founded the publishing house *Editorial Azar*, summoning Fernando Vela to take up residence in Lisbon in order to guarantee the success of this venture with the objective of publishing, in the Portuguese capital, either Spanish originals or translations. The project, however, never went beyond its first publication, *Homo Ludens*, of well-known Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (Amoedo, 2002: 144).

In this same year, Ortega wrote some brief notes for a reflection on *saudade* (the Portuguese term for yearning or longing), which was entitled *Hipotesis a la Saudade, un estúdio de mitologia*, but not subject to further developments. In this reflection, mentioning some classical Portuguese texts on this issue, namely, from Francisco Manuel de Melo and Carolina Michaëlis, he acknowledged that he had never entered the spiritual intimacy of Portuguese culture and that his analysis of its physiognomy was only from an external and almost spectral level. As he stated: "[…] to 'enter' a village is not merely to be in its streets, but to *live* in it, to *be* in it" (Ortega y Gasset, 2005b: 17). He criticized Carolina Michaëlis[15] for centering the theme of *saudade* on eroticism, which he deemed universal and present in all peoples, and sought for the specific characteristics of this feeling within the concrete case of Portuguese historical experiences: "Saudade *is* not a Portuguese theme, it is rather *the* Portuguese theme *par excellence*" (Ortega y Gasset, 2005b: 21). However, this identification was accompanied by a strong criticism of the prevailing conditions of Portuguese culture according to the meaning of *saudade* put forward by Teixeira de Pascoaes, with its implications of a closed off to the world and to the social, scientific, and technological progress carried out beyond the Pyrenees. In counterbalance with the Portuguese theme of the *discoveries*, which he attributed to the "anxiety to depart," *saudade* is perceived as a mythical and imaginary Portuguese condition, associated

[15] Carolina Michaëlis was a German scholar who married the Portuguese philologist and anthropologist José Leite de Vasconcelos. Carolina Michaëlis' book that Ortega addressed in his criticisms was *A Saudade Portuguesa*, whose 2nd revised and enlarged edition has been published in 1922.

with the "anxiety of returning," implying the country's current cultural stagnation due to the long-term radical rejection of progress and development:

> The Discoveries are a breaking of a horizon and a search for the unknown that extends beyond, and the "oceans never braved before" mean radical openness. Saudade is the solidification of an entire given horizon: a fall into the old, into the customary. (Ortega y Gasset, 2005b: 22)[16]

However, in this period, the Spanish thinker was primarily occupied with writing an epilogue to the 2nd edition of *Historia de la filosofía* of Julián Marias. This epilogue would lead onto an autonomous book entitled *El origen y epilogo de la filosofía*, which included the 1944 lessons lectured at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon on the art of philosophizing, on the crisis both of logical rationality and life, on biographic meaning, as well as on the unquestionable and prior reality of any act of thinking (Gracia, 2014: 574). In this work, through historical analysis of western philosophy, he talks about philosophical errors as incomplete truths that should not entail the ignorance or rejection of philosophy, but instead the effort to improve it through the production of new theories. Each philosophical theory discloses the truth of a historical context, expressed in a perspective or point of view. This text, however, that meanwhile was enlarged to a manuscript of near 400 pages, will only undergo posthumous publication (Amoedo, 2002: 146).

The 1944 lectures at the Faculty of Letters on historical reason, in the year Vitorino Nemésio published his famous novel *Mau Tempo no Canal*, caused a major impact, and, due to the number of participants enrolled, the majority of which were not university students, it became necessary to replace the small University amphitheater by a larger venue at the Society of Geography. The description of the first lesson, made by the Lisbon correspondent of the Madrid newspaper ABC, details a heterogenous audience made up of professors, financiers, politicians, diplomats from every country accredited in Lisbon, aristocrats, artists, and senior members of the clergy. This series of only five Lessons (from the 20th of November to the 14th of December) would end due to Ortega's poor health condition. A sixth projected Lesson in January 1945 was never delivered. In March 1945, Ortega would request the Director of the Faculty of Letters to terminate his agreement with the University of Lisbon, due to his repeated health problems (Amoedo, 2017: 32–33).

Since historical reason will be the theme of our next chapter, we won't address these Lisbon Lectures here. Instead, we will make a mention to Ortega's last public lecture in Lisbon before his return to Spain. It's entitled *The Idea of the Theater* and was held at the headquarters of the Portuguese newspaper *O Século*. Delfim Santos expressed publicly in harsh terms his disagreement, both regarding the content and the form[17] of the lecture.

[16] "Oceans never braved before" is the English translation of the third verse of the 1st Canto of *Os Lusíadas*, an epic poem written by the sixteenth-century Portuguese poet Luís de Camões.

[17] Of course, regarding form, one must reckon that Ortega's Lecture is far from being perfect. Delfim Santos, in a newspaper article, even says that, at the beginning of his Lecture Ortega promises to address two different issues—the problem of truth (*aletheia*) and the problem of ruin (from the Latin *ruere*)—promises he will be unable to keep until the end. (See Ortega y Gasset, 2009g:

The interest of this lecture has to do with the fact that it exemplifies how Ortega was able to handle the phenomenological method in matters far distant from usual philosophical issues. Of course, nobody in the audience was familiar with it, except Delfim Santos, who having studied in Austria and Germany had written about Husserl and Heidegger and was perhaps, at the time, the best-informed Portuguese philosopher about German contemporary trends in philosophy. However, his harsh reaction had, very probably, personal reasons, not yet completely clarified, which we will deliberately skip here.

The title of this Lecture, as we have said, is *The Idea of the Theater*. Nevertheless, although Ortega recalls Plato's notion of idea, he undoubtedly means the Husserlian one, i.e., what Husserl also called essence or *eidos*. Accordingly, if there is an idea of the theater, that idea must express what every theatrical production has in common; Ortega means of course something that has to be present in every theatrical production, regardless all the other differences—no matter how important they may be—that separate them from each other. Next, Ortega mentions the importance of the theater as a special kind of building. One may joke about this reference to architecture and conclude that the author is just postponing his theme, about which he knows perhaps too little. Closer inspection shows it's the other way around. The place where theatrical spectacles are carried out always have some importance regarding how the author thinks the plot will develop; some of Shakespeare's long dialogues would be unintelligible without our knowledge of the special characteristic of the Elizabethan scene. Perhaps the same could be said about *tempo* in Greek tragedy. Anyway, that is not very important. We must instead look to the peculiarities of Ortega's method.

In fact, Ortega resumes what he had been saying since the *Meditaciones del Quijote*: reality has two different levels, one patent, the other latent. Philosophical method aims to uncover the latent that the patent hides from our sight. The patent reality of theater is its building. This is not a trivial matter, what Ortega used to call in Spanish a *perogrullada*. If the building hides an interior, at the same time it announces it. Each building has a peculiar form, which is adapted to its function. Anyway, we must go inside the building. We enter now a second level of reality; we begin the examination of what had been hidden until now.[18] In the inside we find a division in two distinct parts: one—the scene, as we now call it—where the representation takes place; the other intended for the public. (Of course, Ortega is thinking about a rather traditional form of representation, where both spaces, the one for the actors, the other for the public, are physically distinct, namely, due to the fact

828–829.) Needless to say that anyone familiar with Ortega's normal procedures is used to this. (The most relevant features of Ortega's theory of theater have already been addressed in chapter "Ortega's Aesthetics". The references to it in this chapter will be sketchy; only Ortega's method is of interest to us here.)

[18] We could correlate this procedure with another one we have described in chapter "Phenomenology Revisited", regarding Ortega's investigation of the ultimate data of the universe. As we said then, he looked at his method as comparable to the one use by the Hebrews in the conquest of Jericho, approaching slowly in circles to the center of the aimed target.

that the scene level is higher than the level of the audience.) We will not follow Ortega's analysis until the end. Those who argue that his knowledge of modern theatrical techniques was scarce are probably right. We only intended to note that Ortega remained faithful to the phenomenological method and even thought that it could be extended to understand certain forms of culture for which it was not created by its founder.

To sum up, one could say that Ortega's Lisbon exile—with the exception of the Lessons on *Historical Reason*—was most philosophically productive regarding those texts he never completely finished in order to be published. We already spoke of *The Idea of Principle in Leibniz*, which he wrote in his Lisbon apartment and kept until his death and to which he returned several times in holidays. (The manuscript of this work was published only posthumously, in 1958, in Buenos Aires.) In Lisbon, before returning to Spain, he also wrote an important essay on Goya, at the beginning of 1946, but Ortega's works on painting (especially on Spanish painting) have already been addressed in chapter "Ortega's Aesthetics".

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