

<https://doi.org/10.21638/2226-5260-2022-11-2-625-640>

ON HEIDEGGER AND ORTEGA Y GASSET: THE SPANISH BEING AND ITS TRAGIC CONDITION OF EXISTENCE

JUAN JOSÉ GARRIDO PERIÑÁN

PhD in Philosophy, Associate Professor.
University of Seville, Department of Aesthetics and History of Philosophy.
41008 Seville, Spain.
E-mail: jjgarper@us.es

From a biographical description made by the German thinker Martin Heidegger of the Spanish thinker José Ortega y Gasset, this article sets out to explore how Heideggerian philosophy requires a tragic condition for its development and promotion. The first part of the article attempts to justify why Heidegger's thinking would fit harmoniously within Ortega's description of Spanish culture and his vision of death. The notion of death is approached as a cultural and philosophical problem of great relevance in order to understand the being-in-the-world of a specific society or nation. In our case, we try to show that Ortega's description of Spain as a philosophical and cultural problem at least coincides with the phenomenological-existential description that Heidegger develops in *Being and Time*. In its second part, through Heidegger's dialogue with Hölderlin, an attempt is made to show how this tragic need for philosophising continues in Heidegger's work. Finally, it concludes by leaving the reader with a question: was Heidegger a Southern-Spanish thinker?

Keywords: spaniard, death, poeticization, tragedy, temporality, culture, freedom before life.

О ХАЙДЕГГЕРЕ И ОРТЕГЕ-И-ГАССЕТЕ: ИСПАНСКОЕ БЫТИЕ С ЕГО ТРАГИЧЕСКИМ УСЛОВИЕМ СУЩЕСТВОВАНИЯ

ХУАН ЖОЗЕ ГАРРИДО ПЕРИНАН

PhD по философии, доцент.
Университет Севильи, департамент эстетики и истории философии.
41008 Севилья, Испания.
E-mail: jjgarper@us.es

Цель этой статьи состоит в том, чтобы, отталкиваясь от биографических описаний Ортеги-и-Гассета у немецкого мыслителя Мартина Хайдеггера, показать, почему хайдеггеровская философия требует трагического условия для своего развития и существования. В первой

© JUAN JOSÉ GARRIDO PERIÑÁN, 2022

части статьи демонстрируется, почему мышление Хайдеггера гармонично сочетается с описанием испанской культуры у Ортеги и его видением смерти. Понятие смерти рассматривается как культурная и философская проблема высокой значимости, чтобы понять бытие-в-мире специфического общества или нации. В нашем случае мы пытаемся показать, что описание Испании как философской и культурной проблемы у Ортеги по меньшей мере соразмерно феноменологически-экзистенциальному описанию, развитому в «Бытии и времени» Хайдеггера. Во второй части, через диалог Хайдеггера с Гёльдерлином, предпринимается попытка показать, как эта трагическая необходимость философствования продолжается в работе Хайдеггера. Наконец, в заключении перед читателем ставится следующий вопрос: был ли Хайдеггер южноиспанским мыслителем?

Ключевые слова: испанец, смерть, поэтизация, трагедия, темпоральность, культура, свобода превыше жизни.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a very brief piece of writing on the occasion of the death of Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, Heidegger recalls the two times the two men had the opportunity to meet. Both meetings took place in 1951, beyond the ominous shadow of World War II. The importance of this brief text, apparently short on philosophical value due to its lack of systematic and scholastic expression, could consist, rather, in Heidegger's existential description of José Ortega y Gasset, cataloguing him as a thinker who endured a great sadness, borne with nobility and fortitude, in the face of the peremptory impotence of thinking, a thinking so naked and pale, so emaciated, that there was hardly any room left for an alternative (Heidegger, 1983a, 127–130). In his description, Heidegger endorses the integrity of Ortega y Gasset's behaviour, standing tall like a reed in the wind in the face of adversity, saying yes, affirmatively loving existence. For this article, starting from this existential and biographical description of Ortega y Gasset, I would like to perform an exercise in speculation or experimentation: *What if Heidegger, in the task of describing Ortega y Gasset, was actually describing himself, and we could derive a philosophical position from this description? Is philosophy divorced from life?* In order not to engage in an act of mere philosophical journalism, I will try to thematize how Ortega y Gasset's existential character, as described by Heidegger, resembles Ortega y Gasset's own analysis of the Spanish people as a people that looks at death, at the devastation of its own existence, and rather than give up and flee from life in droves, instead affirms life itself, lives, despite everything. Thus, the Spanish people, in this sense, having placed themselves before the nihility of life, in a situation from which nothing more can be expected, resolve to live. This situation places the Spaniard, according to Ortega y Gasset, in a kind of *freedom before life* — remember the famous “freedom before death” in *Being and*

Time — Freedom because life no longer had a principle of sufficient reason; one lives without a why and therefore lives more freely. The first part of my text, therefore, will try to show this biographical and philosophical convergence in the paths of Ortega y Gasset's and Heidegger's thought, where death is centrally situated in order to achieve an original understanding of one's own existence. In the second part, I would like to point out how this condition in the face of existence, thought by Ortega y Gasset to be the "character of the Spanish" (and not in a biological sense, but in an existential sense), implies a tragic position before the world. And, in my opinion, if the Spanish character has not ceased to be tragic because of this nature that says yes to life, in spite of everything, in non-fear of death, although there is no reconciling dialectic, then I consider at the same time Heidegger's thought to be eminently tragic. There is a tragic position in *Being and Time*, because Dasein finds its finitude in the knowledge of its death, which opens the temporal gap that constitutes it as a possibility of the impossibility of existence. But Heidegger's thinking remains tragic after the so-called *Kehre*. I will explore how the tragic is essential to understanding the essence of Dasein and the destiny (*Geschick*) of being as historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*). Thanks to his reading of Hölderlin, as is well known in the Heideggerian exegesis, Heidegger navigates the turn in his thinking. And this turn, instead of calming the tumultuous waters of existential anxiety and the nothingness of the entity exposed in the 1929 conference: *What is Metaphysics?* (Heidegger, 1976, 103–122), in my view, turns Heideggerian thinking into highly tragic thinking. This tragic tonality, which shapes the character of a thinker like Heidegger, is fostered by Hölderlin, the poet among poets, namely: a) in the interpretation according to which "the strangest" (*Unheimlichste*) is revealed as the abysmal foundation of the human being, Hölderlin's poeticising being the true care that prepares "the becoming homelike" (*Heimischwerden*) but without denying or sublimating "the inhospitable character" (*Umheimlichkeit*) of the being's occurrence; and b) following on Hölderlin's interpretation of Sophocles' Attic tragedy *Antigone* (*Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*), Heidegger states that "*pathein* is the very essence of the *deinon*" (Heidegger, 1984, 127). *Pathein*, *pathos*, is often understood as "suffering," or "affliction," and in the history of philosophy it has almost always, but especially in modernity, been negatively labelled as a *passivity in human life*. However, in the Heideggerian vision, *pathein* is an *active capacity of the human being* in the face of the task of assuming the essential determination of being of an entity, its happening. This way of assuming the *pathein* is at least very similar to Ortega y Gasset's description of the Spanish character and his stance on life. In other words, for the Spaniard, *the pathos of his existence coincides with his destiny*. Because poeticizing is not about putting thoughts into beautiful words; the essence of poetry lies in opening up the founda-

tional, which is the *deinon*, the monstrous and always excessive, by which poeticizing is compromised and overwhelmed.

Finally, if Heidegger is an eminently tragic thinker, and tragedy would be embodied, in a certain way, in what has been called “freedom before life,” is Heidegger then a Spanish or southern thinker?

2. DEATH AND PHILOSOPHISING

Geographically, Heidegger is German, a native of Meßkirch, a Catholic by tradition, a phenomenologist by profession, a philosopher at heart. Heidegger is, in my opinion, eminently misunderstood in Germany; this incomprehension, which could be compared to a mere incomprehension of society’s blindness to its philosophers, is in the case of so-called Heideggerian studies, patent and sometimes even vulgar. For more than twenty years now, the “Heidegger case,” his alleged Nazism, has been determined as follows: that his thinking is a mere corollary in the service of Nazi ideology¹. Heidegger’s reception in Germany is thus complex, filtered through incomprehension, and tragic for a thinker who, in Safranski’s words, was “Germany’s thinker.” The German thinker for whom thinking constituted, in lofty terms, a root event, is remarkably far removed from certain current philosophical attitudes that see thinking as a problem solvable in the analysis of language (Scherer, 1989, 505–521). Heidegger’s position, his commitment, is to living itself. A human being philosophizes from experiences underpinned with affectivity, here and now, in the face of his tradition and the history that weighs him down. Thinking life from living itself led Heidegger to look death in the face. Death, without hyperbole, is almost transcendental in human life: the constant questioning about my finiteness, about the fugacity of time, about ceasing to be once and for all. For this reason, because living opens one up to death, every thinker who loves life, as I think Ortega y Gasset and Unamuno, among

¹ The expression “the Heidegger case” describes the “political scandal,” his affiliation with National Socialism. Many exegetical lines have been developed on the basis of Heidegger’s political commitment. For reasons of length, it will not be possible to pursue these lines in this article. A brief historiographical development will suffice. The first writings on the Heidegger case were by Derrida (1987), Farias (1987), Lyotard (1988) and Ott (1989). Among these writings, those of Farias are the most forceful and furious. Then followed the publications of Nolte (1992), Pöggeler (1990), Rockmore (1991), Sluga (1993), Wollin (1993). Not to be forgotten is the media hype generated by the publication of Heidegger’s so-called “Black Notebooks” from 2014 to the present day. In my opinion, no writing has succeeded, with any rigour, in showing an inexorable link between Heidegger’s philosophical thinking and National Socialism. Heideggerian thinking cannot be reduced to a political ideology as cruel and inhuman as Nazism. Although it is not the aim of this paper, by doing so, I hope to show the errors of such assessments.

others, did, has to accept the *imperative of death* as something that belongs to living itself. The words of Miguel de Unamuno still ring in the deep abyss of the Spanish conscience: “I don’t want to die, no, I don’t want to die, nor do I want to want to” (*No quiero morirme, no, no quiero ni quiero quererlo*) (Unamuno, 2009, 285)². And since no thinker thinks in isolation, but from his circumstances (situation), the problem of death is a cultural problem, related to a way of existing within a territory. The problem of death is a Spanish problem. Spanish, but without any hint of defending a kind of nationalism; rather, Spain as a philosophical problem, nestled in the circumstantiality of its thinkers, demands a thinking at one with death³.

Let us proceed, then, in the following way, in order to gain clarity: firstly, it will be necessary to explain why Spain is a problem of philosophical entity; secondly, I will have to develop why the problem of Spain supposes a meditation on death; and thirdly, I will leave the ground prepared to open up a binding horizon between the thinking of Ortega and that of Heidegger, brothers of existence, friends of death.

3. SPAIN AS A (PHILOSOPHICAL) PROBLEM

Ortega y Gasset’s historical consciousness always saw Spain as a broad, plural problem (Ortega, 2004a, 89). Spain as a political urgency; Spain as a philosophical axis of universal inclination (Spain as a European problem). Following Laín Entralgo:

the most significant feature of our contemporary intellectual history is this painful and incessant effort to arrive at a definition of Spain’s historical being or, at least, at an adequate and profound interpretation of that being. (Entralgo, 1968, 17)⁴

Spain remains today an unmentionable for many of its citizens; the long, dark and gloomy shadow of the Civil War, Franco’s regime, the debacle before reconcilia-

² My translation — J.J.G.P.

³ Following Ortega’s interpretation — coinciding with that expressed by Heidegger — is that the problem of death is, to use current terminology, “interdisciplinary.” To think about death is to confront different questions from different perspectives: from the anthropological question (who are we?), passing through biological aspects, to metaphysical considerations (what does it mean to be and not to be?). It is obvious that for Ortega death is, in principle, a philosophical problem, philosophical because it is problematic and somehow integral, plural. In this sense, philosophical problems are rooted in the cultural *humus*. All cultural formation is nothing more than the plastic and dynamic mixture of certain problems and challenges for human life, among which are those of a philosophical nature. Thus, Spain becomes a philosophical problem, in a restricted sense, in the way that its culture tries, through the formation of character and habitus, to open a horizon about how death is a radical, transcendental issue, in order to know who we are.

⁴ My translation — J.J.G.P.

tion of the nation itself with its fellows, confronted on two sides, some victors, the rest defeated. Ortega was one of the Spanish thinkers who thought about Spain philosophically with the greatest care and concern.

What does it mean to think philosophically about Spain? Just as Husserl did with his phenomenology, perhaps most clearly in that 1935 Conference which was later published under the title *The Crisis of European Sciences*, but, in general, in the very idiosyncrasy of phenomenology: a tensional and everlasting struggle under the pressure of two fronts: positivism, which makes human beings factual materials, and psychologism, which subjects the coming to presence, the self-sufficiency of the appearing of entities, to a mental or psychic state. The problem of Spain constitutes for Ortega — following this tensional reading of phenomenology — a *European hope* (Ortega, 2004a, 337), a strange case, because its culture was neither materialistic-positivist nor idealist-rationalist, under the very German slogan of the idea of *Kultur*. Spain represented a historical aberration; it came late to the Enlightenment and, according to the so-called “Black Legend,” Spaniards were still living in what Comte called the “religious stage” (Roca, 2021). Ortega sees in Spain’s historical condition an opportunity to justify his ratio-vitalism. *Ratio-vitalismo* is something more than a mere conciliatory stance between vitalism and rationalism; it supposes, in my interpretation, a way of assuming an existence under the auspices of the immediacy of living, where reason does not necessarily contribute to reflection of a theoretical nature, making use of *epoché* or methodical doubt, but it opens up as a being-in-the-world in a highly practical sense. So, even the most apparent prejudices hide some truth: that Spain is a country of the south, that is, that Spaniards live life practically, in the street, with an extroverted, cheerful character, and that they have an extroverted and friendly attitude. For the Spaniard, and in general, exteriority always ends up winning out over interiority, which is why one socializes in bars, with friends, having tapas, talking face-to-face with strangers, without mediation. And this idea of life, even today expounded by certain politicians⁵, emphasizes the Spaniard and, consequently, a Spanish culture composed of cheerful, extroverted modes of existence, more based on action than on theory.

One can ask why Spain is like this, and, of course, one could find certain answers in cultural, anthropological, aetiological or sociological studies. Ortega resolves

⁵ Although it may sound comical, and somewhat extemporaneous for a work of this scientific nature, I am reminded of the words of the President of the Community of Madrid, who defended a “Madrilenian” lifestyle through knowing how to behave in the street, in bars, drinking “cañas.” That this is, by all rights, a prejudice does not necessarily imply that it has a well of truth, at least a descriptive truth.

it in his own way, by summoning philosophising, and, in my opinion, he does so by the process of thinking about death. Only a culture that has thought about death radically can live the way the Spaniards do, devoted to the immediacy of existence⁶. Ortega's thesis is that the problem of death has been a common denominator in Spanish culture. While, in general, philosophical modernity, since Descartes, Spinoza or Montaigne, has developed with a certain phobia of death in the sense of questioning death as something exogenous to life, as a pseudo-problem alien to life, Spain has been almost obsessively caught up in a preoccupation with death, from Seneca to Manrique, passing through Juan de la Cruz, Quevedo and Unamuno himself. What does this imply? For a Spaniard following this line of interpretation, death is an intrinsic part of living itself. Facing death is "the most important vital act" (Ortega, 2006, 709), where we risk our skin, through which we rehabilitate, as we shall see later, an original sense of the temporality of human life. Ortega is very clear about this and sees in the history of Spain a "dance of death" (Ortega, 2004a, 184), in the Spaniard a "friend of death" (Ortega, 2007, 102). Learning from death lies in the possibility of achieving a rehabilitation of the very meaning of living, without the need to make life dependent on some soothing, analgesic, soteriological principle, in short: a basic justifying principle⁷.

⁶ And what connection would there be between culture and death? For Ortega, as also for Freud, cultures are responsible for the formation of the character and habits of a given territory, favoring the survival of the species; consequently, every culture shapes human life, serving as the "orthopedics" for praxis to be realized. Are there cultures that teach us to die? Can a culture facilitate the feat of learning to be mortal? This is one of the differential points of the Spanish against an enlightened Europe that was *thanatophobic*. A culture that has taken death as a process intrinsic to living, as has Spanish culture, provides those who share such a cultural model with a series of hermeneutic tools to carry out actions that ultimately end up shaping the subjectivity of each person. In this sense, as paradoxical as it may seem, Ortega understands that culture has served to give vigor to life, dignifying the task of living, a culture of life. Life that is historical and cultural becomes love for life, for living, a *meditatio mortis* not *timor mortis*.

⁷ The key to all this is that for Ortega the philosophical formation of "the Spanish" goes hand in hand with the promotion of a culture of death, one could even say "of the mortal or of mortality." This categorization of the Spanish does not appeal to a sort of perennial, objective and *a priori* essence; it is not an *ousia*, nor a *hypokeimenon*, but it is a possibility of existential development that is exercised from a culture that, in turn, is historical and finite. This possibility of the Spanish would be deployed from its language, also spoken in most of South America, and in the materiality of the nation, of course, but it is not racial, not even a consequence of a material reality, even though the existential possibility requires (political) space. The Spanish are the existential product of having to deal with an already interpreted reality, open from a historicity and from a demand that sees life itself as an *emergency*. When Ortega speaks of Spain as a problem, Spain as a philosophical problem, he does so by appealing to the cultural crisis of the late nineteenth century, when Europe was torn between two pincers, that of the subjective idealist or the positivism of naturalistic vocation, and when Spain was a possibility, a promise, a future. What would characterize the Spanish

It is not surprising that in 1951, when the so-called Darmstadt Conferences took place, Heidegger described the figure of the Spanish *hidalgo*, melancholic but serene, in the terms that he did. As Heidegger himself records (Heidegger, 1983a, 129), Ortega, sometime after the Darmstadt Conferences, gave a lecture, in a reduced forum, entitled „Der spanische Mensch und der Tod“:

Certainly, he only said what he had been familiar with for a long time, but how he said it revealed to us how much more advanced he was than his captivated listeners in a field which he has now crossed. (Heidegger, 1983a, 129)⁸

The epitomes with which Heidegger describes Ortega, though brief, are very clear: the character of the *hidalgo* — reminiscent of Don Quixote — over Ortega’s melancholic and serene gaze represents a man capable of looking life in the face, without fear, subterfuge or ultraterrestrial promises. And the fact is that existence, living itself, needs death precisely in order to be able to live, saying yes, accepting what is given to us, our mortal condition, lacerating at times, joyful at others; but in saying yes, affirmatively, to mortality, the perennial shadow of death, there is no room for fear or flight. In this respect, it is very clear what Ortega y Gasset says about the Spanish citizen, who:

does not originally attach any conditions to life. He is ready to live without conditions; he sees life as an infinite nakedness, as an absence of everything, and yet this does not produce in him any special anxiety, discouragement or dread. Hence the Spaniard’s famous lack of needs. (Ortega, 2009, 1370)⁹

vis-à-vis Europe? Well, not the color of their hair or eyes, or their racial constitution, or even a supposed mythological history that would make the Spaniards appear as the owners of the world. According to Ortega, what defines the Spanish as opposed to Europe is a way of having integrated the problem of death into the cultural context. While enlightened Europe developed on the back of death, from an attitude of phobia towards death, Spanish culture is “tanática”; death is “the most important vital act.” This cultural condition of *philia* towards death is, following the thesis of this article, of a similar making in relation to the Heideggerian notion of “freedom for death”, because its objective is no more than to facilitate the possibility of a temporal understanding of life, so that it appears in all its potentiality, and thus it is living itself that is dignified. In Ortega’s words, in order to “to have lordship over life” (Ortega, 2009, 1371).

⁸ My translation — *J.J.G.P.* There is no reliable documentary proof of the text of this lecture by Ortega y Gasset of which Heidegger speaks. However, there is a short text by Ortega y Gasset, entitled “The Spanish Man,” which seems very close to the subject Heidegger describes (Ortega, 2009, 1368–1371). I owe this reference and the motivation for part of this article to Prof. Dr. Antonio Gutiérrez Pozo. I recommend reading an article written by him (Gutiérrez Pozo, 2020, 107–135).

⁹ My translation — *J.J.G.P.*

Not needing as a sufficient condition for living; not needing as a plethora of meaning by which all life is possible in its minimal, insignificant condition; a life with no other attributes than living, living being the feat of incardinating itself in possibilities not yet chosen from its genesis, but its own, because life, or existence for Heidegger, needs nothing more than the possibility of being, always exuberant with respect to the way, concrete and factual, in which we incorporate it into an interpreted world, or as Heidegger said, into a state of interpretation. This non-needy condition with respect to living that Ortega describes of Spanish life is clear. The Spaniard:

does not need anything in order to live, he does not even need to live, he does not have a great commitment to live and this precisely places him in full freedom before life, this allows him to rule over life. (Ortega, 2009, 1371)¹⁰

One does not have to be very perceptive to glimpse a relation, not gratuitous, between Ortegian freedom for life and Heideggerian freedom for death:

the coming forward reveals to Dasein its loss in the they-self and leads it to the possibility of being itself without the primary support of busy solicitude and of being itself in a passionate freedom, free from the illusions of the one, a factual freedom, certain of itself and beset by anxiety: freedom for death. (Heidegger, 1977, 266)¹¹

Freedom for death is, strictly speaking, freedom for life, because it presupposes a living that is not subject to the rule of the impersonal, a freedom that is not autonomous, as the epitome of so-called negative freedom, but a freedom committed to mere living, that lives, says yes and does not ask for soteriological principles of ultra-terrestrial justification. This life dispenses with the *principle of sufficient reason*; it finds sufficiency in living, which always exceeds the accumulation that a reason, whether instrumental or causal, makes of the very act of living (existing). This free existence, assuming death as an ontological condition of human life, is neither barbaric nor abrupt nor unhinged, but a life that knows that every existential project, opening itself in its condition of being thrown (away), finds its meaning in reconciliation through the encounter with our finitude. As we know, this encounter with finitude, in terms proper to existential phenomenology, is not an aseptic fact but hides the constitutive core of all temporality that we are at the same time: the finitude of human life is the temporal instance that opens the space of play of the meaning of human life, life that is not there, in front of our eyes, in the manner of *Vorhandenheit*, but that we are, we

¹⁰ My translation — J.J.G.P.

¹¹ My translation — J.J.G.P.

embody it, we dress it, we inhabit it, because existence is “in each case for me” (*Jemeinigkeit*), and I cannot abdicate in order, from a certain distance, to understand the life that I am from outside, from a certain distance. The mortal is the existent who lives his life surrendered “to-be-able-to-be” (*Seinkönnen*), which opens from the condition of surrender to possibilities that must be assumed and decided upon.

There is, then, a freedom for life (death) that is the product of a knowing how to be, a behaviour, an ethical action. It is not enough for Dasein to know that it is mortal; it must first of all learn to exist. And although *Being and Time* by no means had the development of a practical philosophy, a philosophy applied to life, among its objectives, one can infer from what is written in the book a whole philosophising devoted to the task of existing, whose concern is to make existence itself lucid, in which one can extract a certain existential learning about finitude (Garrido-Periñán, 2021, 161–173). Moreover, if Heidegger, as he says in Paragraph 7 of *Being and Time*, employs phenomenology as a condition for the correct display of the ontological problem — being — and if phenomenology is committed to things themselves, i. e., to starting from what we are (not from a supposed immaculate ideal for *epoché*), only then can it be deduced that the descriptions of existence or of factual life are not valid, that Heidegger’s descriptions of existence or factual life should be drawn from his own situation, being experienced in some way by him/us. To speak of freedom for death, or of being-toward-death, as “concepts” would be a gross error in Heidegger’s methodical development. Existentials are signs, born of certain hermeneutical references, which are only valid as reflections of how human life is carried out practically through behaviour. *Freedom from death is not an ideal, but an eminent possibility of human life.* Thus, we could also say, to use Ortega’s and Heidegger’s critique of positivism, scientism or historicist philosophy: we need a philosophising that rehabilitates that vital space that we are and through which we develop: existence. And this way of rehabilitating the existence that we are supposes the integration of death as an instance that makes all living possible, as the “between” that opens the bursting of all temporality, never leaving death behind, making it a stranger to life itself¹².

¹² By virtue of what has been said, this is not a question of considering Spain to be the most authentic culture in the world, but paradoxically, if we follow the terms of “authenticity” exposed by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, where dying is the instance that opens the horizon of the temporality of existence, we could tentatively affirm that Spain represents the cultural model of authentic existence for Heidegger, as long as we consider as valid the perspective through which Ortega understands the relations between life and culture. It is obvious that for Ortega life, before being a phenomenon captured by a theoretical understanding, as in biology, which experiments with certain empirical dates, is culture and history; it develops by means of activities of a hermeneutic nature that gestate and model the human being, from the language up to the most daily habits.

4. “MAN LIVES BY HIS DEATH,” ORTEGA DIXIT¹³

Ortega and Heidegger are twinned in considering death as a key aspect of human life; so key is it that death is an intrinsic and inseparable phenomenon of life. In this sense, as I said before, both of them stand before a certain tradition that, since Epicurus, thinks of death as something exogenous to existence: “death, the most terrible of evils, does not relate to us, for while we are alive it does not exist, and when it does, we do not exist” (Epicurus, 1973, 109)¹⁴; or with Montaigne: “death concerns us neither dead nor alive: alive, because we exist: dead, because we do not exist” (Montaigne, 1965, 95)¹⁵. Ortega, like Heidegger, thinks in the manner of the Spanish poet Alfonso Reyes: “You were death and I called you ‘life’” (Reyes, 1996, 77)¹⁶, or with Quevedo: “You do not know death, and you yourselves are your death, it has the face of each one of you and you are all the death of yourselves” (Quevedo, 1978, 199)¹⁷, or also with Ortega: “at the same time you begin to be born and to die... you were born to die and you live by dying” (Ortega, 2004b, 547)¹⁸.

Needless to say, all these little fragments, even in their affective tone, are much closer to what Heidegger wanted to express when he dared to make an analytic of *Da-sein*. These fragments, taken from the Spanish cultural-philosophical heritage, point to a fact that I would like to interpret from a certain tragic vocation, nothing pessimistic, but irresolvable: death is inscribed in all life, as an immanent unfolding of the possibilities of existence. This implies that I cannot place death, my death, outside in order to think about my existence.

With synthesis and brevity, I will try to explain why I consider this philosophical position tragic, namely:

a. Death is an unsolvable problem; it cannot be left behind, nor can it be repressed or placed outside. Whether I think I am immortal or not, I will die in the end. Therefore, there is no salvation from this necessary relationship between death and life (In every tragedy there is an unresolvable conflict).

b. In the Greek sense of *hamartia* (fatal error), the existent is condemned to his mortality, and no matter how much good will he shows, he will neither save himself

¹³ He said this at the Darmstadt Colloquium. See: (Ortega, 2007, 807).

¹⁴ My translation — J.J.G.P.

¹⁵ My translation — J.J.G.P.

¹⁶ My translation — J.J.G.P.

¹⁷ My translation — J.J.G.P.

¹⁸ My translation — J.J.G.P.

from death, nor save a loved one. Heidegger reminds us of this in *Being and Time*: “No one can take the other’s dying away from him” (Heidegger, 1977, 240)¹⁹.

c. Because death constitutes a vital state, the problem of existence is not solved by resorting to a state of *ataraxia*, as if we could deny consciousness, forget ourselves. Death demands that we integrate it, as a possibility of impossibility, into each of our life projects. So, with death we must accept a destiny, but not passively, but by saying yes, by transforming our lives, by being otherwise.

These three characteristics would account, albeit apparently, for certain similarities with the tragedy of Greek origin, or at least with a certain personal experience that we are able to find when reading these tragedies ourselves. There is, however, something that I have not yet said and that I consider essential to understanding tragedy as an unavoidable existential position, and that is that both Heidegger and Ortega understand the existent as fallen, in the case of the former, and as shipwrecked, in the case of the latter. Having conceived existence in terms of to-be-able-to-be, having conceived life in possibilities that I am myself, for which I put myself at stake, these possibilities being open from the bottom of an impossibility, indeterminable and in-experientible and highly unavailable, it is accepted that all possibility is condemned to errancy, to wandering. An existential possibility is never completely fulfilled; it opens up as a constant lack, because if it is filled, the nothingness of death appears, and that is the end of it. This errancy (wondering), which is a tragic point of view, is also palpable in the field of ethical deliberation and decision, for one never possesses, in advance, a magic recipe for knowing which choice is the right one; every ethical-existential decision is simply made from a background of uncertainty and radical irresolvability, as Heidegger well understood from Aristotle’s *Ethics* (Heidegger, 2005, 343–420).

Once this is affirmed, then what do we do? Do we abandon ourselves to the misfortune of living? Do we take our own life? Do we take antidepressants to sustain life? Indeed, it is no trivial matter that depression is the most widespread illness in an increasingly technological and affluent world, where standards of living and well-being are supposed to have increased. Ortega’s vision of the average Spaniard and his way of existence would seem to me to be a profound and wise answer to how to exist despite this tragic condition that all life entails. To say yes, to love life without conditions, without ulterior principles of justification, not to make existence dependent on structural or motivating questions, which encompass it and to give it an ultimate meaning (in the manner of the final cause), supposes a whole effort to be, and it seems to me that this is not far from what Heidegger meant by “propriety” (*Eigentlichkeit*), if we

¹⁹ My translation — J.J.G.P.

follow this practical-existential reading of *Being and Time*. Resolution (*Entschlossenheit*) integrates death, as a possibility of all impossibility, as an opportunity for *Dasein* to obtain an existential understanding (which is executive, let us not forget) of its own being as existence. It is obvious that the existential property, open in a life project, has had to integrate death within all the possibilities of existence, and that this integration has been done in spite of the “it is said,” the dominant interpretations and the tendency of *Dasein* to fall. And all this without guarantees or magic recipes, because *Dasein* is always *das Man*, and because one’s own way of being does not presuppose an idea of sanctity or an ulterior state of authentic life, but an open possibility from the depths of indeterminacy, which I have understood here in terms of wandering.

5. ON HÖLDERLIN AND POETICISING

Although within the Heideggerian exegetical orthodoxy, it is not until the 1930s that Heidegger’s real turning point in his thinking is considered, with the well-known importance of the poet Hölderlin as the representative of the coming, of the other beginning, Heidegger’s almost erotic relationship with Hölderlin’s poetry went back a long time. According to Pöggeler (Pöggeler, 2000, 71), as early as 1910 Heidegger had already experienced the “earthquake” provoked by his reading of Hölderlin’s narrative work. In 1925, Heidegger wrote to Hannah Arendt: “I live very much with Hölderlin” (Pöggeler, 2000, 71). To my knowledge there is no there are any studies that explore in a central role certain influences of the tragic position drawn from Hölderlin’s reading of the way in which Heidegger thematises “death” in *Being and Time*. In any case, if there are any, they must be little known, since other types of studies are known which relate phenomenological-existential thinking to Kierkegaard, Aristotle, Luther, etc. Be that as it may, this is the main point: to show that the poeticising condition that Heidegger seems to develop through his reading of Hölderlin from the 1930s onwards needs to be embedded in a tragic background, from a certain basis through which existence is understood to be determined under an inescapably tragic condition. To show this essential condition, and for reasons of space-time, I will only take as an example: “the Greek interpretation of man in Sophocles’ *Antigone*” from Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister” (Heidegger, 1984). I will not consider Heidegger’s version in the course of the *Introduction to Metaphysics* (Heidegger, 1983b). The two versions differ; they have unique nuances, but I will refrain from elaborating on them. For Heidegger, the Ister, that mighty river which we call the “Danube,” represents the “locality” (*Ortschaft*) where the historical destiny of the existent, like a pilgrim, sets out on its pilgrimage. This destiny, as is well known, is impossible; it bursts forth barren, infertile, because machination, sponsored by an

increasingly brutalised technological development, has caused the gods to disappear from the horizon. When the gods are missing, Hölderlin exclaims “let the sacred be my word” (*Und was ich sah, das Heilige sei mein Wort*). Hölderlin’s word is not valid because it is his own; words never belong to the man, but to the poeticiser, who puts into action what is essential in order to be able to hope for the “destination” (*Zu-Schickung*) of what is his own (Heidegger, 1984, 148). Man is wounded, because what he “is,” his existence, opens up like a breach from the uncanny/foreign; man is a “being of distance/remoteness” (*Wesen der Ferne*). This remoteness constitutes for the human being the perennial impossibility of disposing of the being of the entity and sustaining the negativity of the world, the nothingness that titillates and drags us into suffering. For the human being, his foundation is the most tremendous-fascinating and inhospitable (*Umheimlichkeit*); if he renounces it, makes it up, disguises it, then he denies himself, and he is heading towards emptiness without remedy. As we are hollow, inhabitants of a vacuum, the human being seeks a home, a house, a *being-at-home*. This longing is only possible because of the pre-eminence of a not-being-at-home, because the human being is, rather, a *pariah* or *metatech* of being (foreign of being). And this means that the essence of the human is based on a “being-on-the-way” (*unterwegs*). We do not have to force this interpretation very far to see how tragic this condition is. The familiar, the homeland and the home are always a quest open to the enormous and inhospitable, to the tragic necessity by which the human being is always already an outcast for himself. This being-pariah apparently has little to do with what we have expressed above about death and being-Spanish according to Ortega’s interpretation. Now, the condition of being-pariah, being open in the inhospitable, are ways of understanding absence as an ontological constituent. By this I mean that, unlike being (which, according to the Greek tradition, is supposed to be always, therefore eternal), the human being can also be non-being, and therefore carries absence, non-being, death. And it is not me saying this; Heidegger says it in *Beiträge*:

To ‘there’ (Da) belongs as its extreme that hiddenness in its most proper openness, the absent, as a permanent possibility, the being (sein) <being> absent; man knows it in the different figures of death. [...] The more originally being is experienced in its truth, the deeper (ist) <is> the nothingness as the abyss at the edge of the foundation. (Heidegger, 1989, 324, 325)²⁰

If you could forget “being,” there would be no problem. We forget “being” when we cling to the “entity”; we put and take goods; we call it “capital” or “Amazon.” But the tragedy of it all is that we twinned with being; we carry a pre-understanding of

²⁰ My translation — J.J.G.P.

being. This causes remoteness to become pre-ontologically closeness. And this allows for errancy. If we were to understand human life in terms of mathematisable coordinates, wandering would be impossible, because wandering is not equivocation; wandering is the main workmanship of human life that opens up as possibilities, which properly speaking are ours, but which we can never have fully at our disposal. This is why “*pathein* is the very essence of the *deinon*” (Heidegger, 1984, 127). To err is always to suffer the *deinon*, the destiny for the human being. So dwelling, being able to experience belonging with home, cannot avoid inhospitality, the human mortal condition, “the to-be-able-to-be of man in the relationship with being is poetic” (Heidegger, 1984, 150)²¹.

6. CONCLUSION

And the essence of poetry, poeticising, has already been found: poeticising is the possibility of leaving-saying to the being so that it is possible to host it, but, first, by welcoming the extreme radical otherness of absence, nothingness or death. How, then, does this welcoming of extreme otherness take place? One can think that it is necessary to be a poet, or to go to Todtnauberg, to be among the cows and mountains, in a hut. This was perhaps Heidegger’s way of being, but what will be ours? It is obvious that it would not be pertinent to imitate Heidegger for the sake of imitating him, because the refuge of the hut does not mean “serenity as tranquillity.” This acceptance of death, of mortality, requires an effort, a capacity to integrate in a life project, the impossibility or the condition of being a pariah, to exist properly or to be able to inhabit the land. Is the example of Spanish life expounded by Ortega an adequate cultural model and in conformity with this kind of tragic philosophy expounded by Heidegger? I honestly believe that it is. Reconciliation with the acceptance of otherness demands a serene courage, a *serene anxiety*; it is necessary to have said yes, without final causes, to living itself, to live without guarantees, in spite of everything. Without this precondition of engagement with life, it would be impossible, in my opinion, to understand the mode of existence that emerges from poetic dwelling. If anything were necessary, it would be this: to live in such a way that in order to live you only need the mere “being alive.” You will discover the inhospitable, the *deinon*, the monstrous, the sorrow, the suffering; sometimes you will flee; you will put on a mask, but if you take the chance, from inhospitality, from your mortality, you will serenely inhabit the Earth.

²¹ My translation — J.J.G.P.

REFERENCES

- Derrida, J. (1987). *De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question*. Paris: Editions Galilée.
- Epicurus. (1973). Epistula ad Menoeceum (125). In G. Arrighetti (Ed.), *Opere* (5–8). Torino: Einaudi.
- Entralgo, P. (1968). La spiritualité du peuple espagnol. Le temps et la présence de la mort. In *Le temps et la mort dans la philosophie espagnole contemporaine* (13–27). Toulouse: Edouard Privat.
- Garrido-Periñán, J. J. (2021). Philosophy as Vocation and Personal Commitment: The Young Heidegger and the Question of Philosophy. *Problemas*, 99, 161–173.
- Gutiérrez, A. (2020). La Muerte como creación. La interiorización vitalista de la muerte en la vida en la filosofía de Ortega y Gasset. *Claridades. Revista de Filosofía*, 12, 107–135.
- Heidegger, M. (1976). *Wegmarken* (GA 9). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Heidegger, M. (1977). *Sein und Zeit* (GA 2). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Heidegger, M. (1983a). *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens (1919–1976)* (GA 13). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Heidegger, M. (1983b). *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (GA 40). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Heidegger, M. (1984). Höderlins Humne „Der Ister“ (GA 53). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Heidegger, M. (1989). *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)* (GA 65). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Heidegger, M. (2005). *Frühe Freiburger Vorlesung Sommersemester 1922* (GA 62). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Farias, V. (1987). *Heidegger et le nazisme*. Paris: Éditions Verdier.
- Montaigne, M. de. (1965). *Les Essais (1580–1588)* (P. Villey, Ed.). Paris: Quadrige/PUF.
- Nolte, E. (1992). *Heidegger. Politik und Geschichte im Leben und Denken*. Berlin: Propyläen.
- Liotard, F. (1988). *Heidegger et « les juifs »*. Paris: Débats.
- Ott, H. (1989). *Martin Heidegger. Unterwegs zu seiner Biographie*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.
- Ortega, J. (2004a). *Obras Completas, vol. I*. Madrid: Taurus.
- Ortega, J. (2004b). *Obras Completas, vol. II*. Madrid: Taurus.
- Ortega, J. (2006). *Obras Completas, vol. VI*. Madrid: Taurus.
- Ortega, J. (2007). *Obras Completas, vol. VII*. Madrid: Taurus.
- Ortega, J. (2009). *Obras Completas, vol. IX*. Madrid: Taurus.
- Pöggeler, O. (1990). *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers*. Pfullingen: Neske.
- Pöggeler, O. (2000). Die kürzeste Bahn. Heideggers Weg zu Hölderlin. In P. Trawny (Ed.), *Voll Verdienst, doch dichterisch wohnt der Mensch auf dieser Erde. Heidegger und Hölderlin* (73–79). Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Quevedo, F. de (1978). *Sueños*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe.
- Reyes, A. (1996). *Obras completas*. México: FCE.
- Rockmore, T. (1991). *On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Roca, M. E. (2021). *Imperiofobia y la leyenda negra*. Madrid: Siruela.
- Scherer, G. (1989). Philosophie des Todes und moderne Rationalität. In H. H. Jansen (Ed.), *Der Tod in Dichtung, Philosophie und Kunst* (505–521), Darmstadt: Steinkopff.
- Sluga, H. (1993). *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wolin, R. (1993). *The Heidegger Controversy. A Critical Reader*. Cambridge, CA: MIT Press.
- Unamuno, M. de. (2009). *Obras completas, t. X*. Madrid: Fundación José Antonio de Castro.