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THE PHILOSOPHER AND HIS PHILOSOPHIES. ORTEGA, HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY AND BEYOND*

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This article tries to unravel some of the main clues provided by Ortega on his understanding of philosophy. The thesis we defend is that the Spanish philosopher maintains two slightly different answers concerning the question *what is philosophy*, though Ortega does not acknowledge them in the explicit narrative of his thinking. This, we believe, creates tensions in his late second philosophical model, as he does not fully break away from certain “adherence” or “mannerisms” associated to his early model. In this respect, Ortega would be a thinker who lives between two philosophical worlds, someone who sees, narrates and interprets the philosophical shock wave occurring at his time, but does not quite let go of the old intellectual constructions. To support our thesis, we will compare two texts, his 1929 lectures *What is Philosophy?*, and his *Notes on Thinking*, from 1941. In the period between these two works, Ortega seems to move from a more “traditional,” “universalistic,” “transcendental,” in short, Husserlian phenomenological understanding of philosophy, to a more historicist, hermeneutical, and pragmatic one, which lays the emphasis on the plurality of discourses on the sense, the contingency of the philosophical narrative itself, and even the very possibility of its ending, at least in its more “metaphysical” and classical form.

Keywords: philosophy, husserlian phenomenology, universalism, hermeneutics, historicism, human condition, end of philosophy.

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ФИЛОСОФ И ЕГО ФИЛОСОФИИ. ОРТЕГА, ГУССЕРЛЕВСКАЯ ФЕНОМЕНОЛОГИЯ И ДАЛЬШЕ*

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В этой статье будет предпринята попытка раскрыть некоторые из тех намеков, которые Ортега оставил о своём понимании философии. Тезис, который мы отстаиваем, заключается в том, что испанский философ предлагает два несколько отличных ответа на вопрос о том, что такое философия, хотя и не излагает их явным образом. Этот факт, как мы полагаем, создает некоторую напряженность в его второй, более поздней философской модели, поскольку он не окончательно отказывается от определенной «приверженности» своей ранней модели и связанных с ней стилистических приёмов. В этом отношении Ортега мог бы рассматриваться как мыслитель, живущий между двумя философскими мирами, тот, кто видит, повествует и интерпретирует современную философскую ударную волну, впрочем, не вполне отказываясь от старых интеллектуальных построений. Чтобы подтвердить наш тезис, мы проводим сравнение двух текстов: его лекций 1929 года «Что такое философия?» и его «Заметок о мышлении» 1941 года. В период между этими двумя работами Ортега, по-видимому, переходит от более «традиционного», «универсалистского», «трансцендентального», иначе говоря, гуссерлианского феноменологического понимания философии, к более историцистскому, герменевтическому и прагматичному. В последнем акцент смещается к множественности дискурсов о смысле, контингентности философского нарратива как такового и самой возможности его завершения — по крайней мере если говорить о более «метафизической» и классической форме этого нарратива.

Ключевые слова: философия, феноменология Гуссерля, универсализм, герменевтика, историцизм, человеческая ситуация, конец философии.

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La verdad es la verdad, dígala Agamenón o su porquero
Agamenón. — Conforme
El porquero. — No me convence.
Antonio Machado

1. AS AN INTRODUCTION: THE QUESTION ABOUT PHILOSOPHY

The questions about the meaning and function of philosophy, about its true inclusion in and relevance to the life of human beings, have persistently recurred ever since the very beginning of this discipline. We do not believe to deceive ourselves by saying that any major philosopher has explicitly addressed, at some point, the reason and purpose of his activity. In this regard, it is remarkable that a discourse which in most of its best practitioners seems to pursue something close to eternity, the perennial, the universal, does not yet find rest or consensus about its own destiny and nature. Even within the same thinker it is not unusual to find *slightly different* or radically contradictory answers on such matter.

In this essay, we attempt to unravel some of the key clues provided by Ortega on his understanding of philosophy. This is no easy task. Any good reader of his work knows that under the appearance of clarity, his prose and thinking are fraught with nuances, twists and sinuosities. His case does not differ on this, for example, from Nietzsche's, whose profound influence on Ortega is well known. And if we had to include Ortega under any category, we would do so under those philosophers who throughout their lives have provided two slightly different answers to this question. Two answers, though, that Ortega himself does not seem to acknowledge in the explicit narrative of his thinking. This, we believe, creates tensions in his late second philosophical model, as he does not fully break away from certain "adherence" or "mannerisms" associated to his early model. In this respect, Ortega would be a thinker who lives between two philosophical worlds, someone who sees, narrates and interprets the philosophical shock wave occurring at his time, but does not quite let go of the old intellectual constructions.

To support our thesis, we will compare his thoughts on this matter using two texts that to us seem very telling and specifically address this issue. We are referring to his 1929 lectures, *What Is Philosophy?*, and his *Notes on Thinking*, from 1941. In the period between these works, Ortega seems to move from a more "traditional," "universalistic," "transcendental," in short, Husserlian phenomenological understanding of philosophy, to a more historicist, hermeneutical, and pragmatic one, which lays the emphasis on the plurality of discourses on the sense, the contingency of the philo-

sophical narrative itself, and the very possibility of its ending, at least in its more “metaphysical” and classical form. Such shift, whose periodization and development we do not intend to explain, seems to us of fundamental importance, since understanding philosophy in either sense is not just a rhetorical matter, but has an impact on the economy of philosophy within the whole set of knowledge, particularly, the humanities, and, accordingly and above all, on the very idea of human being associated to the philosophical practice, that is to say, to our idea of humanity.

We will explain this philosophical shift by splitting our paper into two parts. First, we will specify Ortega’s understanding of philosophy in his 1929 lectures. Secondly, we will do so with his 1941 work. We will then conclude our story with a final coda, where we will gather some questions and perplexities resulting from the tension or discomfort we detect in Ortega himself with regards to the model derived from the radicalness of his own “historicist shift.”

2. AUTONOMY AND PANTONOMY.

THE UNDERSTANDING OF PHILOSOPHY IN WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

In this part of our essay, we aim to establish what is the idea of philosophy presented by Ortega in his emblematic work *What is Philosophy?*. The choice of this course is rooted in the thesis that such lectures clearly show the *prevailing* model in Ortega until *perhaps* the early thirties¹. A model based, with all its nuances, on the idea that philosophy is basically fundament, the evident and true theory of everything that there is. A theory that gathers, as such, the very essence of human condition and is to be understood, with certain nuances, as a rigorous science in a Husserlian sense².

¹ The use of the adjective “prevailing” and the adverb “perhaps” wish to signal the precautions that we the authors have when it comes to determining periodizations that are excessively rigid in the interpretation of a thinker like Ortega. About this point in relation to the liberalism of the Spanish philosopher see: (Díaz Álvarez, 2013a, 286).

² To further study Ortega’s relationship with phenomenology, particularly Husserlian phenomenology, the many writings of Javier San Martín are very important. While it is true that Orriger, Silver, or Cerezo, among others, have insisted on this aspect, we believe that the works by San Martín are already classics in this aspect of Orteguian studies. Thanks to them it is now impossible to study Ortega without the husserlian-phenomenological counterpoint. The last work in this direction that is, in some sense, a culmination and a complement of his prior argumentations is the book *La fenomenología de Ortega y Gasset* (San Martín, 2012). To study the husserlian nature of *What is Philosophy?*, see the article “¿Qué es filosofía? Un texto emblemático de madurez” (San Martín, 1998, 146–198). In relation to Husserl and Ortega, it is also essential to consult (Cerezo, 1984, 191–338; García-Baró, 2012). It can be useful, too (Díaz Álvarez, 2013b, 3–10; Díaz Álvarez, 2020, 87–102;

Additionally, *What is Philosophy?* is also of utmost interest because, while actually sustaining such thesis, it is a kind of crossroads where potential problems and shortcomings in the prevailing model can be sensed. In this regard, the approach taken to the theory of beliefs and their historicity is particularly interesting. Especially relevant are also the last two lectures, IX and X, where Ortega tries to specify some of the attributes of life, as a radical reality, and the specter of Heidegger seems to loom large over the initial Husserlian approach, somewhat overshadowing it. Therefore, one could conjecture that in these very lectures, together with the traditional or Husserlian model, there is a more hermeneutic and pragmatic way of understanding the philosophical activity that is striving to emerge, that is, philosophy as one possible discourse, among many others, about the meaning of human life and with a clear awareness of its own contingency and finitude. In brief, philosophy as a historical possibility about the meaning, but distant, in principle—we will see how Ortega himself significantly qualifies, by act and omission, this thesis—from any ultimate exclusiveness or foundational claim and pervaded, radically now, by human historicity. We will address this aspect in the second part of the essay.

Beyond this conjecture and whether both models are present in *What Is Philosophy?* or not, let us now explain the one we understand to be the most recognizable and mainstream model. We will proceed as follows. First, we will make a general approach to the idea of philosophy prevailing in these lectures. Here, as mentioned before, philosophy is understood as a theoretical discourse without any presuppositions, led by evidence and involving all there is. Philosophy is argued to be, using the language in these lectures, *autonomous and pantonomous*.

Secondly, we will show how for Ortega, in this period, such philosophical discourse is necessarily linked to a longing for human sense, a longing that *only* philosophy can fulfill. To the extent such longing is postulated as universal and can only be satisfied by philosophy itself, the equation established will be as follows: *philosophy is something intrinsic and inherent to human condition and only those who somewhat philosophize, even if in an naive way, are human beings in its fullest sense*. Or in other words, “the living being who is not a philosopher is a brute” (Ortega y Gasset, 2006a, 25), some sort of somnambulist renouncing his innermost essence and very close to an animal-like state.

Thirdly, we will point out how this more traditional way of understanding philosophy results in the fact that the 1929 lectures are lacking two elements clearly pres-

Serrano de Haro, 2016). To study the lectures from the 1930s in general, including *What is Philosophy?*, see: (Lasaga, 2013, 69–89).

ent in the other essay under analysis, which are both essential to discern and understand the new ideas argued later by Ortega. Namely, first, that humanity and its meaning are not exclusively subordinated to philosophy, that other approaches (religious, mythical, magical, sapience-driven or connected to life experience) existed before and will exist after it. Secondly, and closely related to this, that philosophy, at least as we know it, is radically historical, it started at a particular moment of time and will end at another. Hence, in *What Is Philosophy?* there is not even the slightest reflection on the end of philosophy itself, its very termination.

Let us discuss now our first point: the notion of philosophy prevailing in the 1929 lectures.

Anyone who approaches these lectures for the first time and is slightly familiar with the philosophy irrupting from 1900 on will realize the agreement between Ortega's thesis and those of the philosophers trying to overcome in that exact moment what they understood as the submission of philosophy to science, particularly to physics. Their central idea could be summarized by saying that if during medieval times philosophy was a servant of theology, in the 19th century, specially during its second half, a new master had appeared, the science of mathematical physics. This had turned philosophy into theory of science, into a second-order reflection on a field previously determined by physics where the latter enjoyed the monopoly on what could or could not be stated with undoubted truth.

In other words, to these thinkers, the 19th-century post-idealism philosophy had surrendered to the alleged exact evidence validated by the experience arising from mathematical physics, an experience that Kant had, in a philosophical sense, translated as a priori synthetic judgments. Philosophy, then, had to unravel how such judgments were possible. However, was the knowledge provided by physics indeed a strict knowledge of the world? The only one truly rigorous and, as such, the model to be followed?

Ortega and many colleagues of his generation answered this question negatively. Deeply influenced by Husserlian phenomenology, the Spanish thinker said, among many other things, that science is a symbolic knowledge of reality that happens to be wonderful for handling and transforming the world, but precisely for this reason does not quite ultimately reveal what reality truly is. Every symbol has contact points with the real, but is not the real itself. And it is the real itself, beyond its transformations, what philosophy should investigate. Ortega expresses this as follows:

The so-called physical reality is subsidiary and not absolute, a quasi-reality [...]. Philosophy is not a science because it is so much more than science. [*And in another passage*]...

when defining philosophy as knowledge of the Universe, I propose that this is to be understood as a comprehensive system of intellectual attitudes, where the ambition to achieve absolute knowledge is systematically organized. The overriding consideration, thus, for a set of thoughts to become philosophy is based on [the idea that] the intellect's reaction to the Universe is also universal, comprehensive, in short, an absolute system. (Ortega y Gasset, 2008, 258–259, 256, 262)

In essence, philosophy as understood in *What Is Philosophy?* must be *autonomous and pantonomous*. This means, on the one hand, that it must support itself, be, in Husserlian words, a science without presuppositions, a radical and founding science or, as Ortega expresses with great clarity, “much more than science.” From this standpoint, philosophy is the only knowledge actually autonomous and represents a presupposition for any other. But beyond the radical assumption of criticism, philosophy must also be a theory of everything, a knowledge of totality, *pantonomy*, that is to say, philosophy must “not settle for any position that does not express universal values, in brief, that does not aspire to the universe” (Ortega y Gasset, 2008, 296). The result of adding both moments, Cartesian-Kantian (autonomy) and Hegelian (pantonomy), is that philosophy must be, according to Ortega in these lectures, an “absolute knowledge.” An absolute knowledge that, as such, cannot “accept for its sentences any mode of truth other than that of total evidence based in adequate intuitions [...], [namely] philosophy, the data it should pursue are those surely and undoubtedly existing” (Ortega y Gasset, 2008, 302, 304). Therefore, philosophy as the ultimate and totalizing theory of the real, as the final discourse about the truth regarding the world and the human beings inhabiting it, as true knowledge based and articulated *on* adequate and unshakeable evidence.

But if this is the idea that seems to be primarily present in Ortega at the time of these lectures, we cannot be surprised that in the same lessons there is a strong identification between *philosophy and humanity*. Or, more accurately, between philosophy and human being in its fullest sense. We arrived, thus, to what we described earlier as the second point of our argument.

Indeed, if philosophy is an absolute, universal and ultimately-founded knowledge, a primary and totalizing knowledge of the real, anyone who intends to live a truly human existence should interact, even if at a minimum level, with it. In other words, being human means being somewhat of a philosopher in the noble sense of this term, and whoever has not realized that philosophy defines the very characteristic and specificity of humanity, something like its essence, does not substantially differ from a brute, from an animal that has replaced its instincts with a life full of mechanical, reified and never reflected upon habits.

Since, as pointed out by Ortega himself,

Philosophy does not emerge by reason of usefulness neither for unreason or caprice. *It is inherently necessary to the intellect.* Why so? Its radical characteristic was to pursue everything as such totality, capture the Universe [...]. However, why such eagerness? Why not be content with what we find in the world without philosophizing, with what already exists and is evidently there among us? For one simple reason: everything that exists and is there, when it is given, present, evident to us, is by essence a simple bit, piece, fragment, stump. And we cannot see it without envisioning and longing for the missing portion. In each given being, in each datum of the world, we find its essential fracture line, its character of part and only part—we see the wound of its ontological mutilation, it cries its pain as an amputee, its longing for the missing piece needed to be complete, its divine dissatisfaction—. (Ortega y Gasset, 2008, 304, emphasis added)

Somewhere else, Ortega states, in a very Aristotelic way, that an animal or God himself does not feel such wound, neither one has *problems* in the rigorous sense of this term. Only a human being as such, a “problem-ridden divine beast” (Ortega y Gasset, 2008, 304), is capable of longing for meaning in a broken and incomplete world. At the same time, only the human, being capable of such lucidity, can be altered and be lost in his lifeworld and forget about such a radical wound and that only philosophy has the ability to, first, take care of the problem and, second, but not less importantly, respond to the amputation, the ontological stump that human beings are themselves.

But even in this latter case, Ortega’s thinking in this period seems to suggest that such dismissal of philosophy can only be partial, never total. Philosophy and humanity may fall to their lowest level—the 19th century, with the triumph of comfort and utilitarianism, is a good proof of it—, but not disappear. Such is the meaning of the fragment in the previous quote stating that philosophy is “inherently necessary to the intellect.” Or of another passage where Ortega states that “it emerges from life itself and [*life*]... cannot help philosophizing, even if at the most elemental level. [*Concluding*] Therefore, the first answer to our question: what is philosophy?, could be this: philosophy is something... *inevitable*” (Ortega y Gasset, 2008, 267).

In short, in Ortega’s 1929 thinking living in a human way and living in a philosophical way are both the same thing. Humanity, in its noble and full sense, and philosophy are bound together. One does not exist without the other. Philosophy describes the essence of the human condition, of this intermediate creature between beasts and God, and *only philosophy* is able to assume and address the ontological stump that we are. In brief, as long as there are human beings there will be philosophy and as long as there is philosophy there will be human beings worthy of such name.

In this regard, and now we very briefly get into the third and last point of our thesis in the first part of our essay, it is not surprising that, after carefully reviewing

the text of these lectures, we were not able to find a single reference to other possible ways of being human in its full sense that do not go through or are not linked to the philosophical discourse. Contrary to what we shall see in the second part of our paper, there is no sign here of a more general idea of thinking detached from philosophy and that could encompass the way in which religion, myths, magic or sapience, among others, address the issue on the meaning of human life. Moreover, when at any point there is a reference, for example, to religion it is to praise the theologian, who as it is well known in Ortega is always closer to philosophy, versus the mystic. But even theology itself is not presented as a radical possibility for dealing with the ontological wound that defines the human being. Ultimately, the fundamental distinction between *thinking* and *knowledge* is not present in this work, a distinction assumed, *inter alia*, in his 1941 essay, *Notes on Thinking*, that we will later discuss.

Indeed, in this brilliant paper, the philosophical knowledge, ridden of a great deal of its foundationalist and totalizing burden, falls within the realm of thinking. And such realm is the one addressing in a general manner the issue about the meaning. However, *whilst all philosophical knowledge will be thought, not all thought is going to be subsumed into the rubric of philosophical knowledge*. In other words, this essay argues that the ontological wound of human condition is *expressed* and *addressed* in many forms. This is the way it has been in the past and will continue to be in the future. Religion, myth, magic, sapience or life experience are types of thought and possible solutions to our existential pain. Certainly, also in this second period, Ortega prioritizes, in his own way, the philosophical “solution”—we will see how later on—, but does not ignore or disregard the others. Philosophy, then, is not “inherently necessary to the intellect,” nor “inevitable.” The human and its meaning are declined in plural. Philosophy and the human essence are not inextricably and biunivocally bonded.

Moreover, in a new and unexpected twist of his discourse, this non-foundationalist Ortega will state something that remains somewhat implicit in his previous thesis where thinking and knowledge are differentiated, namely, that philosophy is a type of discourse radically contextual and historical. It rose at a particular moment and will surely perish at another one. Thus, the very philosophy of this Ortega acknowledges its radical historicism and anticipates, as we shall soon see, its own end and overcoming³.

³ With regards to this, we want to insist that, as we did earlier, the idea of radical contingency, historicity, and finitude of philosophical discourse does not appear explicitly enunciated in those parts of *What is Philosophy?* that are more distant from the predominant *autonomous* and *pantonomous* model. For instance, those that try to demonstrate the historical nature of human beliefs or those

On the second part of our essay that follows, we will discuss, among other things, this end of philosophy, starting with Ortega's own philosophy, as well as the differentiation between philosophical thinking and knowledge, and the connection between philosophy and humanity.

3. *THINKING, KNOWLEDGE AND THE END OF PHILOSOPHY.
THE CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY AND ITS RELATION WITH
THE HUMAN CONDITION IN NOTES ON THINKING*

The work discussed in this second part of this essay, *Notes on Thinking*, does not only imply a leap in time—it was written in 1941—in relation to *What Is Philosophy?*, but also a change of location—it was drafted in Buenos Aires—and an existential turning point—Ortega's essay was created within the limitations and distress, both material and spiritual, imposed by his exile in Argentina. In this regard, it is a significant detail that according to Ortega's own testimony, 1941, his final year in this American country, was the worst year in his entire life (Ortega y Gasset, 2006b, 967)⁴. Maybe for this reason, and despite the fact that the Madrilian thinker always stressed that his philosophy was not a philosophy of failure, the emotional tone coming from his literature in those years—and we would venture to say until the end of his life—has a melancholic aftertaste completely absent from his 1929 lectures, written at a moment of intense fulfillment in life.

And as could be expected from a philosophy that takes a person's own biography as radical reality, the shift in the conditions, both material and emotional, of enunciation is accompanied by another change that will substantially impact the way of understanding and conceiving the philosophical activity and the manner in which it may be inquired. In other words, in the 1941 text at hand, as in other previous

linked to the last lessons, IX and X, where he attempts to detail, without too much luck in our opinion, some of the categories or attributes of human life.

⁴ Ortega himself, in another essay that has many points in common with the one that concerns us—"Prólogo a *Historia de la filosofía*, de Émile Bréhier"—explained the precarious nature of his work conditions in this way: "My reader has to remember that I am writing without a library to consult...it is important that a future reader keep in mind the moral and material conditions that we are writing in during these years those of us that are still writing seriously" (Ortega y Gasset, 2006c, 163). About his stay in Argentina, see the biographies by Javier Zamora (Zamora, 2002, 431–446) and Jordi Gracia (Gracia, 2014, 9328–9585). Marta Campomar's books are also essential. The last and more important is *Ortega y Gasset. Luces y sombras del exilio argentino* (Campomar, 2016).

and later works elaborated within the same “tessitura”⁵, Ortega makes an important shift in the very approach to this matter. A shift where the question about the nature or essence of the philosophical practice, the question about “what is philosophy?” is now regarded as obligatorily and seamlessly embedded or immersed in the inquiry on the function, occasion, contingency and finitude of the philosophical practice. This means that the question “what is philosophy?” is going to be inextricably linked to *why* is philosophy practiced, *when* in history has it been practiced, and *on what basis*. And even more telling, such questions will go together with the acknowledgement of other possible ways of thinking, different from philosophical knowledge, that could fulfill a similar function—separation between thinking and knowledge—and the proposition of “a philosophy [*that is, Ortega’s*] that envisages its own end or termination and pre-forms further forms of human reaction destined to supersede it” (Ortega y Gasset, 2006a, 22).

With this in mind, it is reasonable to argue that in this essay there has been a displacement, in relation to his 1929 lectures, of the question about philosophy from a more purely phenomenological-Husserlian, “transcendental” perspective—with the singularities imposed by Ortega to this practice—to a more pragmatic and hermeneutic one. We could also say, with all the limitations and quotation marks we may want to put, that the inquiry on philosophy moves from an investigation mostly focused on the context of justification to another one that crosses, hybridizes or combines, in its own way, the context of discovery and the context of justification. In this sense, philosophy, transformed in radical historical reason, is assigned new functions: reflecting on the historicity of the different forms of human thinking; undertaking an archeological endeavor to unearth the presuppositions, beliefs and historical conditions of possibility that enable any form of thinking, including philosophy itself; questioning philosophy’s sovereignty over the definition of human condition; or revealing the fact that the different notions of humanity we inherited have been configured by numerous types of wisdoms and discourses, not just philosophy⁶.

Once this change of approach has been established, now the two relevant questions would be, first, what is the underlying context contributing to this historicist shift? And, second, what is the conceptual hinge articulating such shift? With regards to the first question, it should be stated that Ortega, like all the other philosophers

⁵ Coming back to the difficult issue of Ortega’s philosophical periodization, we dare to state that the tessitura with which this text is emitted is operating in very similar terms at least since the middle of the 1930s.

⁶ See: (Lasaga, 2005, 5–26) and (Zamora, 2013, 91–120) for further study of Ortega’s philosophy as the unfolding of historical reason.

in his generation, is living in times of a crisis of civilization and, consequently, in a moment of a profound philosophical crisis. Indeed, as everyone knows, the idea of rationality had been considered since the Enlightenment some sort of balm of Fierabras that was going to heal all the wounds of the human condition and gear us towards the path of scientific and moral progress. However, the very evidence of the times experienced, with two world wars on record and countless conflicts throughout Europe, seemed to radically refute such faith in reason, at least in the way it had been proclaimed⁷. The factual history somewhat underscored that universal and timeless evidence and truths were not so much so; that rationality had to be read in a more helpless and less omnipotent manner. All this led to the conclusion that philosophy needed to move, change, leaving behind in some sense and manner the privileged place that had been conferred to it by tradition.

Ortega, taking on this situation, articulates such change of model—which in his case, as we have seen, is a change on his own ideas—around a hinge mainly related to a couple of concepts that tradition had mixed up and interchanged. The concepts of *thinking* and *knowledge*.

Thinking is any intellectual activity undertaken to search for and find meaning, to clear up any doubts or end the uncertainty undergone by any historical existence, and includes forms as dissimilar as praying, religion, myth, prophecy, magic, science, sapience, “life experience,” or philosophy itself. *Knowing*, on the other hand, is one form of thinking that has only emerged in certain historical moments and is based on two presuppositions. The first one is

the belief that beneath the apparent confusion, beneath the chaos that, for now, reality poses to us, lies a stable, permanent, form from which all its variations depend on, so that by discovering such form we know what to expect from the world surrounding us. This stable, permanent, form of the real is what since ancient Greece we call the *being*. Knowing is inquiring the being of things, in this rigorous meaning of “stable and permanent form.” [And the second presupposition without] which engaging in knowing would be meaningless, is the belief that this *being* of things has a consistency similar to the human quality we call “intelligence.” (Ortega y Gasset, 2006a, 16)

From this form of thinking, from knowledge thus understood, emerged philosophy and science in ancient Greece. *Philosophy is knowledge*.

Ortega will, therefore, argue that we have a clear distinction between *knowing* and *thinking*, and from this distinction and the fact that philosophy pertains to the particular type of thinking that knowledge is the following conclusion is extracted:

⁷ In relation to this matter, his decisive experience of the Spanish Civil War is very important (Díaz Álvarez & Brioso, 2018, 207–227).

the different forms of humanity emerged throughout history have used the most dissimilar intellectual, or thinking, techniques to deal with their life-world, to make sense of it and be able to inhabit it. For that reason, and this is crucial, philosophy is, contrary to what happened in the 1929 lectures, no longer an inevitable element of life. Thus, the 1941 text endorses a certain democratization of the discourse about the meaning. Philosophy loses its exclusiveness regarding this matter. The meaning is expressed in many ways. It can be implemented and thought of in different manners, which certainly include the philosophical form.

Moreover, from the distinction just mentioned between thinking and knowledge and from the diversity of legitimate ways to address the sense of human condition also derives a second consequence. In order to make the different forms of thinking intelligible in their historical distinctiveness it is imperative to reveal the presuppositions on which each of them is based, the beliefs that have made them possible. All thinking comes from a belief that is no different from religious faith. A philosophy that takes reflection on history seriously, that intends to be historical reason to its ultimate consequences, has to account for this non-rational pre-theoretical area that enables any form of thinking⁸. In this sense, the element that distinguishes philosophy from all the other forms of thinking is, as already discussed, the belief underpinning knowledge itself—which is that there is a stable being and a mind able to fully apprehend it. However, Ortega also makes the remark that such belief has been welded, fused or identified throughout the history of our tradition with another totally fundamental and decisive belief, namely that

philosophy itself, which by no accounts can distort its substance and cease to be what it is, contains in its very core, since twenty-six centuries ago, a permanent and unlimited insult. Having philosophy in the world inevitably means the existence in the world, whether tacitly or explicitly, of this cry: “The human being that is not a philosopher is a brute”! In the worldly orb, anything that is not philosophy is somnambulism, and animals are characterized by their somnambulist existence. (Ortega y Gasset, 2006a, 25)

Thus, Ortega states that the decisive presupposition implicit to all the philosophical tradition is, ultimately, separating what is human from what is not. And guided by this thesis, Ortega, in the essay at hand, hastens to clarify, in line with the democratization previously mentioned and assumed: “*Note that I do not say this*; perhaps my philosophical reform introduces some correction on this dreadful point, but,

⁸ The Gadamerian resonances are evident. For further study of the relationship between Ortega and hermeneutics in its varied manifestations, consult, among others, Jesús Conill, Tomás Domingo Mortalla, and J. Castelló (Conill, 2013, 207–227; Moratalla, 2005, 373–410; Castelló, 2009).

so far, it has been said, implicitly, by the very fact ‘philosophy’” (Ortega y Gasset, 2006a, 25). Now, it is striking that this crucial correction introduced by him on centuries of tradition and on its own thinking—if we consider that the very thesis in *What Is Philosophy?*—is made in a subdued manner, announcing it with an unusual modesty—with “some correction”—in Ortega taking into account its actual significance, since, according to his statement, what questions philosophy as such is the full humanity of the other forms of thinking that his own reflection had envisioned on equal footing with philosophical thinking. Why this subdued manner to address a major and critical matter where it is not exaggeration to say that the destiny and credibility of historical reason, as the new form of philosophizing, is largely at stake? For, if the other forms of thinking do not have the same human stature as philosophy, much of what was previously stated here, and that constituted the main theoretical novelty of the very historical reason, would have no significance. If certain peoples, periods and discourses about meaning have been or are on the human threshold or, in this regard, are of very little importance, how is it possible to take seriously the new concept of thinking and the renovation it implies on the ideas of truth, progress or humanity to which his breakthrough formulation of philosophy claims to aspire? Is it necessary to think in a form that is no longer philosophical to suppress the insult to human equality that, according to Ortega, comes with philosophy since its inception? What happened to humanity in all those historical periods where, as Ortega convincingly shows, there was a different way of thinking, where there was no philosophizing? And if philosophy ends, does the very idea of humanity in a strict sense end as well?

The Spanish philosopher, as is to be expected, does not have clear answers, or sometimes any answers at all, to most of the questions we raised here. But what in our opinion is even more interesting and telling is the unresolved tension that we seem to identify in the very heart of the radically contingent, deflationary and historical shift of his philosophy in these years. Supporting the plurality and democratization of the discourses about meaning and against the monopoly equating philosophy with humanity, as it is done in 1929, we can find, first, the express and affirmative acknowledgment of such plurality and the intrinsic arrogance, to express it in José Gaos’ words, of philosophical activity itself⁹. This entails an important objection to the “imperialist” endeavors that philosophy has had throughout its history in relation to the idea of humanity. Secondly and closely related to the foregoing, we can also find the thesis, nuclear to this essay and also totally absent from *What Is Philosophy?*, about

⁹ For further study of Gaos’ theory of arrogance that is found in the very birth of philosophy and its relationship, applicable to Ortega, with Rorty’s and Vattimo’s so-called weak thought, see: (Díaz Álvarez, 2011, 55–66; Díaz Álvarez, 2016, 137–156).

the absolute historicism of the philosophical discourse. As we already repeated several times, the philosophy inhabiting the historical reason of this period at hand envisages for the first time, according to Ortega, not only its own end as the absolute point from which the correctness of the other philosophies is measured—there may be others that surpass it, that provide a sharper interpretation of the real in line with its period—, but the termination and expiration of philosophy itself and the emergence of another form of “essays of human reaction that will replace it.” (Ortega y Gasset, 2006a, 22)

While all this is true, in the essay we have been discussing and, as far as we know, in any other later works from the Madrilian thinker, there is no clear and fully developed assumption of an approach that dilutes or curtails the role of philosophy as the queen of all discourses on reality. The intersection, equation or mixing of these discourses never gets to be emphatically stated or broadly theorized. We never get to know the details or even the outline of the process that leads or can lead to the end of philosophy, or what would be the design or sketch of those essays of human reaction that could replace it. In fact, there is no significant literature—at least as far as we know—that thoroughly elaborates on a matter of such importance. It is as if in this later Ortega, despite the significant changes undergone by its notion of philosophy in comparison to the 1929 lectures or other works from that period, there continued to be a remainder of philosophical “pride” or “hybris” preventing him from taking the final step towards its dilution in the realm of the humanities or to its treatment on equal footing with them, and all this after announcing the end or possible end of philosophy itself. It is as if the Madrilian thinker got scared of the radical nature of his thesis and restrained some of its seemingly more logical conclusions.

4. FINAL CODA.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO ELIMINATE THE INSULT FROM PHILOSOPHY?

In the previous two parts we tried to show the changes that took place in Ortega y Gasset’s notion of philosophy. His evolution from a more classical–Husserlian–phenomenological—idea of philosophy, where autonomy and pantonomy, foundation, “transcendentality” and universality prevail, to one considering its radical contingency, historicism and finitude. This being the case, after discussing the broad differences between them, we have also tried to show that in the second one, the historicist or pragmatic and hermeneutic one, there are still tensions in a realm that this shift would seem to have had to resolve: those of the democratization of all different “knowledge,” the equating of philosophy with any other discourse addressing the issue of the meaning of human life, and the acknowledgment that the former does not have the

monopoly of humanity and the truth. Now, having this in mind, we would like to conclude our paper by leaving the reader with a reflection, in the form of a question, that we find to be important regardless of whether we are right or not in the “philological” distinction that we have been discussing. Such question could be stated as follows: is it possible to eliminate the insult of philosophy, its arrogance and violence with respect to human equality in itself, and also in relation to the various sense-generating discourses that differ from it without losing the very distinctive nature of philosophy? In other words, is it necessary to think of a form of discourse that is no longer philosophical to eliminate the insult to human equality that comes along with the philosophical tradition? Or if the reader would prefer a more general approach, why does philosophy seem to be linked since its inception to such a far-reaching insult and have so much trouble leaving it behind? The possible answer to this perplexity transcends, we believe, the purely professional and academic interest, the presumed distribution of subjects and the organization of schools in our universities. For what we are discussing here is our very idea of humanity.

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