PART TWO

Europe: The Second Voyage

IT IS PATENTLY EVIDENT that during the last ten years Spain has relapsed into a perfect mental inertia; everywhere indolence and stupidity have triumphed. But this time I know that the defect, however undeniable, did not proceed from our own character. This time its cause was in Europe. Someday we shall understand how the great gust of discouragement that blew across the continent grounded Spain at the very moment that the nation launched itself on its first spiritual flight after centuries of slumber. Now the problem goes beyond our frontiers, and it is necessary to transfer our efforts there. . . . Hence, I begin a new task, To sea once again, tiny ship! I begin what Plato called "The Second Voyage!"

ORTEGA[1]

[1] "Prólogo a una edición de sus obras," *Obras* VI, pp. 353–54.

As THE PEOPLE OF THE WEST *encounter the terrible public conflicts of the present, one of the great misfortunes is that they find themselves equipped with an archaic and dull set of notions about society, collectivity, the individual, usages, law, justice, revolution, and the like. Much of the present confusion arises from the incongruence between the perfection of our ideas about physical phenomena and the scandalous lag of the "moral sciences." The statesman, the professor, the illustrious physicist, and the novelist are accustomed to entertaining concepts about moral matters worthy of a suburban barber. Is it not, then, perfectly natural that the suburban barber sets the tone of the time?*

ORTEGA[1]

[1] "Prólogo para franceses," 1937, *Obras* IV, p. 118.

IX
On the Crisis of Europe

As TECHNOLOGICAL ARTIFACTS ostentatiously obtrude upon our lives, we are becoming aware that esoteric scientific reasoning has vast consequences for human life. Those of us who cannot appreciate relativity physics for its pure rational beauty still hold its creators in awe for having made both the martial and the peaceful uses of atomic energy possible; here everyone sees clearly that abstract speculation affects the human world. Although most are willing to grant that natural science is a productive mode of thought, a form of power, many doubt that speculation about man has more than therapeutic significance. In past times, thinkers needed to deal with this doubt less frequently; they perceived that the creation of divergent doctrines deeply influenced religious and political life. Recently, however, men have narrowed their view of how knowledge should be put in action. The technical applications of natural science usually follow a pattern in which knowledge guides the human manipulation of things; by habit, we are coming to expect all knowledge of practical value to be applied in this way. But it is at best difficult and at worst dangerous to follow this pattern of application in intensely human matters; thus many distrust social science because it encourages the few to manipulate the many as if they were soulless substances.

Throughout his life, but especially during the second voyage, Ortega contributed to an alternative, the *Geisteswissenschaften*, which we shall translate as "the human sciences."[a] The human sciences were a system of disciplined theory that was not intended

to produce technical applications; instead these theories were to lead to personal, volitional incarnations. Founded not on the assumption of nature's continuity, but on that of man's moral autonomy, the human sciences did not deal with inert objects, but with independent, self-directing persons. Consequently, the practical value of the human sciences was not found in the techniques they provided for manipulating the world, but in the principles they yielded by which the free person could more effectively control his own will and character. Ortega's second voyage was a sustained search for such principles; he sought means for strengthening the capacity of each of us to pursue a healthy self-education in an affluent environment.

Although Ortega's reflections were to be applied as they entered into the self-education of diverse persons, his ideas were not of purely personal interest. Civic pedagogy was based upon the premise that the education of the individual was the foundation of the community. Ortega carried this premise over into his second voyage. An essential point, with reference to which he analyzed the problem of leadership in twentieth-century Europe, was the cycle of influences between each person and his social circumstances.

Society is a concept that has been dangerously hypostatized in modern thought. Too often, men talk not only as if society were a thing-in-itself, but further as if they had ways to acquire exact knowledge of this objective entity. Men easily confuse theory with things; having an idea of society, they assume, after Anselm, that this society of which they have an idea must exist in the absolute. Thus sociology has become a hothouse for dogmatic metaphysics. Professed empiricists are loath to take their empiricism seriously; they do not realize that evidence derived from social *phenomena* is no more sufficient to establish the existence of a society or social structure than is evidence of design in nature sufficient to prove the existence of a divine, designing being. Modern theologians actually respect the limits of knowledge far more than their sociological brethren; since Kant, few theologians would risk voicing dogmatics as naïve as those of the venerable Durkheim, who held that "it is unquestionable that a society has

all that is necessary to arouse the sensation of the divine in minds, merely by the power that it has over them. . . ." And he continued: since society "has a nature which is peculiar to itself and different from our individual nature, it pursues ends which are likewise special to it; but as it cannot attain them except through our intermediary, it imperiously demands our aid. . . ."[2] We can know nothing of a nature peculiar to itself and different from our own; hence, we should rigorously avoid hypostatizing our ideas into such transcendent beings.

Properly, society is an abstraction. As with the forest, which we never see for the trees, we never perceive society, for our empirical experience comprises only a complicated mixture of different individual experiences. Confronted by the complexity of their interpersonal experience, men use various hypothetical constructs—society, organization, institution, and so on—to group and to explain to themselves the character of the intricate influences that different persons have upon one another. An abstraction proves valuable to men when it helps them experience and act on a welter of particulars with effect, not when it corresponds to the actualities to which it purportedly applies, for an abstraction cannot take existential predicates and remain an abstraction. The influences of man upon man, not the ideas used to make the influences amenable to rational consideration, are the actual realities of social life. Social theorists should attend to these phenomena, the actual influence of particular men upon particular men, if they are not to plunge us into a world of fantastic entities, of ideas that have been laden with a heavy burden of existential predicates.

Ortega frequently decried the dangers of hypostatizing social theory. A common view of life, he thought, endangered the West; namely, the sense that the state, industry, civilization, could all take care of themselves no matter how much unconcern for them was manifested by individuals. This view developed because men hypostatized abstractions such as the state, industry, and civilization: in doing so, men freed themselves from responsibility for

[2]Emile Durkheim, "Society and Individual Consciousness," Joseph Swan, trans., in *Theories of Society: Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory*, Parsons, Shils, Naegele, and Pitts, eds., Vol. II, p. 720.

caring in their personal lives for the experiences to which these abstractions properly apply. Thus the heedless have it: the state exists; it is much greater than I am; let it take care of itself. In *Man and People*, Ortega directly criticized the hypostatizing of social theory; to avoid doing so, he suggested, men should not study society or the social structure; they should look for that aspect of their personal lives that could properly be called social. For him, social theory should clarify the quality of relations between men rather than characterize aggregates of men; hence, he was not interested in some mysterious thing called "mass society." One errs fundamentally by reading into Ortega an "aristocratic theory of mass society" that can then be empirically tested by statistical surveys.[3] Ortega studied men, not societies; he inquired into the public significance of personal character, and as he inquired, it was not the statistical uniformities among men, but their intrinsic qualities that interested him.

In a work essential to Ortega's second voyage, *The Revolt of the Masses*, the phrases "masses" and "minorities" rarely denoted groups whose members shared extrinsic uniformities. Usually Ortega spoke of mass-man and noble man; and even when he used the collective names, the phrases defined the condition of various persons' characters. "The minorities" denoted the sum of the individuals who have something special and extraordinary in their personal character; these men set themselves apart from others, making a minority of themselves, by struggling to realize their special genius. Unlike the "minority groups" of contemporary sociology, with which diverse persons are linked by incidental similarities of color, creed, or national origin, the attributes that signified to Ortega that men were of the minorities were the diverse, unique excellences that these persons individually possessed. Consequently, one could not statistically study such elites because the characteristic that made a man of the minorities was precisely that which made him distinct from the others, including the others of the minorities. The masses, Ortega insisted, were not "the common people," "the working people," or "the

[3]For an example of this mistake see William Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society*, especially pp. 2-38.

lower classes."[4] Ortega's choice of words here has unfortunate conflicts with common usage in which the masses is a synonym for the proletariat; but on this matter *les jeux sont fait:* we must recognize Ortega's usage and do our best not to confuse it with other modes of speaking. Ortega generally spoke of mass-man and meant by the term a character type, not a social class. Social status was irrelevant; as the sum of mass-men, the masses included for Ortega all men whose personal character was inert, all who placed no demands upon themselves, all who made no effort to excel, to become special by fulfilling their highest potentialities. If one must, however, make an invidious class distinction, Ortega suggested that the upper classes, in the socio-economic sense, had in them the higher proportion of mass-men, a condition that was to be expected since members of the upper classes most fully enjoyed modern abundance, with all the debilitating effects affluence had on character.

Social phenomena happened as minorities in one way or another imparted their special characteristics to the masses. When Ortega asserted that society, to the degree that it denoted real influences of man upon man, was necessarily aristocratic, he meant that social influence was necessarily the influence of one man of some particular excellence upon many others who had not yet developed that quality: regardless of what ideology prevailed, there was nothing for social theory to describe but such influences. "It is notorious that I hold a radically aristocratic interpretation of history. It is radical because I have never said that society *ought to be* aristocratic, but much more than that. I have said, and I continue to believe it each day with more energetic conviction, that human society is aristocratic always, like it or not, by its very essence, up to the point that it is society insofar as it is aristocratic. . . ."[5] Society denotes the influence of man upon man; and this influence is, by the nature of influence, a relation between superior and inferior.

"Exemplarity and Aptness," a chapter strangely omitted from

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[4]Ortega made this point explicit in *La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, pp. 146-8.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 150.

the American version of *Invertebrate Spain*, best presents Ortega's conception of influence. In it, Ortega sought "to acquire a clear intuition of the reciprocal action between the masses and select minorities," for in his judgment, that action was "the basic fact of all society and the cause of evolution towards the good and towards the bad."[6] Exemplarity and aptness denoted Ortega's intuition of the reciprocal action that gave rise to civic pedagogy.[b] This action was the creative source of all social influence: "the exemplarity of the few articulates itself in the aptness of many others. The result is that the example increases and the inferior perfect themselves in the image of the better."[7]

The inferior were to perfect themselves; Ortega's minorities were not a paternal elite that would indenture the masses to its view of virtue. Ortega had no such rigid theory; a literal version of Plato's guardians would ultimately depend on the very hypostatizations Ortega sought to avoid. Exemplarity and aptness pertained to the human phenomena, to the way that each of us is freely inspired to new pursuits by the example of our peers. The influence Ortega studied did not produce a sterile conformism; it conduced to the personal differentiation of each for the others.

An example may clarify Ortega's theory. In Albert Camus' description of the dance hall at Padovani Beach, we encounter a beautiful presentation of the way the minorities help the masses individualize themselves and define their character, and we further see Ortega's conception of minorities and masses manifested in a most egalitarian setting. Summer in Algiers brought the young to the beaches where they would celebrate the cooling dusk in dance. Perhaps each of us can remember analogous occasions. Out of the mass of waltzing workers, Camus recalled a magnificent, statuesque girl who would dance silhouetted against sky and sea from late afternoon through evening. Her tight blue dress would darken in the back with perspiration; after she whirled by, she would linger behind in a mixed scent of flesh and flowers; and as the failing light obscured all the others, her swelling breast would still be seen, set off by a garland of white jasmine. For

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[6]*España invertebrada*, 1921, *Obras* III, p. 103.

[7]*Ibid.*, p. 104.

Camus, as for the other, ordinary participants, the community of dancers was defined by the impressions that such extraordinary persons made upon him. And for Ortega, the task of social theory was to explain how these exemplary persons influenced the others, to discover how participation in a community defined by the excellences of the few affected the character of the many. Again, Camus exemplified the issue, for of the scene just described, he observed that "I owe to such evenings the idea I have of innocence."[8] Camus aptly appreciated the exemplary dancer and thus formed an important conception of character.

Ortega did not need to give his readers such an example, for Spaniards already had a developed idea of exemplarity: they had long enjoyed the "exemplary novels;" but in English the idea has different connotations. We think of the exemplary citizen as the man who does all and only the proper things, and we suspect that he who always sets a good example will prove, under pressure, to be a façade, a regular Babbitt. The Spanish idea of exemplarity is richer and more humane; the Spanish exemplar is not a conventional creature. Whereas the American bent on being a good example is adept at forcing infinitely various situations to fit one of the few, particular forms that convention has deemed proper, in the exemplary novels the author or hero can find in any situation the right word or deed for the right person at the right time. It is indicative of the difference that English idiom depicts a man "setting a good example," whereas Cervantes assured his readers that they could always "extract" ("*sacar*") an advantageous example from the often scandalous escapades of his characters.[9] Unamuno made another point about exemplary novels: their exemplarity was aesthetic rather than moral.[10] Thus, "*ejemplaridad*" pertained not to conventional morality, but to the art of life.

Aptness, the complement of exemplarity, can now be rightly understood. It was not a willingness to do as told. That dullness did not interest Ortega. Instead, aptness was a disposition in life

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[8]Camus, "Summer in Algiers," in *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, Justin O'Brien, trans., p. 108.

[9]Cervantes, "Prólogo al lector," *Novelas ejemplares*, p. 16.

[10]Unamuno, *Tres novelas ejemplares y un prólogo*, 1920, *Obras* II, p. 972.

analogous to aesthetic appreciation; as a personal characteristic it was like the mood requisite for making aesthetic judgments, that is, the state of disinterestedness. Aptness allowed men to suspend their immediate concern and to understand sympathetically the art of another's example: this comprehension could lead to their own mastery of that art. The phenomenon of exemplarity and aptness was, consequently, a means of spreading publicly significant personal virtues, but "virtue" in the Italian sense of *virtù* or the Greek sense of *areté*. Hence, like Plato, Ortega pondered a politics of the inner man in which art was more important than power.

What part, then, did exemplarity and aptness play in the formation and evolution of human communities? In a group of men someone would use more expressive gestures, speak more significant words, feel more appropriate emotions. If the others had "a normal temperament," they would wish to acquire the capacities of the best man. They would not imitate him; "on the contrary, they would polarize and orient their personality towards his mode of being, and they would try to really reform their essence according to the admired pattern."[11] When made aware of something better, men naturally tried to improve themselves. This assumption made the appearance of an exemplar, a teacher, someone better, the most important contingency determining whether the system would work. The learner could be taken for granted. Thus, Ortega contended that the ability to develop progressively, which distinguished man from the animals, resulted from the capacity "to enthuse oneself with the optimum." Aptness was an element of man's psychological nature; it was "an automatic emotion," "a power of psychic attraction," "a law of spiritual gravitation."[12] In sum, aptness was an aspect of normality whereas exemplarity was a question of genius.

Together, the two were the principle of human co-existence. "We will arrive at a definition of community, in its ultimate sense, as the dynamic spiritual unity formed by an example and its

[11] *España invertebrada*, 1921, *Obras* III, pp. 103-4.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

connoisseurs."[13] For a nation to develop fully it had to be rich in exemplary archetypes: intellectuals, artists, soldiers, industrialists, and "even a delightful man of the world."[14] Excessive excellence in one area, to the neglect of others, would imbalance the community and eventually cause its fall. For any particular way of life there was a minimum of competence that the exemplary must attain; otherwise, they would set too low a tone, and consequently, the community would cease to improve itself and fall into decadence. If improvement ceased, dissociation would begin. Thus, exemplarity and aptness was no automatic source of progress. But if there was to be progress or association, it would come from this pedagogical force; for neither the violence of power nor the interests of utility could engender a society where there was no prior association. "Esthetic, magic, or simply vital exemplarity in a few charms the multitude; all the influence or power of one man over others is ephemeral or secondary unless it is this automatic emotion that the archetype or exemplar raises in his surrounding enthusiasts." In sum, Ortega's search for a clear intuition of the reciprocal action between the masses and the select minorities resulted in his idea of exemplarity and aptness—"this elemental gravitation of the vulgar but healthy spirit towards eminent features."

At first, it may seem novel to explain a community as a spiritual unity formed by an example and his connoisseurs; but on second thought, it will appear that this theory reaffirms the classic conception of community in the Western tradition.[c] In exemplarity and aptness we meet once again the Homeric conception of *areté* and honor. We easily overlook how important this archaic conception is to our comprehension of how men influence one another. A symptom of this oversight is the way that many react to Homer's archetypal analysis of this influence. Inured to the nation's service, we are wont to perceive Achilles' refusal to fight, after Agamemnon had dishonored him, to have been an antisocial act taken out of personal pique. Whatever part

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

[14] This and the two following quotations are from *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 105, 106.

pique played among the motives, Achilles abstained fully aware, as were Agamemnon and others, that the act had fundamental consequences for the character of social relations among the Greeks. These consequences were essential to the development of community in the West. Achilles' sulking withdrawal tipped the balance away from a system of despotic rule based on rank towards a community of equals based on honor.

In appropriating Achilles' prize, Agamemnon infringed not against the order of rank, but against the order of honor: he refused to give Achilles' prowess due respect. In doing so, Agamemnon acted as a despot, not as the first among equals. In response, a number of the Greeks besides Achilles spoke out, asserting that honor, the legitimate principle of their community, had been abused. But right, without might, rarely carries weight, and when the hapless Thersites spoke up in the assembly of the Achaeans, claiming priority for the principle of honor over that of rank, Odysseus easily put him down in the name of Agamemnon. But the rights of rank could not so easily suppress the claim of the excellent to appropriate recognition, provided that the claim was put by a man of pre-eminent excellence: Achilles slowly drove home the point; he was of sufficient ability to prove that, if anything, the Greek community would be one of honored excellence. *Si non, non.* In this sense, Achilles waged a revolutionary battle against the residual monarchies of the Mycenean age; and his success was essential to the development of the Hellenic polis. Achilles spoke as a citizen, an autonomous participant in a community who rebelled at being treated as a subject; thus he later answered Agamemnon's envoy, Odysseus, by reiterating Thersites' thought with greater eloquence and power. "Not me, I ween, shall Atreus' son, Agamemnon, persuade. . . . In one honour are held both the coward and the brave; death cometh alike to the idle man and to him that worketh much."[15] If the brave were not to receive due recognition, they might as well pack their ships and sail homeward; this time Odysseus could not mock the speech.

Achilles won his point. Therafter each polis developed as a

[15]*Iliad*, IX, 315-8, A.T. Murray trans.

spiritual unity of various examples and their connoisseurs. For the most part, the Greeks understood this feature of their common character quite well, and they soon used it to distinguish themselves and Europeans in general from the pusillanimous subjects of the Asian despots. For instance, the observant Hippocrates based his contrast of Asian and European character on precisely the matter Achilles had insisted on. "Subjects are likely to be forced to undergo military service, fatigue and death, in order to benefit their masters. . . . All their worthy, brave deeds merely serve to aggrandize and raise up their lords, while the harvest they themselves reap is danger and death. . . . But independent people, taking risks on their own behalf and not on behalf of others, are willing and eager to go into danger, for they themselves enjoy the prize of victory."[16]

Over time the particular examples with respect to which the Greeks developed their spiritual unity changed substantially, but the principles of community remained in force. This fact has been well analyzed in Werner Jaeger's *Paideia*. Through an ongoing critical development a succession of poets and lawgivers continually adapted, as contingencies changed, the repertory of heroic examples to celebrate new forms of worth and to reject outworn images; yet, throughout this history of changing ideals, the polis remained primarily a living community of honored excellence. The degree to which this principle could remain in effect, despite marked changes in the particular excellence that was honored, was nowhere better reflected than in Plato's *Republic*; for in it, at a time when change seemed about to overwhelm the city, Plato abstracted from the particular excellences the Greeks had hitherto honored; he pointed out the principle of justice, the form of the good, which was infinitely adaptable and which was the exemplary element common to all communities. The idea of the good could be used to correct the confusions that had crept into the poetic images of excellence, and its example could inspire any man, for "it is laid up as a pattern in heaven, where those who wish can see it and found it in their own hearts."[17]

[16]Hippocrates, *Airs, Waters, Places*, XVI: 21-8, XXIII: 34-9, W. H. S. Jones, trans.

[17]Plato, *Republic*, 592B, Lee, trans.

This theory of exemplarity and aptness is the basis of political and social thought in the West. Beginning with the *Crito* and the *Laws*, the authority of law has been held to be dependent on its power to educate. Almost every claim to legitimate authority has been based on the assertion that the established power in question is more exemplary than any other, and almost every claim to just rebellion has been founded on an assertion that the established rulers have ceased to be worthy models for men. Because Western politics has been based on the phenomena of exemplarity and aptness, the polities thus created have developed a remarkable degree of integration and cohesion. No matter how humble, almost all persons have had a productive place in the community. When working well, European polities have been strengthened by a pervasive concord about what is and is not worthy; likewise, the great historic changes have been directed not by policy in the official sense, but by profound changes in people's beliefs about what is excellent and deserving of respect. This fact, which results from the system of exemplarity and aptness, is essential to understanding the genius of public leadership in the West: this leadership has been at its best when its strength was drawn from the commitment of those led. Here was the crucial factor: those led were without commitment; this spelled the twentieth-century crisis of Europe.

Even in times of absolutism, the politics of European communities has had to be an inherently popular politics, for leadership has been the leadership of integrated communities, ones in which all members have an essential, constructive function to perform. Hence, no matter how restricted Europe's highest offices have been at times, Europe has not had the disjunction between a succession of ruling dynasties and an eternal, unchanging peasantry, such as the Egyptian fellahin. To rule in Europe, one must influence the whole community: the great crises of the West have arisen when those with nominal power proved unable to exert such influence. In these crises, the concord of commitment disappeared, and would-be leaders became unable to produce their intended effects.

Ortega thought that Europe had entered such a crisis. So did many others, for the signs were there for all to see. After World

War I, many contended that the Europeans were beginning a new era. A few expected a period of hope; most envisaged a time of trouble; but all sensed that something had changed. To be sure, there had been great upheavals in recent centuries, but these seemed to have been wrought by the human will. The course of events had never been sufficiently predictable to allow public leadership to become a practical science. Nonetheless, a certain grand correlation between intention and achievement had been managed, and leaders had been able to direct the whole through change. Even Napoleon, despite his *hubris*, accomplished enduring legal and administrative reforms; and his eventual defeat yielded a stable order because both he and his opponents fought for clear goals with controlled means. Napoleon was neither the protégé nor the victim of mere directionless events.[18]

But something had changed. Public leaders had become imbecilic. Since Bismarck, the expectations of statesmen have rarely had much to do with their results. Never had such fine intentions yielded such checkered achievements. Despite great apparent strength, twentieth-century Europe was not functioning well. Provisions for popular education led to the stultification of the people by the popular presses and to the manipulation of their freedoms by self-serving leaders. Treaties delineating spheres of influence speeded the competition for unclaimed regions. Colonial competition prepared the European peoples for a continental war. The war, which came in spite of all the efforts to avoid it, was to be short and glorious, but it proved to be long and torturous. In the fighting, protective trenches became pits of punishment, and the warriors' ethic succumbed to the expediencies of total war. With the peace, no power had achieved its war aims, and the possibility of a repeat performance was preserved. Further, when Europe's troubles had finally seemed to pass, confident prosperity collapsed in a destructive depression. It ushered in the politics of barbarism that produced the encore—another, total, more terrible war, and atrocious genocide. In short, the leaders of Europe had lost their command of events.

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[18]For an appreciation of these powers, see Emerson's "Napoleon" in *Representative Men*, *Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 369-393.

Reacting in dismay, intellectuals found these developments symptomatic possibly of the decline of the West, possibly of the enmity of Continental Europeans, especially Germans, for an open society, a civilized political liberalism, or possibly of an open European crisis, a revolt of the masses. Ortega made essential contributions to this third diagnosis; the character of his diagnosis becomes apparent in contrasting it to the other two.

A popular analysis of the changes that were transforming Europe was the literature of decay, epitomized by Spengler's *Decline of the West.*[d] This book was a work of genius and of danger; but with respect to the problem of European leadership, it gave a mere pseudo-analysis, for in the personal, "Apollonian" sense, Spengler admitted no such thing as leadership. Spengler committed scholarly *hubris*: the historian was too proud to let mere mortal men make their own histories. Instead, the historian sought to assert his own pre-eminence among men by revealing himself as the human voice of omnipotent historical forces, in Spengler's case the forces of historical morphology. He asserted an unreserved hypostatization: societies were morphological structures that passed through necessary stages of maturation. Europe was at a divide: it had completed the stage of money and was about to embark on its period of Caesarism. "For us, however, whom a Destiny has placed in this culture and at this moment of its development—the moment when money is celebrating its last victories, and the Caesarism that is to succeed approaches with quiet, firm step—our direction, willed and obligatory at once, is set for us within narrow limits, and on any other terms life is not worth the living. We have not the freedom to reach to this or to that, but the freedom to do the necessary or to do nothing. And a task that historic necessity has set *will* be accomplished with the individual or against him."[19] How comforting!—for those who sought release from the intimate anxieties of conducting their lives in a world of rapid change.

Ortega also spoke of destiny, but it was a personal, provisional destiny, not a necessary one; there was no such thing as an

[19]Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, C. F. Atkinson, trans., p. 415.

"historic necessity" that possessed the power to impose a destiny on men. Ortega conceived of destiny as that which one ought to do; the person had a creative initiative with respect to it: he invented it by intentionally forming his personal capacities and character. Spengler, in contrast, conceived of destiny as a set of inevitable acts, ones that would necessarily come to pass. According to Ortega, a person could refuse to fulfill his destiny, thus inauthenticating himself. Since each person was free to shirk his mission, leadership was an exceedingly difficult matter, one of inspiring a person to do those particular things that on the one hand would lead the person to fulfill his excellence, but that on the other were things he was by no means compelled to do. In contrast, according to Spengler, a person was forced by historic necessity to will an obligatory destiny; if destiny would rule regardless of any person's will, be he leader, follower, exemplary genius, or apt connoisseur, leadership simply disappeared as a problem. The view conduced to spiritual weakness: because historic necessity ruled the world, those who wanted power had best not lead, but ally themselves with the inevitable.

Spengler's was the most convincing representative of a varied literature advancing this point. With the idea of decline, one proceeded by describing various stages of civilization, by connecting these stages by necessary causal relations, by locating one's contemporary nation or civilization in the causal progression that had been established, and by then proclaiming what the future had in store. Such proclamations did not help leaders learn how to act effectively; the theories purported instead to identify the kind of activities that were destined to prevail no matter how inept the actors were.

A few writers have lumped Ortega with Spengler, as Kurt W. Marek did by likening the latter to a leviathan and the former to a porpoise "darting over the surface of the millennia in graceful turns, often tossing up a glittering spray."[20] But the comparison is not apt. For Ortega, the essential point was not to identify with Spengler a pattern of decline, but to explicate a pattern of crisis.

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[20]Marek, *Yestermorrow: Notes on Man's Progress*, Ralph Manheim, trans., p. 20.

Crisis differs from decline: crisis is a self-contained condition whereas decline requires comparison of one condition to another. Any system that shows the symptoms of severe disequilibrium can be said to be in crisis; but to say that a system is in decline one needs to compare its present state with its condition at two or more previous times and to find a steadily worsening relation between them. A decline portends a fall, whereas a crisis can culminate in ruin or renewal. Decline invites a deterministic explanation, whereas a crisis suggests an open situation, which was brought about, to be sure, by determined causes, but which could be resolved in several different ways, depending on the will and competence of the persons involved. Where more pessimistic writers saw a decline, Ortega, an optimist, saw a crisis. He found the future integrally open: "I am here anxious to note that we have plunged into analyzing a substantively equivocal situation—that of the present. . . . And this equivocation is not in our judgment, but in the reality itself. It is not that the siuation can appear to us on one side good and on the other bad, but that in itself the present situation is a double potential for triumph or for death."[21]

A second popular analysis of the collapse of leadership in Europe differs considerably from Spengler's; it can be found in the Germanophobe-Anglophile literature produced during and between the two world wars, typified by Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. According to the authors of these critiques, the crisis of Continental leadership arose because European intellectuals and politicians inveterately failed to appreciate the enduring truths of Anglo-American liberalism. If only the Europeans would follow the North Atlantic peoples and develop an effective democracy based on popular consent, toleration, prudent compromise, and the respect for impersonal law, all might be well. Unfortunately, German authoritarian philosophy had instead intimidated the people and confused their potential leaders. Consequently, the people were never able to assert their will over the state. This failure left the political system vulnerable to domination by whatever extremist group might convince itself and others

[21]*La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 193.

that it represented the eternal values of the nation. Thus Anglo-American critics blamed European instability on the traditional elites and the heritage of social philosophy: both lacked the cardinal virtue of a capacity for compromise. Continental stability would be attained only when the leaders renounced political metaphysics and let the people really try to direct their affairs in a pragmatic, democratic way.

Anglophile writers thus concluded that the hope for Europe's future lay in a democratic pluralism founded on the principles of consent and toleration. Being committed to this particular blueprint for European stability, they took umbrage at analyses of the situation that cast doubt on the capacity of the contemporary populace to conduct their affairs happily by democratic processes. To them, gratuitous questioning of the people's powers seemed to help produce a lack of confidence at crucial moments. They found such doubts, including "the violent garrulities of Ortega y Gasset," to be examples of antidemocratic thought and a threat to the proper reformation of European politics.[22] The problem with the Anglophile position is that it itself becomes a form of political metaphysics and critical escapism; dismissing things as antidemocratic serves only to ingratiate one with the true believers: there is no way to determine whether the doubts of the questioners are really unreal except to deal substantively with the problems raised.

Before turning to these problems, let it be said that there were elements of truth in the Anglophile case. Political philosophy in Germany and France, not to mention Britain with the work of T. H. Green, had certain ambiguities that made it vulnerable to totalitarian abuse. Liberalism has long been frightened by Rousseau's doctrine that men can be forced to be free. Likewise, Hegel's conviction that "what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational" is a very difficult thought that is liable to disastrous misunderstandings; and both the statist epigones of Hegel and the Marxists crudely hypostatized Hegel's subtle conception of the state.[23] These errors, however, were first and thoroughly criticized

[22]Sidney Hook, *Political Power and Personal Freedom*, p. 448.

[23]Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, Preface, T. M. Knox, trans., p. 10, italics omitted.

by another German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer. Nevertheless, despite a strong tradition of humanism, during the past hundred years many European intellectuals scorned the principles of toleration and rejected the system of liberal democracy. From positions as opposed as those of Marx and Nietzsche, both could agree in dismissing English liberalism as a storekeeper's philosophy. In the place of a politics of compromise, the state was threatened with takeover by diverse exponents of puritanically perfect policies. And the sympathy of Gentile and Heidegger for totalitarian fascism and of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty for totalitarian communism suggests to many that Continental philosophy may still have a strong bias toward statist extremism.[e]

Despite these facts, the Germanophobe-Anglophile critique of European politics is deceptive. The substantive difficulties must still be dealt with. On the one hand, the critique exaggerates the competence of the English and American political processes; on the other, it ignores the fundamental historic problems that have bedeviled Western politics throughout the century. All the ills of Europe cannot be blamed on German malevolence and French instability. The English bear a major responsibility for leading and sustaining the imperialistic expansion of the European peoples, with the very dangerous competitions this expansion engendered; after World War I the American people undercut efforts at collective security and opened the way to a future economic collapse by making their government withdraw precipitously from the responsibilities it had assumed in economic and international affairs; British foreign policy was a cowardly failure between the wars; and Anglo-Amercan complicity in creating the Cold War has been much greater than we like to admit. These contributions to the European crisis should not be conveniently ignored. The inter-war paralysis of British power is particularly significant in pricking the pride of the Anglophile, for it demonstrated that British politics, like that of Continental Europe, could be deflected from prudent policies by the power of mass movements, in this case by doctrinaire pacifism. As soon as we recognize that Anglo-American politics has been susceptible to the same instabilities as that of the Continent, we can turn to the real problems, the substantive developments in Western life that leaders, regardless of the form

of government, found it difficult to deal with. These problems were the European crisis as it appeared to Ortega, for he believed that because of these difficulties the West had to transcend the outworn quarrel between liberal enthusiasts of democracy and their reactionary opponents.

During the twentieth century, three political phenomena that were unknown to the creators of Anglo-Saxon liberalism have become fundamental influences in public affairs throughout the West: these are ideology, bureaucracy, and mass communications.[f] These developments do not invalidate the ideals of liberalism; let us remain committed, with Ortega, to these values. But the new situation means that we cannot be complacently content with the established institutions of liberalism. To remain true to the liberal spirit, we should join Ortega in subjecting the familiar forms of democratic practice to a thorough critique, facing the new problems so that we can seek solutions to them.

From Locke through Mill, an essential premise in justifying toleration was that men live by the rule of reason. The practice of ideological criticism has turned many against this premise; instead of reason, many see mere rationalizations that deceptively justify one or another self-serving interest. Beneath every principle men expect to find an unprincipled ulterior motive, and all claims of right are dismissed as the mascara of might. The problem is not that for the first time there are men who live by an irrational ideology, but that the theory of ideology, the theory that the thought of all men is determined by their material interests, has made many men lose confidence in the possibility of a rule by reason. As soon as a significant number of men believe that it is impossible to reason with other men whose interests differ from their own, then force in one or another guise becomes necessary to reconcile their differences. Force is the *ultima ratio*, and to disbelieve in reason is to commit oneself to the rule of force. The liberal theory of tolerance does not deal adequately with this situation. Mill assumed that free discussion could only strengthen truth, as in theory it does if the discussants are committed to reason; but he did not foresee the practical case in which organized falsehoods are unscrupulously manipulated under conditions of free speech to predominate against the truth.

This case is not a hypothesis; it is history. With the doctrine of ideology, discourse has not been used as a means of sifting opinion for truth, but as a way of accusing one's opponents of bad faith. To the ideologist, irrespective of his ideology, only arguments from origins seem to carry weight; every person, every thought, every thing is judged by finding whether it comes from a pure or tainted source; and equally for those of the right, left, and center, this mode of argument ends logically with an attempt to eradicate the tainted origin of offending opinions.

Traditionally, liberalism has held each man responsible for his actions. A familiar example of this conception of responsibility is the care with which the framers of the American Constitution guarded against faction, but the theory was not confined to them: among others, Rousseau asserted it in suggesting that to find the general will each citizen should deliberate *alone* with full information about the question at hand. A sense of responsibility is a personal quality, and the theory has been that a humane sobriety in political matters will have the best chance to develop when men are acting on their own personal initiative and responsibility. In the last century, however, the growth of bureaucracy has completely undermined this premise, for bureaucracy has developed as the person has been absolved of certain responsibilities and as these have been transferred to fictitious corporate persons. Men become anonymous managers and civil servants; and huge, peculiarly cohesive factions composed of these emasculated men have arisen, even within the American government despite its ingenious checks and balances. To make matters worse, such bureaucracies have been most highly developed in the industrial-military establishments in every Western nation. The men who seem most absolved of having to act independently on their own personal initiative and responsibility are precisely the men who design, build, and implement the agencies of force in modern life. Thus, the citizens of every developed nation-state are under the continual threat of being dominated by radically irresponsible organizations; and it would be foolish to think that any political tradition is magically immune from the dangers that arise when it has in its midst powerful factions made up of men who are each insulated from having to feel personally responsible for the deeds of the group.

Finally, liberal democrats presupposed that the people would have time to investigate and deliberate over important issues and that popular opinion would reflect the qualities of considered, personal opinions. Instantaneous, mass communications have, however, imposed a completely different pace on public affairs, and they have greatly complicated personal reflection about political problems. These developments have not invalidated the voice of the people, but they raise severe doubts that the voice of the public is in every instance the voice of the people. We recognize that publicity can undercut the possibility of a fair trial before a jury, but we do not carry this recognition over into wider matters. In traditional democratic thought it was assumed that popular opinion would put a check on political leaders. But with the rapid, graphic reporting of world events and with the demand that everyone immediately have an opinion about everything, the manipulation of opinion has come to serve as an ersatz deliberation over public questions, and inflamed popular passions have aggravated, not modulated, political disagreements. As Ortega pointed out, the universal web of news and information was not in harmony with the polycentric politics of Europe; the whole was easily rent as various groups developed deceptive images of their neighbors.[24] All these developments meant that popular deliberations were not occurring as traditional democratic theory postulated that they should.

Phenomena such as ideological reductionism, bureaucracy, and mass communications were the substantive problems that helped produce the European crisis. Significant solutions to these difficulties were needed more than the emulation of political forms that had worked in the past. Thus, although Ortega's conception of the European crisis was not as pessimistic as Spengler's and other theories of decline, Ortega felt that much deeper questions had to be asked of the whole Western system than were asked by those who saw the crisis as a simple failure to emulate the North Atlantic example.

In reflecting on recent history, Ortega hoped to learn why the great advances in human power, wrought by industrialism and democracy, seemed to turn inexorably to negative uses, to mili-

[24]"Epílogo para ingleses," 1937, *Obras* IV, pp. 301-310.

tarism and tyranny. To channel man's new power more constructively, he thought, Europeans should reach beyond liberalism, seeking to solve the substantive problems of the twentieth century. In trying to transcend liberalism, Ortega was not being anti-liberal; he was deeply committed to the human values that had been served by liberalism in the nineteenth century. But he believed that in the twentieth century a blind reliance on the machinery of liberalism would destroy those very values. The nation-state, democracy, and industrialism were great achievements of prudent reason and progressive hope; but their potential had been exhausted. If reason and hope were to continue to benefit men, new ideals, novel projects, and untried enterprises would have to be created. The challenge before Europeans was to find a new way to fulfill the values that had given rise to liberalism, the values of reason, human dignity, the rule of law, the pursuit of happiness, liberty.

Throughout his second voyage, Ortega sharply attacked the notion that historic development could stop with the nation-state and industrial democracy. This attack was no attempt to go back to an earlier stage of historic development; it was, as he carefully stated in *The Theme of Our Time*, an effort to open the way for a creative, progressive advance in political theory and practice.[25] As a whole, Ortega's second voyage amounted to a vision of a Western *Kinderland*, a vision of a community that would lead beyond the ideals of the nation-state and industrial democracy, but that would do so without giving up the improvements in life that had been achieved in the past pursuit of these ideals. Ortega's analysis of the European crisis, which severely challenges the pieties of Anglo-American liberalism, should be taken as a prelude to an attempt to revitalize the very tradition it criticizes.

For Ortega, the European crisis was more than an act of *lèse libéralisme*, yet it was certainly not as much as an irredeemable decline of the West. Instead, it was an open crisis in the European community, which, going back to Homer, had been a community to the degree that the many internalized and surpassed the excel-

[25] *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, 1923, *Obras* III, pp. 152, 156, etc.

lences discovered by the few. The crisis was a crisis in the social bonds of the West, in the principles that had historically united Europeans into communities.

Europe had been a complicated web of examples and their connoisseurs; but the system of exemplarity and aptness was not working well in the twentieth century. Men were not apt to the lessons of true excellence, and the European communities, especially the nations, were being wracked by divisive movements. Traditionally, Europeans have lived in integrated communities in which each person has a personal part to which he commits himself. A citizen made his commitment because he was personally moved by a shared ideal, because he was apt to certain heroic examples, examples of service, learning, industry, and general excellence. Here is the substantial significance of the familiar phrase of unity *in* diversity: rather than unity resulting from some extrinsic similarity such as occupation, nationality, creed, or race, it inheres in the fact that diversity is an intrinsic quality shared by each member of the group. The citizen has been a citizen insofar as he brings something unique and necessary to the common enterprise; a good community should let each man develop in himself these personal excellences, and a good citizen should honor his peers not for conformity but for genius. Unity *in* diversity is neither a wise saw nor moral instance; it is a difficult conception because it requires men to abstract and to see that when many men are truly diverse, setting themselves apart from one another, they share something important, the quality of being different from their peers.

In a community based on a common appreciation of differences, neither its strengths nor its weaknesses will be readily apparent in its superstructure of formal politics. When spontaneously united, such a people will prove far stronger than one would expect from observing the ability of their titular leaders: thus the Spanish *pueblo* once drew the shrewd Napoleon into a costly miscalculation. But when unseen discord undermines the community, then even the most brilliant rulers will not prevail. As Ortega showed in his essay on Imperial Rome, the spontaneous integration of a community of free citizens depended on a tacit but deep concord about the principles by which each person will

independently evaluate the excellences he encounters.[28] Concord meant agreement about who should rule, about what standards should control the effort to settle differences. To achieve concord, the problem was not to avoid attaching different values to the same thing—such diversities were to be encouraged, for there was no reason why different persons should apply their common principles to their unique circumstances in identical ways—; the problem was, however, to avoid applying divergent, discordant modes of valuation to the same thing—such dichotomies were to be discouraged, for contradictory systems of making valuations would set the parts of the whole working in opposition to one another. When concord is lacking, when there is no agreement about how to arbitrate clashing differences, men cease to be able to tolerate the very existence of those differences. Thus, without concord, there is no unity in diversity.

Concord had disappeared in Europe. Men who should have been able to avoid implacable hostilities were no longer able to agree to disagree. Hence, at bottom the European crisis was neither a morphological decline nor a political error; it was the disorientation that arose when men ceased to share a common system of judging value. In Ortega's view, the crisis was serious, for it meant that, as divergent modes of making valuations clashed, ethical nihilism would spread and all would become permitted. But although serious, the crisis did not portend a necessary collapse, for the previous concord had not been the best one possible; if a new one could be developed, stronger communal bonds might be forged between Europeans. Time would tell. Whether the future would lead to descent or to ascent was an open question, the answer to which depended on the Europeans' ability to redevelop a common measure of value.

In short, Ortega was among those who thought the European crisis was a problem of valuation. Consequently, we should locate Ortega's work, especially that of his second voyage, in the succession of thinkers who sought a revaluation of values in Europe. Appropriately, Camus observed that Ortega was "perhaps the

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[28]"Del Imperio Romano," 1940, *Obras* VI, especially, pp. 59-63.

greatest of European writers, after Nietzsche;"[27] and the link between these two, really between all three—Nietzsche, Ortega, and Camus—was their search for a basis of judgment that Europeans could again hold in common. Without such a basis, Europe would be rent asunder. For Ortega, the European crisis arose because men had ceased to share, not a common set of values, but a common mode of making valuations; and the way to turn this crisis towards a hopeful climax was to see to the reform of the practical reason by which men lived. This reform was the ultimate destination of Ortega's second voyage.

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The best choose one thing in place of all else, "everlasting" glory among mortals; but the majority are glutted like cattle.

HERACLITUS, 29

[27]Camus, "The Wager of Our Generation," in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, Justin O'Brien, trans., p. 243.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY CIVILIZATION *permitted the average man to settle himself in a wealthy world, of which he perceived only its abundance of resources and none of its afflictions. He encountered about him marvelous implements, beneficial medicines, perspicacious governments, and convenient rights. At the same time he ignored how difficult it was to invent these implements and medicines, and to ensure their production in the future; he did not notice how instable the organization of the state was; and he scarcely felt any obligations in himself. This disequilibrium falsified him and vitiated the sources of his vitality to the extent that he lost contact with the very substance of life; that is, its absolute danger and radical uncertainty.*

ORTEGA[1]

[1] *La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 210.

X
Scarcity and Abundance

EUROPEANS HAD CEASED to share a common system of attaching value to the things about them: that was the crisis, the dissolution of concord in the West. Symptoms of the crisis appeared in the way different groups were apt to divergent models; men frequently lionized individuals who were unsuited to integrating a people, and leaders instead divided the community by symbolizing good for some and evil for others. Furthermore, many important excellences were simply scorned, not only by the ignorant, but also by the educated. For this reason, the student of the human sciences could not follow the student of the natural sciences and profess faith in the continuity of nature: during the twentieth century something had gone wrong with "the law of spiritual gravitation," the belief that the average man would necessarily attend disinterestedly to the optimum. One could not assume that man would, like a stone, act in the future as he did in the past. To understand the contemporary anomaly, the prevalence of inaptness throughout Europe, Ortega had to reflect more deeply on the phenomena of exemplarity and aptness.

Humanists of Ortega's type hold that the animal man has made himself human by discovering mind and using it to order the chaos that he finds both within and around him. Hesiod celebrated how "the gods kept hidden from men the means of life." Alone among the animals, man was born with instincts insufficient for life; and hence that ingenious god-man, Prometheus, stole the light of reason, the fire in a fennel-stalk that enabled

man to become a thinking reed.[2] Since then great humanists have reiterated how man is the creature that is at once blessed and cursed with the task of self-definition; by our own efforts we can rise among the angels or sink among the brutes. Believing that man must make of himself whatever he will become, humanists consequently attach peculiar importance to problems of pedagogy and politics.

Not all political and pedagogical theorists have been humanists, however. Many revered thinkers have been naturalists with respect to both the physical and the human sciences. Following Aristotle, they have held that social rationality was a natural, inborn attribute of men and that reason was hence a premise, not a problem, for the political philosopher.[3] Thus both Hobbes and Locke postulated that reason was a characteristic of man in the state of nature; consequently reasonableness was a given element of their political philosophy and the problem was simply to devise a system that would allow men to bring this feature of their necessary nature to bear upon their experience.[4] Naturalism in the human sciences leads logically to a primary interest in the particular procedures of various political systems, and from the particulars the theorist will abstract his principles: hence, Aristotle collected constitutions.[5]

Following the practical ethics of Heraclitus, Socrates, and Plato, however, humanistic political theorists have not presumed that man is by nature a political animal. Men make themselves political animals by creating one or another rational system by which they can organize their common experiences. Humanists find that social rationality is a practical problem rather than a philosophical premise; before providing for political procedures, the lawgiver must create, elaborate, and disseminate a particular system of political reasoning. Hence, virtue is *knowledge*, the capacity to take part in a rational community, the willingness to abide by artificial, unnecessary standards of reasoning. Conse-

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[2]Hesiod, *Works and Days*, lines 42-58, Hugh G. Evelyn-White, trans.

[3]Aristotle, *Politics*, I, ii, 1253a; III, vi, 1278b.

[4]Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, Ch. 13; and Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. II, No. 6.

[5]See Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, X, ix, 21-3; and *Athenian Constitution*.

quently, as Rousseau noticed, Plato perfected the polis in his *Republic* by attending, not to practical procedures, but to pedagogy. Various laws and customs were not "a number of great principles, but trifles all, if care be taken, as the saying is, of the one great thing,—a thing sufficient for our purpose—education and nurture."[6] For the humanist the basic political problem is the question whether virtue can be taught, whether men can learn to reason in common, whether they can develop the will to accept the discipline of reason. The task of social philosophy is not to apply a given, disembodied power of reason to the theoretical rationalization of the community, but to point the way by which each man can bring to fruition his contingent powers of reason so that he can freely and responsibly direct his actual public acts. Humanism in the sciences of the spirit leads logically to a primary interest in pedagogy; therefore Plato showed how the only constitution that truly concerned a man was that of his own character.[7]

Philosophy began in wonder, Plato mused in *Theaetetus (155D)*; yet the beginnings in wonder of social philosophy were neutralized by Aristotle's assumption that man is, by nature, a political animal. Men wonder only infrequently about things that come naturally, for wonder is man's amazement that this or that phenomenon should at once be part of a mysterious world and still be so fraught with human significance. All things are natural; hence ascribing things to nature rarely tells us what differentiates the awesome from the ordinary. We wonder at certain things because it strains our credulity to believe that there could be such virtuosity or such solicitude for man in the works of brute nature. Wonder creates that most marvelous interrogative, the one that calls for reasons rather than for facts. Why? Why is the grass green? Why is man a political animal? How dull to answer "by nature," for this answer, like that of an impatient father plagued by a perplexed child, simply suppressed the wonder without providing an explanation of the fact. Man is a political animal—how extraordinary that man is precisely what he must be in order to thrive in the world! Why is it, then, that man is a political animal?

[6]Plato, *Republic*, 423D-E, Jowett, trans. Cf. Rousseau, *Emile*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, IV, p. 250.

[7]See Plato, *Republic*, especially 591-592B.

To ask this question is to go beyond the question of current political science—What leaders, symbols, and powers are actually moving men? It is to ask the Platonic question—Why are these leaders, symbols, and powers able to move men? As we observed, the Platonic tradition does not take political rationality as a given; we wonder how the mastery of certain kinds of reasoning conduces to the creation of human communities. Such curiosity led to Plato's profound analysis of the human psyche, its cardinal excellences, and the power of these abilities to create humane associations. Men made themselves political animals by teaching themselves to think in certain ways. With this recognition one learns to approach politics and pedagogy with reverence and awe: men cannot take political capacities for granted. Yet, for the most part the Aristotelian assumption that man is, by nature, a political animal took the mystery from the matter; it discouraged social philosophers from reflecting on the fundamentals of their subject. Thinkers have wondered only sporadically about the marvelous inspiration that prompts men to invent and maintain the cultural creations, the systems of reasoning that have been responsible for their surprising political capacities.

Ortega's philosophic importance results in part, from his effort to reopen these basic questions. In effect, by asking why the masses, men of ordinary character, responded to leadership by the minorities, men of special character, Ortega asked why man was a political animal. In studying exemplarity and aptness and the way it united the minorities and masses in an open community, Ortega inquired into the human characteristics that made politics—that is, leadership—possible. In seeking to discover reasons for the phenomena of politics, Ortega's goal was not to adopt a single explanation and to use it as a principle for constructing the necessarily perfect society. Ortega had a rich sense of human variety; he was not about to proclaim *the* reason why. He had something more interesting in mind.

Previously, philosophers had postulated that men had entered into a social compact out of desire for either a rule of law or a division of labor. Ortega sought not only to identify such purposes; he wanted to find out why men entertained such purposes, he wanted to understand why ordinary men were apt before the

exemplarity of the unknown genius who first conceived of a rule of law or a division of labor. He did not doubt that response to both of these and to many other principles of order had been essential to human communities. He did doubt, however, that the response to these principles always came about for the same reason. Perhaps there were many potential reasons why men might respond to leadership; perhaps historical crises occurred when men ceased to accept one reason for responding and began to accept leadership according to a different rationale. If this hypothesis proved true, the fundamentals of political philosophy would be integral to any analysis of the European crisis.

To begin with, one might ask what it means to call man a political animal. Among others, Rousseau has shown that it does not mean merely that men live in the company of other men. Many animals live in groups; the company of men, however, has a unique effect on those who partake in it: the company of men leads to their perfection, to the transformation of each into a more potent being. Despite Rousseau's deep concern for the natural man, he insisted that the basis of man's social and cultural existence was that association could lead to the perfecting of natural man. The corruption caused by culture-misconceived came about because man was "perfectible," for better *or* for worse, when in the company of other men. For Rousseau, the tension between man and society resulted from an unnatural view of society, one that made it an end unto itself. This unnatural society encouraged a tragic perversion, the suppression of natural man, whereas the only true reason for social bonds was the effort of natural man to perfect himself. Human perfection was the goal of community and a society that corrupted its members was *ipso facto* illegitimate.[8]

Ortega put himself very much in the grand tradition when he observed that "a community is an apparatus for perfecting its members."[9] This matter of perfectibility was essential to his conception of exemplarity and aptness; it meant that his inquiry into

[8]See Rousseau, "Discours sur les sciences et les arts," and "De l'inégalité parmi les hommes," *passim*. For the distinction between animals and men see the last mentioned, *Oeuvres complètes*, III, p. 142.

[9]*España invertebrada*, 1921, *Obras* III, p. 106, italics omitted.

why man was a political animal was the same as the study of why man was educable. The basic problem of social philosophy proved, as Plato knew, to be pedagogical: when there are several men, why do certain ones respond to the leadership of others, or, in Ortega's language, why are some men apt and others exemplary?

Owing to the fact that most educational theorists are teachers, examinations of pedagogical situations are usually made from the teacher's point of view. This characteristic holds true even for so-called learning theory, which gives a behavioral description of what a psychologist perceives when he trains animals and humans to perform various tasks. At first, Ortega also paid greatest heed to the teacher in his theory of exemplarity and aptness; recall how aptness was a normal attribute of the average person, "an automatic emotion," and how exemplarity was a function of genius. Soon, however, Ortega had to change this emphasis, for he realized, as many teachers do, that profound instruction will not affect souls unwilling to learn.

If one contemplates the nature of aptness, one finds that it is not a merely passive characteristic. Each man is surrounded by a multitude of potential exemplars; hence each man must choose to contemplate this one and to ignore that one. For this reason a science of teaching is impossible, for the teacher does not possess pedagogical power and initiative. Power, initiative, and responsibility devolve on the students, on the masses; he who learns does so as he decides to attend to this teacher and to that exemplar. Taking these facts into account, one can no longer see exemplarity and aptness as an automatically effective system. The duty of potential minorities was still to perfect their excellences; but the masses could never be merely receptive, a dumb herd blindly forced to follow their shepherd to the shears: the masses willingly committed social power to a chosen few.

What made a man a leader? The masses did by agreeing to follow. This observation permitted important questions to be refined. In asking why man was a political animal, Ortega asked primarily why the average man agreed to follow a particular leader. And in asking why one man agreed to follow another, Ortega found that he had to inquire into the way the follower perceived himself and his circumstances.

Certain views of life, certain patterns of perceiving one's self and one's circumstances, prompted the masses to be apt and to grant allegiance, social power, to the authentic exemplars of the time, to the men of noble, progressive excellence. Other views of life would lead to inaptness, which encouraged the masses to give social power to men of no special worth. Thus, initiative had been shifted from the teacher to those taught. To find why political leadership—civic pedagogy or the system of exemplarity and aptness—would or would not work, one needed to study the character of the masses, to inspect the system from the point of view of the learners. How did life appear to the masses? In particular, was there anything in this appearance that would make the self-satisfied person apt, that would prompt him to present the authentic exemplars with social power?

Ortega addressed himself to these questions in *The Revolt of the Masses*. Through his answers, he diagnosed the problem of leadership in Europe, which prepared him for his second voyage in which he would seek a cure for the problem of leadership. In a normal community the average person would be the apt student of various excellent types. In a crisis, an abnormal situation, the excellent types were ignored and the community ceased to operate as an apparatus for perfecting its members. Ortega contended that, until recently, European history had described a community that was by and large normal; Western leaders had been effective because men of ordinary character, the masses, attended to the excellent. Something had changed, however. To find what it was, Ortega took the perspective of the average man, "to see the show from the inside."[10] He looked for a view of life that would suggest aptness to the unprepossessing person. He found one, and another view that would give rise to inaptness.

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"To start with, we are what our world invites us to be." The world that a man perceived ineluctably pressed its features into the character he formed in response. To live was to deal with one's circumstances; and thus the world was the sum of impres-

[10] *La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 149.

sions that a man received in dealing with the circumstances he found himself in. During the past—for the situation had recently changed—almost everyone had discovered that the world offered them only a narrow range of possibilities. Therefore, the world invited men to become aware of their limitations: "round about him the average man encountered difficulties, dangers, scarcities, limitations of destiny and dependence" that he could neither avoid nor surmount. As a consequence of perceiving scarcity and difficulty in life, the mass man became aware of his dependence on those who were more competent than himself; hence he became apt and was willing to accept authorities external to himself. "Before anything, our life is our continuous consciousness of what is possible for us"; and in the past men were, at every instant, aware that it was possible to encounter some crushing difficulty. Man's perception of life as an arduous undertaking culminated in "the supreme generosity," liberal democracy, in which the masses freely gave their power to the minorities that offered the best "programs."[11]

Ortega found that a deceptively simple stimulus had traditionally prompted the masses to agree to follow the competent minorities. Throughout most of Western history, leadership had normally been possible because the pedagogy of scarcity had made the masses apt. The contemporary crisis, the abnormal situation, had arisen when the pedagogy of scarcity was so successful that men created a stable, abundant environment. Such a world invited the masses to be inapt. In this way, the very success of industrial democracy caused the European crisis.

Scarcity and abundance had decisive effects on a community of exemplars and their connoisseurs. Under any circumstances, exemplarity took care of itself. The special or "noble" man, as Ortega called the exemplar in *The Revolt of the Masses*, naturally sought to serve something greater than himself. The noble life was never easy: the essence of nobility was service to a demanding ideal—be the ideal ethical as with Plato's philosopher-kings, erotic as with the noble knights of chivalric romance, or cultural as with

[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 180, 165, 191-2.

the "noble man" of Nietzsche. If a man of noble spirit was not invited by his world to transcendent service, then he would invent a new, more demanding standard to which he would aspire sportfully. "This is life as a discipline—the noble life. Nobility is defined by duty, by obligations, not by rights. *Noblesse oblige.* 'To live as one likes is plebeian; the noble aspires to order and law,' Goethe."[12] In defending the ideal of nobility Ortega did not in the least call for the preservation of privileges; he asked that men preserve their commitment to trying tasks. A remnant always would; and hence in this formulation the exemplar was no longer a problem because he would automatically create himself whenever a man put great demands upon himself.

But noble pedagogues were not alone sufficient; bitter experience had taught Ortega that if exemplars were to have any beneficial influence, they had to be invested with social power by the masses. At this point in a community based on exemplarity and aptness, scarcity became significant. Left to themselves, mass men were inert; "they require nothing special of themselves because they found that to live was to be at each instant what they already were: buoys, which, without effort at perfecting themselves, go wherever they drift." Owing to his inertia, the common man would not present social power to the exemplar unless an external force moved him to do so. The noble was autonomous, the mass conditioned. "Nobility is synonymous with the vigorous life, always set on surpassing itself, on transcending from what presently *is* towards what is intended as a duty and obligation. In this manner, the noble life stands opposed to the common or inert life, which statically secludes itself within itself, condemned to a perpetual immanence until an exterior force compels it to come out of itself." In past times this superior force had been the rigor of the world; scarcity compelled the common man to confront the danger of life and to heed the example of his betters. Hence, the best situation for perfecting human life was in "struggling with scarcity."[13]

In scarcity Ortega found the explanation why exemplarity

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[12] *Ibid.*, p. 182.

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 146, 183, 208.

and aptness had functioned rather effectively throughout most of European history. Without reference to the historical condition of an exacting environment, his conception of community lacked an explanation that could show why the apt had normally accepted leadership by the exemplary. Thus, in *Invertebrate Spain* he had fallen back on the dubious assertion that aptness was a law of spiritual gravitation and a feature of a normal temperament. In *The Revolt of the Masses* he pointed to scarcity as a more palpable, if not palatable, reason for the phenomena of aptness. Men could not escape their fundamental impression of the world: it "converts itself into an interior voice which ceaselessly murmurs certain words in the profundity of the person and tenaciously insinuates a definition of life, which is, at the same time, an imperative . . . 'to live is to feel oneself limited and therefore to take account of that which limits.' " Under conditions of scarcity men perceived their own lives in ways suggesting that aptness was the prudent, productive response. "Common men of the past . . . perceived life, *a nativitate,* as a pile of impediments that they were forced to put up with; and lacking sufficient leeway for any other solution than adapting themselves, they lodged themselves on the ledges that were left."[14]

Observe the revision of value that began here. We have been accustomed by psychologists to dwell on the destructive results of excessive anxiety, and we have built up rather sophisticated techniques, ranging from elaborate therapy to ingenious pills, to avoid or minimize our feelings of dread. In contrast, Ortega was among those who found great value, and even delight, in anxiety; care was one of the positive, definitive qualities of life. To live was to be anxious, to be concerned with vital problems. "The insecurity essential to all forms of life . . ., the anxiety—at once dolorous and delicious— that pervades every moment if we live it to the hilt . . .": this awareness of an uncertain future was the truly healthy outlook towards life; this alertness was the outlook that had enabled civic pedagogy, the system of exemplarity and aptness, to work in European history.[15]

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[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 176.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 168.

Traditionally, insecurity in a perilous environment had led to the right ordering of the masses and minorities. Anxiety was the intuition that implacably followed from sensing the hazards with which the world confronted men; anxiety made the system of exemplarity and aptness work. Man was a political animal because he was anxious, he was concerned about the future, he was filled with dread of the unknown; therefore, he cooperated with his fellows. A difficult environment stimulated the strong to aspire to live heroically; knowing danger, they would, in Nietzsche's phrase, live dangerously. An inhospitable world moved the mass man to complement exemplary heroes with social power; from those who transcended the habitual, the ordinary would derive better habits. The intuition that life was dangerous, insecure, and uncertain invited the noble spirit to discover his duty. In a tough environment in which not even the privileged could expect, come what may, to be comfortable, the strong would drive themselves to develop to the maximum their powers of creation and leadership. In the same way, the rudeness of life provoked the mass man to accept the authority of excellence, not by slavishly doing as the nobles bid, but by mastering in himself qualities the excellent exemplified. Tremulous with the realization that error could bring disaster down upon himself, and hopeful with the recognition that luck, effort, and competence could lead to better fortune, the average man learned to pay heed to the exemplary few. In short, in the past civic pedagogy had worked because insecurity had taught men to learn their virtue.

Man is not anxious by nature; this corollary therefore followed: a community that succeeded in making life secure for its citizens negated its source of social discipline. Here, the perennial dilemma of social policy reappeared as the basis of the European crisis. As Bacon wrote, "prosperity doth best discover vice; but adversity doth best discover virtue."[10] Liberal democracy and industrialism had created a world of relative stability and abundance; Europe ceased to invite its citizens to be apt. Contemporary public affairs were therefore characterized by a revolt of the masses. Mass men were no longer filled with the anxieties that

[10]Bacon, "Of Adversity," *The Essays, or Counsels, Civil and Moral*, p. 54.

had formerly induced aptness in their spirit, and like truant youths they denigrated every example of excellence. Comfort brought with it the reign of the commonplace, which has come to dominate conversation, culture, and the councils of state. The pedagogy of scarcity had succeeded so well that it produced a society ruled by the pedagogy of abundance; hence, Europe had entered into a crisis, a crisis of the complacent.

Although Ortega's conception of the European crisis was not a theory of necessary decline, it did postulate the possibility, even the likelihood, of real disaster. Ortega based his generalizations about scarcity and abundance on substantive features of European history, and the psychological symptoms of this crisis of complacency correlated well with manifest characteristics of European life in the twentieth century. One can easily miss the intent of these reflections by seeing in them nothing but a prophecy of doom; therefore, it is important to be clear about what they were and what they were not.

At first the interplay of scarcity and abundance may seem to yield a cyclical view of history. The ancients were not the only ones in our tradition to see in history a cycle of advance and regression; no less a figure than the father of modern statecraft found it to be the lesson of the *History of Florence:* ". . . valor produces peace; peace, repose; repose, disorder; disorder, ruin; so from disorder order springs; from order virtue, and from this, glory and good fortune."[17] Ortega certainly considered the possibility of a cycle in the history of Europe similar to that which Machiavelli found in the history of his city. For Ortega, civic pedagogy worked when people perceived the arduousness of life and became anxious about their future; and during the industrial and democratic revolutions, exemplarity and aptness had worked splendidly. Men had been aware that their surroundings, material and civic, were not as congenial as possible; fired by hope for improvement, they disciplined themselves and coöperatively created a more stable, productive, equitable environment. As a

[17]Machiavelli, *History of Florence and of the Affairs of Italy*, p. 204.

result, many no longer worried about what the morrow would bring; and experiencing this complacency among his peers, Ortega feared that the morrow would bring disaster. If a sense of foreboding was the engine of civic pedagogy, then it was likely that history would record a rise and fall as a needy people increased their powers to such a degree that they satisfied their wants, became complacent, and met disaster.

Some words of caution should here be intejected. Ortega sought not merely to frighten men with the specter of an imminent, inevitable decline. In the next chapter we shall study how he thought the cycle of influences playing on human character might be broken; here let us simply stress: he believed that it could be broken. History was not inevitable. *But,* an understanding of the undesirable prospects that were harbored in historic trends was the basis of any efforts to avoid the actualization of these calamities. "The revolt of the masses *can* be the transition to a new, unequalled organization of humanity, but as well, it can be a catastrophe in the human destiny. There is no reason to deny the reality of progress, but it is necessary to correct the notion that holds this progress to be secure." Instead, Ortega insisted that the future was open, awaiting determination through the deeds of present man. "There is no sure progress or evolution without the danger of regress and involution. All, all is possible in history—triumphal and indefinite progress as much as periodic regression."[18]

Foresight was the essence of avoidance. With effort and self-discipline, the preceding generations had overcome the more palpable insufficiencies of the world. Happily, for the first time a significant number of Europeans could anticipate a life of material ease. Ortega thought that this "increase of life" was a wonderful phenomenon; he had no desire to return to a straitened state.[19] Ortega was not what C. P. Snow has called a "natural Luddite"; and, what is more important in studying Ortega's second voyage, those Snow condemned for not understanding the industrial revolution and for willingly seeking to destroy it, were

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[18]*La rebelión de las masas,* 1930, *Obras* IV, pp. 193-4.
[19]*Ibid.,* pp. 163-9, 173-4.

unjustly rebuked.[20] By dismissing men like Emerson, Thoreau, William Morris, Ruskin, and D. H. Lawrence as mere Luddites, men who define their human mission in a mechanical opposition to the machine, Snow displays the narrowness of his own response, blinding himself and his followers to the real problem. In contrast to Snow's undiscriminating enthusiasm, these and similar critics asserted that the industrial revolution was a mixed blessing, and they stressed on the one hand the *mixed* and on the other the *blessing*. Like it or not there are destructive demons in industrial dynamism; and if these are to be held in check and kept from undercutting the constructive good produced by material development, we need to dwell on them, we need to use passionate, outraged intelligence to understand the demons so that we may control them. Far from being Luddites, the negative critics of industrialism are the best friends the machine has had, for they were willing to be honest.

Ortega was among the hard-headed social critics; he had the strength of character to risk being called hard-hearted because he treated industrial democracy as a mixed blessing. He wanted to secure the continuation of an abundant world; but to do so, he had to confront the negative concomitants of the postive development. Ortega had no intention of trying to undo the industrial revolution; he warned that unless its power to satisfy appetitive wants was effectively complemented by the ability to satisfy spiritual and moral longings, the industrial revolution would, in all probability, undo itself. Achievement brought changes that had to be mastered. The success of exemplarity and aptness weakened the very forces that had made it successful. Unless a new pedagogy could be found to take the place of scarcity, the masses would abuse their duties of leadership, cause the cultural foundations of industrial civilization to collapse, and thus return men to a condition in which the pinch of hunger and the pang of fear again administered a moral propaedeutic.

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[20]Snow, *The Two Cultures: and a Second Look*, pp. 27-32. Snow's second look seems as obtuse as the first, *Ibid.*, pp. 79-89. He insists on a separation in our culture by not granting that the artist can be constructive as a critic. Where would science be, if scientists could only celebrate existing achievements, rather than subject them to unrestrained critical examination?

Hence, in criticizing the revolt of the masses, Ortega was not venting a reactionary spleen; he was seeking to perpetuate and further the progressive advance of Europe. If we keep this intention in mind, we can follow Ortega's critique of the masses in some detail without falling into the trap of seeing pessimism where optimism ruled: Ortega's realism was his recognition that Europe had serious problems and his optimism was his belief that these problems could be solved without regression to more primitive stages of human organization.

Long ago Heraclitus exclaimed at the inaptness of his fellow citizens, "may wealth not fail you, men of Ephesus, so that you may be convicted of your wickedness!"[21] Thus, for ages the wise have known that luxury weakens the will.[a] Less is known, however, about the precise way in which this debilitation occurs; yet any remedial effort would depend on that knowledge. To find it, Ortega studied with some care how the contemporary world invited men to weaken their character.

Remember that mass man was, in Ortega's terminology, a characterological, not a sociological, type. There is potentially a mass man in each of us: that person whom we are when we are complacently content with what we are. This contented person will make no demands upon himself. The increase of life achieved by the industrial revolution did not create the "masses" by causing the complete leveling of social and material distinctions; such leveling was occuring, but it was not decisive, certainly not as a cause producing mass men. Instead, the general enrichment, the stabilization of existence, played upon the ordinary self of each person in every sociological category in a way that made each feel more content with his character as he found it, inert at dead center.

Liberal democracy, science, and industry had not done away with the old social divisions; rather, they had fabulously intensified the scale and diversity of activities open to the members of each division. Recall the chance remark that was a catalyst to Ortega's reflections: a debutante had confided to him that she

[21]Heraclitus, Fragment 125a, Freeman, trans., *Ancilla*, p. 33.

simply could not bear a ball to which fewer than eight hundred were invited. In each social class, a greater range of possibilities was now within the economic means of its members. Improvement was fundamental: not only did the common man have more creature comforts available than did the very rich of yesteryear, the very rich of today had more wealth than whole nations of former times. Besides an increase in wealth, men enjoyed improved public order and even enchanced freedom from natural catastrophe. Both moral debasement and physical disease were relatively under control; there were still rakes, but their progress was less gruesome than that seen by Hogarth, and there was still a dance of death in which all were chosen as a partner, but the choice, on the average, was forborne a longer time for each. To be sure, certain qualifications would have to be put on this description of the general condition; but those limitations were offset for most by the expectation that men could count on further improvements as a matter of course: not even the supposedly progressive parties seriously contemplated the possibility of a future that *differed* from a linear projection of the present.[22]

Mass man is that person whom we each are when we make no special demands upon ourselves. When life was comfortable, flourishing, this ordinary self would rest content; no upsetting feature of existence would drive mass man out of his natural complacency. In prosperous periods, mass man accepted himself as he found himself and spent his life doing what came naturally. The problem, of course, was that civilization did not come naturally: it was an artifice created through discipline and effort; and of those who were to partake in it, civilization required that they either be exemplary and create their goals freely or be apt and respond authentically to men who could lead them out of themselves.

But in revolt, mass man was neither exemplary nor apt. He was satisfied with his mediocrity, which made him inapt, for he saw no reason to respond to leadership. "He was content just being whatever he happened to be; and without being vain and as the most natural thing in the world, he tended to believe and affirm

[22] *La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, pp. 168-9.

that everything he found within himself—opinions, appetites, preferences, or tastes—was good." The net result was that satisfaction diminished the aspiration to improve. Mass man had a reasonable, if not enlightened, view: with no compulsions to doubt himself, the commonplace man in every class thought that it was a virtue to be commonplace. "Why not, if . . . nothing and no one forced him to realize that he was a second-class, extremely limited man who was incapable of creating or conserving the very organization that had given his life the amplitude and contentment on which he based the assertion of his character?"[23]

Again, Ortega was not calling for a rigid system of social classes: in each of us there is a first- and second-class man, first if we realize our potential, and second if we succumb to our inertia. Nothing was perverse about the second-class man within us; he merely followed the way of least resistance and took life the way it came to him. The ordinary self accepted appearances, and thus the pedagogy of abundance insinuated a debilitating definition of life into the depth of the spirit. "To live is to meet no limitations, and therefore to abandon oneself peacefully to oneself. Practically nothing is impossible, nothing is dangerous and, in principle, no one is superior to me."[24]

Essentially Ortega's analysis pointed to the danger of ignoring the old adage, "spare the rod and spoil the child." The rod was not desirable in either child rearing or civic pedagogy; but since it had performed important functions, one could not simply dispense with it without engendering difficulties. The many comforts of an industrial environment brought great benefits; yet they brought dangers as well. Spoiled children and intemperate adults perceived life as a snug abundance, and they never learned to discipline themselves because they were never forced by the world around them to become conscious of their limitations. Those who inherited an easy life received all they desired without having to master the abilities requisite for the production of the things they consumed. One prepared disasters, personal or civic, by combining developed tastes with undisciplined talents.

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 181.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 180.

In his *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle united in a single group the spoiled child and the self-indulgent, intemperate man. Both were profligates, he found, for profligacy, ακολασια, had the root meaning of unpunished, unpruned, unchastened.[25] Ortega carried this grouping one further. Using "class" in its logical, not sociological, sense, he put the spoiled child, the profligate heir, and mass man in the class *señorito satisfecho*, the class of sated swingers. In another essay, objecting to the decadent example set by the rich in Spain, he called it "the most despicable and sterile class of humanity," for this type of man produced nothing but had everything made for it and turned all into mere ornamentation. A soft, luxurious environment easily corrupted men by failing to chasten their spirit or to prune their powers so that they could channel and concentrate their vitality. "A world of superabundant possibilities automatically produces serious deformities and vicious types of humanity; we can unite these in the general class, 'heir-man,' in which the 'aristocrat,' and the spoiled child, and much more fully and radically the mass man of our time are only particular cases."[26]

Indiscipline could easily tear apart a community of heir-men: that was the threat to Europe. Industrialism could induce heedlessness and arrogance to a degree that would jeopardize Europe's future. "The very perfection with which the nineteenth century organized certain orders of life caused the benefited masses to believe that these were natural rather than organized. This explains and defines the absurd state of mind revealed by these masses: nothing preoccupies them like their well-being, yet they are isolated from the cause of that well-being."[27] Confronted by a wealth of sophisticated products and services, the consumer had difficulty appreciating the intricate web of men, ideas, and institutions that provided the "goods." The mass man was the man in each of us who shirked difficult chores; instead, he expected the advantages that others produced as if these boons were his right, yet he was unable and unwilling to provide them for himself.

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[25]Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethnics*, III, xii, 5-10.

[26]*La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 209.

[27]*Ibid.*, p. 179.

Nothing exemplifies this outlook better than the cowardly exodus from the American cities by members of the middle class. These people are quite ready to commute to the city to earn high salaries and to enjoy the cultural and commercial benefits of concentration; yet they are unwilling to stand by the city, to live in it and cherish it, to pay taxes and give talents to solve its problems. When urban difficulties make themselves felt, the mass man in each of us counsels us to move out rather than to risk defeat in seeking solutions to manifest complexities. But it is doubtful that the city can survive continual exploitation by the prosperous, able middle class. Yet the suburban masses are blind to their heedlessness; they think of the nearby city as a natural organism that will always be there, offering remunerative employment regardless of their personal actions. They feel fully justified in choosing the wealth the city offers on the one hand and the comfort and security the suburb offers on the other; they see the provision of both resulting merely from their requests, and they never trouble themselves to consider precisely how either an economic and cultural center or a periphery of insentience are created and maintained.

In this and numerous other examples, we are familiar with the phenomena Ortega observed: people are happy to enjoy the commodities of contemporary civilization, but they are not so ready to preserve the self-discipline and self-sacrifice that brought into being the powers capable of producing these enjoyable things. "Because they do not see the shop windows of civilization as prodigious inventions and constructions that can be sustained only with great force and foresight, they believe their role comes down to demanding peremptorily what seems to them natural rights."[28]

Heedlessness of this sort made severe political and economic disruptions probable. To take the urban example again: in a concentration of people in which the more stable persons have grouped together and isolated themselves from the less stable, one could not expect the less stable remainder to conduct itself according to the exaggerated standard of "law and order" held by the stable isolate—it was only a matter of time before the vivacious

[28]*Ibid.*, p. 179. Cf. "Los escaparates mandan," 1927, *Obras* III, pp. 459-463.

would offend the sensibility of the stolid. As with this case, so with innumerable others, the tendency of the comfortably complacent to ignore their unpleasant responsibilities made it probable that unusual, unexpected problems would arise in public affairs: in these matters, nemesis has long had ultimate sovereignty.

To further worsen the dangers that complacency engendered in a seemingly secure environment, the lack of awareness, the indiscipline that underlay the emergence of new public problems, would be a formidable political and intellectual barrier to sound efforts to solve the disruptions. This barrier was a significant aspect of the European crisis.

Being satisfied with himself, mass man had a closed mind; he was content with whatever mental furniture he happened to possess. Traditionally, the mass mind was closed, but humble. In contrast, contemporary mass man was distracted by wealth, yet he still lacked real leisure, and in this state he had begun to believe that he could have theoretical opinions. The effects on intellect were awesome. As Ortega described it in another essay: mass man "meets a partisan fact that passes him by and he catches it as he would an autobus: he takes it in order to travel without fatiguing his own legs."[29] No longer willing to leave culture to the few who had the time for it, the masses lost their sense of intellectual limitation. Thoughtlessly, they made a marketplace of thought. In result, the ideas held by the mass man were not genuine, for they were not achieved by disciplined intellection based on the principles of reason.

Here we meet the contemporary difficulty in the traditional theory of free speech. Free exchange in a quest for truth is not the same as a free exchange in pursuit of profit and power; and habitual participation in the latter exchange has been having dire effects on the standards of the former. As opinion becomes increasingly exploited by non-rational means for unintellectual ends, the relation of opinion to power has been changing in dangerous ways. "To have an idea is to believe that one possesses the reasons for it, and this is to believe that reason, an orb of intel-

[29] "No ser hombre de partido," 1930, *Obras* IV, pp. 75-6.

ligible truths, exists. Thinking, theorizing is the same as appealing to an instance, submitting to it, accepting its laws and its sentence, believing therefore that the superior form of living together is the dialogue in which we discuss our reasons for our ideas. But mass man feels himself lost if he accepts discussion and he instinctively repudiates the obligation to respect this highest argument that he finds outside himself."[30] Thus, Ortega contended, the masses simultaneously asserted their right to hold theoretical opinions and to deny that the principles of reason should be the arbiter of conflicting theories. Ominously, the definition of thinking that was operational in public affairs was changing: to have an idea was to find that one possessed the power to compel, badger, or bribe others to profess it, and this was to believe that force, an orb of implacable compulsions, existed.

"Direct action" was the political result: the followers of a mass idea imposed their will on the community by the most effective means at hand. Direct action is one of the characteristic symptoms of the revolt of the masses; it cuts across ideologies and manifests itself in diverse forms. In the liberal tradition, force had always been the *ultima ratio* to which men resorted when discussion, compromise, and law failed intolerably to resolve differences. In contrast to the *ultima ratio*, civilization was an artificial system of indirect methods for reconciling disagreements while avoiding the conjunction of force with passion and all the havoc this pair could wreak. The *prima ratio*, civilization, presupposed the willingness to submit to dialogue in which the merits of conflicting claims were honestly and openly discussed in a search for truth and justice. But men who held their ideas without reasons, as mass men did, could not take part in such a dialogue. For them, force in one or another guise was the only means that could produce agreement and win a further allegiance. Direct action denoted all the means by which rational discourse could be by-passed, subverted, or overwhelmed. And the more the mass man pretended to have ideas, the more direct action would become the norm in public affairs.

In *Invertebrate Spain* Ortega had already indicated the bane-

[30] *La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 190.

ful influence of direct action on Spanish politics. But the disease spread further. Throughout Europe a politics of force was dramatically apparent in Fascism, Syndicalism, Communism, and other mass action movements. These partisans were not willing to persuade and to be persuaded in accordance with how the *logos* manifested itself in open discussion; they had many means to discount in advance all the arguments their opponents might propound. For them, violence was admittedly the *prima ratio*.

But a penchant for direct action was not confined to revolutionary groups: the idea of the state had come to be equated with actual, extensive, powerful bureaucracies; it was no longer, as it had been for nineteenth-century political thinkers, a symbol of public rationality. Instead, many were coming to believe that the state was a primary reality: the administrative apparatus was there to be taken over by the most powerful. Politicians ceased to believe the liberal premise that government resided in men—of the people, for the people, and by the people; they held that men existed within the government. Listen to Mussolini chant: "All for the State, nothing outside the State, nothing against the State"; and take heed![31]

In short, the greatest danger with respect to direct action and public affairs was the state. Statism in action—not in doctrine—was the most serious threat in Ortega's view. This distinction needs to be made because the more serious aggrandizements of the state are accomplished in the name of free men by those who loudly decry statism. Ortega's warning was not similar to that habitually voiced by American conservatives; on the contrary, Ortega cautioned against the static statism practiced by the established powers in well developed political and economic systems. Certain particulars from Ortega's discussion of statism and its dangers show his real concern.

First, Ortega did not oppose the state per se, but an imbalance between state power and social power, the power of spontaneous movements within the community. As he saw it, to the degree that the strength of the state overbalanced that of the integral community, social revolutions became impossible and the possi-

[31]Quoted without source citation by Ortega in *Ibid.*, p. 226.

bility of internal adaptations and renewals of the community disappeared. Members of established groups would avoid having to change their personal way of life whenever serious issues arose, for instead they would have recourse to the impersonal machinery of the state; at most, social tension would lead to the *coup d'état* in which the state was taken over and used in favor of a previously excluded group. The danger that Ortega warned against was the negative use of the state to break up any social movement that disturbed the comfortable majority. "The result of this tendency will be fatal. Time and again, social spontaneity will be capped violently by the intervention of the state: no new seed will be able to fructify."[32]

Second, the positive uses of the state that Ortega condemned were not those that benefited the unprivileged, but those that served the secure, the complacent, and the well-to-do. By describing the example of the Roman Empire, he called attention to the dangerous relationship between industrial and governmental bureaucracy, the military, and the demand for personal security, "the security that gives birth, remember, to mass man." In order to provide security to the comfortable, bureaucracy is brought into being. With bureaucracy, everything is routinized, and the capacity of a people to provide spontaneously for itself begins to wither from disuse. Still, the unforeseen arises and the bureaucracy must force adaptation, which it does through the militarization of the community. The military and its supporting services become a privileged class that, at all costs, must be placated; the army becomes the highest priority to which the remainder of the community must be sacrificed. "State intervention leads to this: the people are converted into the meat and pasta that feeds the mere artifact and mechanism that is the state."[33]

Third, in his critique of statism Ortega described only one concrete example of how the violence of direct action is being institutionalized in the state. The example he chose was not those favorites of reactionary rhetoricians: it was neither the progressive income tax nor welfare for the poor nor even government regula-

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[32]*Ibid.*, p. 225.

[33]Both quotations: *Ibid.*, p. 226.

tion of various private industries; the example of statism that Ortega considered most widespread and symptomatic of the revolt of the masses was the marked expansion of police forces at the behest of those who wanted local tranquillity at any price. The price, of course, was liberty, for, as J. R. Carey presciently rendered Ortega's Spanish into English in 1932, "it is foolishness for the party of 'law and order' to imagine that these 'forces of public authority' created to preserve order are always going to be content to preserve the order that that party desires. Inevitably they will end by themselves defining and deciding on the order they are going to impose. . . ."[34] Ortega found the true test of one's attitude towards the state in the issue of controlling crime: the statist looked to the police to repress the criminals whereas the man who truly believed that the state should have limits preferred to take his chances with the criminals in order to keep his civil liberties free from state infringement. The police, who were essential to maintaining a regular flow in the spontaneous activities in cities around the world, were at the same time the major danger to those activities whenever services of facilitation were transformed into powers of enforcement.

Statism seemed dangerous to Ortega because it could so easily become a static barrier to the spontaneous, vital development of the community. The state would enforce a seeming stasis, which would sooner or later end in collapse. Such a result would probably come sooner rather than later, for the positions of power, both within and without the state, stood at the apexes of well-established organizations, and the rather banal qualities that made for progress through these organizations were not the qualities that would enable men to discover effective solutions to the authentic difficulties. Furthermore, stasis would not preclude continued development in technology and other superficial aspects of life, and the underlying problems that made continued progress problematic would continually become more difficult. Thus circumstances were joining in a way that made disaster imminent: the maintenance of civilization was becoming supremely complex and

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[34]*The Revolt of the Masses*, Authorized translation, Anniversary Edition (1957), p. 123.

the men in positions of power were becoming less capable of dealing with complexities. "It is my hypothesis," Ortega wrote, "that the European who begins to predominate will be, in relation to the complex civilization in which he was born, a primitive man, a barbarian emerging through the scuttle, a 'vertical invader.' "[35]

In sum, traditionally men had made themselves into political animals because they found themselves in an inhospitable environment and realized that to live well they needed to coöperate with one another. Through coöperation, Western man had accomplished a novel stabilization of his surroundings and the usual anxieties were greatly reduced. An increase in security brought a decrease in the civic discipline of the average person, the ordinary self in each person. More and more people were content with themselves as they happened to be; this weakening in man's desire for self-improvement made the collapse of European civilization probable. Mass movements, ideological conflict, institutionalized direct action, and social rigidity followed by upheaval would become characteristics of European public affairs. Increasingly, men would lack the strengths of mind and character that would enable them to solve the complicated problems that advanced civilization created. This, in short, was the European crisis.

But practical men rightly distrust pundits who are content to expose the imminent demise of man and who are yet too uninterested in life to resist the disaster. The activist senses that any doom foreseen by such pallid souls must be a faint danger, indeed; and the workaday world goes on with its business, singing *qué sera, sera!*

Insofar as we stress the spiritual effects of material scarcity and abundance, Ortega's theory seems to be one of these pallid conceptions that counsels a useless despair. But, Ortega repeatedly asserted, the revolt of the masses could lead to either advance or disaster, depending on how men reacted to the possibilities. Man was responsible for his own progress. Improvement was not achieved because conditions made it inevitable; betterment was

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[35] *La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 200, cf. p. 174. The phrase "vertical invader" is from Walter Rathenau.

achieved in spite of conditions. Progress occurred when men overcame the conditions that limited their lives. Hence, in Ortega's view, drama was a constituent of human life because danger, difficulty, and suffering were part of the path to safety, comfort, and joy. The pedagogy of abundance was a dangerous condition; precisely for that reason, the taming of it could lead to a real advance in the quality of human life. "Therefore, it is of great importance to understand *à fond* this mass man who is pure potentiality for the greatest good or the greatest evil."[36] Understand in order to influence: that was the imperative of the philosopher-king.

Yet, it was still not clear that influence was possible. Ortega had studied philosophers of history who thought that scarcity and abundance regulated a close, implacable cycle of rise and fall: thus in the Moslem Middle Ages the great North African, Ibn Khaldûn, perceived how poverty begat virtue, virtue begat well-being, well-being begat weakness, weakness begat poverty, and another round began.[b] For Ibn Khaldûn, history would be an endless exchange as the virtuous Bedouin took over the decadent cities and held them until luxury so weakened him that he became vulnerable to a new wave of desert dwellers.[37] As Ortega knew, many other thinkers had discovered such cycles; and the interesting problem was not to find the cycle, but to find how the cycle might be broken. Helvétius put the question well: "want and poverty are the only instructors whose lessons are always heard, and whose counsels are always efficacious. But if the national manners will not permit [one] to receive such an education, what other must be substituted for it?"[38] One begins to answer this question by reflecting on the critic's power.

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Every creature is driven to pasture with a blow.
HERACLITUS, 11

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[36]*Ibid.*, p. 174.

[37]See Ibn Khaldûn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 3 vols., Franz Rosenthal, trans., especially, Vol. 1, pp. 71-86, 249-310; Vol. 2, pp. 117-137.

[38]Helvétius, *A treatise on Man, His Intellectual Faculties and His Education*, W. Hooper, trans., pp. 77-8.

Ah! it is clear! To propose that life is "principally" this or that is supremely dangerous, for in an instant it will be "exclusively" either this or that. Then terrible things happen. . . . It would be an easy job to exist if we could do things unilaterally. But—and here is the problem!—to live is to travel at one time in every direction of the horizon; to live is to have to do with both this and that.

ORTEGA[1]

[1] "Un rasgo de la vida alemana," 1935, *Obras* V, p. 191.

XI
The Critic's Power

MEN CHOOSE to create communities. The forms of reasoning that made these communities possible were not built into men; on the contrary, the forms of reasoning were acquired, they were learned, they were not necessary, they could be rejected. In the past, by and large, men had not rejected sound means of political calculation because they had direct experience, day-to-day, of the dangers in their environment. As a consequence of their prudence, men entered into relationships of leader and follower, exemplar and connoisseur. With these relationships, there arose the function of ruling and obeying; and "the function of ruling and obeying is decisive in every society."[2] The crisis of Europe brought on by the pedagogy of abundance involved the breakdown of this function; Ortega's second voyage was an attempt to reconstruct it.

As we might expect from Ortega's interest in vital politics, ruling did not mean holding high office. Rather, to rule meant to exercise initiative with respect to man's communal life; to rule meant to have an effect on life, an effect that made it better or worse and that could be attributed to the ruler's actions. Since the breakdown in the function of ruling and obeying in Europe, the result was not decline, but stasis, stasis interrupted by catastrophic attempts at desperate departures from the reigning norm. In the twentieth-century West, the acts that made life better or worse could be attributed to a responsible actor only with diffi-

[2]*La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 242.

culty, while the acts that could be easily attributed to responsible actors seemed to have little effect on the overall quality of life.

Another way to describe this situation was to observe that the traditional offices of practical command had ceased to be positions from which men could effectively rule or shape the whole. To be sure, the men occupying powerful offices could mobilize fantastic armies, organize extensive systems of men and materiel, and draw up budgets of which Midas could not have dreamed. But these men were unable to act; they were constrained by the vast scale of their power, they were exhausting themselves in the desperate, distracting effort to keep the system going; and they had neither the time, the inclination, nor the energy to introduce unexpected initiatives and to change the course of development. The debasing, crushing powerlessness of the powerful was easily overlooked, however, for within their immediate sphere the established offices were still effective; the financier, for instance, was still capable of productive, profitable finance, but he was no longer the creative ruler that he had been during the dynamic phases of the industrial revolution: rather than underwriting revolutionary change, he now served at most to perpetuate a going pattern of life. Ortega perceived great potential power in certain practical offices such as the engineer and the industrial executive; but even with these, their potential power was not latent in their traditional functions, but in new functions that were being thrust upon these offices by the default of others. One had to begin by recognizing these defaults: throughout the West, men who wielded practical power were no longer able to rule.[3]

As a practical matter, the pedagogy of abundance and the revolt of the masses challenged men to rebuild an effective system of power in post-industrial life, a system of power through which individuals could exert significant initiative affecting the quality of life in the community. The first step in discovering the possibility of such power was in learning how the debilitating effects of the pedagogy of abundance might be counteracted. One might

[3]For a more recent version of such thoughts, see Jacques Ellul, *The Political Illusion, passim.*

expect that under conditions of abundance, the critic's function would gain in public significance. The altertness formerly engendered by scarcity had now to be called forth by human activity; and the ability to rule, to direct and channel the effort of the whole, passed largely to critics who could spread concern among their peers for significant matters.

To say that the ability to rule passed to the critics was not to say either that they were necessarily exercising the ability or that, if they did, they would exercise it well. In contrast, it was to say something at once more limited and more significant: the critic now must rise to the responsibilities he formerly foisted on others, to responsibility *for* the course of events. The present danger to humane relations among men is that intellectuals and students are becoming aware of this responsibility and of their present inability to fulfill it; thus frustrated, they resort, in well-meaning desperation, typical of novice rulers who expect great things of themselves, to a cold, sanctimonious extremism. But the errors of the righteous radicals do not change the realities: intelligent criticism has become one of the major forms of power, for good or ill, in our time.

Much of the power left in public life is that of the critic. Members of the "power elite" will find this position quixotic, but the office of critic need not be defended from those who secretly fear its renascent significance. With an instinctive appreciation of the things that matter, let us concentrate on the revival of criticism itself. So far critics have not begun to use their present power fully, let alone to use it well. To do so, for Ortega, the first step would be to rebuild the clerisy's confidence in its office. Ortega had personally felt the irresistible attraction of practical politics; this siren song played upon the suspicion that when all was said and done words were of little significance. But as soon as critics understood the crisis of leadership in Europe, they would not be swayed by this doubt. No one would advise a physical return to poverty and instability as a desirable means of inducing aptness in the masses. But how, without giving up the benefits of abundance, could the populace develop its strength of character? The most promising alternative that might be tried was criticism.

And this alternative was not a mere measure of desperation.

As good teachers know, criticism can give more effective discipline and inspiration than can punishment or failure. When looked at with care, anxiety turns out to be a rather dull goad: it continually prompts men to flee imagined evils. In contrast, criticism inspires men to strive *for* something. Criticism, to Ortega, was more constructive than a carping exposure of disagreeable traits in others; in essence, good criticism was an affirmation of worth, a revelation of potentialities. The critics' task in Europe was to set against achieved realities a great potential project, one so stirring that complacent pride in the actualities would diminish in comparison with the possibilities it revealed; then men would again exert effort. Thus, throughout his second voyage, Ortega's aspiration was to erect a vast critical structure that would inspire the masses with the will to lead themselves out of themselves.

Such a statement, however, can easily be read without experiencing its intended meaning. Criticism, like the words in which it is couched, can often be ineffectual. At its best, the criticism Ortega had in mind was a powerful form of public action. To appreciate what Ortega was aiming at, one should not go to famed critical works, but to deep historic transformations. Thus, the sixteenth-century effect of humanist criticism is not to be found in Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* and other books, but in the historic transformation of standards, which over several generations destroyed the authority of medieval dogmas, opening the way to both the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. In this manner, one will find that most significant developments in Western history occurred when a group of critics truly altered one or another basic element in the view of life that people shared.[a] The Renaissance, the Reformation, the spread of nationalism, the revolutionary affirmation of equality before the law, the steady universalization of material well-being were vast events set in motion largely by the action of critics who, bit by bit, actually changed fundamental ideas about man, God, and nature. Ortega aspired to such criticism, which is criticism that can truly claim to be a mode of action; but, in contrast, most putative criticism usually falls without effect.

To have effect, critics need, among other things, both a cause and a canon. The cause is most important, and the one that moved

Ortega, Europe, will occupy us throughout later chapters. In addition to the cause, however, the canon is also significant, for if the canon is faulty, the cause is likely to die without effect. By a canon, one means a conception of how criticism can and should influence those criticized. Today, critics easily find an audience for their views, for people seem to believe that on listening to exposés of their faults, those faults will disappear effortlessly, as if by magic. This belief creates the paradox that makes a canon important: the more people listen to criticism, the less critical they seem to become.[b] This paradox is a serious phenomenon, for it means that people are building up a strong resistance to one of the more significant forms of power presently available. To counteract this resistance, the competent *clerc* needs a means to make his hearers inwardly critical of themselves and their world, rather than mere consumers of criticism. Ortega sought a canon of criticism that would explain how people become critical of their own situation, for he understood that the signficant achievements of criticism had been wrought when an altered view of the world was internalized by many men: then they began to sing lustily "give me ten stout-hearted men and I'll soon give you ten thousand more."

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Commonly, people think that the object of criticism is to demonstrate the error of a belief or practice. In doing so, the critic is expected to demonstrate the wrongness of one position and the rightness of another; and thus the critic is drawn into absolute judgments that consign some to heaven and others to hell. All this is a misunderstanding that stems, in part, from the ubiquity of bad criticism and, in part, from a misreading of the sting that is properly present in the prose of a good critical stylist. Rightly understood, criticism necessarily ceases to be criticism as soon as it begins to propound imperative judgments, positive or negative; criticism concerns the possible relation between an object outside itself and people other than the critic, and to influence this relation, the critic should respect the autonomy of both the object and the audience of his criticism. In keeping with such restraints,

Ortega's conception of criticism had little to do with passing judgment.

Instead, Ortega's critical canon began with the problem of perception. "Human life has arisen and progressed only when the means that it could count on were in equilibrium with the problems it perceived."[4] At first, this proposition seems to be a dull restatement of the enduring truism that the best environment is a temperate one in which a being's needs and means strike a healthy balance. But that reading misses the significant point. Ortega spoke quite intentionally of human *life*, not of the human *being*, and he said that progress depended on an equilibrium, not between the powers of a being and the absolute problems it encountered, but between the means for living and the problems that were perceived *(sentía)* by "it," by human life. These points are central to contemporary humanism.

In recent times, scientists have disagreed about the place of *life* in the so-called life sciences.[c] A number of twentieth-century philosophers, Ortega among them, have been influenced by the vitalism of certain biologists, particularly the German morphologist Jacob von Uexküll. The issue for the vitalists was whether the biologist should assume, at the outset, that the basic stuff with which he worked was matter, the physical substances studied in physics and chemistry, or life, the mysterious quality that made certain systems self-maintaining. The vitalists predicted precisely what has since happened in the breakup of biology into biophysics and biochemistry: if matter was taken as the basis of biology, scientists would learn a great deal about the physical structure by which various living creatures developed and supported themselves, but little would be learned about life itself. To do so, biologists like Uexküll based their research on assumptions that the creatures they studied were alive, that life was the phenomenon with which biology was concerned, and that, at most, biologists, students of life, could use chemistry and physics as ancillary sciences to help explain how the creature in question lived its life.

A vitalistic view of biology accorded well with several important post-Kantian philosophical developments. Kant's critique

[4] *La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 210.

of the ontological proof that God exists works equally well with respect to any substance, material or spiritual; as we shall see in more detail later, both inductive and deductive knowledge was transformed by this critique into a phenomenalism. In the late nineteenth century, the ontological curiosity, which Kant had seemed to destroy, began to stir again; but this time, rather than following Aristotle in saying that *being* was the ground of all else and that *being* was a substance, they said that reality was not a being, not a substance: it was life, existing, acting. Since this proposition entails a great departure from ingrained habits of thought, we shall keep returning to the matter. Suffice it to say here that from several sources Ortega had learned to mean exactly what he said when he spoke of human *life;* he had in mind the characteristically human pattern of living, of being concerned consciously and unconsciously with all the judgments, speculations, and actions that comprise a human life. He was not thinking of the physical being, the material body, and the conditions under which it multiplies most rapidly or survives for the longest time; he was thinking of the human life, the ongoing activity, and the situation in which this life can rise to its fullest, most significant potential. This life, Ortega thought, was the ground, the occasion of all possible, phenomenal reality: all phenomena existed, not in a world, but in one or another life.

Human life flourished when the means at hand for acting were in equilibrium with the problems *perceived.* Kant had shown that the mind works with phenomena rather than things-in-themselves. In keeping with his Kantian background, Ortega asserted that optimum *vital* development occurred when the *perceived* problems were in balance with the capacity to act that a man had acquired. Absolute needs were beyond our ken. A person was inert with respect to influences that he could not, in some way, perceive. To be sure, unperceived forces could decisively determine the outcome of activities initiated by living creatures, but there was nothing vital about these influences. A living creature could initiate its activities only with reference to the things it perceived.[d] Improvement in life depended on the quality of the initiative that humans took, and men could take initiative only on matters they perceived; therefore, rather than human problems

in the absolute, the problems actually perceived were to be in temperate equilibrium with the means at hand. If the problems of which men were aware were not difficult enough to put their abilities to the test, their abilities would decline from disuse; if the perceived problems were too difficult, their capacities would be overstrained and perhaps destroyed. The contemporary situation was dangerous because comfortable surroundings encouraged Europeans to perceive only easy problems, which would neither challenge the existing means of action nor keep them in good condition.

A man *lived* in the world of which he was aware. He subsisted within an objective reality, but he lived among the things his attention took hold of on one or another level. To live is to be alert, alert to everything, to the viral body entering one's bloodstream, to the person behind one on the street, to economic and military decisions being made in far-off places, to an artistic form shaped by an unknown hand that fell still before there was a history.

One gave a definition of life by saying that it occurred within a sphere of awareness. One cannot read Ortega long without meeting an aphorism beginning "Life is. . . ," or "to live is to. . . ." These aphorisms conveyed the connection of life with awareness. "To live is to deal with the world, to direct ourselves in it, to take a stand in it, to occupy ourselves with it." "There is no life without interpretation of things." "To live is to feel oneself *fatally* forced to exercise liberty, to decide what we are going to be in this world."[5] These were more than fine turns of phrase. Ortega's aphorisms restated an important tradition of philosophic and scientific theory, namely the investigation of life as a teleological phenomenon. "To live is to shoot towards something, to move towards a goal." "Life is constitutionally a drama because it is the frantic struggle with things and even with one's character in order to make actual what we are in potential." "To live is to be outside oneself—to realize oneself." "All life is struggle, the effort

[5]Respectively: "El origen deportivo del estado," 1924, *Obras* II, p. 607; "Los 'nuevos' Estados Unidos," 1931, *Obras* IV, p. 358; and *La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 171.

to be itself." "Life is essentially a dialogue with its surroundings; it is that as much in its simplest physiological functions as in its most sublime psychic functions. To live is to live with, and the other with which we live is the world around us."[6]

In these thoughts Ortega drew on the biology of Uexküll.[e] In 1922 Ortega closed an introduction to one of Uexküll's books with a warm declaration: "I should explain that since 1913 his biological meditations have exercised great influence on me. This influence has not been merely scientific, but also heartening: I know of no suggestions that are more effective than his at putting order, serenity, and hope into the confusion of the contemporary spirit."[7]

Uexküll gave what amounted to a phenomenology of life, one that showed life to be peculiarly teleological. His experiments and theories were based on careful observation of how various animals actually went about living their lives. On the one hand, he studied what kind of perceptual world an animal's sense organs defined; the vital universes of a mollusk and of a man appeared quite different to each because each had extremely different perceptual capacities. On the other hand, he observed the world of action of different creatures; the organs of some gave rise to an extremely limited repertory of acts, those of others to a fascinating variety. With any living creature, Uexküll found, its perceptual world and its world of action were linked by various internal feedback systems, which he called steering mechanisms. Here his theory anticipated the scientific aspects of cybernetics; but, more important for Ortega, his conception of the steering mechanism was useful in working out a canon of criticism.

In Uexküll's theory the function of a steering mechanism was to allow a living creature to direct its perception so that the information needed for a particular act would actually be gathered. Of course, the precise way in which the steering mechanism worked varied greatly with the characteristic organs of perception

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[6]Respectively: *La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 243; "Pidiendo un Goethe desde dentro," 1937, *Obras* IV, p. 400; *Ibid.*, p. 400; *La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 208; *Las Atlántidas*, 1924, *Obras* III, p. 291.

[7]"Prólogo a 'Ideas para una concepción biológica del mundo,' de J. von Uexküll," 1922, *Obras* VI, p. 308.

and action of different species. All the same, selective response always entailed a capacity, in some way or another, to control the pattern of perception *in order to* initiate, sustain, or alter a pattern of action. In human life, the steering mechanisms that mediated between man's complicated perceptual capacities and his powers of action were extremely complicated, and Uexküll did not try to describe them fully. He did indicate, however, that much in both man's perceptual and active world was of man's own making; the human realm was largely cultural rather than natural. Here, in the cultural sphere, the most important steering mechanisms were public functions, in particular, the critic's function.[8]

Uexküll's theories lent themselves well to describing the function of criticism. As an animal had a natural capacity to perceive and to act and had various steering mechanisms that linked these capacities purposefully, so a people had a cultural capacity to perceive and to act and a variety of steering mechanisms, in the form of teachers and critics who sought to stimulate the people's perception so that they could carry through desirable actions. Men learned particular skills, tastes, and standards from a larger repertory, the whole culture; and each man chose to act in any real situation on the basis of the skills, tastes, and standards he had acquired: thus he participated in the common way of life. No matter how original, a particular man could not stand completely apart from these common characteristics; they were intrinsic elements of moving, eating, dressing, speaking. But within this basic cycle of shared cultural perceptions and actions, critics, writers, teachers, and public leaders could try to interest men in important but ignored possibilities. Purposeful action always takes place within the limits established by the constraints of our capacities and surroundings. Public progress depends not on being free from a constraining cultural heritage, but on being able to act within those constraints by channeling attention and ability towards the pursuit of unfulfilled possibilities. The critics who so directed

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[8]Uexküll's most important work available in English is his *Theoretical Biology*, D. L. Mackinnon, trans. I have discussed Uexküll's work and its place in current thought at greater length in "Machines and Vitalists: Reflections on the Ideology of Cybernetics," *The American Scholar*, Spring 1966, pp. 249-257.

our attention were the civic pedagogues, the cultural steering mechanisms.

Ortega perceived the function of criticism in this way. A community of men had vital needs and abilities; its members might or might not perceive their common needs; they might or might not use their powers: whether they would do so depended on how the masses perceived life and whom they chose to make their leaders. In one sense, civic pedagogy was the unselfconscious way in which all the people of a community perceived their needs and on the basis of this perception selected their leading minorities. The civic results would be good or bad depending on the accuracy of their perception, depending on the degree to which the problems they perceived were in equilibrium with the means they had at hand. The decisive deeds for the community developed ultimately out of this great aggregation of the perceptions and choices that each man made. Thus, Ortega observed, "the new biology recognizes that in order to study an animal it is first necessary to recontruct its world, to define what elements of the world exist vitally for it; in sum, to make an inventory of the objects that it perceives. Each species has its natural stage upon which each individual or group cuts out a reduced stage. Thus, the human world is the result of a selection from the infinite realities of the universe, and we understand only a part of these. No man lives the entire panorama of his species. Each people, each epoch makes new selections from the general repertory of 'human' objects, and inside of each epoch and each people, the individual exercises the final modulation."[9] This vast process was the basic cycle of civic pedagogy, the process in which a community acquired its abilities and limitations.

In this fundamental sense, civic pedagogy was beyond the control of particular persons; as Ortega put it, each person exercised a final modulation. His effort, however, was to understand the nature of the critic's power. The critic's power could not be direct, complete, and authoritative; what happened would depend on many wills other than that of the critic. Nevertheless, this limitation did not preclude the critic's significance: the basic cycle

[9]*Las Atlántidas*, 1924, *Obras* III, p. 291.

of civic pedagogy provided room for many involutions, many steering mechanisms. No one person, no one group could directly control the whole system, but any person and any group could try to influence it by criticizing prevalent patterns of perception, by trying to help people improve the choices they made, and by stimulating men to modulate their lives more effectively. The man who exercised this real but limited influence would be the critic, the civic pedagogue.

Improve? Modulate effectively? These were fine impulses. But if each person's world was the result of a selection from an infinite variety, how could one person improve and modulate the selection made by another? If a man lived in the world of which he was aware, how could another, who lived in a different world, criticize the first? These questions point to difficulties with the theory of criticism that has so far unfolded: they lead to a study of Ortega's epistemological point of view. To clarify the function of the critic as a steering mechanism in the system of civic pedagogy, Ortega had to avoid the Scylla and Charybdis of absolutism and relativism, for with an absolutist epistemology the critic would begin to seek direct, authoritative power and with a relativistic one he would become either completely powerless or willfully arbitrary. Instead, Ortega searched for a middle ground, for an epistemology that would enable the critic to make significant suggestions without being tempted to assert command.

Epistemological reflection has been greatly stimulated by the desire to define accurately the actual relation between a substance and its symbol. In day-to-day matters, each of us has an adequate, working conception of this relation; it has become hard to sell the Brooklyn Bridge and even children intuitively grasp the difference between the symbol $10 and the greenish bill it stands for. But relations such as this one, which we operationally understand in simple cases, prove very difficult to clarify rigorously. It would not be surprising, for instance, if the next advance in sub-atomic physics comes from an epistemological critique of the seeming relation between the signs of various particles, as these signs appear in the form of decay paths recorded on film, and the actual entities these signs supposedly symbolize. Our lives are filled with

cases like this one, albeit simpler, in which we take the sign as evidence of the thing; and the urge of the epistemologist is to criticize this practice, showing us when it is likely to deceive and when it will inform us well.

Epistemologists have arrived at no agreement in their critique of the relation between knowledge and reality. There are advantages and drawbacks to the different positions, and the consensus changes as the optimization of these pluses and minuses is made under shifting circumstances. But despite this lack of agreement, the disagreement itself has a form that has been surprisingly consistent over centuries. At one pole is an absolutist epistemology, which holds that signs are true indicators of an absolute reality, of a system of substances as they exist in themselves. There are obvious difficulties with this position, which were manifest in the beginning with Parmenides: we cannot maintain our image of the absolute and still save the phenomena, the whirl of changing objects all around us. At the other pole is a relativist epistemology that holds with Protagoras that "of all things the measure is Man, of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not."[10] The problem here, of course, is not to save the phenomena, but to save ourselves from the phenomena. Which man is to be the measure when one finds that certain things are, and another finds that they are not? Most philosophers, Ortega included, have tried to find ways to integrate the best parts of both these basic positions into a single, consistent system.

During 1913, the year that Uexküll's biology began to influence Ortega, the Spaniard first explained his theory of "perspectivism." It was a simple but significant epistemological contention: knowledge was such that it had to include a point of view. The world was real, he held, but it was knowable only through the partial perspective of men: there was no ultimate or absolute perspective from which truth could be seen. This assertion was not meant to make man the measure of the thing; on the contrary, each thing had a real, absolute configuration for each man, and each man had to measure himself against the truth of these things. Ortega's contention was not, however, a traditional absolutism,

[10]Protagoras, Fragment 1, Freeman, trans., *Ancilla*, p. 125.

for there was no single, universal truth of things set apart from men; the truth of things was integral to each man's unique relation to the things, and the truth varied with each person.

For each person the world had a particular configuration; each man could know this configuration and it was the absolute for him; this configuration was his absolute, for another person a different configuration was the absolute. Knowledge was man's means for making over the chaos of things-in-themselves into a habitable cosmos, one that possessed form and substance; things became absolute for a man as he became aware that he had a definite, unique relation to everything by virtue of his having a particular location in the world.

This epistemology, which suggested that the absolute was each being's particular relation to everything else, was a thorough humanism in which knowledge was conceived to correspond to a fundamentally anthropomorphic universe. Ortega's was a radical anthropomorphism: he did not think that men should naively depict nature in their own image; he held that no matter what precautions were taken to avoid a human bias, knowledge could only concern things as they existed in a definite, absolute relation to the knowing man. The universe *was* anthropomorphic; and to know was to make manifest the real relations between oneself and the world.

This position was not original. Nietzsche had already exclaimed, "How could we ever explain! We operate only with things which do not exist, with lines, surfaces, bodies, atoms, divisible times, divisible spaces—how can explanation ever be possible when we first make everything a *conception*, our conception! It is sufficient to regard science as the exactest humanising of things that is possible. . . ."[11] Furthermore, the importance of perspective had been dwelt on by several previous philosophers, most notably by Leibniz and, again, Nietzsche. Ortega was careful to deny that his views were similar to theirs, and in the case of Leibniz the difference is rather marked. But for our purposes, it is more important to note the similarities, despite the differences, between the three conceptions.

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[11]Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*, No. 112, Thomas Common, trans.

Leibniz presented an absolutist metaphysics in which all was derived from a perfect God. The universe was an absolute spiritual reality made up of innumerable parts, each of which was, in the eyes of God, perfect, fixed, and unchanging. Each one of these parts, however, did not have the eyes of God; each saw the universe from a perspective that made things appear imperfect, transitory, and volatile. All the same, this perspective was the best men could attain; and if properly respected, it would serve men well, for God had, through a pre-established harmony, provided for the reconciliation of every partial perspective with all the rest. "It is God alone (from whom all individuals emanate continually, and who sees the universe not only as they see it, but besides in a very different way from them) who is the cause of this correspondence in their phenomena and who brings it about that that which is particular to one, is also common to all, otherwise there would be no relation."[12]

Nietzsche's conception of perspective was in many ways antithetical to Leibniz', for Nietzsche would accept neither Leibniz' reference to an absolute God nor to autonomous, substantial subjects. The way in which grammar imposed upon our thoughts could perhaps have become clear only to a master stylist like Nietzsche; he realized that reason gave no warrant to believe that either subjects or predicates could be anything more than linguistic conveniences. Phenomenal evidence concerned neither the subject nor the object, it concerned the perspective, a perspective that, for convenience, men described as a subject seeing an object; but in truth, this perspective was simply the perspective, the particular seeing without the inferred subject and object introduced as independent entities.

Nietzsche's theory is difficult and obscure, but in a certain way, it is quite close to Leibniz'. The phenomenal universe for Nietzsche consisted in a heterogeneous mass of particular seeings, feelings, tastings, valuings, wantings, and doings; these perspectives were like Leibniz' monads. For both Neitzsche and Leibniz, all the separate perspectives and all the separate monads existed

[12]Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, No. 14, George Montgomery and A. R. Chandler, trans.

by themselves intermixed but unrelated. The problem was to find a *tertium quid* through which they could become related. For Leibniz, the monads became related through God and his pre-established harmony. For Nietzsche, such a doctrine was untenable, for it required one to believe that the existing harmony was a perfect harmony. Instead, at this point, Nietzsche discovered a will to power at work among the unrelated perspectives; this will sought to work out and establish a *potential* harmony among the perspectives. In every case, the will to power posited itself as subject and sought to gain power over everything else present in what it now recognized as "its" perspectives. "Perspectivism is only a complex form of specificity. My idea is that every specific body strives to become master over all space and to extend its force (—its will to power): and to thrust back all that resists its extension. But it continually encounters similar efforts on the part of other bodies and ends by coming to an arrangement (union) with those of them that are sufficiently related to it: thus they then conspire together for power. And the process goes on—."[13]

Two problems were of central importance to both Nietzsche and Leibniz: the problem of apparent differences and the problem of harmony. By calling attention to the presence of perspectives in all phenomenal knowledge, both broke apart the homogeneous universe and made it possible for differing views to be equally true. Furthermore, both men, especially Leibniz, felt called upon to reconstruct from the perspectival pieces the homogeneous universe. In doing this, both were providing for common standards by which a person could discriminate between various perspectives, saying that, although the perspectives are, as far as they go, equally true, one has significantly greater value than another and the more valuable should have precedence. God's pre-established harmony and the will to power of the life force were rather different standards for making such discriminations; but with respect to the function each performed in the perspectival systems of Leibniz and Nietzsche, they were almost identical. In like manner, Ortega's theory of perspective differed from those of his prede-

[13]Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, No. 636, Walter Kaufmann, trans. Punctuation is Nietzsche's.

cessors in the way that it dealt with the problem of difference and the problem of harmony; but the function of his theory, like theirs, was to deal with these two problems.

Whereas most theories of perspective postulated that a homogeneous reality seen from different points of view would appear different, Ortega renounced the homogeneous reality: from different points of view, reality *was* different. One erred by thinking that truth should appear the same to different men; "a reality that was always identical from whatever point it is seen is an absurd conception." One equally erred by thinking that because truths varied with different observers truth did not exist; this thought was a consequence of an unfounded belief in a homogeneous reality, but now "the concrete determinations, which before appeared relative in the bad sense of the word, change into the sole expression of reality when they are freed from comparison with the universal absolute." Leibniz' Godly point from which all could be perceived at once did not exist, for if there was a God, His knowledge was nevertheless anthropomorphic: "God is also a point of view. . . . God sees through men: men are the visual organs of the Divine."[14]

By recognizing that reality itself was not simple, that it was an infinitely complicated system of overlapping perspectives between this and that, the twin demands of the one and the many, the subject and the object, the knower and the known could be met. Prior to the twentieth century, philosophers had persistently fallen into the error of absolutism or scepticism by not accounting for perspective as a feature of reality. Both rationalists and relativists erred in thinking that reality ought to be some homogeneous object that would, given true knowledge, look the same to different subjects: because of this belief, the rationalist sought to suppress differences in the name of truth and the relativist tried to dissipate truth for the sake of differences. But reality was not some object out there that various subjects could disinterestedly observe; both object and subject were equally a part of reality and the perspectival relation between them could not be transcended. If one accepted the fact that the point of view of the observer was

[14]*El tema de nuestro tiempo*, 1923, *Obras* III, pp. 199, 232, 202-3.

a part of the reality he observed, the differences that men authentically perceived would cease to be difficulties for reason; on the contrary, these differences then become the occasion of reason. From different points of view there were different, real involvements with a single object; it would be futile to insist that only one of these involvements was correct, all the others straying from the path of truth, or that any observer could see just what he wanted to see, there being no real object to correlate with the different reports of the various viewers.

Since reality was heterogeneous, the function of reason was not to suppress differences, but to account for them and thus to preserve them, to make it possible for the different realities to co-exist. This function gave no one unlimited license to think as he pleased; on the contrary, it imposed immense responsibilities on each person to think truthfully. The way of truth still differed from the way of opinion; but reality ceased to be a continuous, homogeneous One: it broke apart into a multitude of real relations between the whole and each of its parts. The perspective of each man was his particular, unique, absolute relation to everything else; to live, each man had to maintain his relation to the world; and to maintain his unique place in the whole, a man was drawn into thinking, into accounting to himself for the differences between himself and others so that together they could preserve themselves by preserving these differences.

With this conception of perspective, Ortega took care of the problem of differences; and he used a correlative conception, that of destiny, to deal with the problem of standards. A man's destiny was his inalienable program of life; it was living the optimum, most human life that was open to him to live. Ortega's conception of destiny was related to the classical conception of fate; it took human effort to fulfill both. But the necessity characteristic of destiny differed from that of fate; destiny was a necessary potential, not a necessary actuality. A person could not change his destiny, but he could easily, all-too-easily, rebel against it and refuse to fulfill it. Thus, the European crisis was a *rebellion* of the masses because part of the destiny of men who put no special demands upon themselves was to be apt before those that did, and mass men were refusing to fulfill this part of their destiny,

this condition of achieving their optimum, personal potential. The fact that men could reject their destiny distinguished Ortega's conception from that of Spengler and other potentially authoritarian philosophers. Because every man could inauthenticate himself, each was free and responsible; and because each man was responsible for freely fulfilling his personal destiny, his best possible self, it followed that his contribution to humanity would be, no matter how humble, as much a personal achievement, as vitally dramatic, and as publicly significant as that of the greatest personality.

Potentiality is a function of constraint; freedom is not a mere absence of limitation. A destiny, an optimum potential resulted because reality had a particular configuration for each person; this configuration put definite limits on how a man could perceive his life and how he could act within it. His real options were defined by these limits, and his freedom consisted in the necessity of choosing irrevocably between these particular options. Since the activities that a man could initiate were a correlate of his perception, his ability to perform the optimum activities that were among his real options depended in large part on his perceiving the world as fully and accurately as his perspective allowed. For each man his highest potentiality was fixed; it was a function of his perspective, of his particular relation to everything else: hence—"I am I and my circumstances." But it was not fixed that a man would initiate or fulfill his highest potentiality; to do so, he had to see himself and his world truthfully in all its perspectival uniqueness. By thus perceiving his destiny, each man could measure his deeds against his destiny and give form to his life. "What happens to us, then, depends for its vital effects, which are the decisive ones, on who each one of us is. Our radical being, the project of existence that we constitute, qualifies and gives one or another value to all that surrounds us. The result is that our true Destiny is our very being."[15]

By accepting a multi-faced world, perspectivism provided a place for truth and a place for differences: that was the essential point. "Perspective is one of the components of reality. Far from

[15] "No ser hombre de partido," 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 77.

being a deformation, it is reality's organization. . . . The inveterate error is to suppose that reality has, in itself and independent of the point of view from which it is grasped, an inherent physiognomy. . . . For it is the case that, like a countryside, reality has an infinity of perspectives, all of which are equally true and authentic. The one false perspective is the one that pretends to be universal."[16]

Here was a basis for criticism: a critic could not tell men how truth should appear from their points of view, but he could identify and expose falsified perspectives by their pretensions to substantive universality. In this, Ortega's conception of the perspectivist critic was closely paralleled by Karl Mannheim's conception of the sociologist of knowledge. An important difference, however, was in their different modes of exposing falsifications. Mannheim assigned a rather paternalistic, positive power to the sociologist, who in the end would know better than the untutored person what that person's real ideas should be. Thus, in Mannheim's system the sociologist would work out, rather authoritatively, the objective, substantive criteria by which ideological thinking could be unmasked; the upshot would be a contention that such and such a proposition was not what it purported to be because it was, in fact, the rationalization of this or that social interest.[17] In contrast, Ortega held that no such substantive criteria could be propagated; the Ortegan critic could expose illusion and dissimulation only with formal criteria that did not lay down what a person's point of view should be, but pointed out simply that a professed perspective could not be what it was professed to be. According to these formal criteria, there were two important sources of illusion and dissimulation: the absolutism and the nihilism to which traditional thinkers were susceptible.

First, rationalism posed a straightforward problem: rationalists believed they knew universal truths. Ortega inveighed against rationalistic absolutism through most of his writings. Abstractions

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[16]*El tema de nuestro tiempo*, 1923, *Obras* III, pp. 199-200, italics in parts of the quotation omitted.

[17]See Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, *passim*, and especially pp. 237-280. The paternalistic side of Mannheim's thought comes out most clearly in his *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*.

gave only abstractions; reality could not be grasped in a universal truth. He did not bother with the dogmatic anti-metaphysics so popular among some twentieth-century philosophers; to him the case had long been closed and to pursue it would be to beat a dead horse: there could be no knowledge of universal absolutes. But Ortega went much further than the anti-metaphysicians, who were overly impressed with the achievements of science; Ortega did not accept scientific rationalism. As he saw it, positivists had given up the search for a universal absolute and limited themselves to a search for universal truths in secondary areas. Positivism, the presumption that the facts and laws of nature could be positively established, was another dangerous form of rationalism: it left uncultivated the profound problems of life in order to pursue inauthentic truths about less important questions. Scientists could tell us nothing about the laws of nature; they could only establish the laws of science, which would stand until later scientists inscribed better ones in their books. To be sure, Ortega granted that there was an "instrumental utility" to rationalistic thought, both positivist and absolutist; "but it is necessary not to forget that with it one will not know reality."[18] Revolutionary and utopian demonism arose when men confused their conception of a universal with a potential reality. The critic's task was to indicate the limits of rationalistic knowledge: the universality of rationalism was a fiction that was justified only to the degree that it enabled us to understand particulars more fully.

Second, relativism posed a more subtle problem than rationalism, for at first glance the relativist did not pretend to universal knowledge. His disbelief in truth, however, itself a negative universal, led to a dangerous outlook. The relativist believed that there was no reality beyond appearance and that whatever men believed was true for them. It was a short step from this position to an ominous extension, usually made in the name of the common good; namely, if each man's opinion was as good as another's, why not proclaim the opinion of the strongest (or the neediest or the greatest number) as the universal? Being strongest, we will call our will the truth. Ortega observed that direct action and blind

[18] *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, 1923, *Obras* III, p. 199.

partisanship resulted from such relativism. Relativists were the men who asserted the right to have opinions but renounced the duty to have reasons. "Every man would be the member of some party, and his ideas and sentiments would be partisan. No one would reconcile himself to the truth, to good sense, to justice, or to prudence. There would be neither a truth nor a justice; there would be only the party consensus; it would be their truth and justice."[19] To a certain degree, every man had to adopt "partisan facts" and the ideas of others because each person could not think through his own beliefs on every possible subject; but this necessity gave men no warrant to partake in a drive to make their beliefs dominant without more ado. The duty of the critic was to remind men that borrowed facts and theories were not their own; before taking ideas not their own so seriously, seeking to impose them on others, they should make the ideas their own by thinking the matters through and forming intelligible reasons for their views. Then, if still convinced of their rectitude, they might try to persuade others, not compel them, to perceive the truer point of view.

In short, the critic should provoke each person to live his own life, to make his own decisions, to form his own ideas, to recognize his perspective and to accept his destiny; in the Platonic phrase, the critic was to help each man keep to his proper business.[f] The critic could not tell men how to live, choose, or think; but he could note whether men were doing these things for themselves or whether they were relying excessively on the ideas of others. For determining the vital effects, or rather the anti-vital effects, it did not matter whether the ideas men mouthed were rationalistic or relativistic; either way, men would falsify themselves as they attached themselves to an idea without absorbing it and understanding it, without making it part of their view of life. The critic could identify these intellectual perversions, and then he could show how such distorted ideas were put to destructive uses.

When a man adopted counterfeit ideas he falsified himself; he rejected his own perspective and ignored the destiny that was his. He who lost himself in the images that others offered would not come to terms with himself; he would not find his real needs;

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[19] "No ser hombre de partido," 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 81.

he would remain unaware of things that were essential to his destined life. "Whoever refuses to be what he must be kills himself while living; he is the walking suicide. His existence consists in a perpetual flight from the one authentic reality that he could be. Nothing that he does results directly from the sincere inspiration of his vital program; on the contrary, everything is an effort to compensate, by means of adjectival, purely tactical, mechanical, and vacant acts, for his lack of an authentic destiny."[20]

Self-deception and the resultant self-destruction occurred when men accepted falsely universalized opinions. With these, men could blur their own true perspectives and avoid the perception of the particular problems that their destiny was to surmount. Depersonalized opinion permitted men to embark on an easier but futile course: to occupy themselves by reacting to conventional occasions in the accepted way. Men filled their vacancy with dead dogmas, some absolute and others arbitrary. By criticizing these compensatory universals, the civic pedagogue could propel men towards the examination of their true destiny. In turning men towards their authentic lives, the critic would gain an indirect influence over the education of the public.

Recall: on the basic level, civic pedagogy was the aggregate pattern of spontaneous obedience and considered resistance that a people manifested as they surveyed their circumstances and pursued their possibilities; this system worked best, it allowed life to optimize its possibilities, when the problems that people perceived were those that would extend but not overwhelm their powers. No man could control this system. Yet the critic who followed Ortega's disciplined canon would indirectly improve the whole process, for he would undercut certain compensations by which men avoided confronting their significant, truly taxing difficulties. Ortega did not claim to have a positive knowledge of the destiny of other persons, for his point of view was not theirs; nevertheless, he did claim to be able to indicate when people were substituting ideas that had been mindlessly derived from others, putting these in the place of those that were proper to their destiny: a derivation could be identified because it had lost its integral con-

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[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 78-9.

nection with any particular man's perspective. If the critic could insure that men were preoccupied with their authentic lives and not with some fake derivative, the dispensation of social power would be in a better balance with the actual problems and potentials of the community. Thus, to begin with, the civic pedagogue exercised his power not by propounding truths, but by criticizing errors in intellectual procedure. But this negative beginning was simply the beginning.

Criticism is the form of indirect action, par excellence; it is indirect because both the object and the audience of criticism have perspectives that differ from that of the critic. The critic respects the autonomy of those he criticizes when he limits himself to exposing false pretensions to generality; the critic cannot categorically proscribe or prescribe anything. Instead, he gains his true power by exposing inauthentic views that he encounters in himself and others. But in doing so, the critic performs only part of his task. The exposure of the inauthentic is a largely negative endeavor, which is significant as it helps men discover their personal destiny; but there is also a positive side to criticism, which is necessary to realize its full, indirect power. Criticism would not yield cumulative civic effects without postive principles that could guide its use. With these principles, the critic becomes able to inspire men to a common hope; and by sharing aspirations men become able to concert their powers spontaneously. Ortega's canon included such positive principles; with these, he made room in it for his cause.

Each man had a unique perspective and destiny; this fact gave rise to the negative power of criticism, for the universal was inauthentic whenever it conflicted with this uniqueness. But if the particularity of perspectival isolation exhausted critical possibilities, if critics confined themselves to insisting that the inner isolation of each should always be respected, then the community would soon be torn asunder by an exaggerated sense of independence in its members. Here is the most paradoxical universal of all: the universal by which one insists that every thing is utterly unique, particular, and dissimilar. To fulfill his canon, Ortega had to subject the canon to its own strictures; with a perfect solipsism

one encourages men to inauthenticate themselves, thinking of themselves as isolated absolutes devoid of real bonds to others. The critic could avoid such absurdity by realizing that common, but not identical, features existed in the perspectives and destinies of other men. Because the destinies of different men included elements in common, the civic pedagogue could inform his criticism, his efforts to influence the public's self-education, with positive principles.

Let us not confuse this point, for confusion could lead to the very absolutism Ortega wanted to avoid. A common destiny did not arise because the destinies, the lives, of different men were in part the same, but because, in pursuing their different destinies, each had to deal in his own way with certain common problems. Communities and institutions were possible because analogous difficulties and desires arose in the lives of men; each had to feed himself, not in the same way, nor with the same food, but since each needed nourishment, all shared a problem of nourishment. Thus there were many common, shared problems with respect to which institutions arose; but all the same, each man still had to find his own, authentic relation to each common problem. If many men fulfilled in their personal lives the possibilities they had towards a common problem, then an integral community would form around it, a community that would appear cohesive and unified, and yet voluntary, variegated, and diverse.

As a critic, Ortega frequently wrote about common destinies. In doing so, he did not try to tell others how to live, saying that to be a good patriot one must think this and do that; instead, he observed that in the course of their distinct lives, each member of a group would probably take up, independently and in his own way, a problem common to all. In speaking of a common destiny, Ortega did not seek to impose one view on many men; rather, he hoped to make many men diversely conscious of a particular want, a particular absence in life, so that they could in their different ways shower the problem with a variety of potential solutions. Consequently, when he said that "the destiny of our generation is not to be liberal or reactionary, but precisely to disengage ourselves from this antiquated dilemma," he was not trying to foist a third orthodoxy on his peers, but to suggest that

as each lived his life the occasion would probably arise in which the particular destiny of each called him to go beyond the comfortable opposition of the liberal and the reactionary.[21] In his view, members of his generation would each meet separately a common problem of transcending a political distinction that had become sterile; Ortega did not propose to make the leap for each person; he merely observed that the challenge seemed to be common, but each solution to it would have to be personal.

Thus, civic pedagogues could call attention to problems that they thought were of common concern. In doing so, they were not advancing false universals or imposing their view of life on others; they left it up to each man, first, to ratify the critics' concern by finding the problem significant in his own life, and second, to project as a program of personal action his own solution to the difficulty. Hence, the positive element in criticism comprised invitations, not commands. In this way, Ortega's writings frequently allured readers towards an interest in certain difficulties. With his stirring presentment, he invited others to join in considering the problem and their personal possibilities with respect to it. For instance, he wrote about *Spain* as a possibility, *Spain* as a political problem, the mission of the *university*, the idea of the *theater*, the theme of *our time*, the revolt of the *masses;* and in each case Ortega asked his readers to consider how they stood with respect to the problems that he suspected were confronting the groups in question. He invited each reader to help solve the problem by taking it into account in deciding on the way to conduct his life.

There was a solid rationale for this idea of action by invitation. The liberal tradition includes an ongoing skepticism about the power of the teacher to edify the pupil; following Socrates we confine ourselves to helping the pupil edify himself. A modern statement of the maieutic is in a note from Nietzsche's *Will to Power: "Not* to make men 'better,' *not* to preach morality to them in any form, as if 'morality in itself,' or any ideal kind of man were given; but to *create conditions* that *require stronger men* who for their part need, and consequently will *have*, a morality (more

[21] *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, 1923, *Obras* III, p. 152.

clearly: a physical-spiritual discipline) that makes them strong!"[22] With Ortega's Uexküllian conception of environment, to create the conditions that Nietzsche sought one would try to create an awareness of more demanding challenges, challenges that would call forth stronger men. Ortega's invitations were intended to elicit the perception of greater possibilities; he believed that if men perceived more taxing potentialities, they might give themselves a stronger physical-spiritual discipline and spontaneously act with greater mastery.

In sum, each man lived in the world of which he was aware. Far from making criticism impossible, this fact became the basis of a carefully conceived canon of criticism, a theory of civic pedagogy.

The education of the public took place on two levels: the one was fundamental and inexorable, the other was secondary and voluntary. On the basic level, a community formed and acquired its characteristic virtues and vices as its members each gave social power to one or another exemplary person. Civic pedagogy created a community because innumerable choices, each made by an individual, aggregated into the selection of the group's leading traits. The prevailing conditions—scarcity or abundance, for instance—could influence the aggregate quality of these choices. But on closer examination, it became apparent that the conditions themselves were not the actual determinant of the character of the community. What mattered was the way men perceived their conditions. In a healthy community people encountered, in the course of living, problems and possibilities that would require them to develop their abilities fully; whereas in an unhealthy community people perceived only deadening difficulties, problems that would either coddle or overwhelm them. Men who lived in a sparse environment found serious, demanding efforts thrust upon them; but men who lived in the midst of luxury had to make a special effort to become alert to inspiring possibilities, for they could be comfortable taking things as they were. Therefore, with the

[22]Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, No. 981, Walter Kaufmann, trans.

development of a stable environment throughout the industrial democracies, the basic process of civic pedagogy should be augmented by the purposeful provocation of awareness throughout the community. To provoke the people: that was the task of civic pedagogues, critics, men who cared for the secondary, voluntary education of the public.

A critic could not work directly on a community. The common character formed according to the quality of the choices each person made; there was no choosing for them. Nonetheless, the civic pedagogue was not powerless; he could try to ensure that the members did not falsify their opinions about important questions and that they would have sufficient intellectual resources to form their own opinions. Such criticism would help the community arrive at a better definition of its possibilities, its destiny, by making its members meditate on their destinies. Furthermore, the critic could invite others to examine certain common problems to see if these were significant elements of their personal destinies. Thus, within the basic cycle of civic pedagogy, which occurred when the masses gave social power to particular elites, a civic pedagogue could do important things: explain and interpret a problem that he thought confronted many persons; build up the intellectual capacities that people might use to resolve the common difficulty; criticize seeming universals by means of which men avoided facing their personal destiny directly; and incite men to search themselves so that they would discover how common problems appeared from their particular perspectives.

These critical activities were similar to the procedures followed in Socratic discourse. Socrates began his discussions with a question of significance in the lives of his interlocutors. Through his concern for proper definition he attempted to build up intellectual tools suitable for resolving the problem. With his persistent effort to make others recognize the contradictions in their opinions, while himself claiming not to know, he practiced the kind of criticism Ortega advocated; with it, he provoked men to examine what they intimately, personally believed. Finally, Socrates' effort to secure the assent of his interlocutors had the effect of Ortega's incitement of others to search themselves; in both cases, the critic called on men to take a stand without the comfort of joining a

dogmatic movement. Socrates, however, was more of a personal pedagogue than Ortega; but the smaller size of Athens, in comparison to contemporary Europe, lessened the gap between personal and civic pedagogy. Thus Plato observed that Socrates was the only true statesman of Athens, and the Athenians attested to Socrates' public influence when they executed him as an enemy of the city. Whenever the official powers feel compelled to use their command of force to suppress the voices of defenseless individuals they unwillingly exemplify how substantial a public power the lone critic actually wields when he effectively acts on the secondary, voluntary level of civic pedagogy. Efforts at thought control are self-defeating: they are the most conclusive witness to the power of unfettered thought.

Ortega's critical canon provided a humanistic alternative to materialistic theories of change. By giving due weight to the importance of perception, he broke the fatalism that results when the ideologists postulate that thought is a function of man's material conditions. If it was sometimes true that a man's character was a function of his environment, it was also frequently true that a man's environment was a function of his character. All depended on the man's ability to perceive his conditions differently: the same surplus, which, when perceived as comfort, induces complacency, will occasion great cultural striving, if perceived instead as a bracing leisure.

Here, Ortega put himself in the ranks of twentieth-century visionaries who looked beyond a politics of power to one of character; instead of relying on force, education was to be their means to reform.[8] They did not deny that human life could be ordered by conditions, force, and manipulation; they merely added that it could also be ordered by choice and aspiration. Furthermore, given a choice between the two sources of order, aspiration was more desirable than force. To make that choice, one needed to understand how force might operate so that one could anticipate how to foil it. Thus, Ortega opposed those absurd revolutionaries who breathlessly pride themselves on their ignorance of the past; he knew that in the past Europeans had shown an ingenious ability to alter their established forms of community, and he believed that anyone who understood the history of that ability

would not conclude that the power to change was a dead attribute of the past. Reader—be prepared: when Ortega spoke of Europe, the crisis of intellect, and the reform of reason, he was not trying to cloak old orders in new sets of verbal clothes. He was serious about the critic's power.

As a young man, Ortega wrote that "there is no theory besides a theory of practice, a theory that is not practiced is not a theory, it is merely an ineptitude."[23] Ortega practiced his theory of civic pedagogy. Through much of his writing he examined the major problem confronting Europeans in common, namely the possibility of unifying Europe. He repeatedly proposed changes in the cultural institutions in order to nurture the capacities that Europeans would need if a Europe, at once unified and diversified, was ever to be achieved. Further, by arguing for reforms in our conceptions of technology and reason, he sought to undermine two powerful misconceptions about science and history, for these errors eased the way for men to ignore the problem of European unity. Finally, by regarding philosophy as a way of life, as the living of an examined life, Ortega incited men to search within themselves for their European destiny. Throughout all, Ortega's goal was to unleash the historic power of critical thinking. "At this height of the times, when we live in old, completed societies, we cannot make history by mere proposals. We need a technique of invention; we need to 'cultivate our garden,' the school, the preparation of the intellect."[24]

Criticism might counter the pedagogy of abundance because the effects that vital conditions had on human character were mediated by man's powers of perception. As Wolfgang Köhler and other gestalt psychologists had shown, particular conditions could be perceived in various ways depending on the frame of mind of the perceiver. In particular, the sense of power, security, and well-being that the pedagogy of abundance insinuated in the average man might become the basis, not of complacency, but of a new, unprecedented striving if the expectations of the average

[23] *Vieja y nueva política*, 1914, *Obras* I, p. 290.

[24] "El poder social," 1927, *Obras* III, p. 500.

European could be inspired with a great new vision, a vision that would make the achieved actualities look tawdry. A possible vision, Ortega thought, was a vision of a united Europe. Europe was the common problem: if each man could perceive it in his separate way, the masses might again become apt before the exemplar.

During the 1920's, when Ortega was occupied with the renovation of Spain, he nonetheless won widespread repute as one of the better "good Europeans." He achieved this reputation by the impression he made on leading Europeans while introducing them to Spain, for in addition to wide correspondence as editor of *Revista de Occidente*, he was host and sponsor of lecture tours through Spain by men such as Albert Einstein, Paul Valéry, and Count Keyserling. Afterwards, Valéry wrote that Ortega and his friends had made Madrid "one of the most precious spots in my memory."[25] And in his book on Europe, Keyserling wrote that "it is a remarkable effect which . . . Ortega produces against the background of his homeland: he is one of the finest and most universal of Europeans; he will someday be acknowledged as one of the leaders of this age."[26]

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It is hard to fight against impulse; whatever it wishes, it buys at the expense of the soul.

HERACLITUS, 85

[25]Paul Valéry, letter to Ortega, in *Revista de Occidente*, 1924, No. 11, p. 259.
[26]Count Hermann Keyserling, *Europe*, Maurice Samuel, trans., p. 93.

THE AUTHENTIC SITUATION of Europe amounts to this: its long, magnificent past has carried it to a new stage of life in which everything has expanded. But, at the same time, the structures that survive from the past are dwarfish, and they impede the present expansion. Europe developed within the form of small nations. In a sense, the national idea and spirit have been its most characteristic invention. And now Europe is obliged to surpass itself. This is the plot of the enormous drama that will be performed in the coming years. Will Europe learn how to free itself from its survivals? Or will it remain a prisoner of what it has always been? Once before it happened in history: a great civilization died because of its inability to surpass its traditional idea of the state.

ORTEGA[1]

[1] *La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 249.

XII
Towards an Exuberant Europe

COUNT KEYSERLING suggested that some day Ortega would be recognized as a leader of "this age." Clearly, Ortega was not a leader of the age of world wars and the great depression; he appears insignificant compared to Churchill, Stalin, Hitler, Roosevelt, and de Gaulle. But Keyserling wrote about *Europe*, and he punctured the self-importance of official politics, national and international, with a telling irony. Keyserling was interested in spiritual leadership, and he was capable of laughing scornfully at the political pieties of his time. His book, he said, gave him a wonderful sense of inner liberation; he meant to occasion the same sense in his readers.[2] So, too, did Ortega in his search for Europe.

With a happy laugh and a gracious gesture beckoning us to join him, Ortega renounced the fatalism of the sensitive seers who find themselves

> *Wandering between two worlds, one dead*
> *The other powerless to be born. . . .*

The paralysis that Matthew Arnold recorded in his rueful rumination on the Grand Chartreuse seemed too easy a pose.

> *Silent, while years engrave the brow;*
> *Silent — the best are silent now.*
>
> *Achilles ponders in his tent,*
> *The kings of modern thought are dumb;*
> *Silent they are, though not content,*
> *And wait to see the future come.*

[2]Count Hermann Keyserling, *Europe*, Maurice Samuel, trans., pp. 8-9.

When men sink into despair, they cannot give birth to a new age; they can only stand mute, watching and waiting. With respect to despair, Ortega offered real leadership. In him the ancient will to believe awakened to a new life; he did not accept the self-pity implied in Arnold's depiction of the future that could not be born.

> *Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age*
> *More fortunate, alas! than we,*
> *Which without hardness will be sage,*
> *And gay without frivolity.*
> *Sons of world, oh, haste those years;*
> *But, while we wait, allow our tears!*[3]

Allow our tears, our dull indulgence? More happy years will not rise, without effort, unaided, from the ways of the world. The belief, the expectation that if we wait, sorrowfully but patiently, the future age will rise ineluctably of its own accord, is the source of our sterility, of our inability to give birth to this age. Ortega devoted himself to destroying this superstition that stood in the way of a new enlightenment.

With a hard gaze at the worst in the world, Ortega found that there were still great reasons for living and that men who had a significant *raison d'être* needed to ask for nothing more from life. From this affirmation there flowed a sense of possibility, a willingness to search out and try new potentialities; his adventurousness is unusual in twentieth-century thought. Ortega's writing resonated with the sounds of an authentic future, one that promised truly novel possibilities. His words resound with the affirmation that alert, thoughful men can create great new works, a meaningful *Kinderland*, if they will disengage themselves from the obsessions of the moment and look to the past and to the future.

Yet men have difficulty disengaging from the immediate; and those who think about politics by profession, the political scientist and political commentator, have special difficulty standing back from day-to-day developments, for they have become deeply involved in the conduct of politics; their attention is occupied by

[3]Matthew Arnold, "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," lines 85-6, 113-8, 157-162, in Arnold, *Lyric and Elegiac Poems*, pp. 214-217.

planning for contingencies, advising on priorities, and mobilizing opinions. With a few exceptions, even the more thoughtful columnists in our daily papers depend for their copy, not on their powers of original reflection, but on their access to men in high places; and political science has gained a quasi-official function, to wit, to rationalize established political practice as best one can. In pursuing this function, political scientists have become amazingly adept at hiding the human reality—the tragic, brutal, comic, joyous, loving, messy flesh and blood with which he ultimately deals—behind sterile ciphers and turgid phrases. Further, both newsmen and political scientists are busy men; they are obsessed with practice and hence they are chained to the endless now. For the most part, students of government lack leisure, the leisure that is the basis for all profound historical and theoretical reflection. As a result, we are rarely confronted by the serious, thoughtful construction of possible futures, by speculative visions like the European future sketched by Ortega. In short, political discussion rarely imparts a sense of liberation.

Keyserling and Ortega experienced a refreshing freedom. In thinking about politics, they ceased to feel limited by the issues their predecessors posed. They perceived the opportunity to ask new questions rather than offer yet another answer to the old. In this ability to pose political problems anew, the few visionaries like Ortega, managing to disengage themselves from obsession with the moment, were similar to the great political thinkers of the Enlightenment. Yet, owing to a deep involvement in practical affairs and lack of leisure most political thinkers now have difficulty perceiving the link between current political speculation and the Enlightenment. For most, the Enlightenment denotes a time of great theoretical innovation during which our current political and economic orthodoxies were worked out. We confuse the intellectual genius that conceived of these theories with the particular theories thus worked out, and in defending the latter we suppress the former. In this way, the very prestige we attach to the Enlightenment blinds us to the ongoing phenomena of enlightenment in European thought.

Take, for instance, the thesis that Judith N. Shklar has advanced in *After Utopia*, namely that "the grand tradition of

political theory . . . is in abeyance."[4] For Shklar, the grand tradition was epitomized by the Enlightenment with its two salient characteristics of social optimism and radicalism, "the belief that people can control and improve themselves, and, collectively, their environment."[5] Thus Shklar identified the grand tradition with a substantive task, the effort to control the external environment, the pursuit of an open political and economic future; and the point has seemed to stand, for since the Enlightenment political theory has in fact been concerned primarily with the means for perfecting the social and economic life of the community. But in twentieth-century Europe, the most articulate writers on politics have been, as Shklar described them, either romantics or Christian fatalists, and in both cases they completely rejected the social optimism and radicalism that is supposedly indicative of the grand tradition. Shklar found that the "romantic" theorists, a group that included Sartre, Camus, Malraux, Marcel, Heidegger, Jaspers, Arendt, and Ortega, were in basic opposition to the Enlightenment; since these writers renounced the pursuit of the substantive tasks that Enlightenment thinkers had made the goals of political theory, the current writers must have forsaken political theory itself.

To be sure, twentieth-century romantics in Europe have denied, for the most part, that political reform and institutional innovation can bring much human progress. With the possible exceptions of Merleau-Ponty and Sartre in his later work,[6] the writers Shklar studied have throughly rejected the particular kind of social optimism and radicalism developed in the Enlightenment. Jaspers with *Man in the Modern Age*, Marcel with *Les hommes contre l'humaine*, Ortega with *The Revolt of the Masses*, and

[4]Shklar, *After Utopia*, p. 272.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 219.

[6]For Sartre see *Critique de la raison dialectique, Tome I: Théorie des ensembles pratiques*, in which he tries to work out a conception of practical action that will be at once Marxist and existentialist and thus the basis for unifying the two movements. For Merleau-Ponty, see *Humanisme et terreur*. Shklar attributes to Merleau-Ponty the conviction that one can be neither "pro- or anti-communist" (*After Utopia*, p. 150), whereas Merleau-Ponty said "*On ne peut pas être anticommuniste, on ne peut pas être communiste*" (*Humanisme et terreur*, p. xvii). Surely, Merleau-Ponty's whole argument was pro-communist, affirming that communism was not yet fully developed, that the humanist should protect and encourage its development in the expectation that someday one could be communist.

Camus with *L'homme révolté* all turned their readers away from the tradition of optimistic reform initiated in the Enlightenment; and a book like *The Political Illusion* by Jacques Ellul, which appeared after Shklar's study, seems to confirm her thesis well, for Ellul draws upon the tradition she calls "romantic" and he thoroughly rejects the illusion that further progress can be achieved through political action. All these writers have asserted that the false spontaneity of crowds, which has become the stuff of politics, is not informed by man's better qualities, and that since man in a rigorous sense has no nature, but a character that he gives himself, reliance on politics for human self-definition is likely to impose the stamp of the worse upon the better. They have contended, further, that an outmoded rationalism inherited from the Enlightenment will lead to the reduction of man to an insignificant object, if such rationalism continues to be the epistemology upon which men base their political reasoning. Thus, contemporary "romantic" writers have voiced strong criticism of the Enlightenment.

But a writer who claims, like Shklar, to have studied Hegel should be careful not to confuse a philosopher's criticism of something with his rejection of it. Men who despair of the morrow do not write on *The Future of Mankind*, *Homo Viator*, or "The Past and Future of Present Man." It was Karl Jaspers who reaffirmed Kant's definition of enlightenment, *"sapere aude!"*; and there is no better advice for those studying contemporary political theory in Europe.[7]

Ortega, and others among the "romantics," attacked the letter of the Enlightenment in order to revive its spirit. The problems of comprehension, in responding to their work, are ones of perspective. One now easily sees Enlightenment thinkers as proponents of an optimistic social and economic radicalism; likewise, one easily perceives the contemporary Europeans as pessimistic proponents of cultural despair: such views come naturally to any-

[7]For "Sapere aude!" see Jaspers' *The Idea of the University*, p. 24. This book and Marcel's *Homo Viator* could have been consulted by Shklar. Ortega's "Past and Future of Present Man," with its very optimistic conclusion was available in the proceedings of the 1951 conference, *La connaissance de l'homme au XX^e siècle*, sponsored by Rencontres internationales de Genève. Jasper's *The Future of Mankind*, with its concluding prophecy — a very prescient one — of a new politics, was not published until 1958 in German and 1961 in English.

one who is comfortable with the present order of things. But all the writers in question were acerb critics of the status quo in which they found themselves. From the point of view of the status quo, any critic is liable to be dismissed as a proponent of cultural despair; and the despair over man's foibles expressed by contemporary "romantics" does not go beyond that recorded in Swift's satires, Voltaire's *Candide*, Johnson's *Rasselas*, or Rousseau's *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*. William Burroughs' prose is no more destructive of human pretension than William Hogarth's pictures. Thus, it is by emphasizing one aspect of the Enlightenment and another of the present that a false dichotomy is set up—an age of hopeful theory against an age of sad despair.

In truth, each era was an age of both criticism and theory. The only real opposition is that current theorists are criticizing the substance of earlier theories. Hence Shklar correctly noted that the "romantics" have not been enthusiasts of either the social optimism or the economic and governmental radicalism of their Enlightenment predecessors, for the contemporary critics no longer believed that these particular concerns would produce the good life. But since European theorists like Jaspers and Ortega were not tied to the established system of practice, they did not need to confine their concern to given political, economic, and social practices; their optimism and radicalism, which was no weaker than that of their predecessors, becomes apparent in somewhat different concerns. Instead of social optimism, twentieth-century theorists have advanced an ethical optimism; and in place of governmental and economic radicalism, they have put forward a cultural and spiritual radicalism.

Ortega, in particular, embodied the three cardinal traits by which Shklar defined the Enlightenment—radical optimism, anarchism, and intellectualism; but these traits were to operate through a heirarchy of activities that differed from the hierarchy envisaged by Enlightenment thinkers. Shklar unwittingly recognized the optimistic and radical character of Ortega's aspirations when she said that "in Ortega . . . the ethics of authenticity becomes ridiculous."[8] She failed to notice that this "ridiculousness" under-

[8]Shklar, *After Utopia*, p. 139.

mined her whole argument. To prudent Europeans anxious to win favor in the courts of Louis XV and his like, Enlightenment theories of social and political organization were ridiculous because, like Ortega's ethics, they called on men to learn to live according to a better, more difficult rule of life. Louis XV was so oblivious to the changes building up around him that posterity has had to credit him charitably but apocryphally, with at least observing, "*Après moi le déluge*". The incredulity aroused in the old regime as the rights of man replaced the rights of monarchs can be inferred from the innocence reflected in Marie Antoinette's "let them eat cake." And every implementation of Enlightenment political theory was decried before the event as patently impossible. Any truly optimistic, radical theory cannot help but seem ridiculous to the conventional opinion of the time; for an optimistic, radical theory is one that cannot justify itself on the basis of what is given: instead, it invites men to transform the given to fulfill the possibility that it describes. Thus, Shklar's mystification at the ethics of authenticity should be taken as a sign that the spirit of Enlightenment still thrives.

Rather than being in abeyance, the grand tradition has merely been transformed: the desire for material progress that has animated Western history for the last three hundred years is turning into an equally powerful desire for cultural and spiritual progress. This transformation should come as no surprise. Anyone familiar with the function of theory should expect contemporary political philosophers to have lost interest in the social, economic, and governmental problems of the industrial democracies. Theory concerns ideal entities. The old concerns are *theoretically* relevant only to the developing nations where the rational organization of society, the economy, and the government is still a mere ideal. But in the developed nations, the social, economic, and governmental systems are going concerns; consequently, in these countries, the need is not for theory about these matters, but for competent, dedicated administrators who can preserve and perfect these ongoing, established enterprises. Hence, there is an end of certain sorts of ideology.[a]

But civilization still has its discontents; life is not perfect; we have not been born after utopia. In the West, theorists have

the opportunity that arises only infrequently in history; they can turn way from familiar problems and, with a fresh, expectant feeling, they can make love to a new mistress, namely, to the possibilities in human life that have arisen with the pedagogy of abundance. In times of abundance, human shortcomings and human possibilties are most marked in the ethical, spiritual, and cultural realms. Well then, let us turn our perfective powers upon these matters. Hence, social philosophers have tried to conceive of politics anew, this time of a politics of the spirit, for they feel a longing, a need for theory about the intangible work of man.

Ortega was a leader of the cultural optimists and ethical radicals—the contemporary exponents of the grand tradition. He criticized the present in the name of a possible future, a European future. He had none of the solemnity about present practices that we have grown accustomed to encountering in political scientists. His conception of Europe touched but lightly on economics, for in Europe what counted was the politics of the pure spirit, not the politics of the gross national product, with its buoyant ups and depressing downs, which everywhere seem to set the tone of national life. With the question of Europe we meet a youthful mood, a soaring of the spirit, a sense of vast possibilities, an impatience with plain realities, a willingness not only to criticize the given, but to try further to create something new.

Such soaring hopes, however, were a movement towards joy through sorrow: men like Ortega were optimistic about the possibilities for Europe because they were thoroughly pessimistic about the possibilities of the narrow nation-states. In the United States the creative despair that has taken hold in the European nations is only beginning to be felt. Most Americans sense that they have been born into a going enterprise, one that provides a structure within which they can achieve personal fulfillment. The situation was different for Europeans like Ortega; for them, the nations into which they were born came to seem confining. Their outlook reveals much about what is happening in the world around us.

"Nation" was the name for a huge but finite set of possibilities in the lives of particular men; it denoted important, different

elements in the destinies of diverse persons. In times of national development, these various possibilities were as yet unfulfilled, but they were apparent as potentials to men. Thus, for one man the nation was a challenge to realize the possibilities of a great public office, for another it was an opportunity to accumulate wealth, for yet another it was a promise of military glory, for a fourth it was a tradition that invited him to literary creation, and for many others it was an occasion for sharing values, hopes, and reminiscences. The nation, which began as a pure form denoting manifold possibilities for diverse persons, was slowly brought into being as men dedicated themselves to realizing the personal possibilities that their ideal nation put before them. During the nineteenth century, Europeans had lived at the height of their times and achieved their destinies by struggling to fulfill the personal possibilities that had become conceivable for each as liberal democracy and industrial technocracy were joined within the national form. But in the twentieth century the national forms within Europe had been filled out; these denoted for men things that they already were, inevitably and without effort, not things that they might become with hard work and imagination "For the first time, the European meets in his economic, political, and intellectual projects with the limits of his nation; he perceives that his possibilities of life, his life style, are incommensurable with the size of the collective body in which he is confined. He then discovers that to be English, German, or French is to be provincial."[9]

Men had fulfilled the most significant possibilities for human life that they could set before themselves through the idea of the nation. This fulfillment encouraged men to perceive the state as an actuality; it no longer seemed to be a potential that by one's personal actions might be given a conditional actuality. The nation-state was a fact, a completed structure. Like the surrounding countryside, the nation-state was a thing that one found oneself in the presence of. Note the consequence. "No human being thanks another for the air he breathes because the air was not manufactured by anyone: it pertains to the class of things that 'are there', of things we call 'natural' because they are never lacking. The

[9]*La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 248.

spoiled masses are sufficiently unintelligent to believe that the material and social organization, which is put at their disposal like the air, is of the same origin because it will apparently never fail and is as perfect as nature."[10] That the residents of the world's great cities can no longer take for granted the air they breathe upsets Ortega's imagery, but it even better exemplifies his fundamental point: the complacent confidence that anything of human significance will take care of itself is supremely dangerous, for man has made himself personally responsible for the whole of his existence.

Ortega drew a parallel between the mass man and the "mass nation," the nation that seemed to be there, complete and secure, as natural as the air we breathe. Both the mass man and the mass nation did no more than assert their right to be exactly what they were; the status quo was supreme and "more of the same" was its apotheosis. Both belonged to the class of heirs: they could take what was given and add not a whit, for both lacked a sense of potential, a vision of the future. Within the mass nation no exacting projects could be formed, for all the authentic ones had been finished and those that might be tried would prove to be perversions, as was the case with Fascist nationalism. Without being able to live personally involved in a developing enterprise, the European could not remain true to himself. "Europeans do not know how to live if they are not launched on a great, unifying enterprise. When this is lacking, they debase themselves, they lose courage; their soul goes out of joint. The start of this is today apparent to those who look. A century or so ago the districts that have called themselves nations arrived at their maximum expansion. Now they can do nothing more with themselves unless they transcend themselves."[11] Only mass men could find fulfillment in the mass nation.

Paradoxically, the very limitation of the national form, the fact that it no longer denoted taxing possibilities, enabled the mass man to avoid perceiving his own limitations. Being relatively complete the nation-state did not force upon its citizens many

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 179.
[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 272-3.

great problems against which they could measure their capacities. It provided for a stable existence; and as long as one was content to take whatever it gave, the person had little need to learn to know himself. A larger, less limited, less fulfilled form was needed if men were to be able to test their own mettle; an occasion for finding in oneself the capacity to create more commanding offices, juster laws, more difficult enterprises, more productive theories would help men discover their limits. This occasion was Europe. "Only the decision to establish a great nation from the group of continental peoples will begin the pulsation of Europe again. They then would again believe in themselves, automatically they would require much of themselves, they would discipline themselves."[12]

Europe—the curious maiden riding Westward with uncertain excitement on the back of a divine bull—has always been a shared adventure. With their national adventures completed, the Europeans needed to find a new undertaking. To maintain their vitality, men endowed with great powers had to dedicate themselves to heroic tasks, to the labors of Hercules and the journeys of Jason, all of which are given to strong men simply as significant tests of their strengths. Life was laying down another such challenge. The nineteenth century had taught men to aspire to a destiny defined within a national form; and with that destiny achieved, the European was challenged to the hardest task of all: to renounce the sovereignty of a familiar, established pattern and to accept freely a more demanding ideal.

Europe was the common destiny that would enable Europeans once again to get in shape. Europe was a form, a potentiality, with respect to which diverse persons could define different but convergent aspirations. In the twentieth century, the offices of *national* politics, economics, society, law, art, literature, schooling, and scholarship had been fully developed, and they required of the men who would perform them merely that these persons "take office" as the phrase now goes. In contrast, the offices of European life—of its politics, economics, society, law, art, literature, schooling, and scholarship—were not at all developed; these offices were possibilities, a teeming world of possibilities, each of which chal-

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 273.

lenged a different man to develop them in his day-to-day activities. Creative discipline would again invigorate European life as men independently devoted themselves to the pursuit of these European possibilities.

Europe as a possibility, this Europe gave Ortega's distinction between the complacent mass and the heroic individual a constructive, open, positive quality. He did not seek to contrast the happy few with the vulgar many. For him the heroic ideal had become an open, democratic ideal, a unifying rather than a divisive quality; Europe presented a common challenge and the excellence it could engender was an excellence open to everyman. The essential difference between a man of noble character and one of mass complacency was not in the type of actions that each undertook, but in the spirit with which each pursued outwardly similar acts: the noble man chose to make his deeds serve a demanding ideal, whereas the mass man was content if his acts satisfied his immediate appetites. Beginning with identical endeavors, the noble would find greater possibilities in them because he was continually bent on transcending the given. But to be meaningful, transcending the given always depended on there being a given that could be pursued more easily than various other possibilities. A man could aspire to nobility only if there were possibilities beyond the given to which he could aspire sportfully. Hence, nobility became a meaningful possibility for everyman when, as with the pedagogy of abundance, the inertia of the mass ceased to be something imposed upon men by the paucity of their environment and became merely one of their alternatives in a world of leisure and luxury. In this situation, the self-satisfaction of the mass man became a revolt precisely because the mass man no longer needed to be of the mass, someone who asked nothing special of himself, for he could, if he cared, lead the noble life. Thus, the revolt of the masses was at once a sign of weakness *and* a sign of greatly increased potentiality.

Achilles' nobility lay not only in the deeds he did, but in his choice, in the fact that he chose to do heroic deeds rather than live a long life of comfortable obscurity. Without that latter alternative, his heroic achievements would have lacked an important element of their nobility, namely, that Achilles did them

despite the fact that he could easily have done less, much less, and still have been a good and decent man. Here for a single person is exemplified the positive, common potential that Ortega perceived in the revolt of the masses and the decadence of the nation-state: these developments made it possible for everyman to pursue nobility of character. Each European could now renounce the way of inertia and define his own excellence by not being content to pride himself in the superficial, established accomplishments of his national existence, by seeking instead to consecrate his personal activities to realizing the European possibilities that fell within his destiny. In the heart of the danger the courageous man found his greatest opportunities. "Is it as certain as I have claimed that Europe is in decadence and resigns its power and abdicates? Could this apparent decadence be the beneficial crisis that will permit Europe to be literally Europe? The evident decadence of the European *nations* is an *a priori* necessity if a United States of Europe is ever to be possible, if the European plurality is to be sustained by its formal unity."[13]

Many Americans feel that a United States of Europe would be a convenient political development. This attitude was particularly explicit under the Kennedy administration; and in general many hope that a resurgent Europe would be a healthy buffer between Russian and American power, preventing their potential clash. Those who hold this vision usually support the European unionists against the neo-nationalists like de Gaulle. American support was beneficial; but the Europe that Ortega and many others hoped to engender was considerably more dynamic and less predictable than the convenient buffer dreamed of by those responsible for American national interests. The question Ortega asked was "who rules the world?" and he thought that precisely that question was raised with the possibility of European union.

For men like Ortega, de Gaulle's Europe of the fatherlands would never do, for at a minimum Europe was their fatherland. European unity was not to be a way to aggrandize national grandeur. In *The Idea of Europe,* Denis de Rougemont indicated that

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 241-2.

Ortega's importance in the three thousand years of speculation about Europe was his realization that the decadence of the European nations was the basis and precondition for the vital emergence of a unified Europe.[14] The thing that American politicians have not considered is the locus of this unified Europe that may rise like Phoenix from the national ashes. How far East would it range? How far West would it reach? What would be its center? its substance? and its form? Far from a mere buffer, a dynamic Europe might well include both Russia and the United States.

Ortega dreamed of a dynamic Europe. He was not an institutionalist. To be sure, he called on politicians to work out the machinery of European unification; but he seemed to put little store in mere machinery, and spoke much more often of the historical traditions that gave civic substance to the European idea. For Ortega the sense of a European destiny would spread among the people before meaningful institutions could be organized by the people. When you and I, as we are beginning to do, stop thinking of ourselves as Americans first, and Europeans second, if at all, and when we, along with countless Germans, Englishmen, Italians, Spaniards, Frenchmen, Poles, Russians, Swedes, Swiss, Czechs, Argentineans, Australians, and many others, begin to think of ourselves primarily as Europeans, and when these other labels mean no more to us than New Yorker, Burgundian, or Züricher, then Europe will be on its way to dynamic unity. We already speak of ourselves as Westerners; and the dynamic Europe of which Ortega dreamed may well be galvanized when this vague term, which is now so often used without feeling as a euphemism to cloak power politics deployed in the service of national interest, gains a common mystique, the power to stir up a sense of shared adventure and mission.

Starting in his youth, Ortega repeatedly advanced a dual conception of community, for multi-sidedness was a constant characteristic of his thought.[b] One hailed from two countries, he told "El Sitio": there was an official Spain and a vital Spain. Inhabitants of the first country liked to reminisce about past glories; participants in the second aspired to fulfill stirring com-

[14]Denis de Rougemont, *The Idea of Europe*, pp. 354-362.

mon projects. The official society was established; its subjects encountered it as a given element of their lives. The vital society was in flux; its citizens made it an ever-changing creation of their effort. In short, a community could be understood as a reality or as a potential. If one were to use the Aristotelian distinction, Ortega wrote, tradition would be the substance of a community and a purposeful enterprise would be its form. More lightly, he observed that "it is a matter, then, of the great difference between what a man is from behind and what he is from the front, or what he is by tradition and what he is by purpose and enterprise."[15]

From behind, there had long been a traditional Europe, which, in fact, had preceded the nations in historical development. As a young Europeanizer, Ortega had maintained that Europe was science: disciplined intellect, taste, and action. He maintained this view: a capacity for spiritual discipline had been the substance of Europe. Thus, Europeans shared a set of common intellectual attitudes, customs, morals, laws, and skills all of which dated back to Greek philosophy and poetry, to Semitic religions, and to the Roman Church and Empire. Consequently, men erred by conceiving of a nation as a self-contained community that could be abstracted away from the cultural ambience in which it subsisted. That ambience was Europe. Europe was an integral element of each developed nation, for the citizens of each nation not only partook daily of the European cultural traditions, but, further, the creators of each nation had proceeded precisely by using European skills and ideas to solve regional problems. For Ortega, recognition of this European precedence was essential to any coherent discussion of European unity, for it showed the inadequacy and nationalist subterfuge in theories of inter-nationalism.[e] "European society is not, then, a society whose members are nations. As in all authentic society, its members are men, individual men, to wit, Europeans who, *besides* being European, are English, German, or Spanish."[16]

Not only had the nations been founded by the aid of customs deeply rooted in the traditions of official Europe; tradition-

[15] *Meditación de Europa*, 1949, 1960, *Obras* IX, p. 278.

[16] "En cuanto al pacifismo," 1937, *Obras* IV, p. 296, fn. 2.

ally, Europe had a powerful political means for making itself felt in the affairs of men. This means was the balance of power, the established, official mechanism of European politics. The presence of Europe had been a changing yet stable equilibrium that reflected the unity of diverse components. The balance of the whole was the unity that had maintained the diversity of the different nations. No part, with its economic, linguistic, and political peculiarities, had been able to overwhelm the other parts and impose its peculiarities on all because the same European skills and principles that enabled any particular part to generate expansive power were equally available to the other parts to generate a countervailing defensive power.

Furthermore, not only had the European traditions enabled the various nations to maintain their diversity, many of the specifically European traditions had provided the raw material for creating and intensifying national diversities. Latin was the common basis from which a whole family of different languages had developed, each with its different literature; Christianity was the common religion from which the national churches had developed, with variously interpreted Bibles and liturgies; and the very idea of nationality was a common, European idea by means of which national peculiarities had everywhere been organized, preserved, and perpetuated. Traditionally, Europe had been the concord that, by preventing one part from supplanting the others, had preserved national discord and had made these different parts the creative fount of the European spirit.

This tradition had entered into crisis. The crisis, as we have seen, arose because various nations no longer recognized or utilized the common, spiritual principles of Europe. On the eve of World War II Ortega criticized two countries for most egregiously abdicating their European heritage. On the one hand, in a profound analysis of what was happening in Germany, Ortega controlled his ideological rancor and found the source of Hitler's power in an exaggerated faith in the efficacy of technical solutions. Writing early in 1935, Ortega contended that all checks to the principle of organization had been withdrawn: everything would be treated as a technical question, and the individual, no longer seen to be of intrinsic worth, would be totally subordinated to the

collectivity. *L'esprit géométrique* was running wild in Germany and was being applied to everything without the slightest qualification by *l'esprit de finesse*. The absolute collectivization of life was an inhumane denial of Europe; and if carried out, horrible tragedies could be expected, Ortega warned with painful foresight.[17]

On the other hand, British pacifism revealed a dangerous incomprehension of the European political system, Ortega wrote in 1937. War was not an aberration that men could willfully avoid by refusing to fight; war was a political technique that men had invented to resolve complicated problems of life. Peace was not a simple absence of war; and a pacifism that amounted to an arbitrary refusal to commit British power in the defense of its national and European interests was an egregious abuse of responsibility. Peace had to be constructed by inventing new means for resolving the problems that war had traditionally settled. In the absence of such invention, pacifism was false; it was an attempt to think away the realities of the European political system in which the pacifist lived. To create peace, one had to create a system that would take over the functions of the balance of power. For this purpose, all conceptions of *inter*-nationalism were inadequate, for the balance of power stabilized by periodic war was the *inter*-national basis of European politics. The danger to official Europe, especially in light of the reigning absurdities in Germany and Britain, was that Europe was not something sufficiently more than an inter-national system: therefore, misguided national policies could disrupt the relations among European peoples. Official Europe was not adequately developed to resolve the present problems without tragic effort and sacrifice. The Europeans needed to reorganize themselves, creating a stronger Europe; and as a result, rather than an inter-nation, "Europe would be an ultranation."[18]

Here Ortega shifted from the back to the face, from considering the actuality to the potentiality, from the historic substance to the prospective form, from the tradition to the enterprise, from official Europe to vital Europe. Eventually, a European ultranation would have an institutional framework, but these institu-

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[17]"Un rasgo de la vida alemana," 1935, *Obras* V, especially pp. 203-6.

[18]"En cuanto al pacifismo," 1937, *Obras* IV, p. 309.

tions would be a farce without something more, something vital to animate their official forms. Only a moving enterprise, which each person would find in his own, particular way to be of direct, intimate significance, could make great institutions pertinent to our inter-personal lives. Without such a mystique, the institutions of a unified Europe would be like the League of Nations, a sham for which Ortega reserved some of his most biting scorn, a gigantic association for administering the status quo.[19] Ortega was not a prudential politician; he called on Europeans to aspire to something more. He tolerated the European technocrats, but he was not content with their vision. "The historic genius now has before him this formidable task: to advance the unity of Europe, without losing the vitality of its interior nations, its glorious plurality that has produced the unrivaled richness and vigor of its history."[20]

Again, we touch on a problem of perspective. We Americans, along with many others, are only now beginning to be left unmoved by our national symbols. Few have transcended the liberal-reactionary opposition, an opposition integrally connected to national politics. We still argue about issues that arose in the course of knitting together different parts and strata of the national population, yet the basic commitments to integrating the people have been irrevocably made. Hence, from Ortega's point of view our whole framework of political discourse is anachronistic; this disjunction makes Ortega, especially the Ortega of the second voyage, hard to understand. One easily overlooks the depth of his radicalism, as he himself warned, and one reads what he wrote as if it pertained to the institutional tinkering over which the left, right, and center perpetuate their quarrels.

If one avoids this anachronism, one is then likely to connect Ortega to the destructive resentment that surges through the disengaged youth of our day. To be sure, Ortega's attack on the legitimacy of national sovereignty was as thorough and profound as any yet produced. But he did not make his attack for its own sake; he considered it merely one stage, an intellectual stage, in

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[19] *Ibid.*, p. 295.

[20] "La sociedad Europa," 1941, 1960, *Obras* IX, p. 326.

his positive effort to promote European unity. Ortega asserted that the nation-state was illegitimate, not to justify acting against the state with a clear conscience, but to provoke the discovery of what authority had now become legitimate, so that one could freely act in accord with it. Ortega remained true to the Cartesian method of doubt, for this method stipulates that until one has developed new principles to replace those that are found wanting, one should continue to live by the old; by preserving the past until the future is generated, this method is a constructive skepticism. Ortega's skepticism about the nation-state was profound; but it was nonetheless constructive: active negation was not necessary; the nation-state would automatically be demoted when it paled into insignificance next to an emerging European ultranation.

Significantly, Ortega did not describe the features of the common project that would unify the European people. He pointed out that a unified Europe should provide substantial economies of scale. Further, it should have marked spiritual effects. As Ortega had thought that Spain could draw national strength from cultivating its regional diversities, he believed that Europe would draw strength from its national diversities. At a minimum, Europe should encourage the mutual comprehension of its parts, for the great weakness of the national system was that various European peoples confused the ephemeral images of their neighbors with reality, creating misunderstanding, distrust, and dissension. Also, the European enterprise should help the young find and fulfill their authentic destinies. That, really, was the whole point: the spirit was caged behind national bars and the young lacked the occasion to develop their real capacities. "Today," Ortega asked rhetorically, "can a youth of twenty form for himself a project of life that has an individual shape and that, therefore, can only be realized by his independent initiatives and his peculiar abilities?"[21] Men could not form their character fully, intentionally, within the narrow nation; the European enterprise would be a great new form that would create spiritual space within which the young could grow and test their limits.

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[21]"Prólogo para franceses," 1937, *Obras* IV, p. 132.

But these functional features did not amount to specifications for the form. Ortega never explicity presented his European ideal. Politically, it might be a federal unity. Reading between the lines in his later writings, however, one senses that he continued to think that Europe was intellect, science, morality, and art, and that cultural institutions would be important in the efforts to realize the possibilities of Europe. One point Ortega did make clear: a unified Europe might be as different from the nation-state as the nation-state was from the feudal system or the Roman Empire had been from the classical city-states.[22] Without going into details, one can observe in the contemporary industrial democracies the beginnings of a cultural community in which the seminal issues will concern intellectual, educational, and cultural policy; in which the great public figures will be philosophers, scientists, artists, teachers, and mass communicators; and in which the decisive events might shift the community's effort from maximizing the material enrichment of its members to helping them achieve spiritual self-mastery or vice versa. These possibilities should be left, however, to later speculations. Ortega remained reticent about the details of his European ideal. He did not try to subject the European future to his favorite blueprint.

And Ortega had good reasons for his reticence. His critical canon made it unlikely that he would advocate a particular set of institutions for Europe, or present his personal conception of a European project as if it were valid for others. As no nation meant exactly the same thing to any two of its citizens, the form of Europe would have a unique physiognomy for each European. Recall that a civic ideal helped men create a community, not because it was identical for every person, but because it was a complicated, yet common, form that could be filled with a functional substance that, in each case, was different yet related. Such a form conduces at one time to both diversity and unity. Since innumerable substantial relations to this form can be established, it helps different persons define unique life programs for themselves; but since each unique life program will have been worked

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 119; cf. *Meditación de Europa*, 1949, 1960, *Obras* IX, pp. 277-282.

out with reference to a common form, the form helps diverse people harmonize their aspirations.

What the Europeans should seek, therefore, was not a single vision of a European project that would be forced upon all, but millions of independent visions, each of which would inform the life of a particular European with certain new, more interesting, more taxing possibilities. As these possibilities were fulfilled by each separate person, a single European achievement would aggregate from the myriad of different European projects. Thus, neither Ortega nor anyone else, not even a great group, could define Europe for the Europeans; to present a well-wrought plan would be to build a castle in the air. The real plan would be determined by the independent movement of many persons towards individual goals that they defined with reference to a common form. The men, the forms, and the ideas that would constitute Europe depended on the different determinations made by particular Europeans, each acting for himself. But the way that each would act for himself depended on the way that he perceived the possibility of Europe; and the European pedagogue could try, not to control, but to influence this pattern of perception.

Ortega's critical duty was not to produce a unifying project for all, but to provoke or invite many men to produce personal projects that, among other things, were each premised on a wider, more inclusive unity and harmony than Europeans had ever before taken seriously. To stimulate men in this way, the critic had to help them perceive the possibility, the desirability, of making real commitments to truly problematic matters. Here we meet yet another way of viewing the noble style of life: the adventurous, the heroic, the ethical always involves serious effort on something that offers no assurance of success. The revolt of the masses was a stampede away from such disciplined risks. The problem in creating Europe was one of redeveloping among men a tolerance for the profound anxiety and the keyed up pace, the alertness, that comes with any adventure, any spirited undertaking that carries men into the unknown.

What encourages a man to define his personal hopes and duties by reference to great things, difficult things, ones that do not yet exist? What moves a man to determine his most important

aspirations with regard to an indeterminate ideal, one that might lead him to greatness or to abject failure? In the past, what human capacity prompted men to plan their actions *as if* a nation-state or an industrial economy existed, even though there was little industry and no developed national state that could force national characteristics upon "its" citizens or even indicate what those characteristics were to be? What human capacities had been the sources of man's historic creativity? How could these capacities be used to bring forth from the European peoples a great movement towards unification?

To answer such questions, Ortega reflected on the origin of the state. To be sure, he did not plan to reveal man's destiny by projecting into the future the erratic course that man has taken from his primeval past to his immediate present. A modicum of history teaches one to leave room for surprises. Thus Ortega did not study the origin of the state in order to force on the future the attributes of the original, essential state, of the *"Urstaat"*; Ortega was out to promote the *kind* of activity that had once originated the state and that might in the future create new social forms.

These two forms of projection differ in an important way. To project into the future a mode of action is not the same as to project onto the future a pattern of action. For millennia men have walked; they have not always walked to the same places for the same reasons. One can nurture a particular mode of action without predetermining the definite deeds to which it shall give rise; and through the turmoil of history there has been ordered change because men have preserved their basic modes of action and produced with these ever changing actualities. For instance, as men have used, between lapses, a particular combination of deductive and inductive reasoning, they have worked out physical theories as diverse as those of Ptolemy, Newton, and Einstein. In like manner, on various occasions the disciplined use of certain capacities had enabled men to create novel forms of community. Ortega sought in the origin of the state an insight into the kind of activity that had given rise to the state so that alternative means of human organization might be encouraged by encouraging the recrudescence of the originating mode of action.

Two questions can be asked about the origin of society, only one of which Ortega aimed to answer. One can inquire back through the origin in an attempt to understand the nature of its ingredients, or one can study the process of origination in an attempt to comprehend what the originator was doing to the ingredients. Anthropologists assure us that primitive clusters had a social organization even though the members of the cluster were probably unaware of their organization. In one way or another, this unconscious system of organization reflected the familial principle; and in one sense these instinctive divisions were the source, the origin, the ingredients of the first intentional efforts at conscious social organization. But this origin was not what Ortega was after; he wanted to understand the process by which particular members of a cluster first became aware of giving a definite organization to themselves. Ortega recognized that the unconscious organization of the cluster influenced the results of the first efforts at conscious organization. But he wanted to learn what impulse prompted men to become conscious of their organization and to try to shape it towards particular, desired ends. What motivated and empowered primitive men to make their cluster into a tribe with a purpose and mission?

A theory of social contract was more pertinent to this question than was a theory based on the familial principle.[d] By definition, contract theory pertains to the origin of intentional social organization; and Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, and many others used it largely as a philosophical interpretation that did not need to be true to historical fact. Instead, contract theory has been an "as if" construction used to explicate one or another political theory. Ortega's conception of "the sportive origin of the state" included several contracts, and was in the end as much an "as if" construction as the earlier theories; but on one matter Ortega thought his predecessors were far from historical fact and seriously in error.

Previous contract theorists had been primarily interested in the terms of the supposed contract, arguing whether it made the sovereign responsible to the law created or whether it put the sovereign above the law. They all took for granted, following Plato, that either way the reasons men had for entering the con-

tract were basically utilitarian: men made a social compact to overcome the threat of the war of each against all or to avoid starvation by initiating a division of labor. Throughout these conceptions, and throughout familial theories, which based community on the needs of child rearing, theorists assumed that men were motivated by necessity, by utility, by prudence. These theories drew their conception of human motivation from the middle-class anthropology of the Enlightenment, from the bourgeois romances of noble savages and *Robinson Crusoe*.

Ortega, on the other hand, was schooled on the historical anthropology of Greece and Rome, and he was less ready to assume that primitive man would necessarily have acted like English merchants transposed to the wilderness. Ortega admitted that utility could be a common criterion for selecting one from among a variety of present possibilities; but utility did not bring those possibilities into being. Thus, the proverb that makes necessity the *mother* of invention was more carefully composed than one might think, for it leaves unanswered the truly interesting question—who was the father? . . . Ah! Prometheus! Delightful rogue, did you steal the fire to serve your needs? Not at all! You stole it in a sportful play of wits with the great Zeus. Needs did not create the power of invention; it was quite the reverse. You first gave this power to the phratry of virile males who lived before women were created, and with this power they could have lived joyfully and on a par with the gods. But then, in fear and spite—at least as that old misogynist, Hesiod, tells it—Zeus fashioned the seductive Pandora and sent her with her vase of nagging needs to ensure that men would have to use their creative fire in mundane matters. But the fire was still sportful; needs held inventiveness down to earth, but the inventing itself always broke beyond the given, the expected, the habitual. Creation!—creation was the work of exuberance!

Creation always involved something that soared above and beyond the existing necessities. Previously, we noted how Ortega believed that in the balance between needs and abilities the perceived needs were more important than absolute needs. Here he took up the balance between capacities and desires in a slightly different way. Remember: "whoever aspires to understand man—

that eternal tramp, a thing essentially on the road—must throw overboard all immobile concepts and learn to think in ever shifting terms."[23]

Absolute needs, needs-in-themselves, were beyond human ken. Ortega concerned himself only with the palpable desires of men. For healthy development, these palpable desires had to be trying but not overwhelming: otherwise a man would break from the tension or go slack. Further, the needs a man perceived should be various in character; here Ortega departed from utilitarianism. Among the many things that men perceived as desirable, some were thought of as established necessities and others were considered interesting but superfluous. Man's creative capacities, his genius for adaptation, arose in the moments of leisure when a man suspended concern for the established necessities and when he indulged in a playful pursuit of the superfluous. Utilitarianism was useless. A people who settled dutifully to ministering to their established necessities and only to these would be devoid of creative power; they would never originate new, higher necessities of life. Furthermore, such sober people, men who consumed their energies in doing diligently what needed to be done, were likely to be upset by circumstances, for as circumstances changed, the established necessity would easily become a secondary matter and the secondary would become an issue of crucial concern, one whose importance the utilitarian would not recognize until it was too late.

Over and over, Ortega called attention to the productive power of the sportive, the jovial, the playful. The genius of life for adaptation resided in its exuberance, which enabled the living to entertain both the primary and the secondary and to alter, when appropriate, these valuations. Great things are done for the joy of it, and man's many-sidedness is a function of the fact that he is a laughing animal. "Without greater solemnity, I would say that life is a matter of flutes: the most necessary is the superfluous. Whatever is content to respond strictly to the necessity that rules it will soon be swept away; life has triumphed on the planet because, instead of attending to the necessities that inundate it, life

[23]Ortega, *Concord and Liberty*, Helen Weyl, trans., p. 75.

has flooded the world with exuberant possibilities, permitting the failure of one to serve as the basis for the victory of another."[24] The origination of the state came, Ortega suggested, in such an exuberant flowing over.

Primitive man first lived in clusters that lacked an intentional social organization. To be sure, there were instinctive divisions: the women, children, and old men; the youthful males; and the mature males. Of these groups, the virile youths were the ones who were exuberant; they had the excess energy and impulse, after they had attended to their established needs, to band together and plan common enterprises. The state, the conscious organization of effort in the pursuit of a common goal, stemmed from their superfluous energies. Ortega hypothesized that the original organization, a phratry of virile males, came into being as the young men of a cluster joined together to steal and carry home the young women of a neighboring cluster.

To be sure, in retrospect the utilitarian will say that these women, who were thus swept off their feet, served the need of preventing inbreeding. But only a Victorian prudery could lead one to believe that, in prospect, the youths initiated their audacious foray with the sober, righteous observation that for the good of the community they *needed* women other than those in their cluster. As the contemporary frat still says, they *wanted* new talent and they had sufficient excess energy to go out and find it. Thus the college fraternity is only a slightly sublimated version of the original phratry; and precisely the very virility of the males who made up this phratry had enabled them, Ortega thought, to originate purposeful social organization. The rapes they planned and performed led to war, and "with the war that love inspired arose authority, law, and a social structure."[25] The male youths banded together to form secret societies for which they created codes, rites, and festivals. In response, to protect their interests, the women of a tribe set up a counter organization; and whether the male or the female organization became dominant was recorded long after the battle by whether rights of succession were

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[24]"El origen deportivo del estado," 1924, *Obras* II, p. 611.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 616.

traced through the maternal or paternal lineage. In any case, Ortega thought, the development of exogamy, war, authoritative organization, asceticism, law, and cultural association had been initiated by young men dispelling their excess energies in various unnecessary intrigues.[e]

Free, principled endeavor originated from the exuberant, sportive powers of men, from man's ability to turn away from important matters and to create and play a flute. The double meaning in English of the word "sport" is thus profoundly appropriate to Ortega's thought: the sport, the variation in normal type, occasions human development and at the same time is the creature of sport, of activity that gives enjoyment, recreation, pastime, and diversion. "It suffices for my purpose to present in the origin of the state an example of the creative fecundity that resides in the sportive potency."[26] As Ortega saw it, all of man's great cultural works—law, science, religion, morality, art—were originated in sporting acts. This was the basis of his revaluation of values.

Scant similarity is apparent, however, between the exuberant search for women by a band of primitive youths and the ethical conception of a European ultranation. At our stage of historical development the appearance of willful fraternities would be a regression, a clear case of juvenile delinquency, and the development of an alternative to the nation would be an advance. But from the point of view of the participant in each enterprise—we should practice perspectivism along with Ortega—there was an important similarity. In both, the participant voluntarily took a place in a group, one that was not an established enterprise, joining in order to pursue the goal that the group had set itself. In both, the participant accepted rules, which were external to his whim, as standards that he should willingly attempt to fulfill. The essence of both systems was self-discipline; the source of both was a surplus, a set of possibilities that remained after necessities had been attended to. Ortega perceived, in the sportive origin of the state, that the primitive rules of the band had been the crude basis of law and ethics. He did not mean that primitive rules

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 619.

were an adequate substitute for ethics, but that primitive rules and each improvement that had slowly transformed the rules into ethics came from the same vital spring of the human spirit: sport. Any further improvement could also be expected to flow from the same source. Ethics were neither natural nor necessary; they were the self-imposed rules by which men ordered their superfluous spirit.

Two problems make it difficult to accept this coupling of exuberance with ethics. First, sobered by our Puritan heritage, we fear that exuberance is unethical: Dionysius seems to sponsor sin. For instance, Fascism provides an example of the sinfulness of a state with a sportive origin, for unquestionably both Mussolini and Hitler gained power through their ability to organize and manipulate the excess energies of groups that were unable to find an outlet in the established society. The Brown Shirts were a contemporary example of an association of virile males for the exploitation of those about them. The rules of this band were not a contribution to ethics, although they may be said to have had a sportive origin. Ortega would admit these observations and add that they were too superficial to be conclusive.

Fascism was most significant, Ortega wrote in 1925, for what it revealed about the general condition of contemporary Europe. Fascism was essentially negative. The fact that it could gain power was a sign that European social movements generally lacked a significant, positive content. "Fascism and its imitators capitalize on a negative force, a force that is not their own: the debility of the others."[27] The barbarism of the Fascists was a clear retrogression from the ethical level that Europe had attained, for the Fascists were not at the height of their times and could not improve upon the sophistication that Europe had achieved. But Fascism also clearly indicated that Europe could not simply rest at its established level. This retrogressive system was a palpable demonstration that the ideals of the nineteenth century had ceased to be effective in the twentieth. "If no one believes firmly in any form of legal polity, if there exists no institution that inflames the heart, it is natural that whoever ignores all these and occupies

[27] "Sobre el fascismo," 1925, *Obras* II, p. 504.

himself directly with other things will triumph. Hence, it results that the power of the Fascist shirts consists, rather, in the skepticism of the liberals and democrats, in their lack of faith in the ancient ideal, in their political shirtlessness."[28]

According to Ortega the ethical problem conjured up by referring to Fascism was of greater scope than that movement alone. To be sure, Fascism wrought great evil. But one would learn little by failing to take the Fascist seriously and dismissing him as a totally malevolent being. Fascism was a symptom, not a cause, of Europe's troubles; and by being content merely to suppress the Fascist, one simply forced the disease out of sight and gave it more time to incubate its terrors without resistance. The ethical failure of Europe was not caused by the presence of Fascism; rather, Fascism was an indication of the presence in Europe of fundamental ethical difficulties. Hence, it would be to put the cart before the horse to use the example of Fascism to suppress our exuberant sense of spiritual striving. To evaluate the significance of Fascism for ethics, one should use one's critical powers to show that it was a vacuous response to a real difficulty, namely, the filling out of the European nations.f As an error, the Brown Shirts did not show that exuberance necessarily led to evil, but that men in search of an ethic could easily deviate and arrive at a bad one. To Ortega, Fascism was yet another demonstration that life "is the one entity in the universe whose substance is danger."[29]

In the second objection, men grant that exuberance does not necessarily lead to evil, yet they doubt that sport can lead to good. For instance, Johan Huizinga separated the sphere of play from the "serious" questions of morality.[30]g In contrast, Ortega held that moral acts were freely willed; if they were compulsive there was no sense in distinguishing questions of morality from those of natural necessity. From where came voluntary effort? Certainly not from the capacities that allowed for mere subsistence, for these were fully occupied with the effort to provide for the root, physical necessities of life. Therefore, ethics had to come

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[28]*Ibid.*, p. 503.

[29]*La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 194.

[30]Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, pp. 1-27, 213.

from man's surplus capacities, ones that remained after he had attended to his subsistence. Man had superfluous power, and his energy overflowed the walls of necessity; for this reason, man could invent rules for himself and will to follow them. Without exuberance, man would have no energy for ethics. Hence, the same play-element that Huizinga found to be so productive in culture was equally creative in the supposedly serious sphere of ethics.

In the same way, sport was the source of discipline. The essence of discipline is self-control, the acceptance of a code of conduct, and the voluntary submission to authority. Many confusions in educational theory have resulted from inability to distinguish between discipline and oppression. Although discipline often must be enforced, usually by one's peers rather than superiors, it really comes from within; whereas oppression comes from without. An example: the Spartans developed an extraordinary discipline in order to continue their cruel oppression of the Helots. There can be no discipline when one is compelled to do something. In sport, Ortega observed, men strove hard to accomplish things that they need not have accomplished. To succeed at his frivolous goal, the athlete submitted himself to a rigorous regimen; doing so, the athlete became the first ascetic, as the etymology of "ascetic"—self-denying in the cause of gymnastics—proved.[31] Discipline was the means to "being in shape"; it was the result of the spiritual desire to excell all others, "to be the best man," as Homer put it. Discipline did not come from attending to truly serious matters. Even "solid and stable wealth is, in the end, an emanation of energetic spirits and clear minds; but this energy and this clarity are acquired only in purely sporting exercises that have a superfluous aspect."[32h]

Freedom and duty were a unity. The man who could only respond, who had no power of initiative, had neither freedom nor duties. Freedom arose as a man gained a sense of choice, the power to do more than nature commanded. Duty arose when the man who perceived his freedom thought that he ought, in order

[31]For the etymology see "El origen deportivo del estado," 1924, *Obras* II, p. 617. Cf. "Discurso en el parlamento chileno," 1928, 1958, *Obras* VIII, p. 379.

[32]"Carta a un joven argentino que estudio filosofía, 1924, *Obras* II, p. 347.

to pursue a chosen ideal, to affirm one and reject his other alternatives. Only men with agile spirits, a rich sense of the possible, and the courage to choose the more difficult alternative could have duties; *Noblesse oblige!* The free man exercised his freedom by creating duties for himself.

Ethics, discipline, and duty were self-imposed procedures that differed from the way of least resistance. Exuberance, sport, and freedom made such self-imposition possible because they were the overflow of force that gave men the power to pass up the way of least resistance and to take a more arduous route. "Moral perfection, like all perfection, is a sportive quality, something that one adds luxuriously to what is necessary and indispensable."[33]

Europe would be developed through such sportive activity. Communities were the free, unnecessary creations of genius, a genius that might originate with a few but that could be shared by all. Again and again Ortega harped on the point: a society was a desirable project, an enticing task, a stirring hope, an exuberant aspiration that was conceived of by men. Imaginative men, who were strong enough to shake off the yoke of established necessity, were the originative source of vital societies. Caesar was a good example. At a moment of great confusion, Caesar perceived the outline of what was possible and initiated the realization of this order. "Imagination is the liberating power that man possesses. . . . The closed imagination of the Roman, represented by Brutus, advised itself to assassinate Caesar—the greatest visionary of antiquity."[34]

In the creation of new political forms, the men who first did the conceiving might not be paragons of prudence, good sense, or rational calculation. One of Ortega's creative heroes, the Marquis de Mirabeau, showed such imbalance; his youth had been leavened by great excesses and yet his imagination conceived—before it was necessary—that constitutional monarchy was the system that would bring order to Republican France. "Impulsiveness, turbidness, histrionics, imprecision, lack of intimacy, thickness of skin: these are the organic, elemental conditions of the

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[33]"No ser hombre ejemplar," 1924, *Obras* II, p. 358.

[34]*La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 263.

political genius."[35] These characteristics helped suppress the demands of apparent necessity and allowed the exuberance of the spirit to flow forth.

Obviously, this view contained a Nietzschean element. Nietzsche also praised the creative power of Mirabeau;[36] but for both Nietzsche and Ortega, the demonic elements of the creative character, which were clearly present in Mirabeau, were not to be valued for their own sake, but to the degree that they freed a man to create more effective, more demanding values. By this measure, most of the gratuitous demonism of the contemporary *avant-garde* is mere trivia. Yet, even with that said, the dangers in assigning values a sportive origin should be recognized; the objection that making sport of serious matters can lead to abuses is true. The Marquis de Sade, as much as the Marquis de Mirabeau, sportively used his imagination to depict a possible way of life. Neither Ortega nor Nietzsche contended that a world that invited human self-definition was the best of all possible worlds, but that it was the world in which man found himself and that only by accepting this fact could men avoid the nihilism eventually engendered through self-deceiving myths.

Necessity was still the *mother* of invention; hence Ortega insisted that the exuberant creation of values should be followed by the prudent, reasoned examination of those values. Here was the proper function of reason, to evaluate the possibilities when one was perplexed about what one should do. But when one found oneself with insufficient or unsatisfying possibilities, prudent calculation was not the best means for creating new ones. In such straits, one had to be willing to rely on genius, on imagination, on exuberance, with the demonic element that often came with it. The fact that the demonic made abuses possible was the reason why life required men to be alert.

Genius alone was not enough. For a nation and, even more, for something greater, for Europe, many men of genius would have to conceive of great, unnecessary, yet interesting enterprises,

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[35]"Mirabeau o el político," 1927, *Obras* III, p. 625.

[36]Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*, No. 95, Thomas Common, trans.

and they would have to succeed in inviting others to join in pursuit of these goals, to join personally, intimately, with something integral to each contributed by each. A community of this kind Ortega described as a "daily plebiscite," a conception he borrowed from Renan.[i] The daily plebiscite was a social contract of sorts, but one that did not bind the future; daily, men continually renewed or slowly eroded the spiritual bonds of a vital community. This daily plebiscite occurred as each member of a group went about his business, either recognizing deep within that he was part of a significant common enterprise or feeling estranged from such an adventure. To Ortega the daily plebiscite maintained a vital society as each member of the group continually reaffirmed its desirability by freely choosing to define his personal aspirations with reference to the common goals, the unnecessary possibilities that the group represented.

With the idea of a continual plebiscite, political philosophy broke away from the conception of a community as a substantive bond, be it of blood, language, or history. A nation, for instance, was no longer viewed as something that was forged in the past and that should necessarily be perpetuated into the future. The official, traditional society had no rights of primogeniture over the prospective, vital community, for a moving project, the national future, was born before the national past and a moving project always preceded and was the condition of legitimate institutions. Men could not make authentic social commitments solely to past accomplishments, for the existent institutions were by themselves an established, developed enterprise, which meant that there would be nothing exurberant, sportive, unnecessary, or moral in a commitment to them alone. Authentic commitments were to a future that was not given, but was to be made. Moreover, the daily plebiscite meant that the vital significance of a group would disappear for any individual as soon as he ceased to define his aspirations with reference to its projects. Hence, in contemporary slang, participants in any group are free to "opt out." But to make good on this option with respect to the nation-state, which has become omnipresent in the world, the person can not merely opt out; he must further manage to define his aspirations with refer-

ence to some larger, more inclusive standard that may, some day, subject the nation-states to a higher law, as in the past the nation-states subjected the localities to more inclusive principles.

Human life is a matter of making things, of realizing in the future what was the hope of the present. Whereas the realization is rational, the work of prudential calculation, the hope itself is exuberant, the creation of the sportive overflow. In order for the rational calculations of each person's self-interests to cohere and aggregate into a cooperative community, each man had to be fired by a common hope stirring enough to command mutual allegiance, for men do not work and sacrifice for yesterday's realities, but for the morrow. "The state is always, whatever its form may be—primitive, antique, medieval, or modern—, the invitation that a group of men gives to other human groups to undertake a task together. This task, whatever its intermediate stages may be, consists ultimately in organizing a certain type of common life."[37]

In sum, then, to create Europe would be a labor of love, a lark, an aspiration, a soaring free above the bonds of existing political necessities. The European creators would be masters of potentialities, rather than realities; their very existence was unpredictable: suddenly creative geniuses might appear. Their work would be the work of exuberant imagination; in the symbolical, metaphorical, spiritual realm beyond the existing necessities, they would perceive a possible Europe and challenge their peers to see who, for the fun of it, could most fully realize its possibilities. Thus, Europe would be built by invitation, for in answer to an interesting invitation men would spontaneously discipline themselves in order to join in the pursuit of the proffered goal. The work of making Europe would be free and difficult, for it would mean that the Europeans would do more than they needed to do. Then, European life would be a truly moral life, that is, a life in which one freely sets a taxing standard for oneself and holds oneself to it. To create Europe, men would use their freedom, their sportive powers, their imagination, their capacity for choice and dedication, their moral sensibility. And here the European critic

[37] *La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 263.

encountered the real problem, for most Europeans had lost faith in these capacities. "Here is the difficulty: Europe has been left without an ethic."[38]

Europe was an ethical problem, for Europe could be created only if men were willing to act exuberantly by conceiving of higher standards and holding themselves to these. At the close of *The Revolt of the Masses* Ortega suggested that Europeans would not create a European ultranation because their willingness to follow an ethic had disappeared. Youth was a *chantage*, an extortion, because adults erroneously believed that youth had no obligations, and in the name of universal youth the adults demanded carefree comfort. Thus men failed to see that precisely because the young were not yet overburdened by mundane cares, they were free to accept obligations in the significant sense. Because he did not confuse obsessive routines with exuberant obligations, Ortega castigated the cult of youth, by which the mature sought to escape the complexities of their lives, and at the same time he appealed to the young themselves to discipline their exuberant energies with a European ethic. Yet, this appeal ran against the temper of the times. "The mass man simply lacks an ethic, which is in essence the feeling of submission to something, a consciousness of service and obligation."[39]

Men felt themselves to be mere foils for many forces. Necessity seemed master over all. Each individual was subservient to "the needs of society," and every rationalization of outrage began with an apologetic, "You must understand, we have no choice but to. . . ." People could not act on principle if they perceived life as a series of compulsions, for acting on principle was choosing to act in accord with a self-imposed standard. Ortega did not believe that a man could rightly say that he had no choice; men always had a choice, for the power and possibility of choice inhered in the will of man, not in the objective situation. Human life was a moral effort; life was a struggle against one's circumstances to affirm one's chosen duty. Yet a radical defect in European culture

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 276.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 277.

blinded men to the openness of their lives. What was it in European culture that made men feel that they were not free to accept moral imperatives or to embark on exuberant adventures?

Unless Europeans rediscovered their ethical sensibility and their sporting spirit, Ortega feared that they would not build a European ultranation, for they would lack the playful character that enables men to undertake desired but unnecessary enterprises. Ortega did not regret the disappearance of a particular moral, a particular ethic, or a particular duty; he was disturbed by the disappearance of the *capacity* for moral activity, the *aptitude* for ethical thought, and the *inclination* to feel duty bound. Expediency seemed the only persuasive ground for action, which greatly diminished the European capacity for development.

Here, then, we have come full circle. The claim that Ortega was a leader of *this age* depends on his having helped set in motion the movement towards European unity. As he saw it, this movement would be a sportive movement, one undertaken in an exuberant spirit, a free acceptance of the rules that would create a more difficult, more interesting game. Without such a movement, the European man who let himself be confined in his nation-state would settle further into insentience and inertia. The problem, however, was that a sportive movement towards unity offered no guarantees to anyone; it would come about only if multitudes of men responded personally to an uncertain invitation. Here was Ortega's optimism and radicalism. Unlike the calculating political scientist, he believed that Europeans had deep within them the capacity for ethical effort; Europeans would respond creatively to the right invitation. If the human soul is inert, recognizing a reason for action only in the calculations of expediency, this ethical radicalism will be ridiculous. Ortega himself observed that it was out of harmony with the times. But Ortega was still willing to put the matter to a test, to a long-term test: he was not about to argue interminably whether the sportive creation of Europe was possible, necessary, and inevitable; he did not care to insist at the start that men have assurance of success. Ortega was engaged in a serious but playful experiment, trying through his sportive effort to help set in motion the process of European uni-

fication. One of the first steps of this experiment was a critique of the very attitude that would hold it suspect.

Where the expedient was sovereign, experiment was suspect. To encourage the European to experiment with unity, the critic sought to expose the cultural defect that made the expedient seem sovereign.

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If you do not expect the unexpected, you will not find it; for it is hard to be sought out and difficult.

HERACLITUS, 18

TECHNIQUE IS *the production of the superfluous: it is that today as it was in the paleolithic age. It is, all the same, the means for satisfying human necessities. Now we can accept this formula that yesterday we rejected, for we now know that human necessities are objectively superfluous and that they are only converted into necessities by one who requires well-being and by one for whom living is essentially living well. Here is why the animal is a-technical: it is content with living and with what is objectively necessary for simple existence. From the point of view of simple existence, the animal is insurmountable and in need of no technique. But man is man because for him existing signifies pure and simple well-being; therefore the technician is* a nativitate *the creator of the superflous. Man, technique, and well-being are, in the last analysis, synonymous.*

ORTEGA[1]

[1] *Meditación de la técnica*, 1939, *Obras* V, p. 329.

XIII
The Reform of Technique

MEN BECAME HISTORICALLY creative when they dedicated their excess energies to the fulfillment of an ideal. Human life, the moral life, was a rich, exuberant overflow of the spirit; men could make Europe into an ultranation if they would spontaneously break their established patterns of living, letting their spirit run in new channels. The Europe of which Ortega dreamed was necessary precisely because it was unnecessary. Europe was the path of opportunity; and by pursuing it, the European could remain true to himself, he could ask much of himself. The European had historically been the man of adventure, the person who voluntarily set himself to the performance of unnecessary tasks. Dauntless, audacious, valiant, gritty, enterprising, self-reliant, stout-hearted, venturous: so men would be as they leaped over their national walls and set out for the fun of it in the pursuit of a more distant ideal.

Ortega was not sanguine, however, about the likelihood that Europeans would gamely devote themselves to realizing an ideal Europe, for the exuberant spirit was depressed and the reigning cults of efficiency taught men to frown on excess energy. Rarely did men now seem to make public commitments for sportive reasons; instead, they justified every kind of public action solely with utilitarian arguments. Thus the paradox: in the so-called free world everything of public significance is described as a pressing necessity. When most men had sufficient energy to respond only to the expedient, then the noble spirit, the great-souled man who could obligate himself to a transcendent adventure, was not given

substantial social power. The spokesmen for compulsion, not creation, seemed to win the allegiance of men; hence, at the close of *The Revolt of the Masses* Ortega observed that he had arrived at the real problem: a radical insufficiency in European culture allowed men to feel as if life were amoral, as if the pursuit of principles was insignificant in comparison to the push of necessity.[2]

Note that Ortega spoke of an insufficiency in European culture.[a] To have done otherwise would have been to take the matter out of the moral realm and to put it in the realm of necessary, material determinants. As Ortega saw it, the sense of amorality did not arise because some pernicious element in "the culture" positively caused men to feel amoral. Historic creation and the moral life were matters of exuberance and sport precisely because they came freely from within and were not fully explained by the causal mechanisms of the external world. Ortega did not think of culture as a natural, objective entity, over and above men, an entity that could act mechanically upon them; instead, he conceived of culture as a repertory of principles that men had created in the fictional world of imagination and that they could use to define their humane possibilities and to direct their real efforts to fulfill these opportunities.

Culture is to character what food is to the body. One continually takes in languages, skills, and ideas, digesting and absorbing them, extracting energy and substance from them, so that one can draw on them in order to act more masterfully in actual situations. Amorality was signified by the behavioral fact that men were not acting exuberantly, sportively, freely, or spontaneously, but were instead acting heavily in a dull response to imagined needs. Hence Ortega inferred that the spiritual diet of the contemporary European had in it certain deficiencies. The deficient diet failed to sustain the person's efforts to cultivate his ethical character; men were unable to nourish their moral sense and they became accustomed to substituting for it the plastic convenience of amorality.[b]

Much that is said about amorality does not convey a distinct conception of what the phrase signifies. Ortega was not concerned

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[2] *La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, pp. 276-8.

about a doctrine of amorality; if the question was merely doctrinal, countering it would involve the relatively simple matter of advancing a better argument. But amorality was not a doctrine; on the contrary, amorality resulted from a general inability to formulate principles and to act freely with or against them. In important activities men were able to respond only to seeming necessities, whereas formerly they had regulated their conduct in these matters by the imaginative creation of standards and by either free acceptance or free rejection of these guides in action. Amorality was not an ethic of neutrality; men were not amoral by virtue of choosing to control their actions by an absurd principle of amorality. Men became amoral when they became convinced that objective necessities really ruled their deeds and that the maxims that ethically legislate personal conduct were therefore irrelevant to any experience controlled by compulsion. So convinced, men would exempt their actions in these areas from moral rules, believing it impossible to feel either moral or immoral with respect to actions taken out of necessity. In this state of mind, men ceased to act exuberantly, for it did not occur to them that they could nevertheless seek to act, over and against the expedient, in accord with self-set standards.

Abstract statements about amorality should be exemplified with particulars, at least to the scant degree particulars can be given. By and large, men exempt their activities from moral judgment because their decisions seem to pertain less and less to particular, personal deeds and more and more to abstract, impersonal processes. Of course, one can still treat all sorts of questions concerning sexual relations, politics, economics, and social mores as moral problems; morality and immorality will always be, if they exist at all, a part of the realm of freedom, for the possibility of morality and immorality comes into being the instant that one recognizes an obligation as obligatory. But people have increasingly found that purported obligations are mere expressions of personal preference, which have nothing at all obligatory about them, and that the real "obligations" are not those by which a particular person freely determines his conduct, but those that determine the objective working of various psychological, political, economic, and social processes. A notorious example of this switch,

in which an essential element of life is being withdrawn from the moral realm and is being viewed with a titillating amorality, is apparent daily: fashion, fiction, and the film show how completely the old moral obligation of chastity is being replaced by an amoral, psychological need for sexual adjustment.

Our purpose is not to decide which set of obligations, the moral or the psychological, best conduces to a healthy man's fulfillment of his erotic potentialities, for that question deserves more than passing discussion and is not essential to our present concern. Here we take sexual adjustment simply as an emblem of the spreading sense of amorality that characterizes our views not only of sex, but equally of politics, economics, social relations, and much else. In each of these matters, men are increasingly unconcerned whether their personal actions follow or violate ethical standards, provided that they find their deeds to be in rough harmony with the objective processes they believe to be at work within and around them. As consequence, this view of life makes the realm of freedom contract and the realm of necessity expand.

This contraction and expansion particularly worried Ortega. The amoral outlook should not disturb because it leads people to violate old pieties more often—it is not at all certain that they do. For instance, whether in fact people who accept a theory of sexual adjustment are more or less promiscuous that those who believe in an ideal of chastity is unclear. What disturbed Ortega was that as men continually deliberated over their acts by reference to the amoral necessities of objective processes, they cultivated an inertia in their personal character, an inertia that diminished the likelihood of spontaneous, historic innovation. Thus, the great exemplars of herioic love would have been impossible without some ideal of chastity both to accept *and to deny;* and the political geniuses who gratuitously led man out of his primitive state would have been unimaginable had they always adjusted their vision carefully to the necessities of the moment. Yet, as men experienced important aspects of life as amoral, they abstracted a general proposition from the particulars, and this propostion—that life itself was amoral—dampened their exuberance and suppressed their power to unify Europe spontaneously.

In the conviction that life was amoral, Ortega saw one of the most dangerous misapprehensions of his time. "How have men

been able to believe in the amorality of life?" Ortega asked incredulously.[3] By putting this question to people, he hoped to elicit an awareness of how absurd the amoral sense was. Such awareness would help refurbish the European's capacity to envision a significant future, a *Kinderland.*

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Life as life is lived, Ortega believed, is a continual moral effort, an attempt to achieve, one after another, various things that the person recognized as "good." A man cannot *act* without being aware of a goal, and when he is in form, the goals of all his acts aggregate into a life project that, he recognizes, is his self-made destiny. This destiny is a demanding regimen. To sustain the great, constant effort that the pursuit of a life project entails, a man needs to believe in its significance; hence, to assure himself of the worth of his work, he resorts to moral reasoning, crude or subtle, naïve or sophisticated, as the case may be. To be sure, he could accept his project as a mere preference, a hobby, an amusement, a pastime; in that case his personal life itself becomes a pastime, and in the inevitable moments of trial he will be unlikely to remain true to such an insignificant project. But the widespread sense that life is amoral does not even allow a man this reduced justification, for it makes the personal preference pale to insignificance in comparison with objective necessities.

When inclinations seem overwhelmed by compulsions, the feeling that the whole life is amoral, that it is a series of experiences that are necessary but not obligatory, begins to extract psychic costs. A man's natural desire to dedicate his efforts to a transcendent principle does not simply disappear when he experiences his life as something subject to the impersonal imperatives of objective processes. A sense of commitment does not develop *ex post facto* as a rational conclusion entertained only after all the objective evidence has been gathered and weighed; on the contrary, a feeling of engagement is the emotional heat generated with every serious action: as such, enthusiasm can be done away

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 278.

with only in the absolute quiescence of death. When the living perceive their lives as amoral, it means that they have repressed their urge for moral commitment; then, like any repressed drive, the ethical sense demands a distorted fulfillment.

In criticizing the absurd sense of amorality, Ortega called into question one of the major distortions by which Europeans clouded their view of their world, shirking their destiny. By merely experiencing life as if it were amoral, men did not succeed in making life amoral; instead, they simply confused their sense of life and introduced into their efforts to shape their character a deceiving distortion for which they would continually attempt to compensate. These compensations were terribly destructive, for they caused neuroses perhaps more serious than those that result from efforts to repress baser drives in the name of false moralisms.

Sophisticated systems of thought seem to sanction the tendency to objectify oneself and one's world and to treat both as factual phenomena that properly have no personal meaning or value. Dostoevsky, for one, was concerned with this problem; and although his ultimate critical intentions were rather different from Ortega's, his analysis of "hyperconsciousness" is pertinent. In *Notes from Underground,* Dostoevsky showed how excessive objective awareness destroyed the personal will by prompting men to repress their sense of involvement in their activities. When Dostoevsky's hero used positive, objective reason to analyze every personal incident and twinge, be it of his conscience or his liver, he dissipated his motive energies, for he convinced himself that even the most humiliating situations were caused neither by himself nor by other men, but by the universe and its implacable ways. Since all persons were impotent in the face of nature's objective processes, the rage of the hyperconscious man became all the more unbearable, for he could not help becoming angry, yet he believed that no action of his own would lessen his ire. "I was always . . . to blame for no fault of my own but, so to say, through the laws of nature. . . . Even if I were magnanimous, I would only have suffered more from the consciousness of all its uselessness. After all, I would probably never have been able to do anything with my magnanimity—neither to forgive, for my assailant may have slapped me because of the laws of nature, and

one cannot forgive the laws of nature; nor to forget, for even if it were the laws of nature, it is insulting all the same."[4] In such ways, hyperconsciousness engenders a powerful frustration during the trials of life.

Complicating the matter further is the fact that the underground man was a true hero, for he resisted the ultimate degradation of losing his self-awareness. Most hyperconscious men, whose sense of personal commitment has been destroyed by their awareness of how objective processes function in all their experience, are likely, in compensation, to be possessed by all sorts of collective urges. Listen to zealots speak on burning causes. When convinced of their personal insignificance, men abdicate and passionately acquiesce to the necessary thrust of history. With this personal abdication and impersonal attachment, hyperconciousness leads, like various false moralisms, to neurotic attachments by way of unnatural repressions. Owing to the dynamic of this neurosis, the conviction that life was amoral endangered the European future.

When generalized into a complete view of life, the sense of amorality conflicts with the feeling of commitment that is the natural, healthy concomitant of intense activity. As the price of effort, the psyche demands the gratification of involvement, participation, and conviction; each exertion engenders passionate attachments, which in turn occasion moral reflection, for one wishes to know whether the object of one's passion merits the value one is attaching to it. Yet the belief that life is amoral can only be maintained if each conviction is explained away, reduced to a neutral necessity. Passion becomes a trivial matter that no longer occasions serious reflection, for it has no significance in comparison to the majesty of objective forces. The psyche slowly rebels at the repeated withdrawal of spiritual gratification, and it starts to fight back, insisting by subterfuge on a place for value in a world of facts. With this deception, the danger develops.

Observing that the hyperconsciousness puts store only in facts and objective laws, the psyche becomes ideological and disguises its commitments in the garb of their opposite, in the

[4]Dostoevsky, *Notes From Underground*, Ralph E. Matlaw, trans., pp. 8-9.

favored guise of facts and objective laws. Thus, everybody's pet project is described as one of society's needs, as an imperative of the time, or as an historic inevitability. This psychic practice feeds the debunking urge of the hyperconsciousness; and with the added debunking, the psyche develops ever greater cunning, until it manages to pass off an absurd belief or a destructive self-deception as a scientific truth. At that point a great pent-up desire for commitment and participation is permitted an aseptic, amoral satisfaction. Men fail to recognize that the object of their attachment, which purports to be a scientific truth, is a value-laden, spiritual goal that merits careful evaluation; they perceive it instead as a natural necessity that will come to pass regardless of how it is evaluated. This perception exempts the commitment from moral criticism and doubt; then great energies can be unleashed in the performance of terrible deeds, deeds whose terribleness will be recognized only in the pained stillness of the morning after. Hence, amorality is dangerous because it makes ethical goals, which are actually affirmed by man's overflowing, exuberant energies, appear as natural, inevitable necessities, and these are thus never evaluated in a test of their propriety. Then, all is permitted.

For years in the post-industrial world, hyperconsciousness and a general feeling of amorality have encouraged men to repress their desire to make positive, personal commitments for which they can hold themselves responsible in the court of moral discourse. As a result, they have a strong proclivity to clothe diverse value judgments in the garb of necessity. And, to worsen matters, certain characteristics of contemporary culture make it ever easier for men to ignore the fact that their goals are exuberantly chosen and to believe that these are imposed by objective historical forces. In addition to hyperconsiousness, a chronic lack of clarity in political and social theory has obscured the fact that human goals are freely chosen superfluities and that men should always examine the desirability of these.

With the omnipresence of mass communications and universalization of a superficial education, the danger that the psyche can fabricate a pseudo-scientific goal for the suppressed sense of

commitment is significantly increased. Both imprecision and pretension abound.

During his second voyage, Ortega was cautious with respect to both imprecision and pretension. Willing to travel through Europe and the Americas in response to invitations to give lectures and to take part in various conferences, Ortega was reluctant to drum up a following. Even though he was speaking, thinking, and writing about some of the great themes of the time, he hesitated to publish, and one finds in many of his posthumous works a serious caution, a marked effort to be precise with concepts such as the state, law, the nation, the very concepts that can easily become the objects of amoral commitments. This caution cannot be attributed to a withdrawal from the great problems of practical concern, for the visionary aspects of Ortega's later thought were extremely far-reaching. His caution was the antithesis of a reluctance to shake the foundations; it emanated rather from a desire not to win a following among those who would misapprehend his thought and, in doing so, emasculate it. Ortega was careful not to propound an ideology; his aim was to shake the foundations by making massed, ideological commitments intellectually more difficult and by increasing the influence of responsible personal choices in public affairs.

In every field, the popular thinkers—the seers and the leaders—are habitually inarticulate; all vernaculars are suffering the degradation manifested in medieval Latin, and with parallel results: there is much ado about nothing. This is the situation that Ortega sought to avoid; he did not want his books to become badges, nor did he want his words to create a spectral world that men would confuse with their realities.

Norms of diction and grammar are neither to be imitated nor rejected, but to be used, and *si non, non.* When men become careless in their expression, they create unnecessary concerns that arise, not from the thought they express, but from the inadequacies in their expression of thought. The results of such carelessness can be deadly. This fact makes the standards of grammar and diction more significant than the mere prescripts of pedantic purists. Men who express fine thoughts carelessly can cause destructive misunderstandings. Unwittingly, in a lapse of gram-

mar or diction, they propagate myths; millions of persons become convinced that the entities populating these myths really exist; and then terrible things happen. Inadequate powers of expression have been a basic cause of superstition; and superstitions have most often occasioned man's inhumanity to man. And beware: in no period of history have men been more superstitious than in the twentieth century.

Hyperconsciousness and amorality are dangerous qualities because we who enjoy an enlightened education rarely realize how thoroughly superstitious we have become in spite of the matter-of-fact awareness our science supposedly inculcates. The naïve sophisticates of our day—who in two centuries of "progress" have not inched beyond Voltaire's scorn for supernatural superstitions—fail to sympathize adequately with those who duped themselves into hunting witches. Men rarely learn from history because they sympathize spontaneously only with the victims and do not realize that in order to learn how not to be a villain, they had best sympathize with the villains of yore. As with witch hunters, well-intentioned men have repeatedly performed terrible deeds because they slipped up in one small matter, committing unawares the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. Thanks to Voltaire and others we can see the error of those who thought that witches were real, and we know the sad costs this error incurred. But let us still be humble; we are as human as our superstitious forebearers: we too are superstitious, for we too are susceptible to misplacing concretions.

Jacques Barzun appropriately called a book in which he warned against the misuse of racial concepts, *Race: A Study in Superstition*. Race is a costly example of an abstraction that can lead to untold suffering when people hypostatize it and attribute to it imaginary substantiality. Race is a theoretical construct devised to interpret various phenomena about man; but no matter how well race works as a theoretical construct, there is no possible warrant for asserting that races exist in the flesh and blood world of man: like all abstractions, race is by definition a conceptual fiction and only superstition can make it seem real. We are beginning to understand our proclivity to be superstitious about the concept of race; but racial concepts simply typify a much

larger set of concepts upon which we are still prone to misplace concreteness. And as with race in Nazi Germany, these concepts are peculiarly suited to giving the hyperconsciousness an object of emotional attachment or repulsion that does not call into question the myth of amorality.

Psychological, social, political, and economic theorists have created in their speculations many profound conceptions describing the aggregate phenomena of human life. As theories, these conceptions are ingenious, interesting, and often effective; but they do not always remain ethereal theories. Numerous neophytes at such speculations are prone to misplace concreteness. And, in turn, the empiricist with his cult of facts easily forgets that his empiricism is a phenomenalism, an idealism; in his rhetoric, a conceptually postulated force, process, or entity is hypostatized and spoken of as if it were real, substantial, actual. Such slips are easily made. A harmless example is from Newtonian physics: one naturally shortens the circumspect statement that the theory of universal gravitation provides an apparently adequate explanation for the phenomena of falling bodies into the metaphysically rash assertion that gravity makes bodies fall. In making the same linguistic shortcuts a heedless speaker will forsake the cautious proposition that a theory, for instance about the social determinants of knowledge, gives a tenuous but interesting explanation why certain people often think certain thoughts, and he will instead assert the blatant superstition that a man's social origin determines his thoughts. Here myths are in the making.

Scholars in every social science have properly hypothesized numerous forces, processes, and entities in their efforts to explain human phenomena; but each hypothesis stands, as in this very phrase, waiting to be hypostatized by slack thinkers. Men have difficulty observing Max Weber's caution that "sociology does not recognize a 'behaving' (acting) collective personality."[5] Such cautions have not been sufficient to make us systematically skeptical of the innumerable assertions that are made daily about the behaving collective personalities that supposedly animate the political, economic, and social realm in which we live. Examples

[5]Weber, *Basic Concepts in Sociology*, H. P. Secher, trans., p. 43.

abound; and perhaps the one fraught with the most obvious dangers shoud be mentioned first. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was a mad struggle of active collectivities, and the seeming objective requirements of these entities gave the docile person unlimited license in his conduct towards other persons: "The German Reich as a state must embrace all Germans and has the task, not only of assembling and preserving the most valuable stocks of basic racial elements in this people, but slowly and surely raising them to a dominant position."[6]

But this example is not a good one insofar as we think of Hitler as a man beyond the pale; Hitler's doctrines have become anathema, yet his way of thinking has become endemic. For instance, despite a completely different ideological commitment, Herbert Marcuse persistently hypostatizes "society" and other collective creatures and makes them the prime movers in man's fate: "man's struggle with Nature is increasingly a struggle with his society, whose powers over the individual become more 'rational' and therefore more necessary than ever before."[7] And, if one finds Marcuse too far towards an extreme, look instead at the rhetoric of spokesmen for the American consensus, which is itself a false object of many superstitions.

Here, the most costly hypostatizations are those made by the very model of a modern Major-General, the national defense planner. As "the Free World" has defended itself over the years from "Communist threats," men have convinced themselves that there exists a complicated system of communication, not between opposing commanders, who are merely impersonal parts in the mechanism of national defense, but between the military monsters themselves. As in the mating rituals of certain birds, this system of communications is based on the relative "national defense postures" of opposing powers, and the planners hope that as "they" adopt a certain posture, "we" can respond with that perfect stance, which will send "them" into an ecstasy of acquiescence; and short of that elusive perfection, "at the minimum, an adequate deterrent for the United States must provide an objective

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[6]Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Ralph Manheim, trans., p. 398, italics dropped.

[7]Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, pp. 240-1.

basis for a Soviet calculation that would persuade them that, no matter how skillful or ingenious they were, an attack on the United States would lead to a very high risk if not certainty of large-scale destruction to Soviet civil society and military forces."[8]

Public leaders base almost all their policies, not only those of the military, on the presumed behavior of collective personalities; and this condition is both reflected and extended by the way daily papers describe the deeds of men as the affairs of organizations. It is now an unusual headline that describes a human action: instead, "U. S. Proposes . . . ," "High Court Hints . . . ," "Assembly Votes . . . ," and so on. All of these constructions, the extreme, the sophisticated, the day-to-day, reflect our civic superstitions, and hypostatized abstractions have become central concerns in the discussion of every public issue and in the formulation of every political persuasion.

Ortega found these abstractions portentous for public life. "Today people constantly talk of laws and law, the state, the nation and internationalism, public opinion and public power, good policy and bad, pacifism and jingoism, 'my country' and humanity, social justice and social injustice, collectivism and capitalism, socialization and liberalism, the individual and the collectivity, and so on and so on. And they not only talk, in the press, at their clubs, cafés, and taverns; they also argue. And they not only argue; they also fight for the things that these words designate. And once started fighting, they kill each other—by hundreds, by thousands, by millions."[9]

When men hypostatize concepts concerning their common lives, they incur greater dangers than they do on becoming superstitious about the rest of nature. It is benign to say that gravity makes bodies fall, for little harm could result if a few eccentric literalists decide to stop the fall of certain bodies by incanting magic formulas against gravity, but it is malignant to believe that certain races are of intrinsic value, others of intrinsic depravity, and that the state can raise up the former and suppress the latter, for wanton fatalities resulted when men decided to

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[8]Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War*, p. 557, italics dropped.

[9]*Man and People*, 1939, 1957, Willard R. Trask, trans., p. 11.

root out depravity by eliminating its imagined racial cause. We recoil at this particular example, knowing well the horrible costs of Nazi racial superstitions. What we do not appreciate is that this supersition was simply the most dangerous example, to date, of a generic superstition that is still very much with us despite the demise of Nazi ideology. Race typifies an extensive repertory of hypostatized concepts derived from the sciences of man; and the superstitions based on these concepts provide peculiarly effective ruses by which the hyperconciousness can have its passionate commitments without recognizing life as a moral matter. For this reason, Ortega carefully stressed that ferocity in the name of behaving collectivities was not confined to a single nation, but had become a universal phenomenon in the century of total war.[10]

Belief in behaving collective entities confuses a person's conception of action; with such superstitions, the person begins to see himself, not as the responsible actor, but as the agent of a superior force or being. Having hypostatized one or another concept that he frequently uses to interpret the phenomena of civic life, the person begins to think that the active collectivity, of which he is merely a subsidiary part, follows its own course according to its own necessary laws. By reference to this entity—the times, race, class, society, nation, corporation, union, club, party, or what have you—the person can disguise morally dubious goals in the garb of necessity, which makes the moral questioning of his goals seem irrelevant.[11] With the hypostatization of political principles, major activities of life seem to pass from the realm of freedom to the realm of necessity, and in doing so, they cease to be subjects for moral reflection and become objects of scientific investigation.

Here, then, was the great cultural deficiency that sapped the European strength: men were habituating themselves to reasoning from impersonal necessities. A superior power seemed to impose

[10]*Ibid.*

[11]Note, for instance, how Henry A. Kissinger dismissed a humanitarian plea by George F. Kennan for increased spending to ameliorate racial tension, to improve urban conditions, to perfect popular education, and to lessen ignorance. "But the times do not permit such an order of priorities. We do not have the choice between improving ourselves and dealing with the menaces to our country." Kissinger, *The Necessity for Choice*, p. 9.

on men their significant purposes. Dignity was dead. Men could only accept as given and unquestionable one or another collective goal that was laid down by historic necessity. Men thought away their initiative; be it the defense of the nation, the superiority of the race, the power of the union, the supremacy of the party, the growth of the economy, or the overthrow of the exploiters, the person could not question the goal that fate imposed upon him: he could only ask how he could best serve as a means to the necessary end.[12] For years men had been hypostatizing collectivities and projecting into the human realm all manner of imagined necessities; as they accustomed themselves to acting only with derivative purposes, with respect to which they felt neither autonomous nor responsible, they degraded their capacity for historic spontaneity and made the exuberant affirmation of an ideal Europe unlikely.

Ortega's rejection of hypostatized social concepts gained much of its cogency from his ontology and his attempt at a reform of reason, matters that will be taken up in the next chapters. But in addition to his critique of the belief that societies were substantial things, he also sought to undercut the prevalent practice of reasoning from necessities. In this effort, he called into question the thought that the needs of society, or of some other abstract entity, gave justification for any definite course of personal action. He found a particular occasion for his general criticism in the implications for personal action that men derived from modern technology.

That Mephistophelean creature, Technology, has been an extraordinary ally of the hyperconsciousness, inducing men to believe that the necessities of mythical collectivities pre-empt personal purpose.[c] Nearly all grant that Technology is a crafty character, one who is capable of wondrous feats whenever he sets his mind to it. But as with almost every superstition about a

[12] "There are limits to what we as a union can tolerate. The very last thing any one of us would want is another shutdown. But if that is the only alternative, if necessary, we will have to close the school system down." Albert Shanker, president of the United Federation of Teachers, as quoted in the New York *Times*, March 25, 1969, p. 43.

hypostatized concept, Technology splits men between the pros and the antis, with both sharing a belief in the veritable existence of Technology, only disagreeing adamantly about the nature and intention of the awesome creature. Thus men disagree over the significance of Technology's accomplishments for the quality of life: some greatly appreciate the comforts that Technology brings, while others worry that, like Faust, they may have sold their souls for the bargains of affuence. This disagreement intensifies when Technology is perceived in union with that other popular divinity, Society: many men strive mightily to meet the imagined needs of "our complex technological society," offering huge sacrifices to Its greater glory, while others rebel hopelessly at what they perceive as an exploitative yet omnipotent god.

Two tales recently reported in the news exemplify the tension: on the one hand, an august commission of Harvard professors pronounced that, verily, technology had advanced human individuality, yet on the other, at the acme of a demonstration, raucous radicals in Montreal destroyed the ultimate technological icon, a multi-million-dollar computer. One suspects that as the conflict between these superstitions sharpens, Technological Society will prove to be, like the god of the Deists, a rather remote being; and when the contending parties clash, He will not be there between them keeping them apart, nor will He even be at a proximate distance to pity the victims and succor the wounded.

To make light of the matter is therapeutic; something darkly comic hides even in tragic superstitions. But despite a comic side, the hypostatization of technology is portentous, for the superstitution is integral to whether we conceive of ourselves and other men as ends or as means. Both those who believe that technology is a good thing and those who know it is a bad thing find their goals inherent in that *thing:* service on the one hand and opposition on the other. Thus, the imagined entity imposes the human end when men believe the entity exists; then the superstitious person considers himself to be a mere means. Unfortunately, although one easily bemoans this mode of thinking, one has difficulty avoiding it, for technology truly seems to be an independent process that follows laws of its own and that imposes its purposes on innumerable human activities. We are all inured to acting at

the convenience of various machines, and even the very young have already found themselves required to adapt their habitual patterns of action to the ever novel artifacts of technology.

Technological superstitions do not emanate from man's natural appreciation of the comforts created by ingenious craftsmen. The superstition is not the spiritual consequence of our materialism: even Plato made ample provision in his ideal state for the material softening of life. The hypostatization of technology is the very opposite of a healthy appreciation of the technician, who becomes incidental in the view of the superstitious. In the believer's mind, technology appears as an objective process at work in history, laying down according to its own inner dynamic various imperatives that men must either fulfill as technology prescribes or reject and thus forever alienate the beneficent god. Like the Calvinist, the worshipper of technology begins to believe that if one postulates an active place in creative work for mortal persons, one blasphemes the might of God, implying that he is not omnipotent and that instead he must rely on the help of men in the great work of salvation.

Damn the divinity!—with technology, as with any other religion, the human effects are neither better nor worse than the humanity of its worldly representatives. The historic failure of humanistic educators is simply that they have sulked as technicians have become more and more important in education; thus, the humanists, too, have been superstitious about technology and have bemoaned its spread while allowing the office of technician to be filled by anonymous persons. But let us not leap ahead. The hypostatization of technology has dangerous effects on the technician; this fact led Ortega to assert that the technician typified the mass mentality.[13] Something in the technician's art made the hypostatization of it possible, at which point the technician could cease to strive, being content to serve. How does the hypostatization work?

Technique is an attribute of every skill, the two are nearly synonymous; and we usually think of technique, not in the abstract as with technology, but in the particular as it is manifested by definite persons. Thus we compare the painterly techni-

[13] *La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, pp. 193-200.

ques of Michelangelo and Titian, the mathematical techniques of Weyl and Einstein, and the nuts-and-bolts techniques of two master mechanics. In addition to such particulars, during recent centuries a rather different "technique of techniques" has developed; this we identify less frequently with the art of individual technicians. On the contrary, the technique of techniques is what seems to make the individual technician insignificant.

In part, the technique of techniques is derived from that venerable myth, the scientific method, which has not been, as critics are showing, the historic method of scientists. The technique of techniques, however, is not used primarily to increase our knowledge, but to perfect worldly action. In essence, practitioners of it follow these steps: for any given operation, or technique, one can rationalize its performance by breaking the total operation into its component steps, eliminating any that are unnecessary studying each of the remaining ones and carefully bringing to bear on the matter all that is known about the materials involved, devising and testing alternative means to perform each step in order to find which means is most efficient, and finally integrating the most efficient, effective components into a rationalized system. Technology is our name for the widespread application of this technique of techniques to the production of goods and services and to the psychological, economic, and political manipulation of various publics. And because the phenomena that technology denotes seem at once to be omnipresent and independent of particular persons, technology is a concept that is easily hypostatized: "it is a system of ideas, techniques, and machines that puts us, in terms of power, about where God is, or used to be. And this system, evolving steadily, progressively displacing nature, tends increasingly to assert itself as the ultimate reality."[14]

When men hypostatize technology, they begin to think of the technique of techniques as an objective process that, having been set in motion in history, will thereafter follow its own course regardless of what particular technicans do. Bacon had pointed out how the reasonable man should ally himself with the necessities of nature, rather than hopelessly opposing them; and ever afterward, technology has been a great fount of reasoning from

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[14]Elting E. Morison, "Technological Man," *New York Times Book Review*, March 30, 1969, p. 1.

necessity. Given the goal and the available material, a necessarily "best," most efficient means exists; and when the technique for finding this best means seems itself to have become an established feature of the universe, churning onward in every sphere of endeavor, regardless of our idiosyncratic preferences, then the technician feels himself freed from being responsible for the actual consequences of his art. A necessarily most efficient means for every job seems to exist, and discovery of that most efficient means seems foreordained by the reality of technology, by the universal presence of the process. If one person refuses to apply the technique of techniques to this or that matter, someone else will be found to do it, and perhaps he will make room in the job for even less of a humane residue.

In effect, all is permitted to the technician who finds himself in such an irresponsible subservience to necessity. In recent years, many have decried this irresponsibility. For instance, Herbert Marcuse has suggested that a feeling of subservience to the inevitable makes the technician lose the age-old sense of sin and guilt and develop "the happy consciousness." The technician considers himself to be a part of a dynamic process, larger than himself, that is essentially good and that therefore justifies the performance of certain questionable acts done to preserve it. The happy consciousness allows technicians not only to think about the unthinkable, but to help perform the unthinkable without a twinge of conscience, for it convinces them that the necessity of thinking and performing these deeds is imposed, if not on themselves, then on others, by the inherent dynamics of the technological process.[15] This state of mind is the euphoria, a rather resigned euphoria, in which men who know better allow themselves to commit atrocities. This euphoria is no different from the political and religious superstitions that have repeatedly possessed men, no different except that in its resignation and distance the technological superstition seems cruely cold—when death comes unseen and unheard from above, those executed are not even permitted the dignity of looking their executioner in the eye.

Efforts in recent years to debunk their technological super-

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[15]Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, pp. 74-83.

stition have been numerous and diverse. It is difficult, by means of a critique of technology, as such, to avoid the hypostatization, as a careful reading of Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man,* for instance, will show. In it, the myth of technology was left intact and merely given a negative value in place of the normal, positive one. Marcuse believed in the reality of behaving collective personalities; and in the end, he created his own happy consciousness, that of the righteous radical who finds complete justification for every and any deed initiated with the intent of opposing the machinations of that most malevolent reality, Technological Society. Marcuse called in question real abuses with his negations: he and his followers began with a humane intention; but they lack adequate conceptual clarity to break down the widespread hypostatization of technology. It is ironic to seek slavishly a desperate liberation from a non-existent power.

As Jacques Ellul has indicated throughout his work, the *description* of closed technological systems may be helpful if it serves to provoke the individual technician to assert his inward autonomy. Unlike Marcuse, Ellul did not hypostatize the system of techniques he described in *Technique: The Engine of the Century,* for he developed a description of technological society that men could use to better understand aspects of their actual experience. As a result, Ellul concluded not with a plea for negative thinking, but with a call for autonomous thinking. The attempts to negate a material and political system of applied techniques would, Ellul suggested, lead only to the elaboration of a system of counter techniques; and one can see these building up as professional protestors become more experienced. Ellul has shown the near omnipresence of technique rationalized by technique, and all his work ends, in effect, with a *"Hic Rhodus, hic saltus"*: here is the challenge, find your own way to meet it.[16]

Ellul took a calculated risk in choosing his rather Socratic

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[16]Ellul speaks briefly about his method in his "Foreword to the Revised American Edition" in *The Technological Society,* John Wilkinson, trans., pp. xxvii-xxxiii. His rejection of counter techniques may be found at *Ibid.,* pp. 425-7, and much more fully in *The Political Illusion,* Konrad Kellen, trans., esp. pp. 199-240.

mode of persuasion: he assumed that most men, on seeing the degree to which the technique of techniques was being used in their day-to-day activities, would seek naturally, spontaneously, to resist, to find concrete ways to lessen their own, personal reliance on such procedures. Thus, although he avoided the hypostatization of technology, Ellul did not provide arguments that might bring the superstitious back to their senses. Those who are already uneasy about the function of techniques in their lives will find that Ellul's phenomenology of technique clarifies their situation; but those who are happily conscious of living in a complex technological society will find Ellul's description a further proof of the seeming fact, a proof inexplicably spiced with strangely anguished rhetoric.

In reflecting on technique, Ortega shared with Ellul the virtue of not succumbing to superstition. But Ortega went much further than Ellul to meet the oblivious believer on his own ground. Ortega's conception of technology differed from those that Ellul dealt with in that Ortega's was meant to be philosophically, not historically correct.[d] Thus, Ortega arrived at his idea of technique by means of reasoned speculation rather than through an historical generalization about techniques already in use. This procedure allowed for unforeseen future development in technical activity, for his conception of the possible was not confined to the class of phenomena that were already actual. As a result, Ortega included wider problems and possibilities within the technician's purview than other critics have. Like Ellul, Ortega presented a phenomenology of technique, but Ortega included the problem of value in his conception of technology; and with this inclusion, Ortega put before the technician a depiction of technical activity that undercut the technological superstition.

For better and for worse, contemporary man was epitomized by the technician, Ortega suggested. Engineering, medicine, law, government, business: all were dominated by the technician, and through his character the technician set the tone that typified these and many other activities. The problems of amorality, of hyperconsciousness, and of the deficiencies in European culture resulted from the behavioral fact, observable in recent decades,

that the technicians in all fields were, as a group, phlegmatic concerning possible goals and most imaginative about possible means towards actual goals that happened to be at hand. This state of mind made for the dangerous condition manifested during the twentieth century, especially in Europe and the West: rapid growth without development.

Note how Ortega's discussion, thus, was not concerned with an imagined process, technology, as much as with the substantial man, the technician. On the basis of recent conduct, the technician exemplified all the inertias characteristic of mass man; yet at the same time, this technician represented to Ortega the hope for a European future, for nothing but spiritual inertia prevented the technician from overcoming his subservience to necessity and affirming himself as an exuberant, sportive creature. Here was the irony: no group seemed more impressed by expediency than the technicians, yet no man's mission, when faithfully understood, was less limited by the expedient than that of the technician.

Ortega spoke, to be sure, of technology; but what was crucial to Ortega was not the myth of a technology-in-itself, but the definition of technology by which the living technician guided himself. With this idea the technician delimited his concern; and the one-sidedness of the reigning conception was largely responsible for the weakness of the technician's character. In short, the technician had made himself into a mass man to the degree that he reduced his art to one of its components: the methodical search for the most efficient means to a given end. Uninspired men brought modern technicism into being by using this conception as an operational definition; but merely acting as if it were the essence of technique did not mean that in fact it was. Ortega looked to the ancient past and to Asiatic mystics and found quite different techniques. With this perspective he contrasted to the mean conception of the mass technician a more open definition of technique: namely, the invention and selection of purposes and the means suitable for carrying them out. By including the problem of purpose, as well as that of procedure, within his conception of technology, Ortega found the technician responsible for meeting all the questions of ethics, morality, and value that the contemporary mass man suppressed by adopting whatever goals

his immediate surroundings put before him. If Ortega's argument was found persuasive, the apparent transfer of major matters from the realm of freedom to the realm of necessity would be reversed, for men would cease to experience life as an amoral matter if they became aware that even all their technical activities were based on exuberant, ethical commitments.

Knowledge had an instrumental function, Ortega contended. He was not a pragmatist if one thinks, as Ortega did, that a pragmatist holds that the truth of a statement depended on its usefulness.[e] For Ortega the truth of something depended on its correspondence with reality, as it had in classical philosophy, but for Ortega the reality to which the truth corresponded was not that of objective, substantial things, but the reality of life as life was lived. With respect to the realities of life, knowledge had more attributes than truth or falsehood. For an omniscient being, truth might be the sole criterion with respect to knowledge. But men were confronted by an infinity of possible objects of knowledge, not all of which they could master; they had therefore to pay attention only to certain matters, ones they chose to concentrate on. Consequently, it was equally as crucial that what men knew should be useful, important, and valuable, as that it should be true. For example, in *Meditations on Quixote* Ortega contended that concepts are tools that we use for defining and holding things steady while we act on them.[17] Forty years later he still maintained that proposition: "Our life is nothing more than an inexorable activity with things. On account of this there are actually no 'things' in life. Things—that is, realities that have nothing to do with us, but that are there, by themselves, independent of us —exist only in scientific abstractions. For us everything is some thing with which we must have some use or occupation and with which we will find it necessary, sooner or later, to occupy ourselves."[18] Here was a basis for a thorough critique of all hypostatizations.

In addition to being true, all knowledge should further be instrumental; despite its sportive origin, men nurture knowledge

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[17] *Meditaciones del Quijote*, 1914, *Obras* I, pp. 349-354.

[18] "Campos pragmáticos," 1953, 1962, *Obras* IX, pp. 642-3.

on finding that it has a value for life, on discovering that they can put it to a use.[f] On this point, Ortega agreed with the practical technician: it was to live a lie to spend one's life occupied with something of no vital worth. But if this conviction were taken seriously, the central problem for the technician was to determine which possibilities of inquiry were most significant and richest in vital worth. To estimate the real usefulness of any concern, showing that it served one or another established purpose was not sufficient, for the important question was the comparative value, the significance of a given purpose when weighed against other possible purposes. To make this comparison the technician needed a theory of valuation.[g] Thus, by beginning with the premise of the practical man and by elaborating it, Ortega showed that questions of value were more important for the technician than were problems of rationalizing procedures. No expenditure of resources is more irrational than one to rationalize the performance of activities that have ceased to have vital significance.

Presently, students of science are arriving at a similar view of the situation: confronted by more possible topics of scientific inquiry than there are scientific inquirers, researchers will have to make value judgments between the topics, and the scientist may have to give up his pretension to disinterestedness. Unfortunately, the pretension to disinterestedness opens the scientist to the most dangerous form of interestedness, namely the naïve. Many laymen and initiates still believe the myth that scientific and technical advance comes from unexpected inspirations, serendipity, and strokes of genius, which occur happily yet mysteriously from the free play of curiosity in every possible corner of inquiry. Insofar as this myth pertains to the psychology of the individual scientist, it may be accurate; but it has long since lost all plausibility as a description of science as a social activity. We have passed the stage in which intellectual resources were spontaneously attracted to channels of inquiry that were unexpectedly opened by strokes of genius; we are instead at a stage in which particular channels of inquiry are opened and made productive by the decision to pump intellectual resources systematically into them. The problem with the pretension to disinterestedness, to value-free inquiry, is that many are loath to admit that value judgments are being used

to direct effort into this channel and not into another, and these judgments are instead irresponsibly disguised as social needs, technical imperatives, or historic inevitabilities.

In view of this tendency, what was important to Ortega, and what is still important for the development of a wise system of allocating technical effort, or "human capital" as it is now called, was to make it possible to subject the pertinent values to examination. The way to do this was not to advance, first, a system of values by means of which the decisions might be explicitly made. Rather, what was important at the outset was to drive home the fact that such allocations were problems of value and were not amoral expediencies resulting from the imagined needs of society, technology, or any other hypostatization. A hint of Ortega's reasoning is in the phrase, which we encountered above, "the most necessary is the superfluous." Vital worth had little to do with those mealy-mouthed "necessities" with which weak men are ever wont to hide their value judgments. Necessity did not compel the human will to perform certain acts; on the contrary, the human will selected and defined those supreme values that men called necessities. Hence, necessity being the creature of value judgment, by no appeal to necessity could one exempt oneself from the responsibility to justify one's goals to oneself and others through moral discourse.

Ortega did not mean that responsibility and moral autonomy were inherent in technical activity because it gave rise to an affluence in which numerous choices between alternatives arose. Well-trained consumers are quick to respond diligently to induced needs, as Galbraith and others have shown; but this argument pertains only to certain sectors of certain economies, and does not show that all technical activity involves value-laden superfluities. Ortega based his contentions on fundamentals that would hold even under conditions of subsistence. Nay, his point, in fact, would probably be much more obvious when men were on the brink, for then their will to live, even to live well with regard to seemingly small matters, would be apparent. Thus, what seemed to be the basic necessity, the necessity to live, was not a material requirement that was universally and necessarily sovereign, as laws of gravity seem to be over physical masses. The necessity to

live was really a *desire* to live that, as it was felt by man, was not built into the human physiology. To live "is the necessity created by an act of will."[19] The need to live was a subjective desire that was revealed by acts of trying to stay alive—by our nocturnal loneliness and fear of death and by our daytime fancy for doing deeds of greatness.

Echoing Plato and Seneca, Ortega further asserted the recurrent truth that defines the importance of philosophy for life: man does not seek merely to live; he seeks to live well.[20] Once a man had made the value judgment that it was worth the effort to live, he had physiologically to fulfill only a scant minimum of objective requirements in order to preserve his life: numerous examples show that man *can* live in the midst of cold on little food and beneath scant shelter. Hence, the invention of techniques did not serve man's objective requirements; "technique is not what man does in order to satisfy his needs."[21] Man could live by foraging without technique; but in the course of that life, man intuited better, unnecessary possibilities: if he tended this plant, if he sharpened that stick, if he stoked that fire, he could not only survive, he could have the leisure in the evening to enjoy the warm embers and to feast on baked bread and roasted rabbit. "Man has no desire to be in the world. What he wants is to be in it prosperously. Only this appears necessary to him and all the rest is necessary only insofar as it is a means to well-being. Thus, for man only the objectively superfluous is necessary."[22] The function of technique was to produce the superfluous; therefore the goals of the technicians were always determined not by amoral necessities, but by ethical decisions, by judgments of value.

Men erred in thinking that technology was the human analogue to the instincts of animals. Instincts provided for minimum self-preservation; technology provided for the "good life." In-

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[19]*Meditación de la técnica*, 1939, *Obras* V, p. 321.

[20]See Plato, *Crito*, 48B: "It is not living, but living well which we ought to consider most important," H. N. Fowler, trans.; and Seneca, *Epistolae Morales*, 90:1: "Who can doubt . . . but that life is the gift of the immortal gods, but that living well is the gift of philosophy," R. M. Gummere, trans.

[21]*Meditación de la técnica*, 1939, *Obras* V, p. 324.

[22]*Ibid.*, p. 328.

stincts were fixed because they were tied to the permanent biological needs of a species. Technology changed continually, not only by progressing towards the more efficient fulfillment of set goals, but more radically by the periodic transformation of its basic goals, which occurred because men shaped it in accord with the conception of the good life that they historically held. "On the one hand the simple life, life in its biological sense, is a fixed magnitude that is defined with each species once and for all; and on the other, the good life, what man calls well-being, is a good that is always moving and endlessly variable." Since man's conception of the good life varied, technology could not rigidify into a fixed or independent pattern without becoming a check upon the further development of human well-being. "Since the repertory of human necessities is a function of [well-being], these turn out to be no less variable; and since technique is the repertory of activities provoked *by*, originated *for*, and inspired *in* the system of these necessities, it is also a protean reality that is in constant mutation. Hence it is vain to study technique as if it is an independent entity or as if it is propelled in a single direction that can be known beforehand."[23]

Ortega suggested that technicians reading his "Meditation on Technique" would become uncomfortable, and well they might, for the implications of his argument were immense. The clean, dust-free world of laboratory facts turned into a derivative structure built upon certain historically conditioned values. Technology ceased to appear as a thing-in-itself dependent on the laws of nature; it was instead the repertory of means by which man tried to create a world in which he could lead a good life, and the particular features of the good life were continually subject to complete change as men formulated and reformulated various conceptions of the good. As with Plato, Ortega found the form of the good to be the determinant principle of every feature of the human world; and also as with Plato, Ortega found that the form of the good was never subject to a final, fixed formulation that would impose upon the human world of flesh and blood, of daily life in an actual community of men, a determined set of unchang-

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 330.

ing features. In short, nothing was given, nothing except a completely indeterminate existence that had to be given shape by a continuous series of value judgments.

Consequently, neither the technician nor anyone else could accept a particular goal as given, for even the concerns that men called their needs depended on how they defined the good towards which they aspired. Although no living man could refrain from aspiring towards one or another conception of the good, the particular formulation of the good to which men aspired was subject to continual change. Here, as in so much of Ortega's thought, the Platonic conception of Eros was important. According to Socrates, the potency of love came from an awareness of not having that which we desired, which meant that technique, man's genius for creation, would not be static. Aspirations were never satisfied, for with every achievement, Eros, man's creative drive, would transfer its effort to some further possibility. Whenever a desired goal was fulfilled, it had to be replaced by another, more excellent object of man's spiritual eroticism. Hence, the happy fulfillment of one's ability to achieve established purposes is never enough; mere fulfillment is rather the mark of decline, for virile man, true man, would want to respond to new and greater purposes. Hence, the technician's satisfied confidence that the familiar needs of industrial democracy could forever provide a clean, amoral guide to European aspirations endangered the European future. Established needs were never secure. Ortega's humanism could not be more complete: "if something in man presents itself as static and immutable, this suffices for us to infer that it pertains to the part of man that is not human."[24]

Nothing "in technology," as the superstitious might say, required human development to continue along the lines charted in the recent past; and whatever direction human development took in the future would depend, as it had in the past, on the weight of the value judgments that diverse people made about the good life. On the basis of these convictions Ortega rebuked the contemporary technician for spiritual inertia. Engineers were content to be engineers; financiers to be financiers; politicians to be politicians; scholars to be scholars and not men thinking. This

[24]"Vives," 1940, *Obras* V, p. 495.

inertia would not maintain itself, for the success of European civilization had thrown its traditional categories into crisis; men could not treat unstable vocations as independent entities whose function and direction were already known. No necessary deeds were to be amorally performed by men who have no choice. The materialistic technology, dominant in the recent past, would probably not continue as the most important source of well-being in the near future. Ortega raised the question of the shrinking workweek: "What is the worker going to do with the enormous balance of his time, that empty ambit that remains of his life?"[25] If nothing else, the law of diminishing returns made it imprudent to expect that an ever-increasing power to purchase material goods would continue for long to be *the* standard of living.

With such reasoning Ortega called upon the specialists to open themselves to all sorts of questions about value that they habitually ignored. Technicians should not prepare to serve only the established purposes; they should entertain purpose in general, the form of the good. If the technician would recognize that his arts dealt with the realm of the superfluous, that is, with well-being and the good life, then they would have to admit that their work was based on value judgments and that it entailed moral commitments. In this way, the myth of amorality would loose force and technicians would be ready to respond to questions of value, knowing that they would want, at least to themselves, to stand by the ethical decisions that underlay their choice to work on one particular problem out of the many upon which they could spend their effort. The simplicity of the specialties was apparent rather than real; their seeming freedom from the complexity of moral uncertainty resulted from the failure to perceive the ethical sources of technical activities.

But as matters stood, specialists showed little awareness of the latent profundities in their concerns. Men of intellect rendered themselves neutral. They made technique responsive only to the established goals of material enrichment. The intellectual institutions prepared a man to do a particular job and provided him

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[25] *Meditación de la técnica*, 1939, *Obras* V, p. 334.

with sufficient diversion to keep him functioning efficiently while he performed his deadening labor. Men of culture failed to move the technologist to ask whether the job was worth doing, and they did not provide the average specialist with the cultural capacities that he would need in order to reason about the relative worth of the various jobs that he might perform. Europe had no future in this course. At best, it would rumble on in an eternal present, forever producing more and more of the same.

In contrast, Ortega had a vision of a world in which intellect did not leave technique tied to a particular way of life, but freed it to adapt to a variety of goals, material and spiritual. By developing greater cultural sensitivity, the technician would learn not only to solve a given problem, but to select with finesse and intelligence the problem that he wanted to solve. With such an openness to potential goals, the growing tension between enthusiasts and opponents of a materialistic technology could be lessened. Ortega did not believe that technology was inherently materialistic, and he envisaged the possibility of a Europe in which technology did not serve the exclusive materialism that has become equally characteristic of both capitalism and socialism. Technique could serve spiritual goals as well as material; and if men recognized that all forms of technique had an ethical basis, they would be less inclined to suppress one form in order to meet the "needs" of another. A more manifold, variegated European way of life would arise if the technicians would free themselves from the shackles of ignorant single-mindedness, mastering the *Geisteswissenschaften* as well as the *Naturwissenschaften*.

Technological superstition was put aside by Ortega. Showing that the problem of value was an integral part of every technique, he linked in the person of the technician the power of both natural knowledge and moral knowledge. This linking opened up all manner of possibilities for the future; but to make good on these possibilities, the technician had to awaken to the fact that in his humanity both powers, the natural and the moral, were combined. Then, the technician could cultivate both sides of his character.

But one can already hear the practical planner exclaiming ironically, "Beautiful! Beautiful! But how will we implement our

value judgments? How will we engineer consent to policy if we admit our policy is based merely on the vision of the good and not on some implacable necessity, some imperative expediency?"[h]

This question has a serious point. Ortega's position, his critique of all hypostatization, is profoundly subversive, in a spontaneous, diffused way, of the established public order. Precious little agreement now exists about what is expedient, let alone about what is good. The practical planner realizes that a minimum of agreement is essential to the implementation of any policy, and he rightly shudders at the thought of having to secure even a modicum of agreement that this or that policy goal is "good." He points out that reason, itself, is not well adapted to securing such agreement: individuals who enter the public forum raising doubts about the good often end as martyrs to a cause, and whole peoples who become obsessed by the matter lose their power to act decisively in concert. Hence, even many intellectuals believe that, owing to the limitations of reason, explicit concern with the good in public questions is unwise. Instead of harping on questions of principle, they suggest, the intellectual will accomplish most by applying his powers to improving the performance of policy with respect to important particulars.

Two caveats can be entered to this outlook. First, the view of the practical planner is not cogent unless the important public issues are ones that can be dealt with only through the implementation of agreed upon policies. Historically, however, the most significant public developments have not been either initiated or directed through explicit policies; but, quite to the contrary, the ultimate safeguard of the rights and liberties of "we, the people" has been our continual ability to maintain initiative, to steal many a march on those responsible for forming and implementing policy: in short, to act spontaneously. The historic leadership that Ortega hoped the technicians would give did not involve the rationalization of formal policy as much as a spontaneous, diverse break with established goals. In place of the obsession with formal policy, Ortega hoped that diverse men would each concentrate on his own personal self-formation, as a result of which the autonomous, informal activities of Europe would be invigorated, broadened, and deepened.

Second, the practical planner displays in his doubts a rather narrow view of reason. He shares with the technologically superstitious the belief that reason should be confined to the rational analysis of means to a given end. He receives this belief, not from the superstition that the end is really given, but from the fear that reason cannot handle the question of purpose rationally. To avoid stirring up an impossible problem, he takes up whatever purpose seems to come to the fore and concentrates on perfecting it, leaving to the mysteries of fate the task of changing purposes over time. Ortega would agree that all elites, no matter how cultured, were inherently unable to use reason to define the good for all; but such a paternal definition appeals only to the planner's mentality. Each, however, independently uses his rational intelligence to evaluate his own purposes; and Ortega saw a function for a cultured elite, not in telling each man what to think, but in stimulating each to think more incisively. The power of command, which presupposes that the few tell the many how to act, was a political power that intellectuals should avoid. The power to stimulate was a cultural power that every man could exercise by accepting moral responsibility for his acts and entering into moral discourse with his fellow men.

By 1900, many men of culture had developed a powerful rationale for not using their cultural power. They abhorred leadership, even of a protreptic sort, and sought only to serve others because they had lost faith in the rational legitimacy of purpose. They learned to conceive of man as a helpless responder to the chance stimuli of the universe. What appeared to be motives and purposes they knowingly explained to be mere rationalizations of manifold behavioral determinants. Science would soon explain these forces; and many even believed that Marx, Freud, Pavlov, and others had already revealed the essential mechanisms. With this knowledge man could merge himself with nature. He could let nature take her course and cease trying to impose his fallible will upon himself. Science would take the place of history; continuity would supplant change; natural cause would redeem the folly of human choice. Selective, cultural formation of the human animal seemed an insolent, overweening effort to resist the implacable forces of nature. Values were dangerous conceits that perverted

the natural man by discouraging him from what came naturally. When the last remnant of culture was eradicated, when the last commitment to a value was renounced, then man would be released from this terrible bondage to himself. He would be freed forever to respond docilely to every law of nature. He would dutifully perform his destined part in the mute, meaningless, behavioral spectacle that the scientist so passionately sought to understand.

Here, then, was another version of amorality. This version was not dependent on the hypostatization of collective concepts; it arose instead with the simple conviction that reason could rightly work only on matters of fact and that all values were as much a matter of prejudice as were those based on myths of race, nation, or class. This view rested on the faith that man's natural urges were healthy, if not good, and that the source of human perversion and self-destruction was frustration over his inability to fulfill his natural urges. Reason, therefore, should not be wasted in futile attempts to evaluate operational purposes. It should be be set to work clearing away the frustrating impediments that stand in the way of whatever intention men happen to entertain. Only when all the infringements have been cleared away can man act in an entirely natural way, a full-fledged citizen of the objective universe.

But did such a natural, neutral object so excite the scientist's concern and solicitude? Should man make himself into a natural creature, oblivious to ethical choice, a purely responsive being for whom morality, purpose, and value are meaningless conceptions? Could man make himself into a celestial mechanism that was, itself, its own watchmaker? Ortega thought not, and he contended that the conception of reason that suggested such a possibility was inadequate.

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And to these images they pray, as if one were to talk to one's house, knowing not the nature of gods and heroes.
HERACLITUS, 5

PHYSICO-MATHEMATICAL *reason, in its crass form of naturalism or its beatific form of spiritualism, was unable to confront human problems. By its very constitution, it could do no more than look for the nature of man. And clearly it did not find this nature because man has no nature. Man is not his body, which is a thing; nor is he his soul, psyche, conscience, or spirit, which is also a thing. Man is not a thing, but a drama, that is, his life—a pure and universal happening that happens to each one of us and in which each one, on his part, is always happening. All things, whatever they are, are ultimately mere interpretations that man exerts himself to give to whatever he encounters. Man does not encounter things; he assumes or supposes them. What he encounters are pure difficulties and pure facilities for existing. . . . To speak, then, of man's being, we need to elaborate a non-Eleatic concept of being, just as others have elaborated a non-Euclidian geometry. The time has come for the seed of Heraclitus to yield its mightly harvest.*

ORTEGA[1]

[1] "Historia como sistema," 1936, *Obras* VI, pp. 32 and 34.

XIV
The Reform of Reason

We have witnessed the fruition of Baconian aspirations. Reason has become the handmaiden of nearly all our acts. We have learned to side with nature, to uncover her laws, and to enlist her power in efforts to wreak our will. The Baconian program has been tried; and in its unquestioned success, it has been found wanting. For over three hundred years reason has been used to plumb the secrets of nature's causal powers. The resultant knowledge has enabled men to manipulate once unimagined forces. The frail, thinking reed has learned to wield the most secret energies of the universe; and the consequent increase of life—and of death, as well—is worthy of awe. Thus man trembles on a precarious balance between omnipotence and extinction.

Yet man is limited. To progress in one direction a limited creature must forgo moving in other directions. Bacon understood this fact. He admonished men to accept their divine duties without insolently demanding reasons for these obligations, and he cautioned men to confine their inquiries to the manifest world of nature. In the paradise of Eden the inquisition of nature had not been forbidden. "It was not that pure and uncorrupted natural knowledge whereby Adam gave names to the creatures according to their propriety, which gave occasion to the fall. It was the ambitious and proud desire of moral knowledge to judge of good and evil, to the end that man may revolt from God and give laws to himself, which was the form and manner of the temptation."[2]

[2]Bacon, "The Great Instauration," in *The New Organon and Related Writings*, Fulton H. Anderson, ed., p. 15.

Here, in capsule, is naturalistic amoralism: seek the secrets of nature and let God define duty.

Since the great instauration, we have progressively empowered ourselves with more and more natural knowledge; and, without entirely suppressing the proud desire for moral knowledge, we have markedly curtailed it. Doubtless, the benefits from natural knowledge that Bacon promised have been forthcoming several times over; thus, the problem is not with the positive part of the Baconian program. Yet, the suspicion has spread: having been expelled from Eden, men are forced to judge alone, perhaps of good and evil, and surely of good and bad, of right and wrong. As Bacon said, knowledge is power. Therefore, men cannot make the neat dichotomy between science and duty; moral perplexity is not alone in perverting the paradise, for with our natural knowledge we also blight the garden as our man-made poisons perceptibly pollute both air and water. Thus, the fact is inescapable: natural knowledge has been misused. It has built bombs. It has spread poison gas. It has unleashed fires that have seared cities to ashes. If the world were Eden, we could, *perhaps*, accept the Baconian limitation, but then perhaps, too, we would have no interest in the secrets of nature. But these are idle speculations, for the world is not Eden. Consequently, the negative part of Bacon's vision is dangerous: since reason is the best tool of judgment that men have yet created, they are foolhardy to restrict it to harnessing nature's powers and to refrain from using it to improve the quality of human choice.

On its own ground, the Baconian program has been a marvelous triumph, but its ground is a defile too narrow to traverse with stability. Hence, intellect has entered into crisis, a crisis of imbalance that arose not because we have lost our knack for natural knowledge, but because we have begun to feel a palpable lack of moral knowledge. Many have noticed this imbalance, Ortega included: "a good part of the contemporary confusion stems from the incongruence between the perfection of our ideas about physical phenomena and the scandalous backwardness of the 'moral sciences.' "[3]

[3]"Prólogo para franceses," 1937, *Obras* IV, p. 118.

One might like to blame this backwardness on Bacon and launch into an attempt to refute the naturalist's skepticism about moral knowledge. But one should not counter the Baconian amoralist in the same way that one does the hyperconscious man. Skepticism about the capacity of reason to deal with ethical matters will not be refuted any more than Bacon refuted the scholastic's doubts about the power of reason to master natural matters. Skepticism is always irrefutable until one does the impossible, or what seems impossible according to the skeptic's dogmas. Sensing this situation, an increasing number of thinkers have taken up the effort to balance the sciences of nature with equally effective sciences of the spirit.

Die Geisteswissenschaften have consequently preoccupied recent European thinkers. In their critique of historical reason—that is, in their effort to clarify the foundations of the human sciences, the system of reason by which we make practical, vital decisions—the *Geisteswissenschaftlers'* problem was not simply to lay an epistemological foundation for the study and pursuit of the arts; the real problem, as Vico had perceived, was to create a program for *l'esprit de finesse* as powerful as the one Bacon had conceived of for *l'esprit géometrique*. Vico failed.[a] But he did indicate the nature of the task: Bacon's crude conception of scientific methodology had not made his work so influential; rather his inspired understanding of the potential power to be gained through the application of scientific knowledge to the physical problems of man won him his followers. If the human sciences are to balance the natural adequately, the former need to harbor similar power, which will prove equally productive when applied to the spiritual problems of man. This condition is a large order.

Talk of applicable power in the moral sciences conjures up visions of the Inquisition and all sorts of prudish paternalisms. These visions result from our dangerously dull conceptions of application. To be applied productively, knowledge need not be applied programmatically. Serious students of the human sciences have not envisioned discovering the laws of moral behavior, nor have they contemplated promulgating a rule to which all must conform. Such intentions would run counter to the most fundamental element of the scientific view: respect for the phenomena

one studies. Moral behavior is inwardly determined behavior, and any undertaking that entails the subjection of moral behavior to outwardly determined, objective rules or norms is unscientific in the most egregious manner possible. Hence, the first step in developing the moral sciences is to break away from the expectation that has seriously vitiated the social sciences, namely, the expectation that discovery of the laws of human behavior should permit the manipulation of men in the same way that the discovery of the laws of natural behavior permits the productive manipulation of natural phenomena.

Powerful application is essential to the human sciences, but slavish emulation of the applications typifying the natural sciences is to be avoided. Recognizing this condition, Wilhelm Dilthey and others of his time attributed the potential power of the human sciences to indirect action, to the fact that by occasioning, not causing, the enrichment of man's cultural, inner life, one indirectly but decisively influenced man's external, public achievements. Natural science gained power when men gave up the hopeless effort to make nature act as one or another man believed it should. The human sciences would likewise gain power when, through a seeming restriction, men gave up the arrogant attempt to make others act according to the rule that one or another man deemed proper. Instead, by means of a yet newer organon, students of the human sciences hoped to make available to each person a system of reasoning by which each could more effectively initiate and carry through significant moral acts in the community of men.

Theorists had thus found that the power inherent in the human sciences differed from that in the natural sciences. From the latter, the scientist learned to manipulate the world around him; from the former, the scientist would learn to control the world within himself. In this sense, the power of the moral sciences was pedagogical, not mechanical. Rather than subject others, treated as objects, to causally necessary manipulations, the human sciences would help a man judge what ideals were worth his personal effort and would help him learn how to bring his actual accomplishments to a more adequate realization of the goals he willed. Count Yorck made the distinction well when he exclaimed to his friend Dilthey: "the reproach is entered against us that we do not

make good use of natural science! To be sure, presently the sole justification of all science is that it makes practice possible. But mathematical praxis is not the only one. From our standpoint, the practical aim is pedagogical in its widest and deepest sense. It is the soul of all real philosophy and the truth of Plato and Aristotle."[4]

Ortega was acutely aware that through pedagogical application the human sciences could exert immense power; and this power would be of Platonic, not Machiavellian quality. The point was not to gain and keep office; the point was to clarify the character of reason in such a way that the disciplined rationality of every man would prove more educative in his personal life. Each man lives a life of emotion and thought, wondrous perplexities, stirring aspirations, and heroic actions; every man perceives himself as the central figure in an intense and fascinating drama. Reason does not directly affect this human world by subjecting the diverse, innumerable, integral personalities to a single mold, breaking each man apart and recombining the abstract fragments as norms labeled Economic Man, Political Man, Behavioral Man, and so on. Quite the contrary, reason becomes significant in the human world as each man finds it valuable in living his personal drama; and Ortega believed that certain reforms in reason would make it a more vital tool to each man. If this were so, qualitative improvements in man's powers of self-liberation would be won, and in the aggregate these would amount to a great historic development. "Imagine for a moment that each of us takes care of himself just a little bit more every hour of every day, that he requires of himself a little more presence and intensity; and, multiplying all these minimum perfectionings and invigorations of each life by the others, calculate the gigantic enrichment, the fabulous ennobling that the human community would share."[5]

To have such effects, the reform of reason that Ortega envisaged would have to be more than an academic reform of reason. It was nice, perhaps, to perform before one's colleagues, to spin

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[4]Count Yorck to Wilhelm Dilthey, June, 1884, in Dilthey, *Briefwechsel*, pp. 41-2.

[5]*¿Qué es filosofía?*, 1929, 1957, *Obras* VII, p. 436.

glorious paradoxes while the world worried and warred. But a real reform of reason had to occur somewhere outside of unread reviews. Here again we meet the impulse that turns systematic philosophy out into the community. Recall Nietzsche's dictum: "I judge a philosopher by whether he is able to serve as an example."[6] Because we judge philosophers by their ability to serve as examples we treat Nietzsche with caution, knowing that for some he served as a bad example. Philosophy does not justify itself by its ability to erect hydroelectric dams or to organize, arm, and deploy grand armies; philosophy proves itself by its ability to educate. For Ortega, the philosopher's function was to exemplify to men how they could gain a better theoretical understanding and surer practical command of the lives they lived. This real reform of reason had to prove itself by helping every man to educate himself with more effect.

An effort to reshape reason by developing the human sciences carried with it certain serious doubts: the conception of reason propagated by the natural sciences was inadequate. We have touched on the character of these doubts, on the concern that progress in naturalistic knowledge needed to be balanced by progress in moral understanding; but we should notice, too, the very fact of the doubts, the fact that men question the established character of reason. To many persons, to question the adequacy of reason and to seek to reform it seems dangerous.

Many who are quick to scorn faculty psychology still think of human rationality as a natural faculty, one that is fixed and unchanging, a part of man's necessary psychological make-up. As a result, they view a criticism of man's rational power as an attack on reason, as a diatribe against this power that is what it is and that cannot be anything else. Hence, they easily misunderstand an attempt to reshape reason; they view the attempt to reform reason as an effort to reject reason. Thus, Nietzsche, a thinker who was profoundly concerned for the future of reason, is still roundly condemned as an irrationalist because he tried to reform the reigning conception of reason.[b] Nietzsche the man was

[6]Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Hillesheim and Simpson, trans., p. 18.

not always rational, but his philosophic undertaking was, both in conception and execution. Yet those who believe that the nature of reason has been fixed forever can find in his efforts only a destructive attack on reason. Likewise, a critic committed to a static conception of reason will find Ortega's reflections on the human sciences, on historic reason, to be an attempt to deny and negate reason. Hence, one of the thought-clichés that has attached itself to Ortega's work is the belief that he was an irrationalist.

Several writers have taken Ortega to task on this point, usually for remarks he made in *The Theme of Our Time*, a book that was so susceptible to accusations of irrationalism that Ortega wrote an article to debunk such interpretations. But the stigma of irrationalism in the work of Ortega and his peers goes deeper than the misinterpretation of a single book. Contemporary European philosophers have indeed mounted a thorough attack on rational*ism* and its narrow idea of reason derived from the natural sciences. Both friend and foe alike have popularized these criticisms as a defense of the irrational and as an attack on man's aspiration to lead a reasoned life. Such assessments miss the point entirely: by setting up an opposition between the rational and the irrational, one polarizes the problem and diminishes the opportunity to reform reason. The whole purpose of attacking rationalism was to defend reason from its own excesses.

Failure to do justice to this point has been most serious among the friends of the reformers. For instance, in *Irrational Man* William Barrett sympathetically explained existential philosophy, including in it a bit of Ortega's work. But he dramatically overemphasized the discontinuity between contemporary thought and the philosophic heritage; as a result, a great work of reason was degraded, especially for readers not well acquainted with that heritage, into a willful assertion of unreason. The popularizer's purpose should not be to convey the mood, especially the demonic pose of certain existential thinkers; his purpose should be to impart the conceptual powers that will enable men to profit from the reform and to reason more effectively about all aspects of their lives. This purpose is not well served by dwelling on the dramatic achievements of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and passing lightly over the important but difficult contributions of the pre-Socratics,

Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and especially Kant, Hegel, Dilthey, and Husserl.[7]

Barrett left an erroneous impression: that contemporary European philosophers had tried to restrict the reign of reason by showing that the irrational is as authentically human as the rational. This interpretation leaves intact the static view of rationality; both the rational and the irrational seem to be primary qualities, twin ghosts locked disharmoniously in a machine. But instead of merely balancing a fixed rationality with an equally fixed irrationality, existential thinkers have subjected reason to a decisive reformation. Viewing reason not as a primary quality, but as a secondary characteristic, and locating it not within the realm of necessity, but within the sphere of freedom, contemporary thinkers have greatly widened the scope of reason. In doing so, they preserved the rationalistic tradition, not as the whole of reason, but still as an essential element; they challenged men, not to give license to irrational impulse, but to live by a far more complete and exacting regimen of disciplined intelligence.

Contemporary thinkers contended that rationalism had created irrationalism by basing reason on a too narrow, yet absolute, foundation. By finding reason to be a freely formed attribute of the human person, rather than a necessary quality of some self-subsistent reality, material or spiritual, contemporary ontologists have freed men to make reason encompass all the phenomena that rationalists had rejected as irrational. As Ortega put it, the reform "will carry us, by a few steps, to dealing face-to-face with a future reason, one that is most distant from the venerable pure reason and that is nevertheless the exact opposite of vagueness, metaphors, utopias, and mysticisms. A reason, therefore, much more reasonable than the old, one from which 'pure reason' appears as an enchanting folly, and in addition, one for which many things will cease to be irrational that formerly suffered this pejorative qualification. . . . Historic reason, disposed to swallow reality without nausea, prudery, or scruples, will regulate it by bringing

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[7]See William Barrett, *Irrational Man*, pp. 149-205, for the treatment of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Compare this with the brief mention of Husserl and no mention of Dilthey.

within the reach of rationality chance itself, that demon of the irrational and the *ci-devant* enemy of history."[8] The upshot of this reform was to encourage standards of character and conduct antithetical to irrationalist license.

The reform of reason wrought in the development of the human sciences was a real re-*forming* of reason. As has been noted, those who still view reason as an inborn, natural faculty recoil at this effort, for if reason is to be re-*formed*, reason must be a cultural artifact developed through certain historic acts. Few have studied reason in this historical manner; and the limits of our historic awareness are indicated by the fact that we have innumerable histories of science, art, literature, and philosophy, but none of reason itself. Yet reason has a history;[c] for the neo-Hegelian, reason even is history. Ortega did not go that far. But, deeply influenced by historicism, especially by the historicism of Dilthey, Ortega inverted the Hegelian position: "far from history being 'rational', it happens that reason itself, authentic reason, is historical."[9] Reason was historically conditioned, not simply in the fact that the problems to which reason was applied at any particular time were historic problems, but more fundamentally in that the character of reason itself was conditioned by its development in history. To reform reason, one first examined its formative history in a search for alternative paths of development that might be pursued. Ortega was not the only twentieth-century ontologist to find that, on going back to the history of reason, Heraclitus offered a different possibility that merited pursuit.

In musing on its history, let us not hypostatize reason: reason is our name for a human activity, for a particular mode of thinking. Reason, consequently, is not a thing, but an action: that old, invidious distinction between action and contemplation does not hold, for contemplation is itself simply a form of action. By reason we mean true thinking, thinking that gives rise to knowledge as distinct from opinion, that puts us in touch with reality rather than mere appearances.

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[8] *Origen y epílogo de la filosofía*, 1943, 1960, *Obras* IX, p. 392.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 366fn.

Metaphor, however, muddies our conception of reason, and it leads to confusion to say that reason "puts us in touch with" reality. This phrase is an untechnical description of the correspondence theory of truth, which is essential to working out the form of thinking called reason. An effort in recent years to do away with this theory has had some success, for there are serious difficulties with the conception that reason gives rise to propositions that correspond to reality: my idea of the mountain obviously does not physically correspond to the mountain itself. But criticism of the correspondence theory has been misdirected, for the most part, because the concept of correspondence has been made to seem far too vulnerable by loose metaphors such as "puts us in touch with." Kant's ontological arguments undercut any such palpable correspondence; but that is not the end of the matter: correspondence is not the definitive term in the whole theory, for what we mean by a proposition corresponding to reality depends entirely on what we take reality to be.

To deny categorically the possibility of correspondence is to deny the possibility of reason, which is thinking disciplined by an ideal of thinking in accord with reality, whatever that may be. Men form reason by aspiring to think according to a definite regimen, a regimen of thinking thoughts that correspond to reality. Unless men aspire to this ideal, the distinction between truth and opinion breaks down by becoming arbitrary. Consequently, before dispensing with the theory of correspondence, men should reflect on what they consider reality to be.

Speculative ontology precedes a critical epistemology. Thus, Kantian epistemology can prove the impossibility of thinking in correspondence with the reality of dogmatic metaphysics, but it cannot preclude the possibility of reasoning in accord with a reality yet to be defined by a different metaphysics. Nicolas Berdyaev put the matter well: through epistemology "one cannot arrive at being—one can only start with it."[10]

By starting with being, men could invent reason. That is, men formed reason, a disciplined mode of thinking, as they asserted the existence of a reality, distinct from appearance, and postulated

[10]Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, Natalie Duddington, trans., p. 1.

the possibility of thinking in accord with this reality rather than with the appearances encountered by undisciplined perception. At first this formulation may offend, for it makes man responsible for what many believe is the gift of either God or Nature. The offense might be lessened, however, by observing that many such intellectual inventions are well documented in the history of art and science. Mathematics is an exploration of the operations made possible through the assertion of certain axioms, and it is not offensive to say that men have invented their powers of mathematical reasoning. In the same way, Galileo invented the science of mechanics when he projected freely in the realm of thought certain ideal forms: "imagine any particle projected along a horizontal plane without friction. . . ."[11] So too, someone invented reason when he intuited the possibility of true discourse, of thought that corresponded to a definite, unchanging reality. Imagine, he might have said, a reality that does not change continually as do the appearances we experience through our senses and emotions: seek always to speak in accord with that honest reality. From that time on it was open to men to accept freely the discipline of the rational ideal, using, as with the science of mechanics, a rather implausible set of postulates to anticipate and direct experience.

Ortega contended that in originating philosophy men followed precisely this procedure. "When one says that philosophy is a searching for Being, one understands that it is going to proceed by discovering the constitutive attributes of Being or of the entity. But this implies that one already has Being before one. How did it manage to be before the senses? Would it not seem more credible that men, having lost the fundamental principles of their life, inquired for some X that would have certain *prior* attributes—precisely those that would justify what they were seeking?"[12] In the early moments of philosophy, two sets of attributes for

[11]Galileo, *Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences*, Crew and de Salvo, trans., p. 244.

[12]*Origen y epílogo de la filosofía*, 1943, 1960, *Obras* IX, p. 434. This is the final statement in an unfinished, unpolished work, one that is important yet difficult to use. Its parts were composed over a period of ten years. Although in conception the work is a book, in execution it is, as it stands, a series of fragments.

that mysterious X were put forward, one by Heraclitus and another by Parmenides. Ortega believed that philosophy began with these two men, and in his unfinished work on *The Origin of Philosophy* he treated them together in analyzing the historic situation with which both grappled. But in the parts of the work available, Ortega did not dwell on their respective doctrines, except to connect Parmenides with the doctrine of Being that Ortega wanted to reject.[13] We know from other references that Ortega identified Heraclitus with the doctrine he wanted to develop. "After twenty-five centuries of intellectual experience we find ourselves forced to abandon interpretations of reality as substance, and we are picking our brains to see if we can acknowledge . . . that all reality . . . is the contrary, is the deficient being, the indigent being that does not suffice for itself, that is deficient and that nevertheless is. The matter seems acrobatically paradoxical and ultradifficult to understand, for our mental habits since the birth of the European nations have been formed with the ferule of Greek discipline, and the Greeks, excepting Heraclitus, thought the contrary: they thought, with one or another accent, that reality is the sufficient being, the substantial being."[14]

Heraclitus first stated explicitly the correspondence theory: "although this Logos is eternally valid, yet men are unable to understand it—not only before hearing it, but even after they have heard it for the first time. That is to say, although all things come to pass in accordance with this Logos, men seem to be quite without any experience of it. . . ."[15] Heraclitus here asserted the principle of the principle, of an eternally valid concept in accord with which all came to pass; and this principle, this Word or Logos, was the reality to which reason should correspond. The basic ideal of reason was implicit through all of Heraclitus' fragments. There was in the endless flux of appearances a valid, unchanging coherence, a reality that might be known: "this universe, which is the same for all, has not been made by any god or man, but

[13]*Ibid.*, p. 384, for philosophy beginning with Parmenides and Heraclitus. *Ibid.*, pp. 399-412, for his discussion of them. *Ibid.*, pp. 433-4 for his identification of Parmenides with Being.

[14]*Una interpretación de la historia universal*, 1949, 1960, *Obras* IX, p. 212.

[15]Heraclitus, Fragment 1 (DK), Wheelwright, trans., *Heraclitus*, Fr. 1, p. 19.

it always has been, is, and will be—an ever-living fire, kindling itself by regular measures and going out by regular measures."[16] In this fragment, as in many others, Heraclitus made an effort to suggest, with oracular reserve, the nature of the reality that gave reason, the Logos, its cogency; only in correspondence with that reality, which was the same for all, could truth be found by men, for "human nature has no real understanding; only the divine nature has it," and "man is not rational; only what encompasses him is intelligent.[17]

Soon men began to call Heraclitus "the obscure," and for good reason: he was not exactly explicit about what the intelligent encompassing was. This obscurity is not necessarily a sign of weakness: the idea of reality permits the invention of reason not because the reality is perfectly known and absolutely clear, but because the idea allows us to aspire systematically, and perhaps confusingly, to perfect knowledge and absolute clarity. For the sake of the search, Heraclitus seems to have been intentionally obscure about the one, the divine Logos, for "the Sibyl with raving mouth utters solemn, unadorned, unlovely words, but she reaches out over a thousand years with her voice because of the god in her."[18] Almost immediately his raving voice began to show its reach as Parmenides took up the effort to define more clearly the reality that might give rise to right reason.[d]

"Come," Parmenides invited, "I will tell you—and you must accept my word when you have heard it—the ways of inquiry which alone are to be thought. . . ." Note that Parmenides is here striving for rigorous argumentation, for words that one must accept on having heard them; this cogency is an important feature of the system of thinking, that is reason, or the way of truth as Parmenides called it. Parmenides continued to make the great distinction between the two basic ways of inquiry: "the one that IT IS, and it is not possible for IT NOT TO BE, is the way of credibility, for it follows Truth; the other, that IT IS NOT, and

[16]Heraclitus, Fragment 30 (DK), Wheelwright, trans., *Ibid.*, Fr. 29, p. 37.

[17]Heraclitus, Fragments 61 and 62 (W), Wheelwright, trans., *Heraclitus*, p. 68. The authenticity of Fragment 62 is contested by some scholars; Fr. 61 is Fr. 78 (DK); Diels did not include Fr. 62.

[18]Heraclitus, Fragment 92 (DK), Wheelwright, trans., *Heraclitus*, Fr. 79, p. 69.

that IT is bound NOT TO BE: this I tell you is a path that cannot be explored; for you could neither recognise that which IS NOT, nor express it."[19] This passage at first seems far more obscure than any by Heraclitus; but, once one overcomes the archaic stiffness of the formulation, it is a rather rigorous statement of the correspondence theory of truth: true thinking must be in accord with Reality, that which is what it is and which does not change, whereas deceptive thinking is in accord with that which is not what it is, for this appearance yields no measure by which its actuality can be tested or articulated. To put it another way, one can have confidence in the results of thinking only if what one thinks about is a reality that in itself is stable and unchanging, for if what one thinks about is mere, volatile appearance, the most rigorous investigation will yield results that become untrue the instant the appearance changes. And, furthermore, only by postulating the stable, unchanging reality can we even recognize and express definite changes in appearance.

Here Parmenides went a long way towards linking the way of truth to reality and towards making this link differentiate reason from appearance. Parmenides went so far, in fact, that he verged on absolute idealism: "that which it is possible to think is identical with that which can Be."[20] With this conviction, Parmenides proceeded, as philosophers have ever since, to reflect on what it is that has Being, real and absolute existence, and to deduce from the properties of this Being certain standards of cogent reasoning. If it were not for his follower Zeno, these deductions might have prompted men to call Parmenides the paradoxical, for in spite of obvious appearances, he held that reality, Being, was one, an unchanging, homogeneous whole that included everything and that was eternal.

Parmenides seemed to have postulated an impossible conception of reality, for superficially it contradicted the most common phenomena, those of change and differentiation. But, in keeping with Berdyaev's dictum, this conception of reality quickly became

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[19]Parmenides, Fragment 2, Freeman, trans., *Ancilla*, p. 42.

[20]Parmenides, Fragment 3, Freeman, trans., *Ancilla*, p. 42, fn. 2, variant reading.

immensely fruitful for epistemology, and it is still a vital force in the history of reason. Thinkers soon freed themselves of the particular image of reality that Parmenides depicted, the image of a single, solid, unchanging, eternal sphere; but the criteria that Parmenides set forth as indicative of that-which-is have remained in force with minor adjustments until recent times. These criteria called for a finite, unchanging substance that was unified and universal. Reason was thinking that could claim to give rise to truth, to knowledge, because it told about being, about that which is, was, and ever will be, about that which met the criteria of reality, for only propositions about things that met these criteria would prove dependable: all others might be upset by a capricious change in their referents.

Unless reason corresponded to a finite, unchanging substance that was unified and universal, its results would be undependable: if not finite, it could not be wholly known; if not unchanging, today's opinions would not be dependable tomorrow; if not universal, opinions that are here true might be false there; and if not unified, opinions would concern arbitrary compounds that would hold only for those inclined to make the same grouping. Such criteria are still very much in force, for the contemporary sicentist who might observe with Heraclitus that nature likes to hide, must also agree with Parmenides that nature is not capricious, or else the whole fabric of reason loses its continuity and tears apart.

Reason has developed historically as certain men further elaborated on the reality to which it corresponded and as many others learned to use the mental discipline the few thus created. Parmenides' image of the universe, of absolute reality, was inconsistent, as we noted, with almost all experience; and his immediate followers, especially the atomists in one direction and Plato in another, worked hard to save the phenomena without departing from the way of truth that Parmenides sketched out. The atomists observed that many of Parmenides' difficulties could be avoided if, instead of there being only one One, there were many, each a unified, homogeneous whole, an atom. The dynamic, changing, sensible universe could then be built up as the innumerable atoms cohered according to regular principles. Plato tried to

save the phenomena in a different way: he etherealized Parmenides' image of reality, attempting to divest it of any sensible features. The One was a pure principle, a Form, that was universal, eternal, and unchanging; and our dynamic, sensible surroundings were simply imperfect reflections of this perfect Form.

Both elaborations on Parmenides have made fruitful contributions in the history of reason; many of the Platonic ones are essential to this work. For the present argument, however, it is most convenient and sound to concentrate on Aristotle's great synthesis of his predecessor's metaphysical speculations. Heraclitus, Socrates, and Plato (presuming a non-Aristotelian interpretation) may not have thought of reality as something out there in the surrounding universe. The great tradition, however, has only recently come to a realization of this possibility, for Aristotle's synthesis has dominated reflection on the subject. Ortega intended to reform reason first by rejecting Aristotelian metaphysics and the conception of reason founded on its definition of Being and then by basing a new conception of reason on a new specification of reality.

For Aristotle, metaphysics was the study of Being *qua* Being, and it was the highest of all the speculative sciences (*Metaphysics: IV, i; I, i–ii*). Here Aristotle planted himself firmly in the tradition that developed from Parmenides: Knowledge must correspond to reality, to Being, and the study of Being is the study from which all standards of rationality ultimately follow. The Parmenidean conception of reality had already been considerably elaborated by the time Aristotle wrote; and instead of Parmenides' rather stiff IT IS, Aristotle dealt with the same concern under the much more familiar heading of "substance." With this concept Aristotle was able to reunite, by reasoning too involved to trace here, the two basic elaborations of Parmenides: the materialistic and the idealistic. There were two kinds of substance, Aristotle contended, the sensible and the immutable. Sensible substance was subject to change and consisted in matter; immutable substance did not change, for it was the unmoved mover whose necessity we could deduce, whose works we could observe, but whose presence we could not palpably sense. Aristotle's influence has been immense. With varying emphasis, first on immutable sub-

stance and then on sensible substance, the discipline of reason recognized in the West from then until recent times largely received its authority by virtue of its claim to yielding propositions that corresponded to substances as set forth by Aristotle.

Throughout our past, both body and spirit have been conceived of as real substances: bodies have been thought of as material things and spirits as immaterial things. In philosophic literature, the term substance was frequently denoted *res*, thing or entity, but in any case this *res* could be either material or spiritual. Thus there was a *res extensa* and a *res cogitans*, and the function of reason with respect to both was to give rise to truths that corresponded to these two forms of reality. Over the centuries, investigations into the *res extensa* produced our vast system of natural science, and inquiry into *res cogitans* led to considerable development of the deductive and theological sciences. Metaphysical controversy remained, until about 1800, within the Aristotelian boundaries with champions of sensible substance on the one hand and immutable substance on the other arguing that their favored reality was the one true one.

About 1800, Kant decisively overturned this tradition by developing a critical epistemology that encompassed dogmatic ontology entirely within a system of ideas. Because Kant worked out his position in reply to professed skeptics and because he had every intention of providing a firm basis for reason, certain consequences of his critique of reason were slow in becoming apparent. Kant severed the relation between reason and reality, an act that at first seemed to be a convenient way of escaping difficulties such as those raised by Hume about causality. In making this break, Kant simply carried to a logical conclusion a trend that had begun with Descartes, which had seemed quite benign because thinkers had lost sight of the primacy of ontology over epistemology. Kant did away with traditional ontology. Reason could, after Kant, claim no link to things-in-themselves; and the category of substance, which for Aristotle was the one category that "*is* primarily, not in a qualified sense but absolutely,"[21] became for Kant a mere conceptual category, one that could be said to exist only by virtue

[21] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, VII, i, 5, Hugh Tredennick, trans.

of our thinking it. He stated the conclusion clearly: "the concepts of reality, substance, causality, even that of necessity in existence, apart from their use in making possible the empirical knowledge of an object, have no meaning whatsoever, such as might serve to determine any object."[22]

In *Leibniz's Idea of the Principle* Ortega showed in some detail the flaw in Aristotle's metaphysical speculations.[23] In Book IV of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle first used the actuality of substance to prove the law of contradiction, that a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time. Then a few chapters later Aristotle used this law to prove the necessary existence of substance. Because of this circular reasoning, Aristotle did not actually offer an ontology; he created instead a speculative rationalism that postulated a reality dependent on the accepted laws of thought. Parmenides' proposition—"that which it is possible to think is identical with that which can Be"—was turned around unwittingly —"that which can Be is identical with that which it is possible to think." Being became more and more dependent on thought and epistemology became more and more prominent in comparison to ontology.

As Ortega observed in his lectures on *What Is Philosophy?*, the transmutation of post-Aristotelian metaphysics into the epistemology of critical idealism began in earnest with Descartes. The legislative reason, which was at work surreptitiously in Aristotle, became explicit with Descartes. Starting with systematic doubt, Descartes used his famous *cogito* to establish, it seemed, an indubitable relationship between his thought and absolute reality. Descartes believed that "I think, therefore I am" assured man of his own existence as a *res cogitans;* and from this unquestionable example of *res,* of a substance, he assured himself of the absolute existence of both the spiritual and material universe. Descartes, like Aristotle, was unaware of the degree to which he had made reality dependent on reason rather than the other way around; or more precisely, as a rationalist convinced that reason

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[22]Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* I, Pt. 2, Div. 2, Appendix, A677:B705; Norman Kemp Smith, trans.

[23]*La idea de principio en Leibniz,* 1947, 1958, *Obras* VIII, pp. 155-213, esp., p. 195.

was a necessary attribute of reality and not the creation of the human mind, Descartes saw no danger in grounding a theory of reality in the laws of thought.

Leibniz, Ortega noted, began to make explicit the idealistic implications of Descartes' theorem by restating it as *sum cogitans*, "I exist as thinking," adding that many things are thought by me. With this statment, what seemed to be an ontological argument was perilously close to an epistemological one. Kant completed the idealization of the *cogito* by showing in the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements in his *Critique of Pure Reason* how we construct a vast phenomenal reality by means of the laws of disciplined thought. Strictly, the Cartesian *cogito* meant, "I think, therefore I perceive myself as existing"; and Kant went on to demonstrate that no proposition could inform us about things-in-themselves, be they material or spiritual. In doing so, Kant created the problem of contemporary ontology, not by his invalidation of traditional ontological arguments, but by his having locked reason in a purely phenomenal realm. Thus Ortega noted that "the tragedy of idealism results from its having alchemically transmuted the world into 'subject,' into the content of a subject, enclosing the world inside of it; and then there was no way left to explain why this [world] appears so completely distinct from me if it is only my image and a fragment of me."[24]

Kant offered a taxing discipline for the three major modes of reason that had been developed, the scientific, moral, and esthetic. This discipline, plus the rigor of his arguments, obscured the fact that Kant withdrew from reason its fundamental claim, namely that its propositions corresponded to reality. Kant showed that all conceptions of a transcendent, substantive reality, of an actuality that existed apart from its manifestations in experience, were in fact transcendental ideals, mere conceptions that told us nothing about reality in itself, but that were used *as if* they did in order to establish intellectual standards.e Kant knelled the death of the correspondence theory insofar as it pertained to substances, *res*, *ens*, entities, bodies, to any reality out there somewhere.

Kant's personal discipline was strongly internalized, which

[24] *¿Qué es filosofía?*, 1929, 1957, *Obras* VII, p. 403.

may account for the fact that he made no provision in his system for the external authority of reason. Recall how carefully Parmenides had devised a way of speaking that "you must accept . . . when you have heard it," for he had experienced the same capriciousness that had led Heraclitus to complain that men ignored reason even when they came in contact with its teachings. The whole import of the correspondence theory was to make reason something that men must accept on hearing it because it articulated a truth dependent not on the whims of human imagination but on the rationality of the encompassing, of reality itself. In breaking with this tradition, Kant's transcendental ideal gave rise to a system of reason far more elaborate than that of the ancients, but Kant's pure reason was voluntary. Kant asked how various forms of reason were *possible*, and he brilliantly worked out the conditions of their possibility. But whether these possibilities would ever become actual, he left to the free choice of man. The romantic movement quickly showed that other men might choose to discipline their imaginations in ways that differed from the rationalistic rigor that Kant chose.

Many, however, stayed within the Kantian path, relying on reason, not emotion, to deal with human concerns. In natural science the transcendental ideal worked magnificently, so well in fact that many scientists still believe that empirical methods give them a positive knowledge of objective reality and not of a phenomenal world. For other scientists, the Kantian critical method, not his particular results, proved most liberating, for it opened the way to new forms of geometry, logic, and mathematics. Whole new worlds were brought into existence by postulating categories whose possibility did not occur to Kant.

In these matters, the transcendental ideal worked so well because the scientist, who might be very interested in his findings and their significance for him, was nevertheless disinterested with respect to the phenomena he studied. This disinterestedness was not the case in the other areas of inquiry—politics, economics, ethics, esthetics, value theory, and so on—where the transcendental ideal proved less effective. For this reason, philosophers who are primarily interested in natural science and its limitations are still usually content to live with Kant's ontological skepticism,

whereas philosophers working in the human sciences feel that refurbishing the correspondence theory is important.

In intensely human concerns, with respect to which the observer can only feign disinterestedness, the trancendental ideal has been inadequate. A human standard justified by an absolute reality had an authority that seemed ineluctable; and its prestige, its correspondence to actuality, helped in the important but difficult matter of inspiring men to subordinate their interests to their principles. But a standard based simply on a transcendental ideal, and on nothing more substantial, easily seemed, in difficult situations, to be merely optional, depending on the convenience of the moment; and this lack of prestige, this correspondence to a mere concept, made it more easy for men to subordinate their principles to their interests. Marx tried to salvage this situation with a leap of faith. He accepted systematically the subordination of principles to interests and placed all hope in the ultimate benevolence of history: if conflicting interests are allowed ruthlessly to consume one another, a time will arrive when men will no longer need interests, and principles will be free to flourish. But history may not be benevolent, unless in making it men guide themselves by the principle of benevolence.

Schopenhauer soon began to grapple with the practical effects of idealistic subjectivism by going beyond Kant. Schopenhauer saw clearly that men would not resist their egoistic urges unless they belived that morality had an equally palpable foundation. "If, therefore, we take the matter seriously, artificial concept-combinations of [the Kantian] kind can never contain the true incentive to justice and philanthropy. On the contrary, such an incentive must be something that requires little reflection and even less abstraction and combination; something that, independently of the formation of the intellect, speaks to every man, even the coarsest and crudest; something resting merely on intuitive apprehension and forcing itself immediately on us out of the reality of things."[25] This something, Schopenhauer held, was compassion, which was the root feeling from which the two great moral virtues, justice and loving-kindness, were derived.

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[25]Schopenhauer, *On the Basis of Morality*, III, #12, E.F.J. Payne, trans.

Schopenhauer's treatise was refused the prize for which it was submitted. The Royal Danish Society for Scientific Studies could not "pass over in silence the fact that several distinguished philosophers of recent times are mentioned in a manner so unseemly as to cause just and grave offense."[26] But in addition the judges had a more substantive point. Schopenhauer wrote an erudite philosophical criticism and a profound essay on the psychological basis of moral feeling. But the metaphysical section was relegated to an appendix and was not a good example of Schopenhauer's metaphysical abilities. In effect, he showed that, given compassion, one could derive the moral virtues from it; but he did not show that compassion transcended Arthur Schopenhauer and was an ineluctable feature, not only of his perception of reality, but of an absolute reality confronting all men.

Many other philosophers took up the problem of re-establishing a link between moral reasoning and reality so that principles might maintain their prestige. Any adequate discussion of the recent history of reason would have to follow closely the contributions of Nietzsche, Dilthey, Brentano, Bergson, to mention only a few. None was wholly successful, and the problem is still very much a problem of man, not merely one of philosophy. Ortega put the difficulty well and his theory of historic reason was an attempt to deal with it. To this theory we shall shortly turn.

Ortega joined Nietzsche in attempting a transvaluation of values, for such a transvaluation seemed the most desirable response to the profound nihilism that arose as numerous shocks to the authority of reason, particularly the Kantian criticisms, slowly worked their way into the European's consciousness. We might sum up, in the Aristotelian terminology, which we shall soon try to shed, Ortega's view of twentieth-century life: the formal cause or the ultimate reason why the characteristic problems of the time had arisen was the Kantian critique, the material cause or substrate in which the problems manifested themselves was the revolt of the masses, the efficient cause or the source of shaped change in contemporary affairs was the reform of reason,

[26] "Judicium Regiae Danicae Scientiarium Societas," in *Ibid.*, p. 216.

and the final cause or purpose, the goal, of these developments was an exuberant Europe. We have looked at some detail at the material and final causes of the second voyage, at the revolt of the masses and a sportive Europe. The formal and efficient causes were for Ortega closely linked, for the reform of reason followed out of the Kantian critique and its aftermath.

When men were left with a mere ideal and when they ceased to discipline their character by contrasting it to a transcendent actuality, their arbitrary will became the motive force of human affairs. In 1933, in trying to determine "What's Happening in the World," Ortega suggested that the collapse of reason as an effective, legitimate authority was the spiritual source of the major upheavals in twentieth-century life, the source of the new art, the glorification of sport and the body, the cult of youth, and the politics of direct action, especially Fascism. The reasoned traditions of the past were simply being ignored, for, having learned about philosophy without learning to philosophize, youths felt no compunctions making them take reason seriously. Belief in naturalistic reason lost its power when it ceased to be buttressed by a transcendent authority, when it lost its claim to correspond to a substantive reality. In the absence of an alternative, people based their actions on their arbitrary will, for to the untutored the will seemed far more immediate and solid, more real, than did obtuse mental images. "The politics of today means that the new generations do not want to be reasonable, not because they have no reason, but because they do not want to heed their reason even if they have it. They do not want an idea of things, but the things themselves. They do not value those who think, but those who will. In essence, they prefer volition to intellect."[27]

Contemporary Europeans were disillusioned; they lacked a faith; in their hearts they believed all was permitted. Frightened by this situation and the specter of chaos lurking in it, men arbitrarily selected features of their circumstances and exalted these, trying desperately to make absolute realities of them. Thus, the Fascist and the Communist exalted the state and the party so that these could substitute for the principles that had informed the

[27] "Qué pasa en el mundo," *El Sol*, June 3, 1933.

politics of liberal democracy. Men who found no authority in thought turned desperately to a myth of an organic state or an organized proletariat; the discipline they could no longer derive freely from their reason, they found in the prosaic facts of state and party, which would at least impose a totalitarian form on life, for slavery was preferable to intolerable chaos.

Ortega did not hanker for such a solution to the situation. Wherever the desperate, arbitrary will ruled over all, there was no check on those who wielded power. As events would show, a willful flight from freedom was the surest route to chaos; and what seems to have been the stability won in blood by certain authoritarians may well prove to be mere interludes of exhaustion. For Ortega, the problem was not one to be solved by the man of dominant volition. The problem had its formal cause in carefully reasoned arguments and the efficient cause, by which men might resolve it, would be of the same nature: a reasoned reform of reason. Hence, in spite of the fighting and the fury, Ortega believed that men of intellect should not exalt the will, but redirect their inquiry back to the foundations of reason.

Men who were dazzled by experimental brilliance had for too long ignored the most important questions about the nature of the universe and of human life. A backlog of fundamental problems had been created by the Kantian revolution; and popular culture was being bedeviled by irresolution about these matters. Contemporary Europe was endangered in part because many of its better thinkers had turned away from the problems of man, ignoring the profound questions that arise as men find themselves alone in a world. "That experimental science cannot resolve these fundamental questions in its own manner gives it no cause for the gratuitous gesture, like the fox before the grapes that were out of reach, of calling them 'myths' and inviting us to abandon them. How can we live unmoved by the final, dramatic questions? From whence comes the world and whither does it go? What is the formative power of the cosmos? What is the essential meaning of life?"[28]

Questions do not disappear by invalidating their traditional

[28] *¿Qué es filosofía?*, 1929, 1957, *Obras* VIII, p. 311.

answers. When the old answers dissolve, some men resolve to find new means to make new answers. Thus, in speaking of the diversity of means that exist for arriving at a single goal, Montaigne made an appropriate observation: "Certes, c'est un subject merveilleusement vain, divers et ondoyant, que l'homme. Il est malaisé d'y fonder jugement constant et uniforme."[29]

What follows, then, is an attempt to adumbrate, not Ortega's solution to the ontological problem, but what Ortega envisaged as the desirable, historic solution to the problem. He indicated several lines of endeavor along which diverse men working in different ways in various human concerns could develop a renewed conviction in the authority of reason.

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Wisdom is one thing — to know the thought whereby all things are steered through all things.

HERACLITUS, 41

[29]Montaigne, "Par divers moyens on arrive à pareille fin," *Oeuvres complètes*, p. 13.

LOSING HIMSELF *in the jungle of ideas that he himself created, man does not know what to do with intellect. He continues to believe that it performs an indispensable service, but he knows not what this is. He knows only that its service is not the one attributed to it during the last three centuries. He* predicts that reason will have to be given a new place in the system of actions that make up our life. *In short, having been the great solution, intellect has become for us the great problem.*

ORTEGA[1]

[1] "Apuntes sobre el pensamiento: su téurgia y su demiurgia," 1941, *Obras* V, p. 524.

XV
The Dawn of Historic Reason

In 1951 ORTEGA PAID TRIBUTE to the profundity of Martin Heidegger's philosophic style. Although much of Heidegger's writing was difficult to read, his prose was marvelously adapted to his purpose: to reform the vocabulary and syntax in such a way that men could express new thoughts more effectively.[2]

Ortega spoke from experience, for he had had a new thought, but he could express it effectively only after he had contended with Heidegger's prose. This fact has prompted some to suggest that Ortega was a disciple of Heidegger, a suggestion to which Ortega did not take kindly.[3] On this matter, only two points should be made. First, there is a difference between having been influenced and being derivative. Ortega was no follower; several years before Heidegger's first publications Ortega had uncovered and discussed the reality on which he would base a reformed

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[2]"Entorno al 'Coloquio de Darmstadt,' 1951," 1962, *Obras* IX, p. 634.

[3]In *La idea de principio en Leibniz*, 1947, 1958, *Obras* VIII, pp. 272-3, Ortega went to some pains to establish the chronology of his intellectual development vis-à-vis Heidegger's. In *Prólogo para alemanes*, 1933, 1958, *Obras* VIII, esp. pp. 43-54, Ortega explained his relation to phenomenology and Husserl. Ortega's petulance at being called a litterateur in comparison to thinkers like Heidegger came out sharply in a note in *The Origin of Philosophy*, Toby Talbot, trans., p. 86, fn. 7. "Perhaps it is further noteworthy that there has never been a *genus dicendi* truly adequate as a vehicle for philosophizing. Aristotle was unable to resolve this problem that fools ignore. His work has been preserved because he held onto his own lesson notes. I personally have had to contain myself for thirty years while fools accuse me of producing only literature, and the worst part is that even my own students find it necessary to pose the question of whether I have been writing literature or philosophy, along with other ridiculous provincial notions of this order!"

reason.[4] All the same, Ortega doubtless found *Being and Time*, which was published in 1927, to be a good heuristic, for starting in 1928 he produced a series of substantial essays about the correspondence of reason to the realities of life, and from the first of these he acknowledged the value of Heidegger's work.[5] Recognition of this influence detracts nothing from Ortega's achievement, which was a personal achievement that followed its own course and that led in a direction rather different from Heidegger's aloof *Gelehrsamkeit*.

Second, properly treated, the doctrinal formulas of both men are irrelevant to the actual concern, for no one can copyright reality. During the early twentieth century, many serious thinkers were reflecting on the problem of reality and its importance for the authority of reason. With respect to fundamentals, one does not devise ingenious formulas, one hopes to *uncover* that which is. What matters is not that one or another person first worked out the correct doctrine, but that as various men point the way—and there were many in addition to Ortega and Heidegger—Europeans manage in the day-to-day complexity of their common lives to reform reason and shore up its authority. Were this a book on the reform of reason we would turn not only to Heidegger, but also to Dilthey, Brentano, Husserl, Scheler, Blondel, Croce, Rickert, Cohen, Vaihinger, Jaspers, and many others.[a] It is, however, a book on Ortega, who would have a prominent place in the larger story and who is the central concern in this preliminary version.

But although Ortega is the occasion of our inquiry, his theories should not be the object of our inquiry. He set forth his own position at length, repeatedly, and with elegance. For a full exposition of Ortega's ontology and his conception of historic reason, the reader should go to Ortega's own works, to *What is Philosophy?*, *Unas lecciones de Metafísica*, "Prólogo a *Veinte años de caza mayor*," *The Origin of Philosophy*, and most importantly, to *La Idea de principio en Leibniz*.[b] The last mentioned is a major philosophic treatise, the richness of which would be impossible

[4] *Meditaciones del Quijote*, 1914, *Obras* I, pp. 320-1.

[5] See the extensive reports on Ortega's lectures on "¿Qué es la filosofía?" in *La Nación*, (Buenos Aires), Nov. 10 and 14, and Dec. 25 and 28, 1928; and *¿Qué es filosofía?*, 1929, 1957, *Obras* VII, pp. 275-438.

to summarize adequately. But to do so is not our purpose. Studying "Ortega as educator," our task is to grasp the gist of his ontology, his conception of historic reason, to see how these pertained to his mission as an educator, one committed to furthering European unity.

For a number of intelligent critics, the problems of European life in the twentieth century seemed to be rooted in the stigma that had become attached to reason, not to Reason disembodied, but to the personal reason according to which each man may choose to live his life. In every class, in every profession, in every nation, too many men seemed willing to pursue their respective activities without thinking seriously and personally about what they were doing. Of course, the causes of this heedlessness were manifold: on the material level there was the pedagogy of abundance; on the political level there was a simultaneous complicating and narrowing of alternatives as the possibilities of the nation-state were realized; on the cultural level there were new marketplaces for ideas that encouraged men to adopt positions, not to think thoughts.

In addition to these and other fundamental causes of the European crisis, another type of problem complicated the situation. Basic developments such as the pedagogy of abundance were serious but open developments; that is, the cycle of influence involved could lead either to degradation or improvement, depending on whether innumerable, diverse individuals perceived the surrounding abundance as an exuberance of possibilities or a cornucopia of achievements. If men viewed their surroundings as a basis from which to work at unifying Europe, Ortega believed that the concrete achievements of the men who had built the European nation-states would not be perceived as a comfortable, undemanding inheritance; instead, each particular man would find that some definite aspect of his national ambience offered him an exciting, demanding intimation of a supranational destiny, one in the pursuit of which he could nobly discipline his character. Critics were unlikely, however, to stir the technicians working in diverse spheres of activity, the men who might invent powerful supranational offices, because these men did not believe in the task. To them, reason should invent only means, not ends.

Reason thus presented a double problem with respect to the reform of European affairs. First, owing to the traditional conception of reason as thinking in correspondence to *res*, substance, be it physical or spiritual, many were strongly attracted to hypostatizing important ideas like society, to asserting that the idea must correspond to a thing, and to finding their purposes in the needs of these imaginary entities. Second, the better educated, who had followed the philosophical developments since the mid-1700's, no longer had confidence in the rationality of the traditional conception of reason; they could point out the error of hypostatizations by slack thinkers, but they had few alternatives to offer. The most thoughtful had the least conviction, a condition that made them weak in the bedlam of public voices. A new ontology was important for practical affairs because it would help the more serious, careful thinkers speak out with intelligent conviction.

Whether Ortega's philosophical reforms could have the practical implications claimed for them can be best judged after contending thoughtfully with the problem that Ortega contended with himself in working out his theories. The problem, recall, was this: in the past, the reality to which reason was supposed to correspond consisted in things, substances, in bodily things and in spiritual substances; but after Kant's criticisms, faith in the reality of any *res*—of any thing or substance, spiritual or material —would not sustain a system of reason, for the link between reason and *res* could not be made and any attempt to do so would end ultimately in skepticism. There was simply no way to test the actual correspondence between a phenomenal depiction of a thing and the thing-in-itself; and the profound effect of this fact on the traditional distinction between reason and opinion was beginning to be generally felt throughout the public, for it made reasonable men hesitate to speak with conviction and it made impulsive men more ready to act impulsively. Every man thus had before him this question: was a correspondence between the results of reason and an authentic reality still possible?

Ortega thought such correspondence *was* still possible, but not if one simply refurbished the traditional theory. He returned to the human problem that gave rise to philosophy; he did not

dwell only on the theories recorded in philosophy. "Without now pretending to express a formal opinion on the point, permit me to insinuate the possibility that what we are now beginning to do under the traditional banner of philosophy is not a new philosophy, but something new and different from all of philosophy."[6] As a result, what is important is not his formulas, his theories, which, stated baldly, and secondhand no less, will seem meaningless; what is important is the problem and the answer to it. If one seriously entertains the problem—Is there a reality to which reason corresponds?—then Ortega's formulas may help suggest a solution to the problem as one perceives it. The basic mistake of academic philosophers has been their expectation that solutions to the problems of philosophy should be encased in the formulas expounded by their peers. But the problems that are worth concern are human problems, your problems and my problems; and the test of a philosopher's formula is not whether it is an eternal truth, but whether or not it serves as an occasion, helping you and me grasp and resolve the problems we perceive. Thus, we shall not bring Ortega's ontology to the bar of analytic judgment; we shall instead try to put his question and suggest the lines along which he thought a man might answer it.

To begin, note that nothing in Ortega's view denied the independent existence of the world out there. Many persons—and not only the naïve—are put off by the apparently infinite arrogance of the idealist who seems to make the entire universe a work of his meager imagination. All Ortega held, following Kant, was that the objective universe, which certainly must exist apart from our ideas of it, could not serve as the foundation of reason, for reason could properly tell us nothing about the universe, material and spiritual, as it existed in and for itself. Our ideas about the universe did not correspond to the universe-in-itself. Still following Kant, Ortega held that *res* was a transcendental ideal, a concept, not a substance, that men postulated in order to map their material and spiritual surroundings. With this position, neither Kant nor Ortega denied an external world, they asserted

[6] *Origen y epílogo de la filosofía*, 1943, 1960, *Obras* IX, p. 397.

instead that the foundation of science was not *in* that external world. To encounter the reality to which reason corresponded, one had to look for something other than substance.

Let us pose the question, what is real? On reading this question, one may take it as a mere phrase, three words cast in a particular grammatical construction. In that case, we should call the phrase a mere appearance, for there was no correspondence between the conceptual intention the words carry, namely to put a question about the character of reality, and one's mode of concentration on reading them, which may have been that of daydreaming to pass idle time, speed reading to acquaint oneself with a curious character, or fatigue: in any case the question What is real? did not correspond to what one was actually thinking. On the other hand, the phrase may have been a truth, for on reading it one might not have merely mouthed the words; one might have actually entertained the problem by wondering what it is that is really real. One might have stopped, recalling the profound perplexities that moved one once on looking up at the night-sky, filled with distant stars, on running sea-sand through one's hand while viewing an expanse of beach, or on seeing an ancient fossil exposed when the spring frosts laid bare a new surface of shale. At times, one wonders: is it all as it seems, or is it a vast deception? Who am I, an animate speck, a thinking spark, lost in the midst of immensity? What is real? What is true? What is the basis of this vast spectacle before me and within me? People who are perplexed by such questions philosophize; and with the comparison between reciting by rote the phrase What is real? and the actual feeling of perplexity at the uncertainty the question is meant to denote, we uncover the reality to which, Ortega believed, disciplined intellection could truly correspond.

Before any of us can concern ourselves with the reality of *res*, we are living thinkers who, in the reality of our lives, posed the question of reality. Ortega was not pointing here to our phenomenal lives, which we are aware of retrospectively as the sum of our experience. The reality of our lives is not for each of us phenomenal; the reality is not our report, public or private, that this feels hot and that that tastes sweet, for these reports

can easily be falsified, both intentionally and unwittingly. The reality of our lives is instead the succession of instantaneous presences, of active actualities: now feeling the heat, now tasting that which we call sweet, now seeing, hearing, thinking, doing, wanting. Whereas we can falsify the experience in the reporting of it, the experiencing itself was what it was, a dynamic reality that is the absolute, irrevocable ground against which we judge the truth or falsehood of the phenomenal experience reported in hindsight. It will seem paradoxical at first, but it is a fact of life, a simple, inescapable, yet fruitful fact: experiencing is *a priori*. Active experiencing is prior to experience, to our phenomenal awareness of what transpired; experiencing this or that is a definitive actuality, it is the ground, the reality, to which our experience, our phenomenal awareness, can and should correspond.

We find ourselves in a world, doing certain things: I am writing, you are reading; both of us are in definite places, I scratch my eyebrow, toying silently with words, testing their adequacy to my intention. We each stop, wondering what in all of this is real, and following Ortega we decide to put aside, temporarily, millennia of metaphysics; we decide, instead, to look at ourselves and our immediate surroundings, feeling that if we cannot find reality here before us, we will have scant basis for finding it far out there. Thus we note: "the being of the world before me is . . . a functioning upon me and, likewise, my acting on it. But this—a reality that consists in an I seeing a world, thinking it, touching it, loving it or hating it, being enthused or grieved by it, transforming, enduring, or suffering it—is what has always been called 'living,' 'my life,' 'our life,' that of each one of us." Each of us is living his life; that is the occasion of our joining in an effort at communication. This living is the reality that gives rise to all our experience of the world without and the world within. "Hence, let us wring the necks of those venerable and consecrated words, 'to exist,' 'to coexist,' and 'to be,' in order to say in their place that the foundation of the universe is 'my living' and all the rest that is or is not is in my life, inside of it."[7]

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[7] *¿Qué es filosofía?*, 1929, 1957, *Obras* VII, pp. 410-1.

In due course we will touch on some of the difficulties that arise in this revision of reason, but our purpose here is not to debunk the argument, but to try experiencing the reality that Ortega believed was the basis of reason and of the distinction between truth and appearance. To treat the matter fully would take us far afield, for as Ortega showed in his work on *La idea de principio en Leibniz*, the topic is a substantial problem for philosophers, one to which many of the more technical tomes in the philosophic tradition are centrally important. Furthermore, a full excursion into the subject would not only require a discussion of the philosophic past far more extensive than the one attempted here, it would also entail a much more extensive inquiry into the philosophic present, which includes numerous lines of parallel reflection. This inquiry would carry us not only into the work of such well-known figures as G. H. Mead, Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre, but also into the writings of important but less renowned men such as Herbert Spiegelberg and especially Alfred Schütz.[8] Here let us stick to Ortega.

The reality to which reason corresponded, Ortega held, was not being, but living; not substance, but life. If living is actually a reality, it is here for each of us, here as reality, not as doctrine; hence we need not depend on Ortega's doctrine to be free of difficulties; rather we can welcome the difficulties, for once we have called attention to the reality, the difficulties make it possible for each of us to go to the reality, to test it, to investigate it, to become familiar with it, and eventually to use it or reject it as the basis of the rationality by which we discipline our thought.

Our reports of sensations and feelings can be most easily tested against the reality of living rather than being. Thus, what used to be, according to the old ontology, secondary qualities are now primary, for these are, when truly reported, in direct correspondence with our acts of experiencing. Perhaps the following will show how simple and fundamental this correspondence can

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[8]See for parallel views by Schütz his essay "On Multiple Realities," (1945) in Alfred Schütz, *Collected Papers*, Vol. I, pp. 207-259. Schütz knew of Ortega's work, but primarily of Ortega's sociology as expressed in *Man and People*; see Schütz, *Ibid.*, pp. 142-4.

be. The child of a friend was running along a rocky path intent on his goal when he stubbed his toe on a stone. As he cried, his father tried to distract him from the pain by telling him to think what a beautiful day it was. "But it hurts!" the child replied. "It hurts! It hurts! . . ." And in concentrating on formulating and reiterating this reply so that all would hear, the child distracted himself from the pain and then turned to other concerns. Now we can see that the child's first reply was a truth that corresponded to the actuality of feeling pain, which was then the reality that he was living; but as soon as he started to articulate his feeling of pain, he began to live another competing reality, namely that of articulating his feeling, which soon became his dominant concern, so much so that the refrain, "It hurts!", kept up until after his toe had stopped hurting. Then, suddenly, when the child recognized that his report no longer corresponded to his feeling, he skipped happily off to play.

This example gives a simple instance of the way intellection, the child's throught that it hurts, at first corresponds and then fails to correspond to the reality of his life. This example indicates how such a theory of correspondence can be the basis of a regimen for our thought about our immediate sensations, emotions, and intuitions: our phenomenal reports of these should always correspond as closely as possible to the real sensing, emoting, and intuiting that provides the basis of the report. We see, thus, that basing reason on the reality of living brings into the sphere of reason aspects of life that were formerly "irrational." With respect to the standard of life, neuroses result, for instance, not from an inability to contain one's irrational drives, but from a failure of one's reason, in an expanded sense, for the neurotic person chronically dissimulates his experience and consumes great energies in falsifying his conscious reports of his innermost imaginings.

But let us not lose ourselves in byways. A correspondence between disciplined intellection and the reality of living is rather simple when what we are living are direct sensations and deep emotions. As we noted, these were formerly secondary and now seem primary. What is more difficult is to see how the primary qualities of old correspond to the realities of life. Yet if such

correspondence cannot be elucidated, the reform of reason would simply trade a new one-sidedness for the old.

"The truth is not that I exist because I think, but, on the contrary, that I think because I live, because life puts to me basic, inexorable problems."[9] With this reversal of the Cartesian *cogito*, we encounter the vital source of the realm of *res*, or things, of the world out there. In Ortega's view, this world was not the primary reality, the ground of reason, but a derivative reality, a result of reasoning. In the course of living, men gave definite form to their phenomenal surroundings in order to act on them more effectively. Encountering difficulties in life, men sought to think about their surroundings because they wanted to think through these difficulties, which seemed centered out there in their environs. In order to deal with these concerns, men postulated a cosmos, a dual realm of matter and spirit. The sense of substance, therefore, is not in the correspondence of this concept to the things-in-themselves, but in its correspondence to the realities of life, to the fact that by its means men have been able to convert the inhospitable chaos in which they find themselves into a habitable cosmos in which they can anticipate, and even control, what the world will do to them and what they will do to the world.

In the conduct of life, each person had to think, he had to anticipate his performance, he had to *preoccupy* himself with the way he would live in this or that circumstance, because much of living was dealing with particular circumstances that could easily overwhelm him. "Each of us lives surrounded by things, by immediate objects that present themselves and make themselves obvious by themselves. Many of these things are mineral, others are living beings, and others are persons; and furthermore, still others are the intimate objects that we find to be no less immediate than those outside of us—our sadness and sentiment, our appetites, intentions, and ideas. The conjunction of all these things that are immediate entities that present themselves to us we call our circumstances or world."[10] With respect to one's circumstances,

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[9]"¿Qué es el conocimiento?," *El Sol*, Feb. 23, 1931.

[10]*Ibid.*, *El Sol*, Jan. 18, 1931.

living was more involved than the immediate reflex of feeling pain on kicking a stone; life often involved choosing, deciding, acting, judging. To facilitate these complex activities, men invented, transmitted, and ever expanded the realm of *res*.

Even the most abstract forms of reason had a vital basis, which ultimately was the ground of all rational authority. Ortega elucidated the basis of both moral and natural reasoning in the living of life; men had designed both, through the free play of speculation, to aid man in dealing with particular kinds of difficulties that arose in the course of living in a world.

Moral reasoning corresponded to the realities of living in a world of partly indeterminate circumstances. A man's circumstances included all that the world had been for the person, everything in the sum of his actual life up to his immediate present, the *now* that he was living; and as such, this man's world delimited a definite realm of future possibilities, of potential circumstances that were yet to be determined in their actuality and that the person had *now* to choose between. Living at this instant meant deciding between these possibilities. Man's dignity, anguish, and joy was that the influence of past circumstances in present decisions was not deterministic, for his world included his appetites, intentions, and ideas, which he could use to affect the value and force of his past, external circumstances. Here, in exercising one's freedom, men became aware of a desire for a system of moral reasoning, which would strengthen them in sportively resisting the inertias of their past and empower them to shape their future.

"Deciding between this and that is the part of our life that has an element of liberty. Constantly we are deciding on our future being, and in order to actualize it we have to take account of the past and make use of the present to operate on actuality; and we do all of this inside of 'now', for our future is not any future whatsoever, but a possible 'now', and our past is the past up to now, not that of someone who lived a hundred years ago."[11] One's life is one's *now*, at this instant, one's reading these words. One can comprehend these words first because one makes the

[11] *¿Qué es filosofía?*, 1929, 1957, *Obras* VII, p. 435.

commitment to take the effort to understand them and second because a multitude of past actualities has brought one to them and them to one; all of these circumstances contribute to making it possible for one to interpret their significance. Further, a wide range of future possibilities, significant or not as the case may be, depends on precisely how one interprets their meaning and on how one exerts his volition in the light of this comprehension. In short, in reading one is making a series of judgments that have irrevocable consequences for one's life, and these judgments are what one is now living. " 'Now' is our time, our world, our life. . . . Into it, we come encrusted [with particulars]; 'now' impresses on us a repertory of possibilities and impossibilities, of conditions, of dangers, of conveniences, and of means. It limits with these features the liberty of choice that moves our life, and it is, over against our liberty, the cosmic pressure; it is our destiny."[12]

In living life, each man continually encountered a definite set of real choices between which he was compelled to choose. To facilitate this choosing, to make an unexpected wisdom possible, men early invented various systems of moral reasoning, not because absolute moral principles actually ruled over their choices, justifying certain ones and condemning others, but because with each choice a man obligated himself to make future choices from a range of possibilities limited by the past choice. Men quickly learned the desirability of being able to foresee the character of these obligations, to anticipate how present choices shape future options. Men soon discovered that in many situations the immediately easiest course could prejudice their future options: by lying, deceiving, and exploiting others, a man might attain his present ends while making his future choices untenable as others learned to distrust and hate him. Another man, a noble spirit willing to resist necessity, might have presently chosen a more difficult course, foreseeing that the ensuing choices to which it obligated him were more desirable. In the quest of such foresight, men invented the world of spirit in which they postulated the soul, eternal, all-knowing gods, the form of the good, and many other ethical principles.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 435.

We need not here recapitulate the history of ethics, showing how different systems in different ways all serve to forewarn men about the likely character of the future obligations created by present commitments. What matters here is first the recognition that the realities of living have aspects that men can deal with only through some form of moral reasoning, by some means for evaluating the quality of the obligations to which they are now committing themselves, and second the realization that whatever the principle from which particular men deduce their system of practical reason, the authority of that system lies not merely in its internal consistency, but further in its truth to the realities of the lives men live. Living meant choosing continually and thus creating real obligations. Hence, a man's moral reasoning was more than a nice set of edifying preachments, for he was going to live, and even die, dealing with whatever obligations he now took on. A man's moral reasoning was his means, good or bad as the case may be, of *pre*occupying himself with his obligations, trying to make them as sound as possible.

To be effective, then, a system of moral reasoning had to correspond to the realities men were living. To inform a man about future obligations, ethical reflections must not falsify the character of his present mode of living. The quality of hypocrisy is informative only if it corresponds to a mode of living hypocritically. The concept of honesty is meaningless if it is used by a flatterer without attention to the way of living of the man called honest. All our ideals of character, in short, properly correspond to realities of living, and when they are used in such correspondence they can help us foresee what sort of future obligations, limitations, and situations are implicit in various present alternatives. This foresight would enable us to shape our lives according to a pleasing and possible pattern. Intentional self-formation, Ortega held, was the result of "preoccupation," our anticipation and evaluation of various possibilities through sportive, ethical reflections. "Life is preoccupation; and it is so not only in the difficult moments, but it is always so and in essence it is nothing more than this—preoccupying oneself. In each instant we have to decide what we are going to do in the next, what is going to

occupy our life. It is, then, occupying oneself by anticipating; it is preoccupying oneself."[13]

Moral reasoning, thus, was man's great means for preoccupying himself with his life. To live was to find oneself in a definite world endowed with particular powers and a determined past; to live was to find oneself forced to be continually deciding on which of the finite possibilities for the future would be the particular possibility that one would strive to realize. The consequences of these decisions were absolute. These determined one's life; hence in living one became either a *petit Dieu* or a *petit Diable*, for in living each man freely created major features of his inner and outer world, and these features would be either good or bad, beautiful or ugly, true or false, depending on the real character of his choices. Living one's life, bringing a self and a world into existence, endowing these with definite character, was serious sport: sport because one was free to make of oneself whatever was within one's powers and serious because one was responsible for living with the consequences. Thus, men invented concepts of the self, of the soul, and of spiritual qualities, not to describe some intangible substance within or around them, but to analyze the actualities they lived so that with their inalienable freedom they could avoid blind self-destruction and achieve full self-realization.

Whereas moral reasoning corresponded in such ways to the realities of living in a world of partly indeterminate circumstances, of exercising one's freedom of choice, natural reasoning corresponded to the realities of living in a world of partly determinate circumstances, of acting in definite ways. Our phenomenal world, the world as it appeared to us, depended only in part on how we used our liberty, on what we chose to do; in doing what we chose, we had also to contend with a wide panorama of givens, of conditions, of facts that had to be dealt with. These conditions posed threats and offered challenges. Man early sought to devise ways to think about these determinate surroundings, not to understand the personal and social obligation that he took on in the course of choice, but to predict the consequences in the event of action.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 436.

For this purpose men postulated, in addition to a realm of spirit, a realm of matter in which the concept of substance was used to delimit more tangible things. As with moral reasoning, natural reasoning should not correspond to the things-in-themselves, but to the realities of living in a determinate world, a world that might or might not be determinate in itself, but that was clearly determinate with respect to the living, willing, thinking person. "Being, the *essence* of a thing, originally signifies the image of it that gives us vital security with respect to it."[14] This test of scientific reasoning considerably broadened the scientist's purview. The essence of a thing was neither the image of it that put man subjectively at peace with it, nor the idea that let him think that he objectively knew and had control of it; the true, vital essence was the conception that put man as he lived his life in actual control of it. To grasp the practical significance of this distinction, take the case of our knowledge of the atom. For many centuries men were subjectively at peace with respect to the atom, for although a few had postulated its existence, all were ignorant of its nature. During the first half of the twentieth century men seemed to gain objective control of the atom, successfully using it in both war and peace. But whether our disinterested knowledge of atomic energy is adequate to give us *vital* security with respect to the atom is still moot, for although on objective grounds we have rather sophisticated control of atomic fission, on vital grounds we are dangerously uncertain whether we can control our control of the process. And if we do not, we will live the consequences—cataclysmic death.

Many may find it difficult, however, to conceive of scientific reasoning as corresponding to the realities of living. This difficulty may be met head on. We are accustomed to thinking of the scientist as a completely disinterested spectator; even more, many believe that repeatable experiments and standard measures can open a window into nature herself. What one scientist sees can be seen by any man who repeats the experiment and conforms to the standards. Hence, to assert that scientific reasoning should, like emotional and moral reasoning, correspond to lived reality

[14] "¿Qué es el conocimiento?," *El Sol*, March 1, 1931.

seems to open a carefully controlled system to the foibles of subjective judgment. But on examination, this danger disappears. The proper insistence on controlled observations, in Ortega's view, stipulates that the phenomena about which the scientist theorizes be *real* phenomena; that is, data about actual occurrences in the lives of certain men. The transformation of magic into science came when men stopped speculating about what they would like to have happen in their lives and when they began to reflect on what actually was happening, there before them. Being scientific about science, we will recognize that what is crucial for scientific observation is providing a systematic point of correspondence for scientific theory, a correspondence not to the objective universe, but to carefully recorded realities in the lives of particular investigators, repeatable experiences described by standard, common measures. The insistence on repeatability in experiments makes sense precisely because scientific theory should correspond not to things-in-themselves, but to the data the investigator actually experiences. Repeatable experiment is not a window into nature, but a means of keeping the scientist honest.

Here is another way of explaining the enlarged responsibilities of the scientist. He is first responsible for thinking in strict correspondence with the results gathered as he observes the particular events he seeks to understand. But this observing is not the whole of his living. From time immemorial, the great source of arbitrary error has been the failure to know oneself, to know what sort of life one was really, irrevocably living. The genius of rationalistic science was to perceive that for certain problems one could best control for lack of self-knowledge by recognizing as pertinent only the results of the scientist's controlled observing, declaring irrelevant all the rest of his living. This procedure worked so long as men could safely separate the domains of moral reasoning and natural reasoning. But the separation depends on a fortuitous condition: namely, that many "things" around us function independently of us and can therefore be isolated for purposes of observation. In observing in our lives things that function independently, we do not need to consider how they act on us or how we might act on them; thus, we

can pretend that we, as living persons, are not implicated in these "objective" events beyond our act of observing them.

This pretense breaks down, however, whenever the thing we observe enters into our lives in any capacity other than as the object of disinterested observing, that is, whenever we begin acting on or with what we have been observing, or whenever what we are observing, perhaps a human being, has claims on our benevolent interest. As a result, we find that the methods of "objective" science are mere conveniences, appropriate only under special conditions. Consequently, natural science does not provide a model for all reasoning, especially for reasoning about man. In the human sciences, and even in applying the natural sciences to the pursuit of human purposes, the thinker has to take into account a far wider range of realities than those resulting from his carefully limited observations. As Ortega saw it, natural science was not the great exemplar. If reason should correspond to the realities of living a life, natural science was a special form of reasoning applicable only in unusual circumstances. "After having suffered shame when men of science disdained philosophers, throwing in their face the taunt that philosophy was not a science, today philosophers are . . . pleased by this insult; for, catching the taunt, we return it, saying: philosophy is not a science because it is much more than a science."[15]

Living one's life was a reality to which emotional, moral, and natural reasoning should correspond. If Ortega's vision is valid, then the true test of any system of reasoning is its truth to life; and this test will be performed in the human world as each man finds, examining the matter for himself, either that he can, or that he cannot, live better by thinking in correspondence to the realities of life. This vital test can take place only slowly as diverse persons begin to examine what disciplined thinking entails, what grounds exist for it, and what place such thinking has in their immediate, irrevocable living. This vital test is not yet complete—it has barely begun; and rather than here declare

[15] *¿Qué es filosofía?*, 1929, 1957, *Obras* VII, p. 300.

a verdict, one way or another, let us look instead at what Ortega believed would be the signs indicating that men were beginning to live by means of historic reason.

In his essay on "Wilhelm Dilthey and the Idea of Life", Ortega insisted that the biographer had to complete his subject's work in order to do justice to it, for only then could the significance of it be properly appreciated.[16] Ortega's biographers should do something similar, for throughout his old age he contemplated but never wrote a magnum opus. The book was to be *The Dawn of Historic Reason,* which was to contain his invitation to the future. But events were not kind to the aging Ortega. From the outbreak of the Civil War until his death in 1955, his life was one of continual wandering and intermittent sicknesses; of fleeting leisure, fitful work, and interrupted activities. Through these two decades he accomplished much in spite of the distractions, and a draft of *The Dawn* may yet appear from among his unpublished papers. But so far, it remains merely a repeated promise made in various notes from 1936 onwards.

All the same, *The Dawn of Historic Reason* is an essential book for our purposes. In his published works there are several indications of the subjects that Ortega intended to cover in it, and he even put a draft of its opening chapter before the public. But for the most part, we should leave the content of the work for the future, and we should concentrate instead on its *function.* Even if the work was never written, the idea of it served an important function in Ortega's mature thought. If we can grasp this function, we will find that most of his later writing contributed to its fulfillment. Perhaps this "great philosophical memorandum book," as he once called *The Dawn,*[17] was never finished because it was not a book at all, but the sum of his work.

In 1936 Ortega announced the impending publication of this book, calling it *On Living Reason.* It would be, he said, "an essay at a *prima philosophia.*"[18] First philosophy is the Aristotelian name for metaphysics, which Aristotle defined as "a science which

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[16]"Guillermo Dilthey y la idea de la vida," 1933, *Obras* VI, p. 174.

[17]*Ideas y creencias,* 1940, *Obras* V, p. 379.

[18]"Historia como sistema," 1936, *Obras* VI, p. 38.

studies Being *qua* Being, and the properties inherent in it in virtue of its own nature."[19] Since Aristotle held that Being was always a substance, a *res*, we might be surprised to learn that Ortega contemplated a work on first philosophy; and this surprise will be further compounded when we examine his other references to *The Dawn*, for they do not seem to point towards metaphysics in any Aristotelian sense. For instance, in the early 1940's Ortega described his projected work as his "historic catechism," and in 1947 he claimed that in it he would distinguish between "the creators of a land" and "its inhabitants," referring with the phrase "land" to the few great philosophical systems. In 1946 Ortega promised that one of the chapters would present "The Principles of a New Philology," and in 1940 he published a draft of *The Dawn's* opening chapter, which was a preliminary critique of historic reason called "Ideas and Beliefs."[20]

Thinkers working in the post-Aristotelian tradition will be hard put to understand how an essay on first philosophy, the study of Being *qua* Being, could properly include reflections on the philosophy of history, philology, and epistemology. In the Aristotelian hierarchy of studies, these are secondary subjects. Certain readers will have noted a similar reversal when in discussing the correspondence of reason to the realities of living we began with the emotional and moved from it to the moral and then to the natural. These reversals are symptomatic of the fact that with the dawn of historic reason Ortega envisaged a fundamental break with the Aristotelian first philosophy; and a major concern in Ortega's later work was to show that the Aristotelian conception of Being *qua* substance was simply a theory that did not adduce Being *qua* Being at all. Hence, Aristotle's metaphysics was not a first philosophy, but a secondary one that was dependent in actuality on the transcendent reality of certain men, that is, on Aristotle and his readers living their particular lives and thinking in those lives certain metaphyiscal propositions. Conse-

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[19]Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV, i, 1; Hugh Tredennick, trans.

[20]Respectively: *Origen y epílogo de la filosofía*, 1943, 1960, *Obras* IX, p. 385; *La idea de principio en Leibniz*, 1947, 1958, *Obras* VIII, p. 300; *Velázquez*, 1950, 1958, *Obras* VIII, p. 493; and *Ideas y creencias*, 1940, *Obras* V, pp. 379-409.

quently, a part of the reform of reason entailed redefining *prima philosophia*. By virtue of this redefinition, the topics mentioned by Ortega, as well as several others that he discussed from 1936 onwards, found a proper place in a first philosophy.

Aristotle contended that metaphysics should be the study of Being *qua* Being because it seemed to him that only in this way could he find the first principles and ultimate causes that he sought to understand. With Ortega's ontological reforms, substituting for Being the fact of living, first philosophy would tell about the living of living instead of the being of being. In first philosophy one would search for the first principles and ultimate causes not of life as a thing, but of the living of life. Thus, one would need an historic catechism; a distinction between creators and fulfillers; an understanding of the use and disadvantage of words, of ideas, and of beliefs for life. The hierarchy of studies would be turned upside-down. The theoretical sciences and especially the study of Being *qua* Being would become secondary, for these concerned the dependent, hypothetical substances that, in the course of living, men had created by postulating various concepts. In the place of these studies, the practical sciences would become the primary ones, for these had direct reference to the first philosophy, that of living *qua* living.

After an ontology of life has replaced that of *res*, an inquiry similar to the Aristotelian conception of ethics would become the *prima philosophia;* but the similarity would be one of concern, not of doctrine, for the *Nicomachean Ethics* was of a piece with the *Metaphysics*. Aside from their different places in the hierarchy of studies, the major difference between the new and the old ethics would be that, in accordance with an ontology of life, the unmoved mover ceased to be some distant divinity and became the living man who found himself alive and had to live by moving, choosing, acting, and doing. The first cause was my living, your living, your finding yourself shipwrecked in a world and forced to keep yourself afloat or to let all end; the regress of real causes was not infinite: for each person, it had a finite beginning and end in the actualities of the life that he lived. My living is the cause of my thinking, as well as the cause of all that I have to think about; the final cause, the *telos* of it all, is not the quiescent con-

templation of a pure and absolute mind, but the fullness of the active instant, here and now. Thus, we do not live to think; we think to live: "life is not fundamentally what it has been believed to be for so many centuries: contemplation, mind, theory. No; it is production, fabrication, and only because of these does life require thought. Therefore, afterwards and not before, life is mind, theory, and science. . . ."[21]

Life began with living, in that act was life's first cause, for by looking outside of life for its being, one could never approximate its realities, even if one perfectly catalogued its ingredients. Life was its own first principle and ultimate cause. Living was always some form of doing, a special type of which was thinking. Hence, the human endeavor was not to proceed towards contemplation by means of action, but to proceed to action by means of contemplation. A man who lived in this manner, by acting in accordance with his thinking, would occupy himself significantly in philosophizing, in thinking particularly about ethics, the practical science par excellence, the purpose of which was to elucidate through contemplation the means for living a good life. In spite of themselves, Ortega suggested, past philosophers had by and large followed this procedure in practice. "Knowledge perfects work, pleasure, and sorrow; and vice versa, these drive and direct [knowledge]. Therefore, after its initial stammers and fortuitous discovery, when philosophy formally began its historical passage of millenary continuity, it established itself in the Platonic Academy as an occupation originally with ethics. From this perspective, Plato never ceased to be Socratic. Whether larval or palatine, philosophy always implied the 'primacy of practical reason.' It was, is, and will be, as long as it exists, the *science of doing*."[22]

For Ortega, first philosophy was a study of the way life was lived, a study that was undertaken in order to learn how to live better. First philosophy did not, however, give rise to a corpus for instructing others how to live their lives; the study of how one man could manipulate others was not the study of living *qua* living, for the lives of others could be influenced only by pallid abstrac-

[21] *Meditación de la técnica*, 1939, *Obras* V, pp. 341-2.

[22] *La idea de principio en Leibniz*, 1947, 1958, *Obras* VIII, p. 268.

tions about other peoples' business. In contrast, first philosophy dealt with actualities, for it concerned each man's understanding of his life; and hence it amounted to a regimen for self-formation, for living one's life was a matter of giving form to oneself. First philosophy was first in the sense that it concerned a man's shaping of the immediate, irrevocable realities of his life, in that it involved his determining the life he lived and his bringing his self into existence; and all else depended on this first philosophy because everything else that he perceived was a function of the reality he lived. In cultivating his self he laid the foundation of everything else; and the theory that he used consciously or unconsciously to guide his cultivation of his character was the foundation of all his secondary reflections about the things he met with in his life. First philosophy was the personal attempt by a man to give his historic reason, the reason by which he shaped his life, a firm foundation. In this sense, first philosophy was a pedagogy of self-education. Ortega's conception of historic reason was reason viewed as the means, not the end, of self-culture.

Self-education was the concern of first philosophy, for the basic reality was a man's living his life, and the particulars within his life were created through his course of self-formation while living his life. As a man shaped his capacities in this way and not that, as he chose to live here and not there, as he willed to concentrate on this concern and not that, as he cultivated his self in this manner and not that, he determined what phenomenal world he would inhabit. This situation—more precisely, this manner of situating himself in a world—was not solipsistic, for, no matter what, the man's life would involve both his self and a vast, chaotic flux of *actual* circumstances. There would always be real elements in his living that were outside his self, but the particular nature of these elements depended *first,* although not completely, on how he formed his self. This self-centeredness of a man's reality gave him no justification for exploitative, egotistical arrogance towards others. The self brought into being through a man's self-education was not his "self-image," his phenomenal conception of his self as it was touched up by wishful thinking. On the contrary, the self created by first philosophy was the man's real self, which was what he lived immediately and irrevocably, in spite

of his pretty self-images. This real self gave no sanction to egotism. Although a man's real self was the basis of all else, it did not justify either his insensitive exploitation of others or any other vital shortcut, for in adopting such views, he was not justifying exploitation, but making himself an exploiter; and in this case, his arrogant egotism simply became his means of hiding from his subjective self-image the real character of his actual, transcendent life.

Alétheia, uncovering, unmasking, has always been what first philosophers sought to do to reality; and in the twentieth century, when reality has come more and more to mean the actualities of living our lives, the whole urge of European philosophy has been to break the persuasiveness of the elaborate collective abstractions by means of which men can hide from the realities of their lives. Here is the common commitment binding such diverse creations as Heidegger's obscure and difficult efforts to reform philosophical language; as Camus' clear, biting, and pointed outrage in "Pourquoi l'Espagne?"; as Sartre's infatuation with men beyond the pale in his appreciation of Genet; and as Ortega's plea for clarity about the collective abstractions that cloak senseless passions with empty justifications. The truth thus spreads: to improve the quality of our lives, we should act on the realities, not merely on the fictions. Hence, the great problem for self-fulfillment and common development has been to shear away our paltry means of self-deception and to free men to care for the one reality of which they may be the master, themselves.

Self-education is possible, although it seems paradoxical, it being the art of leading oneself out of oneself. If historic reason, reasoning in correspondence with the realities of life in order to cultivate the possibilities of life, were ever to become a characteristic concern of Western men, it would be through a seemingly paradoxical development in which historic reason would be spread as men lived by means of historic reason. This paradox can be resolved only by reference to—nay! only by the presence of faith. There is no easy escape from this age-old problem.

Those who suddenly feel uneasy by this talk of "faith" need not despair. The paradox that historic reason can come into being

only through historic reason calls on men to have faith, to have a living faith that has nothing to do with dogma, official doctrine, or certified confession. Faith should be our willingness to act by means of precisely those powers that we hope to perfect through our actions. Thus, faith should equal self-education; faith enables a man to learn a language by using the language, to create trust by having trust, to develop historic reason by thinking by means of historic reason. Such faith does not result from producing a professed allegiance to one or another doctrine; the attempt to force, manipulate, or cajole men into accepting particular tenets is a sure sign that such faith is absent, for faith should always be a spontaneous commitment to a matter without which the matter would be impossible. Causal necessities do not produce faith; faith is the fount of all possibilities, upon which causes may thereafter play. Men spread faith by having faith, for faith is a vital commitment, a lived decision to recognize and pursue this or that possibility. Faith itself, not the object of the faith, is thus the unmoved mover of all human development.

Faith cannot be produced, and in the absence of it, a man can produce nothing. To plant a seed, the primitive farmer must have had faith in its power to grow: that argricultural science began in religious myth was not irrational. The same would be true of historic reason: to allow it to develop, one would have to have faith that it would develop. Without that faith, the paternal teacher would overstep the bounds, he would try to use abstractions to impart historic reason to his dependents. Such a program would simply spread a dependence on abstract tutelage. Hence, Ortega devised no plan for forcing his view of historic reason on other men, for he had the faith that on encountering historic reason other men would also spontaneously have faith in it. There would be nothing more absurd than paternal instruction in the art of self-culture, in historic reason.

When a man had faith in historic reason, he would live with the personal recognition that reason was not some enormous body of abstract truths, but a means of his self-formation. He would act with the understanding that reason was, like his hands, legs, or eyes, a part of his anatomy that could, when properly disci-

plined and coordinated, aid greatly in living a good life. Recognizing that reason was a crucial element in living his life, the man would know immediately that right reasoning derived an ineluctable authority from its correspondence to the realities he lived. Thus, when a man had faith in reason, when he went ahead and lived by the aid of reason, he provided reason with a transcendent sanction and overcame the impossibility of providing from within the realm of pure thought alone, an effective justification for the authority of reason. By living reasonably, a man provided a justification from the realm of reality. Men need not live by reason because it has a proven authority; reason could gain a proven authority because men live by its means, and the only way to disprove this authority of reason would be to live *completely* without resort to it.

Historic reason signified the adaptation of all modes of thinking to assisting a living man's effort to shape the realities of his life. Unlike abstract reason, historic reason was not a corpus of timeless truths. Instead it was the continuous recurrence of timely truths; hence the skeptic could not deny historic reason in principle unless he could rigorously avoid in practice his own resort to any form of disciplined intelligence, any thinking that accorded with the occasion he was vitally experiencing. Since historic reason was not the sum of teachable truths, it could not be spread programmatically. For instance one could never officially base a school curriculum on historic reason, for "the curriculum" was a fiction that could not be endowed with vital reality. Any such pretension would miss the living actuality of historic reason, namely that it is the reason that has historic reality because it is my reason, your reason, the reasoning that each of us actually uses in living life. Historic reason could not be an attribute of one or another fictional program; it could only be a an attribute of particular, living persons. Historic reason could at most make itself felt in an educational program when particular persons went beyond the official prescriptions of the program and acted as they saw fit according to the light of their own reasoning. For example, when the Ford Foundation asked Ortega to suggest a program of education for the future, Ortega replied that such a pronounce-

ment, no matter how profound, would saddle educators with an anachronistic view. Educators themselves had to clarify their views of the future continuously.[23]

In keeping with such restrictions, Ortega offered no program for promoting historic reason. He simply *invited* each man to proceed on the faith that he would accomplish something significant for himself and his peers if he successfully perfected his historic reason, that is, the disciplined intellectual powers that he used in living his life. As Ortega saw it, such an effort could authentically arise only from an ethical, sportive commitment; causal force of one sort or another could not produce allegiance to historic reason. Such force would only reduce man to his least common denominator; and our most gratuitous yet important task is to save ourselves from the forceful fools who are at once too solicitous of our future and too suspicious of our power to permit us to save ourselves! "Here is the greatest danger that today threatens civilization: the statalizing of life, the interventionism of the State, the absorption of all social spontaneity by the State; that is to say, the nullification of the historic spontaneity that ultimately sustains, nurtures, and impels the destinies of man."[24] The failure of faith embodied in orthodoxy, the mistrust of man that underlies statist paternalism, leads to the constriction of man.

Instead, when a faith spreads as men find it in themselves, life does not constrict, narrowing into the dull repetition of favored formulas; on the contrary, with a faith life expands, for with a living faith men accept new possibilities and begin to base their efforts on potentials that in the absence of faith would not exist. The spread of historic reason might revitalize the ethical sensibility of Western man, and this revitalization might in turn renew the European's power of historic initiative. But this possibility was not a blueprint for renovation; the future could not be implemented by a mere policy, for the future was that which confronted each and all with a radical contingency: not the *right*

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[23]"Apuntes sobre una educación para el futuro," 1953, 1962, *Obras* IX, pp. 665-675, esp. pp. 672-5.

[24]*La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 225.

of self-determination, but the *inevitability* of self-determination. Hence, historic reason could become a faith only if men freely gave themselves to it, having faith in it, accepting it exuberantly as an unnecessary possibility that they would nevertheless use to guide their lives.

Ultimately, Ortega came back to a reliance on man's exuberance, his aspirations to excellence, his ethical urges, his erotic drives. Historic reason could spread only through the game willingness of men to take a chance, to have faith, to act on something that would exist only if men freely acted on it. The only hope was man's power to hope, for there was no necessary source of the unnecessary. Morality always arose through prophecy, not manipulation. Men have freely acted ethically because the attraction of a possible future drew them forward, not because the causes of a completed past pushed them from behind: punishment might force men to conform to sanctioned practice, but it would never inspire them to act autonomously. Therefore, Ortega did not lay out a program through which a faith in historic reason could be assuredly produced. He was content to prophesy a potential future and to invite others to join in finding diverse paths to its fulfillment.

We arrive at nothing more or less than an invitation to reform—but what an invitation! Recall how Plato said that the only politics one can take part in is the politics of one's own character. To change the community we each must have a change of character. The realities of life are such that any particular person, after he has seen to the conditions of his own character, can only invite others to do the same, for no power in the world can either force another to perfect himself, nor can any power, but death, force another to stop seeking self-improvement. If men could devise a sound understanding of the art of self-formation, they would have a tremendous defense against their paternal, statist peers. Men could turn away from the hopeless inertias of practical politics, and with a great-souled joviality they could leaven public life with diverse personal initiatives. With faith in the dignity of personal existence, the radical concern in living became the effort to realize one's self, the fullest human possibility that one could live.

Self-culture, self-formation, self-education became the basic problem of life. Ortega's second voyage, which death terminated long before the journey was complete, was an invitation to see whether innumerable, small spontaneous reforms in the life each man lived could aggregate into such a transformation of the Europeans' character that an undreamed of political, economic, and social life might become possible.

* * *

I searched into myself.

HERACLITUS, 101

MAN NEEDS A NEW revelation, for he loses himself in his arbitrary and boundless inner cabalism when he can no longer contrast and discipline himself in the clash with what he knows to be an authentic and inexorable reality. Reality is the only true pedagogue and governor of man. Without its inexorable and pathetic presence, there can be no serious culture, there can be no state, there can not even be—and this is the worst of all—reality in one's personal life. When man remains alone, or thinks he does, without another reality that is distinct from his ideas and that sternly limits them, he loses the sensation of his own reality, he becomes for himself an imaginary, spectral, phantasmagoric entity. Only beneath the formidable pressure of some transcendence can we make our person compact and solid, and produce in ourselves a discrimination between what we are in effect and what we merely imagine ourselves to be.

ORTEGA[1]

[1] "Historia como sistema," 1936, *Obras* VI, p. 48.

XVI
On the Past and Future of Present Man

MAN IS BORN A MAN, but everywhere he is treated as a thing. Each person is registered at birth; and thereafter he is repeatedly counted and classified under a variety of numbers; he is continually mobilized as the nation, economy, or society may demand; and he is finally released when death converts him from the consumer to the consumed. In current mythology, human aggregates have been as thoroughly personified as were the forces of nature in primitive religion. The lawyer's fiction of the corporate person has been confounded with reality; and the men of an era yet to come will find us, insofar as we inveterately describe human events as the work of various loving, hoping, wise, wrathful institutions, as curious as we find the Homeric Greeks when they disguised their heroic deeds as the work of Olympian Gods.

History is no longer the story of heroes; it is not even the story of liberty: history has become the record of nations, classes, parties, groups, and processes as they are raised up by causal forces and ruined by objective determinants. A myriad or myriads are mobilized in war; hundreds of thousands starve in famine; millions are exterminated in bestial acts of genocide. In such a world the person seems implacably ground into an object, as a once vital shell is ground to sand when waves endlessly wash it, back and forth, over the grating surface of the shore.

Yet, the fullness of life is best attained as men try to realize their *selves*, not impersonal abstractions, through the use of principles. To facilitate this endeavor, we might radically humanize our understanding of history, sociology and philosophy. Then,

these subjects might pertain to our lives, not to corporate fictions. Then they might illuminate the history that exists as an influence in and upon my life, the community that ought to exist through my life, and the philosophy that can best guide my life.

Intellectual work can be judged against various purposes. Great reforms in the human sciences will follow as new purposes generate new intellectual standards. Building empirically true models in social, political, and historical sudies, as well as making exhaustive analyses of procedural points in philosophy, serve the purpose of establishing the repute of the model-builder and the analyst within academe. But as a prelude to acting in one's life upon one's world—as the work of man thinking, not the scholar —model-building is singularly inadequate. Reliance on induction protects the model-builder from criticisms of his personal judgment. In addition, induction makes his models, even models of revolution, radically reactionary, for the inductive modeler confines himself to simple variations on past accomplishments. Furthermore, most models are not made to human scale: they locate the man in the institution, as it were, rather than the other way around. Such models help officials act on unwary individuals, but they do little to illuminate the all-important problems of our personal conduct of life. To empower the person to affect his vital world—the fascinating web of hopes and fears, of abilities and deficiencies, of intentions and performances that compose each particular life—the human scientist would concentrate on principles, not facts, for principles are timeless universals that are *applicable*, that is, susceptible of being applied by the active individual, to every occasion, whereas facts are unique to each situation and are not a suitable basis of applicable generalizations.

Principles become powerful when particular men use them to make and implement personal valuations. Command of principles is not developed by creating models of what happened in various cases; it arises from reflection on what failed to happen. As the laws of physics explain why interventions in nature did not produce the results that men naively expected, historical principles explain why actions by men of good will incurred consequences that failed to fulfill the actors' intentions. Heraclitus was profound when he observed that war is the father of all and that men

know of justice only by the fact of injustice.[2] Reflection on failure is the essence of all critical theory; and the purpose of the resulting principles is not to perpetuate established practices, but to free the future of past errors.

"History," Ortega said, "is not only to recount the past, but to understand it, but I should now add that to understand the past, history must necessarily be to criticize it and, in consequence, to become enthused, afflicted, and irritated with it, to censure, applaud, correct, complete, lament, and mock it. History is not a way of saying things: seriously, history is an integral way of living in which the man, the historian, takes part completely—if he is, in truth, a man—in part with his intellect and in part with the whole pack of his most powerful passions, *cum ira et studio*."[3]

In studying "history as a system," Ortega did not try to create a positive model of what happened in history in the manner of Spengler, Toynbee, and others. The past interested Ortega as a record of definite human mistakes, and rigorous reflection on the erring past was valuable to the degree that it yielded principles by which persons could avoid repeating such mistakes in living their particular lives. History would be useful to a man educating himself insofar as it helped him avoid having to repeat the errors of others. "We need history whole to see if we can escape from it, not to fall back into it."[4]

Ortega was not alone in appreciating the negative importance of historical principles. Professional historians easily overlook the radical revision of historical method arising from the "critical history" that Nietzsche advanced in examining the use and disadvantage of history for *life*. Superficially, critical history seems similar to the practices of academic historians, for Nietzsche agreed with the professional in deprecating two other forms of history: the antiquarian and the monumental. In the former, the historian indiscriminately, minutely, and pedantically reconstituted every detail of the past without making any effort to

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[2]Fragments 53 and 23, Freeman, *Ancilla*, pp. 28, 26.

[3]*Origen y epílogo de la filosofía*, 1943, 1960, *Obras* IX, pp. 411-2.

[4]*La rebelión de las masas*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 206.

explain, whereas in the latter, the historian depicted great, moving examples of human achievement without paying close attention to the constricting facts that might diminish the monument. But Nietzsche envisaged doing more through critical history than the professional did with his sound account of essential events and his judicious estimation of their probable causes and historic significance. Nietzsche wanted more than "an interpretation"; he wanted the past to be rigorously analyzed, judged, and *negated.* "Man must have the strength to break up the past, and to apply it, too, in order to live. He must bring the past to the bar of judgment, interrogate it remorselessly, and finally condemn it."[5]

For Nietzsche, critical history accomplished more than reconstructing the past; it became a chisel with which to shape the present. Here the professional historian may resist, uncomfortably wondering how he can effect normative judgments in the present without molding the past into a tool of propaganda. But history used to shape the present would be the antithesis of a "presentist" history, one that interprets the past anachronistically through the categories of present concern. Rather than recount the past to suit the complacencies of the present, Nietzsche suggested that men could criticize the past in order to worry out principles by which they could lead a life different from the one their immediate past, their habits and assumptions, projected into the present. In this way, men would empower themselves to reject the inertias of their past and to make their present from this negation. Here was history in the service of self-formation; here was history with a maximum use and a minimum disadvantage for life.

For Ortega, "history as a system" would be a Nietzschean critical history. Ortega did not mean that history was a physical system like a system of faults in the crust of the earth, the reproductive system of an animal, or the weapons systems of modern armies. He did not want to subject history to "systems analysis." History, like philosophy, was a great *speculative* system; it was the set of principles by which men could make sense of the phenomena of completed human lives. By working out such a system, a man could use it, not to predict the future, but to make the

[5]Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History,* Adrian Collins, trans., pp. 20-1.

future, to make, not an abstract future, but his own actual future. History was *about* the past; but it existed in the living present of particular persons. Such history was an intellectual system that yielded principles that living men could use in the present to define their problems and to direct their effort. A particular man could pursue his destiny when he learned to anticipate how his life would unfold over time and to perceive how to deal with challenges to the growing integrity of his character.

A man learned which of his possibilities merited his personal concern by using historical principles to weigh their potential contribution to the reality he sought to live. For example, Socrates' conduct with respect to his trial and execution showed a keen sense of critical history. Socrates understood what actions were a threat to his character, and he used this understanding effectively to defend his chosen way of living. Men should always study history with the Socratic goal in mind; turning back to the past, they could make history a speculative, theoretical discipline that would prove pedagogically practical as men found its results helpful in their concern for self-culture. Progressively, man can "take fuller possession of his past. When the current struggles cease, it is probable that man will, with a fury and eagerness now unknown, occupy himself in absorbing the past to an unheard of degree and with an unprecedented vigor and precision: this is what I call, and have foretold for a number of years, *the dawn of historic reason.*"[6]

Two concepts by which men might take fuller possession of their past were "the generation" and "beliefs." These ideas were not offered primarily to the historian so that he could organize a better narrative of the past; instead, they were to be used by the philosopher, or better yet, by every man who would live philosophically, to define his situation in life, to describe to himself his duty and destiny, to pre-occupy himself with what it was that he had to do. Although these concepts were not primarily to help us write history—their purpose was to help us make history—we can learn much about them by observing how they served historical explanation. One could not use the generation or beliefs

[6]*Origen y epílogo de la filosofía*, 1943, 1960, *Obras* IX, p. 362.

effectively in a retrospective narrative of finished events; but one could use them to sharpen one's understanding of the prospective expectations that the participants in events may have had. Thus, Ortega contended that to reconstruct the hopes and fears that had animated historically creative persons one needed such concepts. Generations and beliefs were particularly helpful in revitalizing the essential phenomena in history, the spontaneous concerting of concern among men who may have had no inkling of each other's existence. Helping to make credible how in the past spontaneous personal initiatives could effectively cohere without being organized by some outside force, they might equally well help living men foment such unorganized cooperation.

To explain the substance of these concepts in detail is unnecessary; Ortega did it at greater length and with greater lucidity than could be managed here. Our purpose is to indicate how these components of historic reason were to be used. Heroic, historic adventures were sketched out with concepts like the generation and beliefs. A generation was a temporal grouping of diverse persons who shared, through their separate perspectives, a concern for common historic problems and who saw their lives animated by similar historic tasks.[7] Beliefs underlay another historic grouping, one that could include parts of several generations but perhaps not all of any. Beliefs were certain basic standards of thinking that shape our preception of our world and of ourselves; beliefs determine what we will and will not find convincing. Beliefs were not thoughts, which occur to us at a particular time and place and which we arrive at through a particular act of intellection. "On the contrary, these ideas that truly are 'beliefs' form the container of our life; and, consequently, they are not so constituted as to be particular contents inside of our life. This means that they are not ideas that we have, but ideas that we are. And even more precisely, because they are fundamental beliefs, they are confused by us with reality itself—they are our world and our being—; and, therefore, they cease to have the character of thoughts that might very well not have occurred to

[7] *En torno a Galileo*, 1933, *Obras* V, esp. pp. 21-80.

us."[8] In defining his personal aspirations, any particular man relied on certain beliefs and thought of himself as a participant in a generation that had a definite historic mission. If you and I share beliefs and our personal conceptions of our generational tasks mesh together, we will cooperate in our historic activities even though we may never meet and consciously concert our efforts.

With personal conceptions of our generation and beliefs, with the empty concepts filled with content drawn from our personal lives, we can sharpen our understanding of the relation between our selves and our historic circumstances. In developing such comprehension, we prepare ourselves to act more independently, more precisely, more effectively in our world. Without having to know the official vita of another, we can estimate his generation and beliefs from our personal experience of him. Such estimates can become a secure, tacit basis for spontaneous coöperation. Tremendous historic energy inhered in the bonds of belief and in the succession of generations. History as a system was to help particular men—everyman—learn how to control that energy in his personal life.

If through critical history men developed concepts for explaining how they might shape their actual historic destinies, forming vital alliances with other persons, an important improvement would be made in the means that each person found at hand in his self-education. Likewise, reflection on "the social" could serve a similar purpose. Academic sociology failed this purpose; a model of the social structure, of what society is in itself, was at once intellectually impossible and vitally uninteresting. It would be both possible and interesting, however, to gain a clear comprehension of "the social" as it exists in our actual lives and as it helps and hinders our efforts to act; furthermore, each man could use such understanding to perfect his free pursuit of his authentic purposes. The social theory of historic reason would not make "society" function more efficiently; it would help men function more effectively.

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[8] *Ideas y creencias*, 1940, *Obras* V, p. 384.

A first step towards developing such a theory would be to cut down to human scale that bane of all clear thought—Society, the Social Structure. Great sociologists like Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, and Bergson had failed to determine rigorously what constituted a social fact, Ortega observed.[9] This vagueness led to numerous hypostatizations in which men groundlessly assumed that one or another social model corresponded to some actual entity, variously called society, the social structure, classes, elites, and so on. No such entities existed; the only real referents of social theory were particular aspects of the actual lives of various men, namely the dehumanized side of their lives. "This idea of the *collective soul,* of a *social consciousness,* is arbitrary mysticism. There is no such collective soul, if by *soul* is meant—and here it can mean nothing else—*something* that is capable of being the responsible subject of its acts, *something* that does what it does because what it does has a clear meaning for it. . . . The collective soul, *Volksgeist* or 'national spirit,' social consciousness, has had the loftiest and most marvelous qualities attributed to it, sometimes even divine qualities. For Durkheim, society is veritably God. In the Catholic DeBonald (the actual inventor of collectivist thought), in the Protestant Hegel, in the materialist Karl Marx, this collective soul appears as something infinitely above, infinitely more human than man. . . . The collectivity is indeed something human, but it is the human without man, the human without spirit, the human without soul, the human dehumanized."[10]

Ortega's sociological treatise, *Man and People,* is incomplete. He had planned a course of twelve lectures, the last six of which were to be on the State; Law; Society and its forms; the Nation, ultra-nation, and internation; "Animal societies" and human societies; and Humanity. Ortega was not one to adhere rigorously to a schedule of topics; and the transcript of his twelfth lecture introduces the topic of the State, as if he planned to continue on, and he proposed eight additional lectures that would have covered the topics listed above. Whether he gave these lectures or whether, if

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[9]*El hombre y la gente,* 1949, 1957, *Obras* VII, p. 81.

[10]*Man and People,* Willard Trask, trans., pp. 174-5.

he did, the transcripts have been preserved, is not clear.[11] The incompleteness of the public record is not too serious, however, for our present endeavor; sufficient portions of his sociology are available for grasping its character.

In *Man and People* Ortega displayed his mastery of phenomenological description, using it to elucidate the nature of social facts as they appear in lived life. His method differed radically from that identified with sociology, and he explicitly rebuked the use of sampling techniques to make inferences about *public* opinion from evidence about *private* opinions.[12] Public opinion was not the holding of similar private opinions by a large number of individuals. Rather public opinion existed among the opinions of each separate person, as he was taken separately; public opinion comprised that portion of man's mental baggage that he possessed, not by virtue of his own intellection or volition, but because it was pressed upon him by his linguistic, cultural, and communal circumstances. The study of public opinion was not to tell men of affairs which ideas were receiving majority or minority backing at various moments, but to help each person become aware of how his conditioned opinions functioned in his vital experience, so that he might gain greater conscious, independent control over his public opinions and increase his sphere of responsible, volitional activity. To accomplish such purposes, sociology had to help individual men gain command of social usages, the various rote gestures, informal customs, commonplaces, and formal laws that were pressed from without on the members of a community.

Ortega envisaged a mission for the sociology of usages similar to that Mannheim, Scheler, Znaniecki anticipated for the sociology of knowledge, except that Ortega more closely circumscribed his conception of the social. If used rigorously, his conception would exclude knowledge from the social realm, locating it in the more hospitable spheres of the personal and the interpersonal. He

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[11] *El hombre y la gente, Apéndices*, 1949, 1957, *Obras* VII, pp. 270-2. The compilers suggest that at least the notes to these lectures exist and will eventually be published after all Ortega's more finished posthumous papers have been published; *Ibid.*, p. 72.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 265.

founded his social theory on careful distinctions between these realms of experience.

In the quest for self-knowledge, clarifying these distinctions was important, for the personal, the interpersonal, and the social were real elements of the life one lived. Thus, in rejecting past conceptions of a self-subsistent society as a form of mysticism, Ortega did not seek to deny the reality in our lives of social constraints, for he knew well from his experience as a Spaniard that a man's social circumstances were a determinant of the possibilities that he could pursue both separately, personally, and in common with other men, interpersonally. The social was not some grand, mysterious entity that existed apart from us and that demanded our worship and sacrifice; it was a set of real constraints that affected, for both good or ill, our immediate, transcendent existence. The reality to which social theory corresponded, therefore, was this operational presence of social constraints in our personal lives.

Ortega's ontology invalidated all social theory that hypostatized society, treating it as a self-subsistent entity, the reality of which did not depend on its existence in the particular lives of actual persons. For this reason, Ortega generally avoided the word "society" and replaced it by "the social," for the only reality of the social was adjectival; the social could only describe elements of our actual lives. "Society," when used at all, clearly referred to certain phenomena in one's life. "The theory of human life is, to begin with, the theory of personal life. But inside of our personal life we encounter not only other persons who are like ourselves and who do not give rise to a discipline unlike the personal, but we also encounter them together in an aggregate, that is distinct from each of them and all of them, taken one by one: we call this aggregate the society or the collectivity."[13]

Ortega phenomenologically described how an awareness of the social developed in the life of a person. On finding himself alive in the world, a child began by living with other persons; and from his direct, interpersonal experience of "we," of living with other persons, he developed conceptions of "I" and "you," of my

[13]*Una interpretación de la historia universal*, 1948, 1960, *Obras* IX, pp. 75-6.

living with myself and of your living with yourself. By means of these conceptions, a person could create a multitude of interpersonal worlds in which many different you's and I's entered into innumerable definite relations. Most of our real experience of other people fell into this interpersonal realm; and as complicated as these relations were, the interpersonal sector of my life was not the social sector. Social facts should not be confused with interpersonal relations. The social comprised a different set of facts; namely, the innumerable *usages* that each man found pressed upon him in the course of living his particular life: innumerable forms of speech, salutations, customs, traffic regulations, and so on.

Part of Ortega's contemplated contribution to a first philosophy was to have been a study of the use and disadvantage of usages for life. Curious readers will find the details in *Man and People*, and we will not follow his reasoning closely here. Suffice it to note that usages have an anomalous character; they present themselves to us in our lives as *faits accomplis*. The observation of usages is never mandatory or inescapable, but refusal to conform carries an impersonal penalty that is characteristic of usages. To drive on the "wrong" side of the road is dangerous; and people who refuse to shake hands, who converse in boorish phrases, or who flout the law all feel, in different ways, the self-enforcing power of social usages. Hence, the social is that aspect of our lives that is predetermined by the usages of the people with whom we live. But the person was not necessarily the helpless prey of usages, forced to acquiesce or suffer grievous consequences. Usages were much like habits, the humane value of which William James so profoundly explicated. While limiting the possibilities open at any time, usages greatly facilitated, within the limited possibilities, a man's capacity of effective action. Full understanding of the definite usages in force in a group would minimize the limitations imposed on one's actions by the usages and would maximize one's power to make the usages facilitate one's efforts to act. Thus, like a good handbook on linguistic convention, the social theory of historic reason would put the person in control of the great power that was locked in usages.

A paradox in Ortega's conception was that the social turned

out to be a dehumanized sector of human life. The impersonality of the law is proverbial, and the policeman who enforces it does not act at least in theory as a man, but as an officer. Usages exist because "one" accepts them, and they are thus devoid of particularized human interest. This dehumanization revealed the social as a completely derivative realm that could not be justified as a goal for personal endeavor; the social gained value only if it served to facilitate the pursuit of definite human purposes. For instance, speech was a social fact consisting of "what people say." Scientific students of language could compile, codify, and comprehend the entirety of speech; but the fulfillment of their inquiry was not in the abstract comprehension of language itself, but in the definite improvement of efforts by particular persons to say what they had to say. While the mechanical act of speaking was social, the intelligent act of saying something was personal, fully human. Social facts were themselves dehumanized, and their justification for existing in our lives was that they help us to realize our possible, personal humanity. Properly understood, usages are an essential aid in our self-formation: they free us to concentrate on more significant matters. As Socrates explained to Crito, despite occasional abuses, the laws educate us by providing a form within which we can determine our personal character. The laws were sovereign indirectly; namely, by serving a man as he sought to be the sovereign of his soul.

Because the human value of usages was indirect, a complicated problem of enforcement arose, a problem that, once understood, showed why it was so important for the quality of common life that people be united by stirring, difficult aspirations. *Man and People* ends just when Ortega arrived at this problem, introducing the paradox that society is as much an occasion for dissension as an opportunity for community. However, in other works he explained the gist of his views, especially in *An Interpretation of Universal History.*[14]

Since usages were justified only to the degree that they helped men pursue their authentic purposes, they were vulnerable to the resentment of those who experienced the established usages as

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 64-119.

destructive impediments blocking self-fulfillment. Repeatedly, situations have arisen in which many have found that the established usages impeded their personal formation; then, the Socratic willingness to cherish the laws, come what may, quickly disappeared. Such situations led to great historic crises similar to the one that Ortega thought the European peoples were experiencing.[15] Now, in our time, the prominence of national usages seems out of proportion to the scant degree that they facilitate the pursuit of interesting personal purposes. Hence, the nations, especially the more grandiose ones, are vulnerable to a seething resentment in the young: they widely perceive national usages as unjustified impediments to the fulfillment of their higher possibilities. The managers of the nation-state can do little to preserve their present prominence; change is under way. But, as Ortega realized, progress or regress in the transformation of national usages depends on whether they are anarchically torn asunder or sportingly transcended, whether we restrain the agents of the nation-state by turning against them in anger or by turning away from them in admiration for something else. Only the latter course can conserve the real accomplishments of our national traditions without making of those traditions an intolerable barrier against man's further self-realization. "The infamy and irresponsibility of politicians has brought Europe to this hour of debasement, in which it feels like Atlantis, for it seems about to submerge itself in the elemental fluid that is history. But thanks to its inexhaustible or almost inexhaustible interior riches, well beneath the skin of this, its debasement, it subterraneously prepares the basis of a new culture . . . , but the surface, the conspicuous part of both the collectivities and the greater number of individuals, is patently miserable."[16]

To revalue national usages constructively, men need a social theory that is antithetical to the ones that make the person more docile before established authorities; men need a social theory, like that of historic reason, that will recreate a personal sense of authority by helping them understand how social usages can be

[15]See especially *En torno a Galileo*, 1933, *Obras* V, pp. 81-164; and "Un capítulo sobre la cuestión de como muere una creencia," 1954, 1962, *Obras* IX, pp. 707-725.

[16]*Meditación de Europa*, 1949, 1960, *Obras* IX, p. 268.

harnessed to personal concerns. Few now have the Socratic realization that the established laws are our educators and that these can, when attended to properly, help us form our selves. Instead, we have accustomed ourselves to thinking of usages, especially those of the nation, as objective powers that have their own internal dynamic before which our personal concerns pale into insignificance: some revere, others hate these august powers. But the social forms of the nation merit allegiance only insofar as they serve in our efforts to educate our selves. By this standard, the national idea is on the verge of losing our allegiance. But men will not find real alternatives to the nation by deferring to even more grandiose abstractions; we will find alternatives when we give allegiance to social usages that transcend the claim of any particular nation and that effectively help each live a fuller life. We must find these usages within our lives. As Ortega often reiterated, men are the only agents of historic initiative; they do not exercise that initiative by irritably seeking to suppress established usages, but by adapting existing usages to the service of surprising, new purposes.

In sum, as historic reason replaced abstract reason, marked changes would occur in disciplines pertinent to the conduct of life. Generally, studies would be reoriented so that everyman could use them in his effort to live his life well. Particularly, history would lose its traditional character as a descriptive subject, becoming more theoretical, whereas sociology would cease to be so theoretical, becoming more descriptive. Such reorientation would make these studies more effective in informing the reason by which we shape our personal lives. For instance, Americans have already had a taste of the practical power generated when descriptive sociologies spontaneously inform the historic reasoning of many youths, shaping the beliefs of a generation. Thus, in recent years corporate businesses have had difficulty recruiting talented young men and women, each of whom decides separately against corporate life on the basis of how certain sociologists have trenchantly described the usages governing giant organizations.[17] In this

[17]An excellent case study in the processes of civic pedagogy in the United States would be an imaginative inquiry into the influence of descriptive sociologies like William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* on the expectations of those who acquired their education during the 1960's.

way, historic reason affects the practical world. Spontaneous confrontations between social usages and personal intentions have only begun; a theoretical history and a descriptive sociology may produce many more.

Be that as it may, descriptive history and theoretical sociology still dominate their disciplines, but a basis exists in the realities of life for a reversal, or at least a merger, of their interests. The person learns little about the living of life from a knowledge of historical facts or of social theories, but he might learn much from historical theory and social facts. Living our life is a dynamic, temporal enterprise; to live our life well, we need theories that explain how we can act on relationships that function over time. Furthermore, to act well at any particular time and place, we need to know the established usages that will facilitate or hinder our efforts. Taking history and sociology as coöperative enterprises, which hopefully will function far into the future, one might further contend that the historical theorist will gain more from a mounting heritage of careful sociological descriptions than the social theorist will gain from a continually revised body of historical description. Regardless of how these matters work out, for Ortega *The Dawn of Historic Reason* would herald an effort by both historian and sociologist to inform, expand, and perfect the rational powers diverse persons used in living their lives. The philosopher, too, had a similar task.

Having already surveyed Ortega's philosophical reforms, we need to make only one further point in showing how he invited men to make philosophy, as well as history and sociology, more useful and less disadvantageous for their lives. In basing philosophy on life and in using it to guide living, men should be careful not to narrow undesirably their repertory of truly vital concerns. "Vital concerns" means the actual hopes and fears that beneath all the rationalizations really move men in the course of their living their lives. It means the real motive: the love of the good, pure or perverted; anxiety; joy; exuberance. Ortega's stature vis-à-vis his philosophical peers will be found in the richness of his sense of life, in his surer sympathy for man's vital concerns. Ortega found thinkers like Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Sartre unable to do justice to the dramatic, joyful side of life; and in comparison to them Ortega excelled by virtue of his ability to

draw on a truly catholic sense of life in filling out his reform of reason with concrete concerns.

A guiding philosophy that does not do justice to the actual concerns that move men will automatically become destructive as men impose it upon themselves, for it will prompt them to suppress authentic parts of their lives. Valid parts of their destinies will appear as matters not recognized according to their partial views. Persons seriously involved with the vital issues of experience will be deceived into inauthenticating themselves and trying, even, to impose their imagined limitations on others. Men give inward consent to a system of practical reason only when it makes sense with respect to the realities they are actually living; and standards based on an incomplete sense of life will not gain inward consent and will spread only as the few impose them on others, forcefully cutting life down to fit a narrowed image. Consequently, it was of the utmost importance that any conception of practical reason begin with a full inventory of the moving concerns of life.

On this point, Ortega held a number of influential thinkers to have been too narrow. Like the technicians, important humanists exaggerated the moving power of anxiety while they underestimated that of exuberance. Ortega most seriously opposed writers who condemned an outright determinism by arguing that human freedom was authentically manifest only in anguish. Any conception of practical reason that made anxiety the sole sign of authentic concern would necessarily end, despite the philosopher's intentions, in a deterministic stimulus-response psychology. Man would be seen as free, but biased by a desire to diminish his most palpable uncertainties and to preserve his most cherished certainties, to lessen his anxieties. Ortega acknowledged that anguish was *one* authentic manifestation of human freedom, but not the only one, for through anguish alone men could not sustain freedom. Driven only by anxiety men would seek consistently to escape from freedom.

Man's creative potency, his ability to sustain his freedom, his power to initiate unnecessary acts, sprang from his sporting, joyous exuberance as much as from his anxiousness. "Life is anguish and enthusiasm and sensual pleasure and bitterness and

innumerable other things."[18] To avoid distorting practical reason by unjustly narrowing its base, Ortega showed that enthusiasm was equally as authentic a part of life as was anxiety. Our awareness of our freedom, even more, the actuality of our freedom, did not always give rise to anguish: frequently it provoked profound feelings of exhilaration. Joy, hope, and exuberance moved us into the unknown, which in turn produced a sense of anxiety, an alertness towards possible landmarks. The real basis for practical reason was the open interplay of joy and anguish, and only the dialectic of the two could give an adequate alternative to closed stimulus-response theories of behavior. "My idea, then, is that the tone adequate for philosophizing is not the wearisome seriousness of life, but the halcyon joviality of sport, of play."[19]

Historic reason made sense only if men were actually moved by positive, sportive concerns. If men used reason predominantly to minimize their anxieties in the face of their freedom, then they would not take to historic reason, for in effect such reasoning would increase their anxieties by continually expanding their freedom. But if men used reason predominantly to maximize their personal, positive accomplishments, then they would find historic reason to be a great aid. Anxiety and joy were the concomitants of any personal effort, and the philosopher should seek to adapt reason to strengthening the positive effort rather than to drawing attention, one-sidedly, to the anguish.

Ortega could not accept the Sartrean lament that it was futile to speak of the good life with men who were hungry; too often, the hunger has been caused by various conceptions of the good life, for instance, that cattle are sacred or that a man's virility should be tested by the number of children he sires. Even hungry, downtrodden men gamely face life as a sporting matter, proposing goals and accepting certain standards. They have a sense of personal dignity, freedom, and power. The job of philosophy was to build on these positive qualities, to arm them with greater foresight, surer skills, and a sharper sensibility. The good life had not resulted from men banding together in an anguished effort to

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[18] *La idea de principio en Leibniz*, 1947, 1958, *Obras* VIII, p. 297, n. 1.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 306.

defend themselves from danger. Well-being resulted from man's sportive exuberance by which millions of independent efforts aggregated into a great qualitative improvement of life. The philosopher would serve human well-being to the degree that he founded a humanistic, practical reason on the full range of man's authentic concerns, on the joyful as well as the anguished. Then everyman had to harness this reason to improving his personal ability to pursue his positive aspirations.

In sum, Ortega invited men to cease making academic specialities of history, sociology, and philosophy and to begin letting these serve more directly in forming the actual rationality that everyman employs in living his life. These subjects would not work magically, providing perfect programs to the abstract difficulties of the time. These subjects were not meant to perfect primarily our civic programs, but to help the civic substance, men, perfect themselves. The education of the public was thus a matter for self-culture, not paternal instruction; and this faith in the public significance of self-education departs sharply from present practice. In effect, historians, sociologists, and philosophers were invited to stop treating their subjects as the vehicles of truth, so to speak, and their students as empty receptacles into which the truths of their subjects are dumped. By basing all forms of reason on the realities of living, the students become the vehicles of truth, the truths of life, and the subjects become receptables into which truths that have been proved in various persons' lives are gathered. "Philosophy is not to demonstrate with life that which is the truth; it is strictly the contrary, to demonstrate the truth by being able, thanks to it, to live authentically."[20]

What might happen if men take up the human sciences in the spirit of Count Yorck and Wilhelm Dilthey, believing that the significance of these studies for human practice is pedagogical? What might result if men responded to Ortega's invitation, making culture serve the fullness of life, of the life that each lives? These questions have no predetermined answers, for the point of the invitation was to bring spontaneity back into public affairs, to call on the men of eminent capacity to follow their own lights.

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[20]*Ibid.*, p. 316.

Ortega urged men not to be content to impose the abstract plans of today upon the living reality of tomorrow.[21] He did not merely invite historians, sociologists, and philosophers to make their subjects serve the pedagogy of self-formation. He further called on men, on everyman, to make full use of this pedagogy, refurbishing the historic spontaneity that has been characteristic of Western history.

Ortega expended much effort in his later years in addressing diverse groups — librarians, architects, educators, corporate executives, dramatists, lawyers, doctors, scholars, and scientists. With each group, his plea was the same: "*¡Pensar en grande!*" The practitioner of any occupation based on intellect was a man of culture, not a specialist; this man of culture was responsible, not only for performing his limited duties effectively, but further for basing this performance on a definite conception of its implications for the whole of life. All men of culture, especially the young, had a mission to perfect their imagination and intellect, to enter every profession without abdicating their initiative to the formalized rituals of a career, and to inform their performances with a definite conception of what significance their special competencies had for the complete cultural repertory of their time. Let the librarian find ways to make the book, of which he was the custodian, serve as a more effective stimulus to life. Let the men of the theater discover how to transport the audience to an intimation of yet unimagined human possibilities. Let the lawyer not be content to administer existing law but to create desirable, new forms of law. In short, let cultured individuals in every walk of life continually take initiatives that will keep every habit and every institution in permanent disequilibrium, in a perpetual need for adaptation.

As is common these days, Ortega's vision of the future called for marked changes in cultural institutions. Numerous critics have perceived that the great era of organizational reform in politics, economics, and social relations has approached completion in the West. They recognize that the locus of constructive change has shifted from practical organizations to educational, scientific, and

[21] "Apuntes sobre una educación para el futuro," 1953, 1962, *Obras* IX, p. 675.

cultural concerns. Thus, many have suggested that these be reorganized to take account of their novel power.[a] But usually the desired reorganization is impossibly unrealistic. The plans are utopian *not* because they fail to take into account the existing circumstances; about the present situation planners are often painstakingly precise. They are utopian *not* because they lack specific prescriptions; with these they abound. They are utopian because the planners do not understand the character of cultural power; they are unaware of its proper source and its peculiar mode of operation. Pedagogical planners confuse cultural power with political power, and out of inertia they treat cultural concerns as if they were practical organizations. Like the politician, businessman, and warrior, they propose a glorious campaign, break it into plausible steps, and expect their underlings to perform as planned. They have read the *Republic* but failed to sense its irony.

Political power is prescriptive; cultural power is protreptic. Politics commands the will; culture persuades the understanding. The two must go together, but they do not mix: the protreptic politician is a demagogue and the prescriptive intellectual is an ideologue. These distinctions help one comprehend the genius of Ortega's hortatory reforms, his invitation to innovation.

Ortega's proposals to the men of culture were protreptic, not prescriptive. He wanted to inspire dramatists, executives, lawyers, librarians, teachers, writers, scholars, even man-thinking with a vision of an intellectual life greater than any now known. The university, its students, its faculty, its libraries, the professions it served, the schools it drew from, writers, publishers, and scientists too: all could rise up, and each, independently, could inform his work with a grander design. What held for the university, held for every aspect of culture: "the origin of university reform is in coming fully to terms with its mission. All change, repair, or refurbishing of our house that does not begin by first revising with energetic clarity, with decision, and with truth the problem of our mission will be a labor of wasted love."[22] The protreptic reformer believes that if free men are in concord about purposes,

[22]*Misión de la universidad*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 314.

they can work in community even though each attends only to his personal performance.

Not only was Ortega's grand design for intellect protreptic rather than prescriptive, it was extensive rather than intensive. Most pedagogical prescriptions concentrate on one set of institutions. Planners specialize: they cannot lay down the law for all. Hence, in 1945 a Harvard committee on general education thought it had cast its net wide by precribing possible reforms for both the secondary schools and the colleges. But a year later, Howard Mumford Jones showed that such proposals were impossible without reform of the graduate schools.[23] No matter where one begins to plan, soon all is drawn in. Ortega understood this fact: to exhort students to move towards one goal was useless, if the faculty had a different bent, the libraries had another, and the professions yet a fourth. Therefore, Ortega incited many groups that worked with intellect to contemplate their mission. The particular design of each group, of course, would differ, but Ortega hoped that each would inform its mission with a problem common to all: to wit, improving the use of cultural power in contemporary life. By doing so, men of culture would greatly expand their capacity to exercise initiative, a publicly significant private initiative, in the contemporary West.

Readers interested in Ortega's particular ideas about cultural institutions had best go to the sources.[b] Because each had its own mission, the way each might serve historic reason had to be taken up separately. Nevertheless, when Ortega's ideas about the library, writing, the theater, art, the liberal professions, and the university are juxtaposed, his single purpose becomes apparent: to exhort men of culture to use their power independently. A national humanities foundation was not needed for the human sciences to affect public life. At every instant, men of letters influenced the ethical concord within which all public affairs took place. To do so with optimum effect, each needed to contemplate his per-

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[23]See The Committee on the Objectives of a General Education, *General Education*, esp. pp. 4-5; and Howard Mumford Jones, *Education and World Tragedy*, esp. pp. 109-178.

sonal abilities and intentions, and, with a profound personal commitment, to appoint himself to the task of continually provoking himself, his peers, the people, and their leaders to examine their purposes and powers. Men of culture of every type could each determine what function he could perform in the further liberation of man; and then, if each strove self-consciously to fulfill this mission, all would be pushed beyond their present limits.

Culture was the means men had invented for thinking about their purposes. "Life is a chaos, a savage forest, a confusion. Man is lost in it. But his mind reacts at his sensation of shipwreck and ruin; it works to find in the forest 'paths' or 'ways', that is, clear and firm ideas about the universe and positive convictions about what things and the world are. The conjunction or system of these is the culture in the true sense of the word." In this true sense, he continued, culture was the opposite of ornament. "Culture is that which saves us from vital shipwreck, which permits man to live, and without which his life would be a tragedy lacking sense, and hence, a radical debasement."[24] Culture was a cosmos of conceptions, the tools of historic reason, within which men could define and discuss their purposes; and whoever freely refined these conceptions, sharpening the tools with which men think in the course of living, would spontaneously enlarge and perfect the possibilities open to men. Ortega invited us to have faith in historic reason and to use this power; this was his invitation to autonomy.

His invitation to the men of culture was thoroughly protreptic. Officials cannot keep the initiative in the face of protreptic reforms; they can only try to prevent potential reformers from appealing to their peers. Many people, out of habit, are inclined to belittle protreptic reform, seeing it as a threat to rational organization, which has served so well as a source of progress in past centuries. But Ortega invited us to embark once again on a great departure from past forms. Western communities had rigidified with the actualization of their major political, economic, and social aspirations; therefore the historic responsibility of protreptic reform was great: it alone could turn our effort towards uncharted seas. Ortega's appeal to librarians, playwrights, and

[24] *Misión de la universidad*, 1930, *Obras* IV, p. 321.

professionals, to students and professors, to all men of culture, was that they set their own standards, that they define their respective goals, and that they find ways to order their lives on the basis of these integral purposes. In making this appeal, Ortega was not pandering to parochial perversities; he was arguing for the highest historic service. Possibilities for historic initiative had been exhausted in the practical walks of life; nevertheless, men would create new historic enterprises by realizing that the great, unfilled possibility was to uncover and exercise the uses of cultural power.

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Soul has its own principle of growth.

HERACLITUS, 115

In THIS HALF-LIGHT *in which the very principles of our civilization have disappeared beneath the horizon, we must try to see things clearly. Every crepuscule . . . is a light that can be equally either the last hour of the day or the beginning of the dawn. Therefore it divides us into two groups: on one side there are those whom I call the "vespertine," who believe that all is concluding, and on the other there are those who believe, like myself, that it is necessary to be "matutinal." This is not pessimism, but the contrary. It is the announcement that something great is going to begin: that is to say, it is not yet here, it is not yet known, it is still problematical and difficult; and for persons who accept life only as a convenience, it is still dead. But any man whose veins throb with a bit of blood has a need for the opposite: a perpetual inconvenience and inquietude, and, with an imperative sense of creation, a going towards something new. These new principles are not utopian matters, they have here and now begun to be.*

ORTEGA[1]

[1]Ortega, remarks in the discussion of "Pasado y porvenir para el hombre actual," at the conference "La connaissance de l'homme au XX^e siècle," Rencontres internationales de Genève, 1951, as printed in *Hombre y cultura en el siglo* XX, pp. 351-2.

¡Pensar En Grande!

SENSITIVE, CAPABLE youths are being oppressed by a mood of *déjà vu;* we have already seen and rejected the obvious options before us and our minds are swollen by a plethora of abstractions that blot from view our authentic, novel possibilities. As a consequence, those who might be the fount of a significant future are turning to the bizarre, the extreme, and the frivolous. Why not? In the absence of stirring aspirations, extravagance is next best, for at least it permits an exuberant examination of all modes of modishness. But unstructured experiments at living by turned-on imaginations have their own discontents; and when the rock group, the Jefferson Airplane, closed their high-flying version of Alice in Wonderland with the insistent suggestion—"FEED YOUR HEAD!"—they may unwittingly have been pushing a stimulant more lasting and humanizing than pot or LSD.

We are starving from mental malnutrition because we have been fed a steady diet of indigestible abstractions. Most ideas recommended as very important matters are useless in an individual effort to form one's personal character; yet one's character, not the ubiquitous abstractions, is what each person is destined to live with and by. The young are not anti-intellectuals—far from it! For them, intellect has ceased to be the sum of disembodied truths about things out there. Intellect is the intellect of each person, the sum of skills and principles that each has mastered and that each can bring to bear in continually making his encounters with the world and other people as significant, just, and joyful as possible. In this sense, intellect thrives on principles, not

abstractions; yet academe has lost itself in abstractions and offers mainly these.

Principles are unapologetically mere conceptions that men are free to use *hic et nunc* to guide their actual acts in the flesh and blood immediacy of life. Abstractions, in contrast, serve to define within the immediacy of particular lives a more inclusive, diffuse sphere of activity in which both natural and civic processes seem to follow courses all their own. Here is the difference: a man may have recourse to principles as he sires and raises a child, whereas officials must rely on abstractions if they are to resolve problems of overpopulation. The malaise is not that we lack abstractions by means of which we can define significant public problems: we have been surfeited as pundits pronounce on the problems of population, peace, poverty, progress, and pollution. But the more immediate problem, which is felt by those who combine a generous impulse with critical awareness, is that these and other serious difficulties are defined in ways that make it almost impossible for any particular person to act on them out of principle with any definite, significant effect.

Abstract generalities about pressing problems of public affairs do not define a *Kinderland.* The constant call to public action does little to help any man define his personal aspirations with respect to the definite realities of his life. In our actual lives, the great, established institutions—the corporation, union, church, school, and state—are all too often experienced as imperious, bumbling intruders. Thus men have ceased to experience the state as a mere *idea,* a hope, that they can freely use in their personal lives to orient their independent activities. Instead, men have grown accustomed to experiencing the state as a deficient monolith, a magisterial entity beset by overriding needs. Hence authority is on the verge of dissolution, for a deficient monolith is absurd. *Delenda est imperium!* Sentient men cannot live as self-respecting human beings by solely aspiring to solve abstract difficulties, those of the public and *its* problems, the one that, as officials might say, "functional analyses and statistical projections reveal as threats to the viability of the complex, dynamic processes that sustain modern societal and economic systems." *Ecce homo!*

Our task is to nurture our spontaneity and to channel it towards a *Kinderland* of common, personal significance.

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We reach the climax of Ortega's thought. Throughout his later works, he spread prophetic utterances inviting men to turn away from concern for sustaining the established order and to join in founding radically new forms of life. Recently, we have become surfeited by the frivolous use of such phrases by professional puffers and are nearly incapable of seriously contemplating substantial changes in our way of life. We expect the newness of the new to be described in attractive detail and our empirical sensibility rebels at expecting the unexpected. Those modern augurs, the futurologists, assure us that the year 2000 will be much more like 1970 than 1984. Ortega, instead, foresaw aspects of the future, not by projecting present trends ahead, but by anticipating trends that were not now present. He called explicit attention to the radicalism of his views, for his radicalism, which was based on the only real radicalism possible, a philosophical revision of first principles, was easily overlooked.[2] If first principles were transformed, a coherent yet spontaneous transformation of everything else becomes probable especially in the seemingly fundamental realm of politics. This Emerson understood: "the history of the State sketches in coarse outline the progress of thought, and follows at a distance the delicacy of culture and aspiration."[3]

The twentieth century was a time of true transition into a yet unknown, indeterminate way of living, Ortega believed. The external forms of living that would characterize the coming era might be as different from those of the nineteenth century as were the concerns of the nineteenth from those of the thirteenth. Real change was afoot. Anything could happen. Men no longer had faith in the realities in the midst of which their predecessors had for millennia lived. All was possible, even stasis. Faith in a new reality might spontaneously develop, bringing an unexpected

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[2]See *La idea de principio en Leibniz*, 1948, 1958, *Obras* VIII, pp. 281-5.

[3]Emerson, "Politics," *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 368.

transformation in its train, or one or another relic of the outworn authorities might use the state to impose a sterile, empty order on the world. The state might overwhelm our spirit. Our spirit might rise above the state. There was no assurance of anything, except whatever would happen, be it renewal or collapse, would happen because of what each man did freely, responsibly, and finally in the particular life he lived.

Ortega rejected any claim that the established order deserved positive allegiance. He equally denied any assertion that the established order merited negative opposition. Western man was in the midst of another great, historic transformation; in the face of the impending metamorphosis, the course of events with respect to established institutions paled into insignificance. Involvement in the state, with it or against it, could end only in statism. The significant developments depended on how each cultivated his own character; and to direct attention to this concern, Ortega was quite willing to slight traditional conceptions of public affairs. In his late work, the former political commentator was silent about practical events. He barely mentioned World War II or the Cold War; and despite his strongly voiced interest in a supranational mode of life, he showed no concern for the Marshall Plan, NATO, or the United Nations. A remark from the 1920's perfectly characterizes his later attitude: "I hope that our century will react against the belittling of educative work. There will arrive in Europe an exemplary devaluation of all politics. Having been in the first rank of human preoccupations, it will decline in status and end as the lowliest. And to everyone it will be evident that it is politics that must adapt itself to pedagogy, which will then achieve its sublime and proper goals."[4]

A social order could be legitimate, Ortega contended, only when founded on a living faith, a common belief about the character of reality. Only from a shared belief about reality could a system of reasoned discourse about common problems gain sufficient authority to harmonize—freely, without external compulsion —the conflicting interests of men. In the absence of a common belief, even the best intentioned, most scrupulously legal rule

[4]"Pedagogía y anacronismo," 1923, *Obras* III, p. 133.

could do nothing but force its will upon men who did not share the beliefs of those in power. Since men in the industrial world lacked a concord about fundamental realities, no system of rule was legitimate and there was no way to legitimate any system of rule until one or another conception of reality spontaneously became a common belief. The illegitimacy of the present order, however, did not legitimate disobedience, *dis*-obedience, which in a paradoxical way affirmed the established order. "The very first thing that is to be done with illegitimacy is to swallow it."[5] One wastes one's effort warring against a doomed order, for the cause of the doom is not in the strength of those who oppose the order, but in the weaknesses of the order itself: hence many an ancient regime has preserved itself by sucking vigor from its vocal opponents.

For Ortega, all systems of order were radically illegitimate; none had an iota of power to make itself legitimate, for the source of the illegitimacy was not in the government, but in the people, in their lack of common beliefs about fundamental matters. Consequently, the upshot of Ortega's theory of illegitimacy was not an engagé argument, one holding that all governments were illegitimate, but that some were less illegitimate than others and that these might, given support, evolve into legitimate ones. Such reasoning, which persuaded Merleau-Ponty and Sartre to support Soviet communism, carried no weight with Ortega. No government could cause itself or be caused to become legitimate, for legitimacy rested on authentic beliefs of the people, not on attributes of the government. The lack of such beliefs could not be solved by any form of group manipulation, for even though men could be temporarily forced to profess allegiance or momentarily beguiled into believing that they believed, a living, enduring faith existed only as an unmoved mover.

Faith could not be produced in others; each man, on communing with himself, found that deep within him, either he had it or he did not. In a time of disbelief, men could only search within themselves. Thus, the illegitimacy that Ortega found characteristic of our time did not justify aggravating the unscru-

[5] *Una interpretación de la historia universal*, 1948, 1960, *Obras* IX, p. 155.

pulous competition between groups for the control of organized force; rather it showed the competition to be null. Contemporary illegitimacy threw each man back upon himself; it drove each man to seek out his beliefs and to manifest these in his personal conduct of life. "I have nothing to do with politics and nothing of what I speak is political, but something enormously more profound and more grave than all politics."[6]

Let us soar free with Ortega. We are in the midst of a radical transvaluation of values. Reality itself is changing. Hence, in the interim, man has no authority outside himself upon which he can rely for justification; each determines what it is that he shall stand for, and that determination is final: for good or ill, it is the ethic he will have lived by in the reality of his life. Life is self-realization, and to realize one's best self one needs to recognize his endeavor as an exuberant, sporting lark. This joviality was the very essence of the transvaluation of values that Ortega foresaw. The serious could not stand against the expedient; values could be upheld only for the joy of it. The established order harbored little joy; if left alone, it would fall into disuse as more and more men found it void. But Ortega did not see the old order tumbling in a dramatic collapse; Rome no more fell in a day than it was built in a day. Although the old would persist, a new order would ineluctably emerge as persons recognized that the demands of the old were illegitimate and turned within themselves, searching for ways to perfect their immediate lives.

Men will develop a new order through self-education. Historic spontaneity is a function of man's capacity for self-culture. The configuration of the future will develop as diverse persons take responsibility for themselves and develop in themselves qualities that, by their exemplarity, will become the basis of a new system. In the end, Europe is not for the Europeans; the Europeans, whomever they may be, will make Europe. To change our world we must discover how to change ourselves; and if we learn to change ourselves, no power on earth or in the heavens can prevent us from changing our world. Here is Ortega's optimism:

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[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 224-5.

self-education is the most fundamental of all historic determinants. It is a fact of life: each man is individually free to orient all his cultural surroundings to the concern of self-formation. By doing so, Ortega thought, men would break with the familiar line of development. Progress would cease to mean improving the institutionalized performance of economic, social, and political functions. The national histories that stretched from the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment up to our recent past would close. With this break, men would rediscover that to live was to aspire to an uncertain future.

Needless to say, one could criticize the anticipation of such a crisis as the advocacy of cultural discontinuity. Ortega was not awed by institutions or offices; he was willing to see venerated ones decline, contract, and disappear. In matters of civilization, too, he was venturesome: he foresaw a marked revision in the hierarchy of valuations that underlay contemporary materialism. But even in his most apocalyptic moments, Ortega did not advocate historical discontinuity.

Previously, Western man had experienced historic changes as sharp as those that Ortega envisaged; yet there remained a Western tradition. In precisely that fact one touched on the true genius of the men who had made Western history: they never gave themselves over entirely to a single way of life, to a static set of institutions, or to an unchanging pattern of thought. Historical continuity does not require stasis; the deeper one sinks one's roots the higher one can raise one's character and stand steady in the midst of howling change. Ortega showed no frivolous anti-intellectualism; unlike those who feel that their most banal surroundings are naturally new, he held that the men who could *make* their future were the ones who could master their past. To the degree that in his late writings he ignored the present and prophesized about the future, he studied his past, especially the record of classical politics and philosophy, for continuity would be created in the course of change by men who understood the principles of their predecessors.

In believing that Ortega argued for a break with his tradition, one not only misinterprets Ortega, one more seriously misunderstands the continuity characteristic of our tradition. When Ortega

asserted that " 'Western civilization has died! Long live Western civilization!' " he asserted the very opposite of historical discontinuity.[7] There is no continuity in stasis. A tradition, like a bicycle, is stable only when moving. The culture by which men have lived in the West rests on the principle of the infinite profundity of the person. When the chips were down, the human person has alway been considered to be greater than any of his creations. The fixity of external characteristics has continually given way to transformations in internal chraracter. What binds Socrates, Jesus, Abelard, Sir Thomas More, and Albert Schweitzer is not the government they recognized, the ways they earned a living, similarities in their choice of friends, the conventions they heeded, or their style of dress; they are bound together by their willingness to think through their convictions and to live or die in fidelity to their conclusions. Up to now in the West, institutions have remained protean forms, allowing any person who has the will to break loose, not without cost but with effect, to explore the endless possibilities of his character. As a consequence, each man in each successive generation has found himself with a richer heritage to draw from and with greater goals to aspire to, *should he so wish it.*

Institutional discontinuity has been the price of characterological continuity. Should our external way of life become fixed, then we will deprive our progeny, each one in his particularity, of the glorious quest for the whole man, for the fullness of life, that we have inherited from our forebears. The continuity of our culture develops from an eternal recurrence. Our culture continually comes back to life when particular men find themselves unable to rely satisfactorily on the established externals. Our culture will die only when the established externals are exalted mindlessly into rigid molds for human conduct. Hence, to see Ortega's disdain for existent institutions as a desire to renounce the accomplishments of ages is unjust. Quite the contrary. The surest way to renounce our past is to be content with our present, to elevate a passing instant into a timeless standard, and to be so dull as to be unable to imagine a world in which great nations

[7] "Pasado y porvenir para el hombre actual," 1951, 1962, *Obras* IX, p. 661.

and immense industries had become minor matters. Continuity is an attribute of change; and to appreciate our fatherland, we need the strength to aspire to our *Kinderland.*

Western history has been dynamic because the men who made it shared a conviction, well expressed by Heraclitus, that the human spirit is infinitely deep and inexhaustible. In the face of each person's profundity, no particular way of life can claim finality. "You could not discover the limits of soul, even if you traveled every road to do so; such is the depth of its meaning."[8] This conviction has been a standing invitation to each man in every age to plumb his spirit ever more deeply. So far, whenever our forefathers seemed to settle onto a static level of life, this invitation has been courageously renewed.

So it was by Ortega. Surveying the existing forms of civilization, he found them exhausted; the going patterns of politics, science, and art offered little hope to any particular person that he could travel further through them towards the limits of soul. As a result, Western man had begun to doubt the forms of his civilization, which was a most healthy sign, for civilization did not die from doubt. Let us free ourselves from servile attendance to sterile forms. Let us return to the Heraclitean spirit. Let us have faith that man is more than his accomplished works. When present forms were exhausted, the past and the future invited men to invent new ones. Facing his audience, as he had done at Bilbao over forty years before, the aged master again invited the young to meet the challenge before which their elders were faltering.

> We have arrived at a moment, ladies and gentlemen, in which we have no other solution than to invent, and to invent in every order of life. I could not propose a more delightful task. One must invent! Well then! You the young — lads and lasses — Go to it![9]

[8]Heraclitus, Fragment 45 (DK), Wheelwright trans., *Heraclitus*, Fr. 42, p. 58.
[9]"Pasado y porvenir para el hombre actual," 1951, 1962, *Obras* IX, p. 663.