

# Ortega y Gasset's reception through political contingences. A historiographical study in Spanish intellectual history

A recepção de Ortega y Gasset através de contingências políticas. Um estudo historiográfico da história intelectual espanhola

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## ABSTRACT

This article aims at analysing a particular case within Spanish historiography: how the writings, speeches and public activities of one of the greatest intellectuals of this country, the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, were perceived, discussed and studied by Spanish historians and scholars from the beginning of his exile onwards. Its goal is exclusively that of exhibiting, through a single but very significant case, the strong interdependence between historiographical activity and socio-political environment, between historiographical interpretations and political credos, both in the course and because of the long and pervasive influence of Franco's dictatorship in Spain.

## RESUMO

O presente artigo tem como objetivo analisar um caso particular da historiografia espanhola: como os escritos, discursos e atividades públicas de um dos maiores intelectuais do país, o filósofo José Ortega y Gasset, foram percebidos, discutidos e estudados por historiadores e estudiosos espanhóis do início do exílio desse pensador em diante. O objetivo é exclusivamente exibir, através de um caso único, mas muito significativo, a forte interdependência entre a atividade historiográfica e o ambiente sociopolítico, entre as interpretações historiográficas e os credos políticos, tanto no decorrer como por causa da longa e difundida influência da ditadura de Franco na Espanha.

## KEYWORDS

20th century historiography; Political history; Intellectual history

## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Historiografía do Século XX; História política; História intelectual

This article aims at analysing a particular case within Spanish historiography: how the writings, speeches and public activities of one of the greatest intellectuals of this country, José Ortega y Gasset, were perceived, discussed and studied by Spanish historians and scholars from the beginning of his exile (1936) onwards. In this way, the article will focus on two different aspects. On the one hand, the direct reactions of academicians and writers during the period in which Ortega was still alive, but somehow “silent”, consequently being a sort of passive spectator of a fierce and not always scientifically critical diatribe over his works and public figure - from 1936 to 1955 -; on the other hand, the posthumous historical and philosophical studies devoted to the author’s activities during Franco’s regime from the end of the fifties up to the democratic transition and the beginning of the XXI century.

Before entering into the details of this story, we must point out that this article does not aim to constitute an exhaustive review of the vast existing literature on the works and public activities of Ortega y Gasset. Rather, its goal is exclusively that of exhibiting, through a single but very significant case, the strong interdependence between historiographical activity and socio-political environment, between historiographical interpretations and political credos, both in the course and because of the long and pervasive influence of Franco’s dictatorship in Spain. As it is known, this political reality determined a radical change in the way of conceiving and practising history among professional scholars, making historians more prone to prudence than truth.<sup>1</sup> Franco’s regime and its policies directly influenced how the historiographical work was conceived and practiced during those years. Not only because of the censorship imposed to scholars in the academia, but also because of changes in the way of choosing the topics at stake, in the way of recruiting new scholars and researchers, in the struggle for compliance and, lastly, in the creation of different factions within intellectuals - and historians - affiliated to the regime. In this context, the study of Ortega’s reception in Spain constitutes a paradigmatic case in the intellectual history of this country, due to the leading

*1 - Indeed, historians: "viviendo en el presente perpetuo de una dictadura, hicieron de la virtud moral de la prudencia una categoría de comportamiento intelectual y un principio de responsabilidad profesional". (PEIRÓ MARTÍN 2013, p. 14).*

role played by his works in forging a new philosophical canon within the Spanish academia, both during and after his life (MORENO PESTAÑA 2013).

The choice of 1936 as the starting point of this article should, therefore, be patently, even if briefly, justified. As it is known, 1936 represented a turning point not only for the personal life of Ortega y Gasset (MÄRTENS 2008, p. 171-186; MÁRQUEZ PADORNO 2009), but more generally for the history of Spain, characterised by the extremely cruel civil war and the following dictatorship of Francisco Franco, which lasted for almost four decades. The choice of this particular individual case, at the same time, is motivated by the fact that Ortega not only was a leading intellectual, but he was also constantly engaged in political activities that, *a fortiori*, contributed to determining a strong reaction both in favour and against him.

## 1. Ortega as a political figure

Indeed, during his entire long career as a philosopher and public intellectual, José Ortega y Gasset was always strictly involved and engaged in the political struggles of his country. He was not only a passive spectator and commentator of the events, but at the same time, he actively tried to intervene within the political sphere (CACHO VIU 2000; LASAGA MEDINA 2003; BLANCO ALFONSO 2009a; 2009b; 2010a; 2010b). However, his factual presence in the Parliament was indeed very brief and episodic, in particular during the II Republic, through the *Agrupación al Servicio de la República*, in 1931. It is probably due to this very close relationship with the political environment in which he lived that even after death he continued to represent a term of comparison and discussion among historians and public opinion as well. Certainly, he constantly overcame the mere academism, directly influencing the social environment in which he lived through his philosophy. For this reason, as Juan Padilla writes: "*La historia de la recepción de Ortega no empieza con su muerte; empieza cuando comienza a dibujarse su figura pública*" (PADILLA 2007, p. 26).

The Metaphysics professor of the University of Madrid was involved in several political projects which he tried to coherently combine with his intellectual activities, profoundly persuaded that “*el que no se ocupa de política es un hombre immoral; pero el que sólo se ocupa de política y todo lo ve políticamente, se un majadero*” (ORTEGA Y GASSET 2004, v. I, p. 554). Even before the very beginning of his career as a professor in 1910, he had collaborated with several liberal newspapers and journals, such as *Faro* or *El imparcial*. His claims about the necessity of social and liberal reform of Spain were notoriously put into action during his very youth, for example, through the development of the *Liga de Educación Política Española*<sup>2</sup> (1913), of which he was the official spokesperson. He played a leading role in this association when, in March 1914, in the *Teatro de la Comedia*, he pronounced a conference titled *Vieja y Nueva Política* that became the public manifesto of the association. Until his exile, Ortega continuously tried to influence politics and public opinion, through all possible cultural means, such as the creation of liberal-oriented journals such as *España* (1915), *El Sol* (1917); or by the establishment of editorial projects such as *Revista de Occidente* (1923) and others. As Zamora Bonilla wrote, in these texts Ortega’s aim was that of: “*obligar al ciudadano a participar en la vida pública entregando al mayor número de ciudadanos la toma de decisiones sobre los problemas que les afectaban*” (ZAMORA BONILLA 2002, p. 252). For this reason, Ortega’s main objective was that of realising his unceasing wish to modernise Spain, bringing the country up to the social, spiritual and material conditions of all the others European nations, in particular through an educational reform (LOPEZ DE LA VIEJA 1997; LÓPEZ CAMBRONERO 2003; RABI 2012; SCOTTON 2014).

Ortega’s cultural and political interventions, together with the ones of an entire generation of highly educated members of the bourgeoisie, were the response to the material changes occurring in the Spanish society, characterised by an increasing rationalisation and bureaucratisation of the new political elite (COSTA DELGADO 2015). Also, for this reason,

2 - Among the association’s members: Manuel Azaña, Fernando de los Ríos, Manuel García Morante, Constancio Bernardo de Quirós, Pablo de Azcárate, Américo Castro, Antonio Machado, Luis García Bilbao, Lorenzo Luzuriaga, Ramiro de Maeztu, Pedro Salinas, Ramón Pérez de Ayala.

Ortega's purpose of modernisation, during his own life, constantly overlapped, willingly or not, with the political slogans of different extremisms, with which it was somehow improperly confused. This is, for instance, the case of the concept of *selected minority*, a term Ortega coined in his famous *Invertebrate Spain* (1921). This term has frequently been interpreted as the expression of a sort of authoritative and conservative political thought (ACHIRI 2012), even though the main purpose of the philosopher was rather to promote the cultural renovation of the country through an engaged and thoughtful citizenship (MAJFUD 2006). Indeed, Ortega himself was perfectly aware of his peculiar and complicated status of independent thinker in an extremely politicised environment: "*Derechas' e 'izquierdas', las dos Iglesias, me excomulgan, cada cual desde su mano*" (OC, v. III, p. 802).

Moreover, also right-oriented politicians, such as José Antonio Primo de Rivera, and the Frente Español (ELORZA 2002, p. 207-213), instrumentally used his remark about the necessity of constructing a New State, a thesis Ortega strongly defended in particular during the 1930s, as a source of ideological legitimacy. In one of Primo de Rivera's public discourses, published in *Haz* in December 1935, the falangist politician declared that the duty of the *Falange* would have been that of "*vertebrar España*" (PRIMO DE RIVERA 1959, p. 748), and of constructing a new idea of National party. He did so by clearly adopting, in an instrumental way, a very typical Orteguitan language (FONCK 1996).

In an unpublished article written for *El Sol* in October 1923, "*Política de estos días*" (OC, v. VII, pp. 803-806), Ortega defended his right to intervene as a free and independent intellectual within the public debate. He condemned the tendency of the new political front of using his very words as slogans, depriving them of their authentic meaning and any philosophical essence. He insisted on defending the need of reforming the Spanish political scenario, but he thought that to

do this, a new bourgeoisie would need to be forged, an upper-middle-class able to rationally participate in politics (FONCK 2010).

Some years later, Ortega directly had the opportunity of taking part in a political project: he led a group of intellectuals that, in 1931, gave birth to the *Agrupación al Servicio de la República*. Ortega broke the barrier between politics and academia, being persuaded that doing this was necessary for the political reform he always envisaged. His goal was giving his theoretical contribution to the definition of the new politics of the nascent Republic. To gain the support of his colleagues and the public opinion, he coined enthusiastic expressions, which would be very popular among the right and conservative parties in the following years: for instance, the expressions of *national party* and *New State*. The new republican constitution was approved at the beginning of December 1931. Soon after its establishment, Ortega partially criticised it, conceiving the possibility of creating a new republican party separated from the ASR, and proposing a "rectification" of the Republic by fostering the construction of a National Republican Party for promoting educative, institutional and administrative reforms. His ideas were strongly criticised, and Ortega was accused of endorsing conservative positions (DEL VILLAR 2003). As a consequence, he started to lose his influence within the parliament, and he soon resigned from his role within the ASR.

After this period of intense participation within Spanish politics, during the civil war, Ortega made very few political declarations in his writings and very rare speeches. One of the most significant cases in which Ortega seemed to directly intervene in the public debate was the short article entitled "*On Pacifism*", published in 1938 in the British journal *The Nineteenth Century and After*. In this text he accused of patent ignorance and unjustified interventionism those foreign countries and political groups that decided to intervene in the Spanish war, in particular in relation to the international interventionism of the U.N., exhibiting the wish of Western

countries to impose a social order external to the one that Spain had to establish on its own. As it has been argued, the aim of Ortega during the civil war consisted in trying to open the way to political dialogue between opposite fronts. Even when this dialogue appeared to be blatantly impossible, he tried to do so in an indirect and veiled fashion (MARTÍN 2014), but this somehow ambiguous position concerning the Spanish question during the years of the civil war and the following dictatorship of Francisco Franco, caused him more harm than good. Moreover, he did not clarify his position in the following years, refusing to directly enter into the political debate, preferring a physical and intellectual exile (LASAGA MEDINA 2012). Ortega's seeming silence (FOURMONT-GIUSTINIANI 2007) was vividly disapproved by some of his disciples, among them the philosopher Maria Zambrano (ZAMBRANO 2011) who, as Ortega left his homeland, strongly criticised the total absence of a neat and public condemnation of the regime by her master. Besides, among the Spanish republicans in the exile, the general sentiment towards the return in Spain of Ortega in 1947 was always particularly negative (LAÍN ENTRALGO 1970, p. 350-360). However, Ortega's silence during that period played a performative function since, as Ferguson put it:

Silence can serve as resistance to any institution that requires verbal participation (as do virtually all). On a macroscopic political scale, states often require such participation and subsequently employ a variety of means to compel it. The state-sponsored requirement to take an oath is a particularly overt form of obligatory speech (FERGUSON 2002, p. 8).

So, directly and indirectly, Ortega always played a significant role in the Spanish cultural and academic debate. Accordingly, the purpose of the following pages is that of understanding how scholars under different political regimes read the works of the philosopher, and to what extent changing political and ideological circumstances determined how they interpreted them.

## 2. The silent life of Ortega y Gasset

*Prima facie*, Ortega's self-imposed exile during the last years of his life determined an almost complete dismissing of his works within the Spanish culture. A lack of consideration sporadically interrupted exclusively by strong ideologically oriented attacks (MEDIN 2014). The civil war and the following establishment of Franco's regime gave birth, at least until the end of World War II, to the attempt of deconstructing all the cultural pillars of the previous political regime, both within academia and in society. This fact has been defined as the first *hora cero* of Spanish historiography: in the name of a forced acquaintance to the regime, the new cultural establishment imposed a backlash against all the relevant progress carried about by the historical profession in the first three decades of the XX century (PEIRÓ MARTÍN 2013, p. 22-29). In this context, the political power imposed its control over the universities, appointing several historians affiliated to the *Falange*, and giving rise to a "*asalto a las cátedras*" (RODRÍGUEZ LÓPEZ 2002; BLASCO GIL, MANCEBO 2010). This caused a radical change in the way in which scholars and future professors were recruited: the selection criteria "*quedaron en gran medida supeditados a las recomendaciones, afinidades ideológicas y presiones de las camarillas del Nuevo Estado*" (PEIRÓ MARTÍN 2013, p. 52).

Consequently, history became a vehicle of propaganda, and a way of establishing a common ideology through academia. Obviously, the intellectual canon also had to be dogmatically adjusted to render the history of Spain coherent with the social and cultural development imposed by the regime, condemning all those experiences in contrast with it (GRACIA 1996). In this context, Ortega's reception did not represent an exception even if, during his exile in Portugal, his major works continued to appear in the *Obras Completas* edited by *Revista de Occidente* (apart from the more politically oriented works, published after Franco's death during the 1980s). In any case, Ortega's legacy was so relevant that it was impossible to simply remove

it from the cultural scenario. Two opposing possibilities were given: annihilating him, by countering his ideas; or integrating his system of thought within the regime, by manipulating it. Thus, to a more rigorous analysis, Ortega continued to play an important function within the Spanish intellectual debate. At least since he constituted the direct target of the attacks, both personally and intellectually driven, of those intellectuals who would have contributed to shaping the cultural ideology of the New State, in particular, the ones belonging to catholic associations.

The national Catholicism was in fact very well established in the official culture of the "New Spain", ruling some fundamental institutions such as the *Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas* (CSIC), *Arbor* its official journal, (PRADES PLAZA 2007), and other relevant publications, such as *Razón y Fe*, linked to the Jesuit group. Ortega's works were generally represented as dangerous elements for the Spanish wellbeing by these institutions. This is not surprising, given the fact that the philosopher always considered himself as a-Catholic, a moderate position incompatible with the strong political extremisms of those years. Therefore, all his writings started to be strongly contrasted with massive propaganda.

To respond to these attacks, some of Ortega's disciples, in particular, Marías, Garagorri, Rodríguez Huéscar, and others, gave birth to what has been defined as the "*escolástica orteguiana*". However, this group had a very limited impact and support in comparison to the official establishment. Thus, Ortega could count on very few supporters within the Spanish borders. The majority of his admirers had been exiled or had very little influence within Spanish academia and its main culture. It is not a case that the most relevant and interesting advancements in Ortega's philosophy during those years may be found precisely in some exiled republicans, such as Lorenzo Luzuriaga, in Argentina (SCOTTON 2016), Manuel Granell in Venezuela (SCOTTON 2018), or José Gaos, in Mexico (MEDIN 1994). In fact, for these authors, the exile not only

constituted the occasion for forging their theories by originally adapting Ortega's philosophy to their interests, but also for thinking about his heritage from a personal and existential point of view. The case of Gaos is paradigmatic. As Medin (2005, p. 100) put it: "*Las dudas y el temblor de Gaos frente a su maestro reflejan sin lugar a dudas (...) mucho de lo que era el intramundo de los exiliados, su tragedia, su desilusión, su 'lo que seguían siendo', españoles en el exilio*".

Within the Spanish borders, the situation was fairly different, being Ortega constantly under attack. The political aim of these criticisms was that of officially banning Ortega's works, and including them in the *Index*, thus rendering impossible to publish and sell his books (PADILLA 2007). Regarding the contents of these criticisms, Ortega was frequently accused of being a superficial intellectual, unable to develop a coherent and autonomous doctrine. An atheist without any interest and concern for metaphysical problems. One of the leading figures among the critics of this catholic group was the Jesuit Joaquín Iriarte who, together with other authors such as José Sánchez Villaseñor and Juan Ruiz Gironella, vividly attacked the main ideas of Ortega, frequently without even critically assessing his thought, in a series of articles published in *Razón y Fe*.

The theses purported in these writings had a relevant influence within the catholic propaganda against Ortega during the 1940s, becoming widely accepted among the advocates of the culture of New Spain (BOLADO OCHOA 2011). Therefore, Ortega started to be considered as an opponent of the New State.<sup>3</sup> To Iriarte, Ortega was the symbol of the atheist philosopher, without any faith or authentic belief (IRIARTE 1943, p. 117). According to him, accepting the philosophy of history theorised by Ortega in his books — such as the *Prologo a la Historia de la Filosofía de Émile Bréhier* —, would have given birth to a dangerous relativism, incompatible with a Christian dogmatism. According to the clergyman, Ortega's theory risked to corrupting the new generations of students, and for this reason, it had to be countered:

3 - "*Frente a Ortega y Gasset no caben actitudes mezquinas. Lo que representa es demasiado para oponerle, como algunos ingenuamente pretendieron, la conjuración del silencio, o para rastrear contradicciones en la suprema consecuencia de su pensamiento*". (BOFILL 1946, p. 225).

Los ánimos juveniles que lo oigan, pues es considerable el ascendente que en ellos ejerce el pensador (...) se van a imaginar que, mientras sigan creyentes, fieles a la fe de los padres, no han de quedar consagrados como filósofos. Y querrán comprar la aspirada aureola a precio de una apostasía, que será triste por lo que deja y triste por lo que da (IRIARTE 1943, p. 117).

Indeed, the philosophy of history developed by Ortega during those years should have appeared quite subversive for a member of the new intellectual establishment. In fact, Ortega's theory of history rests on the basic assumption according to which no human action is driven by an external or universal principle. On the contrary, they have their own justification in the concrete lives of single individuals and groups. Thus, Ortega explicitly rejected any pre-established metaphysical order, advocating for the complete responsibility of human beings in the construction of the social world.

In fact, contrary to Ortega's anthropology, according to which each human being is personally responsible for the construction of an always-undetermined future, a new metaphysical vision of the world was emerging within the regime. This was testified by Juan Zaragüeta, a philosopher and priest who was appointed as the substitute of Ortega y Gasset as professor of Metaphysics at the Central University of Madrid. The pedagogy purported by this priest was radically different from the one presented by Ortega. In Zaragüeta's book, *Pedagogía Fundamental* (1943), it is possible to find the basic ideology of the educative model that the New State was trying to implement. The university traced by Zaragüeta differed from the one conceived by Ortega at least in respect to three main aspects: a) the prominence of religion over philosophy as the peak of a humanistic education; b) the methodology to be adopted, that is the memorisation of general principles rather than their questioning; c) the role of the intellectual both within the university and in society, understood as a representative of the political power rather than a skeptical and critical voice. Therefore, a new religious outlook was taking power within the society and the university, whereas Ortega was considered

as a Freemason who was impeding the progress of the “*Gran Cruzada española*” (HERRERA ORIA 1941, p. 196).

Therefore, it is not surprising that, when Ortega decided to go back to Madrid, founding with his disciple Julian Marías the *Instituto de Humanidades* (1948-1950), his return was immediately and generally attacked by the catholic propaganda that interpreted it as a nostalgic attempt of restoring a liberal and atheist regime. However, the Institute caused relevant disputes within the very regime, since two opposite views were confronting each other, and Ortega indirectly played a role in this controversy. On the one hand, the director of *Escorial* and *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, Laín Entralgo; on the other, the director of *Arbor*, the review of CSIC, Calvo Serer. In his *España como problema* (1948), Laín Entralgo used Ortega as an example of a positive way of conceiving the role of intellectuals in society: people who promote political and social reforms, indispensable for the benefit of the nation, by calling for the help of a selected minority: “*La minoría entusiasta y eficaz; he ahí el primer objetivo de la operación transformadora de Ortega. El periódico, la revista, el libro, la conferencia serán los instrumentos inmediatos de este germinal equipo salvador*” (LAÍN ENTRALGO 1948, p. 102). Laín Entralgo conceived Ortega as the theorist of the construction of the hegemonic thought, through the idea of a leading minority able to run the country. Accordingly, he proposed himself and his circle as the most suitable people who could have been responsible for this intellectual and political mission. On the contrary, in his *España sin problema* (1949), Calvo Serer, spokesman of the *Asociación Católica Nacional de Propagandistas*, accused Laín Entralgo of bringing back to the public debate and cultural scenario many of those intellectuals incompatible with its ideology, among them Ortega, that the regime had repeatedly tried to annihilate since its very foundation.

Indeed, Ortega’s Institute of Humanities — an intellectual project internationally admired (HELMAN 1951) — was interpreted as a significant danger for the principles at the basis

of the new Nation. Consequently, all the activities of the group orbiting around *Arbor* during those years were characterised by a forceful anti-Orteguianism (DÍAZ HERNÁNDEZ 2008). Thus, the Institute of Humanity acquired great significance within the Spanish cultural scenario, far beyond Ortega's intentions and goals.

Joaquín Iriarte was again one of those who spent more energy to disqualify Ortega's Institute, for instance in his book, published in 1949, entitled *La ruta mental de Ortega. Crítica de su filosofía*. The main aim of the book was significantly that of destroying the philosopher rather than critically assessing his works. In doing this, Iriarte was supported by another important member of the CSIC and member of the *Opus Dei*, Juan Sáiz Barberá, who in 1950 published "*Ortega y Gasset ante la crítica. El idealismo en El Espectador de Ortega y Gasset*". During that period, Julian Marías seemed to be the only defender of his master in Spain, but his book "*Ortega y tres antípodas*", published in the same year of Sáiz Barberá strong attack, constituted a marginal episode to rescue the philosopher from such strong and biased criticisms.

The situation during the 1950s appears to be slightly different: the aptitude towards Ortega started to be not as monolithic as before, and within the established scholars, two different factions emerged: those belonging to the *Opus Dei*, strongly in contrast with the philosopher, and some other falangist intellectuals who, being Orteguian catholic, started to advocate for a possible compatibility between Ortega's ideas and Catholicism, finding significant traces of spirituality and religiosity in his philosophy. This was the only way through which it would have been feasible to rescue Ortega from his critics within the Spanish borders, rendering possible the reading of his texts, and avoiding the censorship (MEDIN 2005, p. 176).

The celebrations for Ortega's 70th birthday, in 1953, offered a clear representation of this contraposition among orthodox intellectuals and part of the falangist movement. The

date significantly coincided with the promulgation of a decree by the Minister of Education Ruiz-Giménez, which opened up to the scholars of 1936 the possibility of entering into the academia, if they had not been engaged in the previous republican government, or had not been in contrast to Franco's regime. Interestingly enough, Ruiz Giménez claimed to be a disciple of Ortega. Even before being appointed as a minister, he admitted that the philosopher had significantly influenced his own ideas and ways of thinking. In a letter to the secretary of the Institute of Humanities in 1948, and later in an interview with one of Ortega's son, José, in 1951, he affirmed:

Yo creo – y aunque muchos, como tú sabes, me lo critiquen no me importa – que es un deber para la Nación que tu padre hable en la Universidad. Que hable a las nuevas generaciones que no le han oído. Tu padre es una fuerza que nos ha influido a todos, por distantes que en algunos puntos puedan muchos estar de él.<sup>4</sup>

During these celebrations, in 1953, Julián Marías and Paulino Garagorri organised a course on the philosopher, titled *"El Estado de la cuestión"* which took place in Madrid between March and May 1953. The organisers clearly showed their vision in the proceeding of those seminars:

Nosotros lo vemos (Ortega) como una promesa, como un pensador "de la segunda mitad del siglo XX". Queremos utilizarlo ávida y generosamente; si es posible, ir más allá de él: para un filósofo, ningún homenaje mejor que demostrar – andando: con él y por caminos que ha señalado y tal vez no recorrido – su fecundidad.<sup>5</sup>

However, these tiny signs of revitalisation within the institutions and the academia were countered by massive propaganda against the philosopher. Both through mass media and scientific journals. For instance, the Jesuit Eustaquio Guerrero, wrote in the ABC that Ortega could have been incorporated to the new intellectual canon only:

4 - Archivo Fundación José Ortega y Gasset-Gregorio Marañón, PB.374 42. *I am very grateful to the staff of the Foundation for having kindly provided me this document.*

5 - El estado de la cuestión. Problemas y posibilidades en la segunda mitad de nuestro siglo, in *Archivo Ortega y Gasset C-31/ 53, p. 7.*

Guardando la jerarquía de valores, reconociendo que el hombre sabio, literato, pensador, poeta, pero carente de fe católica '*ceteris paribus*' debe ocupar en la estimación de una España católica un lugar inferior y en modo alguno debe encomendarse, y menos sin reserva, al caudillaje intelectual de una juventud que aspira a una perfecta cultura católica, porque anhela como ideal una vida católica (GUERRERO 1953, p. 3).

Meanwhile, Vicente Marrero published in *Arbor* a note on the celebrations carried out in Madrid in which he continued to purport the thesis of Iriarte and the Jesuit group in order to discredit the works of the philosopher,<sup>6</sup> causing the reaction of the Orteguian disciples who officially protested with a letter directed to the Minister of Education, then published in *Arbor* during the same year.

Thus, a debate took place about the possibility of including Ortega within the canon of the accepted writers and intellectual figures of Spain. A debate that, in 1955, when Ortega died, seemed to involve also the Minister Ruiz-Giménez. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1955, two days after Ortega's death, Ruiz-Giménez published in *El Sol* and *El Magisterio Español* the necrology of the philosopher, calling for a "*tregua respectosa*". However, *de facto*, on that occasion Ruiz-Giménez made at least three very important hermeneutical moves which seem to have had significant political consequences: a) he sustained the thesis of the personal, political, and religious errors of Ortega y Gasset; b) he underlined the dependence of his overall thinking on National and Christian premises, making him a prophet and therefore an unwilling defender of Franco's National-Catholicism; c) lastly, he traced a continuity from Ortega's teachings up to the catholic scholars and academicians appointed during the regime.

Thus, it is possible to note an explicit attempt made by the establishment to include Ortega y Gasset among the most representative Spanish authors (ÁLVAREZ COBELAS 2004, p. 70-73), using him as a source of political legitimacy for the regime. But this position held by Ruiz-Giménez was neither common nor popular among established intellectuals.

6 - Ortega represented "el esfuerzo encaminado a descris-tianizar España más inteligente, más siste-mático y brillante que se ha visto en nuestra patria desde la apari-ción de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza". (MARRERO 1953, p. 109)

Indeed, in the immediate months after Ortega's death a violent campaign against him spread in Spain through newspapers and magazines: articles and books appeared, some of them patently opposed to the philosopher (IRIARTE 1956), others, on the contrary, less ideologically influenced, but still unable to produce a critical and reasoned balance of the activity of Ortega. This is the case of the monographic edition of *Revista de Filosofía*, published at the beginning of 1957. In spite of the wish to show a critical, respectful and authentic discussion of the activities and writings of Ortega, the uncertain knowledge of his writings and speeches, due to the silences and prejudices of the previous years, caused very poor and partial assessments of his works (BOLADO OCHOA 2011).

Interestingly, Ortega's death also constituted the stimulus for the first patent student opposition to Franco's regime. The so-called Generation 1956 manifested its disappointment in February 1956, by identifying in Ortega y Gasset the master they could not have had and that, according to them, might have contributed to opposing liberal and democratic values to the strong dictatorship imposed by Franco (ABELLÁN 2000; LIZCANO 2006).

### 3. Ortega after Ortega

By the end of the 1950s, the strong anti-Orteguian campaign had not ended yet, even though some tenuous signs of changes and divisions within the regime relevantly took place also in those years. A notable contribution to this campaign was made in particular by the publishing of the book of the Dominican Santiago Ramírez, in 1958, entitled "*La filosofía de Ortega y Gasset*". This book reinforced and systematised the main theses of the Jesuits, offering a sort of official guidebook to the main criticisms against the philosopher. Ramírez was responding to the interests of that part of the Spanish religious establishment that was trying to render Ortega a *pariah* in the academia. In his book, he directly countered the overall philosophical outlook of the Madrilenian philosopher, affirming that: "*La metafísica*

*de Ortega sería la filosofía de los eternamente despistados y descontentos. Filosofía de tarados y anormales. Eso no es metafísica, sino un vulgar humanismo morboso*" (RAMÍREZ 1958, p. 351).

Indeed, Ramírez was a very powerful and representative figure: it had been chosen to substitute Ortega as professor of Metaphysics at the Central University, but he renounced, thus permitting to Zaragüeta to do it (MORENO PESTAÑA 2013, p. 82). He was a very well-known scholar of Thomas Aquinas, and this is particularly interesting for understanding his prominence within the cultural establishment during those years. In fact, as far as the philosophical research is concerned — but a similar point could be raised in regard to the study of History — during the 1950s up to the 1970s, the main pillars of Spanish academia were the diffusion and defence of the Aristotelian and Scholastic tradition which, during all those years, represented the official philosophical orthodoxy, also thanks to its religious connotations. Significantly, Ramírez's book, as Bolado writes, "*es una aproximación inquisitorial a la filosofía de Ortega y Gasset, que busca calificarla desde el punto de vista de la pureza de la fe, según la teología y filosofía aristotélico-escolástica*" (BOLADO OCHOA 2011, p. 161).

Not surprisingly, this book was very well received, and in the following years Ortega was largely treated according to two different points of view: either being subjected to devastating criticisms to his general philosophical account, as far as it was seen as incompatible with the structure of the religious system of value of the establishment; or being simply neglected and left apart from the national intellectual pantheon.

An exception to the first of these ways of dealing with his thought is offered by the book by José Luis Aranguren, "*La ética de Ortega*" (1958), which tried to counter the very thesis of Ramírez by exhibiting the possibility of a peaceful coexistence between Ortega's philosophy and Christian principles. The historian José Antonio Maravall made a similar attempt when, in 1959, he published "*Ortega en nuestra situación*".

In Maravall's book, it is possible to notice the absence of relevant philosophical considerations, and, on the contrary, the continuous defense of Ortega as an author who could have been adapted to a Catholic mindset:

Para los católicos, que cruzan sobre el planeta pensando que su vida es posibilidad y es encargo de llegar a hacerse hijos de Dios, el contacto con la filosofía de Ortega fue y seguirá siendo una luminosa ayuda para aclararse su propio destino. Esa filosofía de la vocación y del destino es en Ortega una filosofía de la trascendencia (MARAVALL 1959, p. 46).

The works of Julian Marías and Francisco Romero represent a second exception to the general abandonment of Ortega's philosophy. They tended to show a very different picture of the influence and importance of Ortega within Spanish culture. For instance, Francisco Romero published in 1960 a book entitled "*Ortega y Gasset y el problema de la jefatura espiritual*" (significantly published in Buenos Aires) where he argued that Ortega played in Spain a fundamental role in determining its spiritual heritage. He defined him as a *jefe espiritual*, defining this figure as "*una función social, no una tarea que pueda ser cumplida en la soledad*" (ROMERO 1960). However, this, as well as the very important contributions by Marías, constituted very marginal attempts to integrate Ortega within the Spanish culture. Marías, in particular, wrote in 1960 a very significant book — "*Ortega Circunstancia y vocación*" — that constituted the first attempt to systematise the entire Ortega's philosophy, presenting it under a unifying theoretical framework. He did so since, as he wrote in the prologue to the first edition of the book: "*Ortega ocupa un puesto único por su cualidad y condición en la historia de España y en general, de los pueblos de lengua española*". However, "*Es un hecho que la filosofía de Ortega, y en general su obra intelectual, es poseída hoy adecuadamente solo por muy contadas personas, y desde luego no consta públicamente de manera suficiente*" (MARÍAS 1984, p. 24-26).

The beginning of the 1960s marked a new change in the reception of Ortega's thought, in particular thanks to a new generational turnover within the academia, and within other means of cultural diffusion that were difficult for the regime to directly control. The years between 1955 and 1960 were characterised by a vast increasing of the number and quality of editors, and by a more vital intellectual scenario (MATEOS LÓPEZ 2008). It started to emerge also a stronger *antifranquismo* which, however, from 1963 onward (GINARD FÉRON 2008), was vehemently contrasted and repressed by the *Tribunal de Orden Público*.

This variegated panorama offered the possibility of a relevant innovation both in historical and philosophical trends. Concerning this second aspect, the significant importance of foreign philosophies, such as Structuralism and Marxism, opened a new radical phase of liberal and heterodox intellectual activity in which the works of Ortega could have been reintegrated not in the name of their pureness and traditionalism, but in the name of their appeal to modernity.<sup>7</sup> The new *Revista de Occidente* became the main vehicle of the renewed liberal approach to philosophy and, therefore, to Ortega's heritage. Nevertheless, among the liberal intellectual circles Ortega was surely respected and seen as an important source, but at the same time his texts were only very partially known, due to their limited circulation. This partial knowledge characterised this first new rediscovery of Ortega's legacy, marked by a tendency of dismissing his own writings, in unwilling accordance with the Jesuits' theses. This fact, at the same time, implied a wish of overcoming his own philosophy during the first part of the 1980s, even if that very philosophy was still not well known. As Rodríguez Huéscar critically wrote during those years: "*Para ser de verdad heterodoxo, lo primero que hace falta es ser docto, es decir, haber digerido y asimilado la doctrina de la que se disiente*" (RODRÍGUEZ HUÉSCAR 1985, p. 28).

To briefly summarise, from 1965 up to the end of Franco's dictatorship, Ortega surely did not represent one of the main

7 - This new trend countered the previous hegemonic tradition of the 1950s when "el lenguaje liberal acerca de la organización política del Estado había sido triturado por la retórica fascista y nacionalcatólica". GINARD FÉRON 2008, p. 226.

reference points of Spanish culture. In fact, on the one hand he was largely condemned and ostracised by the official propaganda. On the other, he was no longer fashionable for an emerging generation of scholars looking for new cultural references outside of Spain. Nevertheless, among his direct or indirect disciples, he continued to be vividly defended through an unceasing editorial effort. This strenuous defence was marked by a not always critical assessment of the works of the master, and by a large dismissing of his own texts. It was in particular from the middle of the 1970s that a group of Orteguian scholars called for a radical change, characterised by a critical perspective on the author in the light of the most recent international development of philosophical trends (FERRATER MORA 1974). However, despite the incredible efforts of this small group of independent scholars, until the democratic transition, the works of Ortega did not find the right conditions to become part of the Spanish intellectual tradition. Moreover, even the most well documented works, such as the one of Gonzalo Redondo (1970), would very rarely consider the life and works of Ortega y Gasset after 1936, reducing their analyses to the period that preceded the civil war. A way to testify that Ortega's legacy could not coexist with the regime, being exclusively relegated to a dead past. Indeed, Ortega and the liberal tradition, which had indeed to be invented by the new emerging self-proclaimed elite, would have particularly benefitted of the change represented by a progressive swift towards a democratic outlook:

En fin, la idea de la "prosecución de la corriente historiográfica liberal" hizo fortuna en el seno de la comunidad de historiadores españoles desde mediados de los años setenta. Por un lado, lo hizo en tanto condición necesaria de la segunda *hora cero* de la profesión y, acto seguido, en cuanto efecto derivado del intento de legitimación del tardío, y muy rápido a la vez, proceso de *refundación/normalización* disciplinar del contemporaneísmo español (PEIRÓ MARTÍN 2013, p. 246).

## 4. Ortega's revival

The huge literature that currently exists on the philosophy and life of Ortega y Gasset has reached its current amplitude in particular thanks to an increasing number of studies on the author published from 1983 onwards. The centenary from his birth, surrounded by a completely renewed political scenario, marked the beginning of a new and critical way of considering the relevance of the philosopher in the Spanish context, both in a historical and philosophical sense. In fact, until the democratic transition, Ortega had played only a marginal role compared to other intellectuals of his age. For this reason, during the previous period both for the public opinion and for the majority of academicians the "*dioses intelectuales fueron otros*" (LLEDÓ 1985). A particularly important moment in this new rediscovery of Ortega's philosophy is 1983, probably "*el año [que] pasará a la historia de la cultura hispánica como el 'año de Ortega y Gasset'*" (AYALA 1986). That year, at the same time, coincided with the very important University reform purported by José María Maravall, which imposed a significant turnover within the academia, opening the way to a generation of young historians and scholars<sup>8</sup>. Remarkably, Ortega was, between 1975 and 1985, the most edited author in Spain, both concerning the publishing of his books and studies on his philosophy and life (BOLADO OCHOA 2005).

8 - Ley Orgánica 11/1983, 25 agosto, de Reforma Universitaria, in «Boletín Oficial del Estado, n. 209, 1 September 1983, p. 24034-24042.

In addition, the *Fundación Ortega y Gasset*, founded in 1978 by Soledad Ortega Spottorno, reached an increasing importance within the academia. The new political situation marked a new trend for the Spanish historiography, which directly and positively influenced also the Orteguitan studies. In the words of Peiró Martín:

Después de 1979 la historiografía española no fue la misma. Y no lo fue porque un grupo de investigadores abrieron caminos reales para su desarrollo, precisamente, por haber establecido la conciencia y el imperativo ético para el historiador de escribir en

libertad, de aceptar la pluralidad de las voces en el estudio del pasado y perder miedo al presente (PEIRÓ MARTÍN 2013, p. 81).

From the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, and in particular thanks to the celebration of the centenary from his birth, Ortega's works began also to spread more relevantly among other European countries. During the 1990s, the study of Ortega was favoured by a very fruitful environment, which, thanks to the birth of associations such as the *Asociación de Hispanismo Filosófico*, and the *Centro de Estudio Orteguianos*, with his related journal *Revista de Estudios Orteguianos* (2000-now), guaranteed the premises for an in-depth study of the philosopher.

Contrary to the previous moments of Spanish history, this new revival was characterised by a significant philosophical and historical criticism, avoiding previous partisanship. Nevertheless, the scenario in which this revival took place, and the interests at stake, partially impeded its complete neutrality and scientific nature: to get Ortega accepted it was necessary to draw a line of continuity between his thinking and the new democratic political scenario in the name of his liberal philosophy. This peculiar account was largely similar to the overall trend within Spanish historiography in which:

Reflexiones sobre la historia de la disciplina les llevarán a reconstruir un canon histórico de la historiografía española políticamente presentable, sobre todo en el terreno de lo contemporáneo, argumentando acerca de la mejor tradición liberal y considerándose, por extensión, los herederos legítimos de su legado (PEIRÓ MARTÍN 2013, p. 240).

As a consequence, the last period of Ortega's life, politically ambiguous and complicated, was simply cancelled or very rarely included within the narration of his life, so to avoid possible misunderstandings. Ironically enough, this aspect constitutes a peculiar feature of continuity between the Orteguian historiography during and after Franco's regime. In fact, even

if it would be both a historical and theoretical mistake to consider Ortega as an authoritarian or anti-democratic thinker (CEREZO GALÁN 1984; SAN MARTÍN 1994 AND 1998; PAREDES MARTÍN 1994), the last decades of his life were simply not considered by the majority of the scholars. In this way, they were trying to render his overall philosophical account more systematic and coherent with his personal choices. His mere coexistence with the regime rendered him a possible target for criticisms and reproaches, without remembering that, as proven in this article, Ortega had been violently attacked by the majority of the scholars who were part of the dictatorship's establishment.

As a consequence, only recently some general books about his life have started to consider the last period of his life (ZAMORA BONILLA 2002; 2013; GRACIA 2014). Moreover, some studies have also tried to analyse those years in order to deconstruct some historiographical myths, questioning the very nature of Ortega's liberalism (MORÁN 1998) and of that of his disciples (JULIÁ 2004; 2009). Interesting lights have been shed on the years of his physical and intellectual exile, calling into question the existence of a real separation from the politics and culture of his own country also during that period (FOURMONT-GIUSTINIANI 2009; 2014; FERREIRA 2014; CAMPOMAR 2016).

Thus, it is possible to affirm that Ortega's reception has always been strictly intertwined with the political history of his country, both during and after his life. From the 1920s, in particular, in case of relevant political change, his philosophy started to be interpreted with different purposes by opposing fronts. This phenomenon exacerbated during the 1930s, with the difficulties of conciliating the former leader of the *Agrupación a Servicio de la República* with the ideology of the right movements, contributing to his progressive decline within the Spanish intellectual pantheon. On the other hand, during those same years, Ortega's ambiguous relationship with his own past, and sometimes also with the present of his nation,

caused a rejection also among left minded intellectuals. For this reason, with the establishment of the New State, Ortega could count on very little support, his ideas were ostracised and his works suffered from frequent and unfair censorships and criticisms. Ortega's ideas only sporadically entered in the cultural and political discourse, being instrumentally manipulated by conflicting political groups struggling for the hegemony within the regime. Contrary to what happened in South America, the few disciples that remained in Spain were unable to develop a critical reading of his works, which risked to be banned. The most frequent readings provided within the Spanish borders were attempts of rendering Ortega compatible with the new ideology, in particular with the principles of Catholicism. This situation only changed starting from the 1970s, with the slow modernisation of Franco's regime. In those years, new readings and interpretations of his works and life emerged, and with the democratic transition, Ortega returned to play a very important role in another instrumental attempt: that of building a conceptual framework and tradition for the new Spanish liberal democracy.

Thus, the history of Ortega's reception continues to be very closely linked to the political history of his homeland, and with the history of Spanish historiography, representing a very interest case study to understand the development of this discipline in the country along with its continuous political changes.

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