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## ORTEGA Y GASSET AND THE QUESTION OF THE BODY

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My essay is devoted to the very early and attractive understanding of the lived body in Ortega y Gasset's thought. I focus especially on the text "Vitality, Soul, Spirit" of 1925, which can be considered a proto-phenomenological approach to the issue of embodiment. Ortega identifies "vitality" with "the intrabody" and makes the latter the founding dimension of subjectivity, at the basis of the affective sphere ("soul") and at the basis of the intellectual and volitional sphere ("spirit"). In a manner very close to Husserl's unpublished manuscripts, he also shows how the body is the only reality of which there is simultaneously external perception, as if it were just another thing in the world that everyone else can see, and internal perception, which only the self can have and feel. The study also points out, however, the two major difficulties that I detect in Ortega's precocious attempt. A first doubt concerns the too sharp stratification of vitality, soul and spirit, as can be seen in the analysis of the experiences of pain and of mobility. A second doubt concerns the ontological hesitations surrounding Ortega's position, which is torn between a coherent phenomenological perspective and a vitalist position in which my body is only an emanation of the lifestream of the universe.

*Keywords:* Ortega y Gasset, body, phenomenology, vitality, first-person perspective, vitalism, pain, self-movement.

## ХОСЕ ОРТЕГА-И-ГАССЕТ И ВОПРОС О ТЕЛЕ

### АГУСТИН СЕРАНО ДЕ АРО

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Моя статья посвящена раннему и привлекающему к себе внимание пониманию живого тела в мысли Ортеги-и-Гассета. В частности, я сосредотачиваюсь на его тексте 1925 г. «Витальность, душа, дух», который может рассматриваться в качестве прото-феноменологического подхода

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к проблеме телесности. Ортега отождествляет «витальность» и «интра-тело», а последнее делает основополагающим измерением субъективности на базе аффективной сферы («души»), а также интеллектуальной и волевой сферы («духа»). Он также в манере очень близкой неопубликованным рукописям Гуссерля показывает, что тело — это единственная реальность, относительно которой одновременно имеются как внешнее восприятие, как если бы оно было всего лишь еще одной вещью в мире, которую может видеть кто угодно, так и внутреннее восприятие, которое только я сам могу иметь и чувствовать. Вместе с тем, в исследовании также отмечаются две главные трудности, которые я обнаруживаю в этой ранней попытке Ортеги. Первое сомнение касается слишком резкого расслоения витальности, души и духа, как это можно увидеть при анализе опыта боли и движения. Второе сомнение относится к онтологическим колебаниям, связанным с позицией Ортеги, которая разрывается между последовательно феноменологической перспективой и виталистской позицией, согласно которой мое тело является лишь эманацией жизненного потока Вселенной.

*Ключевые слова:* Ортега-и-Гассет, тело, феноменология, витальность, перспектива от первого лица, витализм, боль, самодвижение.

## 1

There is an increasingly shared conviction nowadays concerning the decisive presence of phenomenology in the development of Ortega y Gasset's philosophy. Only a few decades ago the question of whether or not Ortega belonged to the phenomenological movement drew little attention or was an undervalued issue. The circumstance that the young Ortega had completed his philosophical training in Germany in 1911 with an intense reading of *Logical Investigations* and that this enthusiasm subsequently continued in Madrid with a reading of the newly published *Ideas I*, culminating in the very same year (1913) in what are very likely the first articles published outside Germany on transcendental phenomenology—all this was generally regarded, at best, merely as an obvious set of facts, but these facts were not granted any particular meaning with regard to the articulation and development of his own original philosophy. The turning point came only in 1984 with the notable book by Pedro Cerezo, *La voluntad de aventura*. Subsequently, Javier San Martín's tenacity in a wide range of books, articles, and public interventions has strongly served to discredit the earlier dominant view that disregarded Ortega's involvement with phenomenology (San Martín, 1992; San Martín, 1994; San Martín, 1998; San Martín, 2012). Meanwhile, however, it now seems of higher theoretical interest to ponder Ortega's peculiar way of appropriating phenomenology and finding inspiration in it, rather than continuing to discuss whether this link itself is well grounded. What is his personal voice, his peculiar ontological and methodological emphasis when analysing human life as the immanent experience of our worldly circumstance? How could Ortega's ra-

tio-vitalism be characterised not only in contrast both to realistic and to constitutive phenomenology, but also in contrast to Heideggerian fundamental ontology and to the initial models of French phenomenology—all trends that were contemporary with the course of his creative life?

Certainly, there have been some recent significant contributions devoted to outlining the theoretical profile of the Spanish thinker within contemporary phenomenology. Here one might immediately think of Miguel García-Baró's excellent book *Sentir y pensar la vida*. However, my purpose in this paper is much more modest. I intend to cast some light on a specific problematic, one that is not only characteristic of mature Husserlian phenomenology and of post-Husserlian phenomenology, but is a topic towards which Ortega himself showed a special sensibility—namely, the bodily condition of human subjectivity. The primal fact and principle that conscious life experiences the world firsthand through the body, as well as the fact that this body is itself experienced in a constant and peculiar way, did not remain unnoticed to the great promoter of Spanish philosophy and phenomenology. Among Ortega's many theoretical and practical pursuits, he also aspired to the status of a thinker who looked for a fresh start rather than accepting either received philosophical views of the body on the one hand or the prevailing cultural habits of dismissing the body on the other, and he was keenly sensitive to the implications of this dismissal for our very abilities to appreciate bodily experience. The Spanish philosopher lucidly noted that the new school of philosophy called *phenomenology* augured or promised, or at least permitted, more than any philosophy of the past, a new descriptive approach to the body's presence and reality. Neither the objectivistic reduction of the body to *res extensa*—to the anatomical machine of limbs and functions—nor the subjectivistic reconversion of the body to *res cogitans*, as the exterior border of thought, of sentiment, of will, were faithful to the phenomena themselves, which call for situating embodiment in the operative centre of human life.

In addition to this possible theoretical innovation, the “bodily turn,” so to speak, corresponded in his view to a distinct and propitious historical sensitivity. The philosophical topic went hand in hand with a new cultural evaluation, which he assessed with true enthusiasm. In 1925, Ortega indicated how “the European human being is on the path towards a resurrection of the body—and I use precisely this expression because Catholicism is undoubtedly the religion that at bottom has the least hostility towards the body.” (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a, 568); (Ortega y Gasset, 1954, 320)<sup>1</sup>. Such a resurrection, confirmed in the twenties in the boom of sports, in all the arts, and in the new interest

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<sup>1</sup> I will be giving two references of Ortega's quotations from the essay “Vitalidad, alma, espíritu.” The first refers to the recent Spanish edition of *Collected Works* (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a). The second, for non-Spanish readers, is to the German translation of 1954 „Vitalität, Seele, Geist“ (Ortega y

in erotic life, is, according to José Gaos, one of Ortega's lucid prophecies that must be classified among those that were entirely fulfilled (Gaos, 2013, 73, 82–85).

In any case, in a multitude of Ortega's pages and subjects, the body appears on the one hand as a fertile source of innumerable metaphors, a womb of the incessant plasticity of his language. On the other hand, the presence of the body provides a clear non-intellectualistic bias to his thought, a trait of primary worldliness—and yet another source of his “bodily turn” might be his early training in anatomy and physiology in Leipzig around 1905. All these aspects undoubtedly contribute to the peculiar atmosphere of *Meditaciones del Quijote*, in which the ego takes shape in a circumstance that one is not only open to in a bodily way, but in which one is physically rooted:

My natural exit towards the universe is through the mountain passes of the Guadarrama or the plain of Ontígola. This sector of circumstantial reality forms the other half of my person: only through it can I integrate myself and be fully myself. The most recent biological science studies the living organism as a unit composed of the body and its particular environment so that the life process consists not only of the adaptation of the body to its environment but also of the adaptation of the environment to the body. (Ortega y Gasset, 2004b, 756–757; Ortega y Gasset, 1961, 45)

But it is in the decade of the twenties when Ortega's spontaneous sympathy for the corporeal leads to a truly philosophical enquiry into the phenomenology and ontology of the body. His thematic interest in embodiment becomes explicit in various writings between 1920 and 1925: “Don Quixote' in the Secondary School” (“El Quijote' en la escuela”), “Vitality, Soul, Spirit” (“Vitalidad, alma, espíritu”), “Expression as a Cosmic Phenomenon” (“Sobre la expresión fenómeno cósmico”), and in the idea of life that *The Theme of our Time* (*El tema de nuestro tiempo*) pursues. The 1925 lectures on “Vitalidad, alma, espíritu” play a crucial role in this problematic. This constitutes, in my opinion, the first explicit approach in Spanish-speaking phenomenology to the issue of one's own body. In the following pages, I will focus principally on this text.

Let me call attention to the fact that remarkably enough, around the early twenties, phenomenological treatments of embodiment can only be traced in the works of Max Scheler—in *The Idols of Self-Knowledge* (1911, 1915) and in *Formalism in Ethics* (1913, 1916)—and in the published part of Edith Stein's thesis *On the Problem of Empathy* (1917). The treasures of Husserl's research, especially the decisive developments of *Ideas II*, remained unpublished. And we are still at least a decade away from French phenomenology making this issue a badge of its identity and a central motive of an

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Gasset, 1954). The English translation is due to Elisabeth Behnke, since, as far as I know, there is no English version of this work available.

incessant creativity that persists to this day. Unfortunately, the trajectory of Ortega's inceptual original work on this theme was, in my opinion, the reverse. In the decades of the thirties and forties his interest in the subject did not decline, but his theoretical perspective had changed under Heidegger's influence, and consequently—at least in this regard—it lost its initial radicalism.

In any case, however, the topic of body and embodiment in the philosopher and phenomenologist Ortega deserves greater attention than it has received among scholars (Lasaga, 1992; Serrano de Haro, 2013; Gutiérrez, 2016; Gobbi, 2022; Parente, 2023)<sup>2</sup>. But it would also benefit, in my understanding, from a rather more critical view towards the achievements of the philosopher. The assessments of Laín Entralgo and of Nelson Orringer concerning the fact that no contemporary philosopher offers better perspectives than Ortega with regard to “a complete theory of the human body” (Orringer, 1999, 51); similarly, (Laín, 1989, 115–116) are, in my opinion, well intended but very exaggerated. They also conceal the fact that the limitations of Ortega's understanding of Husserl's phenomenology took their toll on this issue and left their mark in certain unresolved ambiguities concerning the body as it is experienced in the first person. However, this aspect of Ortega's interpretation of Husserlian phenomenology will not be considered here. Instead, I will follow the thread of “Vitalidad, alma, espíritu” and offer an initial view of Ortega's understanding of the body before highlighting the internal difficulties that confront his attempt.

## 2

In “Vitality, Soul, Spirit,” the three dimensions mentioned in the title make up, in Ortega's words, “a tectonics of the person,” “a great topography of our intimate being” (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a, 570; Ortega y Gasset, 1954, 322). As essential structures in every human life, they are called upon to offer the essential basis for a philosophical anthropology. Thus, the notion of the human being is initially constructed in a commitment to multiplicity or plurality. Instead of a theory of rationality as the unique characteristic of the human self, this triad of levels alludes to heterogeneous forms of expressing the notion of an ego, three ways of being a self.

Beginning from above, from the higher layer, spirit designates, in a restrictive manner, the acts of will and of thought. The spiritual self is therefore the volitional subject that puts forward rational purposes and the intelligent subject that thinks, understands with evidence, and judges with possible truth. Ortega adheres to the Sche-

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<sup>2</sup> The list of References includes the most significant Spanish publications on Ortega's phenomenology of the body.

lerian concept that these spiritual acts, oriented towards the order of the ideal and the normative, are characterised by being occasional and discontinuous, “mental lightning flashes” without any duration. This is a doubtful assumption—to judge requires time, as does making up one’s mind, an event necessarily retained and held in subsequent instants. But in any case, the spirit tends towards objectivity and universality in a rational vein. Under this upper level, a second, immediately underlying dimension must be mentioned: namely, the soul that constantly beats and stirs. In this peculiar use, “soul” embraces the vast world of emotional life, including desires, quests, wants, impulses—the complete “keyboard of inclinations” of a person (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a, 576; Ortega y Gasset, 1954, 331), with the sole exception of bodily tendencies. These sentiments are lasting states that may undergo rational judgement by the spirit and perhaps may even be subjected to the will. But by itself, the spiritual dimension of the self would be incapable of arousing sentiments or annihilating moods. The most intimate core of the self of each person, the individuating dimension, would reside, then, in this intermediate stratum of affections and emotions. However, under the soul’s emotional fabric there still beats and stirs an even more primary stratum—namely, vitality, which is to be identified with corporeality, with embodiment. Thus, the elemental sense of the self—the ultimate base of the personality, the egoic primal reality—refers to having a body in the first person, to being embodied.

In Ortega’s treatment of vitality as embodiment, and vice versa, it is very clear that the lived body is not an objective, mechanical, anonymous totality, a variant of *res extensa*. Vitality does not even have to do with the organic being that is endowed with a complex anatomical structure and executes a myriad of biological functions. Above all, vitality is the body that the self makes its own, the body that sustains his/her entire person. It is the body of which I am aware, not from the outside, but rather in its core, in a phenomenological and ontological circularity situated beyond mind-body dualism: living in my body is inseparable from the body itself, and this bodily reality is wholly permeated with affection and consciousness. In Ortega’s words, “Thus one part of our person is infused into or rooted in the body and becomes, as it were, a corporeal soul” (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a, 568; Ortega y Gasset, 1954, 320). According to this peculiar status, all the phenomena that form part of this corporeal vitality are conscious experiences and are lived immediately by the self. In fact, Ortega offers an initial list of events and situations in which the immanent consciousness of the body is merged with the reality of the body in the indissoluble unity that is embodied existence: “the instincts of defence and offence, of power and of play, the organic sensations, pleasure and pain, sexual attraction, sensitivity for the rhythms of music and dance, etc., etc.” (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a, 568; Ortega y Gasset, 1954, 320).

In my opinion, this emphatic identification of vitality—the very condition of living—with the body as experienced is a first great contribution of the essay of 1925. Bodily life lies at the base of all subjective existence and is, in a very similar vein to *Ideas II*, the ground for all intentional activity, be it emotional, volitional, or intellectual. It is fitting to suggest that like Husserl, Ortega is exploring the initial passivity of experience and trying to illuminate the connection of this sensitive and emotional passivity with the body. It is then not surprising that Ortega sought a different term for this key category, proposing the Spanish neologism “*intracuerpo*”: “inrbody” (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a, 570<sup>3</sup>). This term was never successful, and even its creator seemed to move away from it. For example, in “Sobre la expresión, fenómeno cósmico,” Ortega mobilizes instead the term invoked by Merleau-Ponty after several decades, and later on by Michel Henry as well—“*carne*” (*chair*): “There are two species of body: mineral and flesh.” Incidentally, this essay continues with a magnificent fragment on the intimacy or immanence of life; a reader who came to the text without knowing who wrote it might well think that it came from the hand of Michel Henry:

Mineral is complete exteriority; its inside is a relative inside; we break it and what was the interior portion becomes external, patent, superficial. But the inside of the flesh never itself becomes external, even if we slash it: it is radical, absolutely internal. It is, by essence, intimate. We call this intimacy life. A hidden, non-spatial reality, a mystery, a secret. (Ortega y Gasset, 2004d, 680)

But I would like to point out a second outstanding “somatological” contribution in Ortega’s outline. It consists of the clarity with which he highlights the fact that the initial access to the body always involves a dual form of experience. In principle, the body is revealed in two heterogeneous ways, and this irreducible duality, far from being a mere curiosity, is a feature entirely distinctive of the phenomenon; in the whole world, only one’s own body presents this peculiarity of manifesting itself by two different channels:

For the human being is the sole object of the world of which we possess a double knowledge arising from radically different experiences. We know it from the outside as we know trees, swans and stars. But in addition, each individual lives his/her body from within, having an inner perception or intuition of it. (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a, 570; Ortega y Gasset, 1954, 323)

The paradigmatic example to which Ortega turns in order to display this dual access is precisely the phenomenon of walking. Local movement takes a different

<sup>3</sup> The term was translated into German, incidentally, as „*Binnenkörper*“ (Ortega y Gasset, 1954, 322) without considering that Husserl himself used the expression „*Innenleiblichkeit*“.

sense, almost an equivocal meaning, depending on whether we are referring to the body that I feel and in which I live, or else to the body of any other real or possible subject. When it is a matter of a “you/he/she walks,” to walk is fundamentally a visual phenomenon: a human figure moves in an environment of perceived objects against a basically stable background. The perception of this change of position of the other self takes place in a way similar to grasping the movement of a swan, or of an oncoming vehicle, or of an object that is carried by the wind: a perceptive correlate, a sensory noema, is given to me in my field of intuition. In contrast, when it comes to “I walk,” the visual phenomenon disappears almost entirely, as if the occurrence is converted for me into something invisible. At best, I may manage to see the tips of my toes in their coming and going or the swing of my arms. Instead, a proliferation of tactile sensations takes on the leading role, a stirring of muscular sensations of tension and effort. In the case of my own body, both modes of access coalesce; for myself, my body is a visual object, a thing more or less visible among the patent things of the environment, while at the same time my intrabody “does not have colour or well-defined shape” (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a, 571; Ortega y Gasset, 1954, 324).

Ortega’s readers today may be surprised by the striking lucidity of this “dual meaning” of embodied phenomena. Walking, stopping, turning, acting, hurting, enjoying—all the actions and passions the body enters into—are presented in an essentially distinct way, nearly equivocal, depending on whether they are predicated of me—of my body—or of the other’s body, of the other selves. And there is the added complication that in the case of my own embodiment, an integration of the dual heterogeneous modes of access takes place. Although to a considerable extent Ortega’s account is incomplete, it can still be said that here he is coming close to a transcendental understanding of the lived body. He is not only underscoring the way in which the intrabody can be the core of our being, but is simultaneously specifying how this vitality operates as the source and framework for any other phenomenon: what is accessible only from my own peculiar immanent experience simultaneously plays a decisive role in the intuitive givenness of anything else. Thus, the immanence of life and the transcendence of the worldly are linked in the very way in which one’s own lived body is most originally given. In Ortega’s own words, which unfortunately neither the 1925 essay nor his later thinking elucidate further:

Both our psychic life and our external world are conditioned by this perception of our body from within—a perception we take with us wherever we go, so that to a certain extent it becomes the framework *within which everything appears to us*. (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a, 571; Ortega y Gasset, 1954, 324)



At the same time, however, such an innovative and advanced approach to bodily experience runs into significant difficulties of both a descriptive and an ontological order. Whenever phenomenology has rigorously approached the peculiar reality of the body, ambiguities have bloomed, and these must be considered and reconsidered. In the case of Ortega, perhaps the main problem lies in the fact that the Spanish philosopher did not continue struggling with these difficulties, and his promising essay remained isolated as an almost laconic proposal that is clearly insufficient to the magnitude of the matter. I would accordingly like to indicate two large domains in which, in my opinion, Ortega's view demands the meticulous continuation that he himself did not provide. A first domain concerns the content of the description, or more precisely, the effective articulation and borders of this "tectonics of subjectivity." A second domain, more general, has to do with what could be called Ortega's ontology of vitality and his hesitations regarding the principles upon which it should be grounded.

Concerning his description of subjectivity, it can be asked if the criterion for distinguishing the three strata of vitality, soul, and spirit is clear enough. From the perspective of a phenomenological approach to the body, the main question is whether the embodied experiences analysed confirm the differentiation of levels, and the articulation between these levels, that the Madrid philosopher assumes. Let us consider the two major phenomena that Ortega himself invokes: pain—physical pain, localized in one part of the body—and movement, the self-movement of the body by which the living person changes location in his/her environment. There is no doubt, of course, that the painful event belongs to the primary stratum of vitality and therefore appears, along with pleasure, in Ortega's list of vital experiences. But on the other hand, pain is experienced as suffering, as felt adversity, and this points to the emotional stratum of the self, suggesting that pain belongs to the stratum of the soul. In fact, Ortega himself refers to "toothache" as a paradigmatic example of "what is mine," even if, as an individuating "mineness," it does not belong to the ego, to the "spiritual self" (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a, 577; Ortega y Gasset, 1954, 331–332). So pain is not merely a sensation within bodily vitality, but is also a disturbing feeling or emotional alteration within the soul. Moreover, in a certain sense, physical pain does indeed gain access to the area of the spiritual self as well. In contrast to Scheler's description, to which Ortega is too much indebted, the egoic centre of volitional and intellectual acts is also touched, reached by pain, as Buytendijk highlights in his groundbreaking study *Über Schmerz* (Buytendijk, 1948, ch. I, 2, IV, 1–2): just as a target is hit by a projectile, the ego itself

is shaken and hurt by pain, and this distress takes place passively whether I want it to or not, whether I condemn it or not. In Ortega's argument,

“my” impulses, inclinations, loves, hates, desires are mine, but they are not “me”: “The self” is there for the course of the impulse as a spectator, intervenes in it as a police chief, rules over it as a judge, disciplines it as a captain. (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a, 577; Ortega y Gasset, 1954, 332)

In other words, the self adopts a voluntary posture in relation to his/her emotion, and this position is in good measure imperative, governing. However, the descriptive difficulty—and what is left out of the analysis—resides in the fact that this same self is, let me repeat, the target that is suffering the attack of pain, the one who is affected, distressed, unsettled by it. As Husserl puts it, the ego-pole of acts is also the pole of affections: the self that reacts to pain is the same centre that is suffering it. This does not mean to call into doubt the fact that the self can behave centrifugally towards pain just as he/she does to other emotions, and accordingly to act, so to speak, as a police chief, a captain, or a judge; instead, it highlights that before doing so, he/she has already been the centripetal term of the affection, its passive victim, and continues being so even while evaluating it and countering it. This situation does not destroy Ortega's topography, but casts doubt on his tendency to assume a sharp demarcation of the strata so that the upper stratum might remain entirely autonomous. In short, his clear hierarchy of subjective life turns out to be problematic.

Something similar, but now in the opposite direction of the architectonics of subjectivity, occurs with bodily movement. Here what Ortega's scheme neglects is the fundamental intervention of the self in the action of moving the body. He only underscores the somatological factor of effort-tension and the proliferation of sensations, but the power that the self exercises immediately on his/her body in walking cannot be ignored. It is the ego who activates the movement, who determines the direction, who modulates the gait—faster, slower, towards the right or the left—and it is also the ego who puts an end to the movement of approaching or going away, and who now maintains the body in relative rest. This stoppage, on the other hand, is not an inertial state of a physical body, but rather a bodily position that the self adopts, that he/she maintains and readjusts frequently, whether sitting in a chair at work, driving a car, watching a movie, etc. Mature phenomenological analysis of kinaesthesia emphasizes the phenomenological principle that the ego is, above all, a power of motility—the capability of moving oneself, that is, of moving one's own body. Consequently, on a far more basic plane than that of the intelligence and will, there is an I-can involved in motility and in experiencing through movement, and this I-can, which precedes the

I-will and founds the I-think, is at once subjectivity and corporeality. The embodied self, walking, turning, stopping, acting, is thus not situated at the peak of the subjective intimacy of life—the spiritual stratum—but is at the same time immersed in the primordial experience of life as a whole, where bodily condition, vitality, and egoic subjectivity converge.

Let us go on now from these descriptive difficulties to Ortega's ontological hesitations. "Vitality, Soul, Spirit" is mainly written in a keen phenomenological perspective of analysis that detects the different senses in which the ego experiences itself and that examines the immanent structures of the phenomena as they are lived. Undoubtedly, Ortega is putting the style of a descriptive philosophy into practice, and his attempt at a philosophical anthropology is shaped by the same attitude. However, it is as if the Madrid thinker does not completely assume the universality of the phenomenological perspective, and as if in the end, he did not believe that a purely phenomenological philosophy was possible. A certain worldview—an understanding of the world as a whole that is impossible to account for in a first-person analysis—supplements the immanent understanding of vitality and provides a sort of cosmic support for the pure phenomena. This worldview seems to be an all-encompassing vitalism, so that as an individual organism, one's own lived body winds up amounting to a contingent outpouring of the stream of life of the universe. It is therefore not experience in the first person that, once purified, sets the ultimate norm; instead, it is the effective reality of what there is, of what truly exists, that has the last word in understanding. This deeper truth, in a certain way a meta-phenomenological assertion, links the intrabody to an undercurrent of vital impulse as the law of the cosmos and the ultimate factum of the universe. In the following quote, one may observe with enormous clarity how Ortega moves between both paradigms and how, after all, the vitalistic grasp of reality winds up gaining ontological preference:

If the phenomenon we call vitality corresponds to an objective reality, then we are led to believe that this reality must be something like a unitary cosmic stream, which means that there is a sole universal vitality of which each organism is but a pulse or a moment. The most pressing biological problems will remain unintelligible unless we suppose this unique harmonious life pervading the entire cosmos. (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a, 581; Ortega y Gasset, 1954, 337)

The ontological difference between the intrabody as a lived body in the first person, on the one hand, and on the other hand, my body as a moment of the cosmic stream, an outpouring of animality in universal life, clearly conditions the way in which the phenomena are thematized. When Ortega clings to the phenomenological

imperative of undergone and effective experience, he denies any immediate anatomical equivalent for the intrabody; *Leib* is not simply *Körper*, not even *Binnenkörper*. When Ortega endorses the demand of vitalism, the intrabody tends to be, on the contrary, the anatomical interior, the deepest entrails of the organism, the seat or vehicle of the vital force. Pain in my flesh and the motility that I exercise in my body are offered only to the living being that suffers the discomfort or that carries out the movement. In contrast, “this terrifying event that is the flow of blood through our veins, sometimes arriving only with effort at our fingers and our toes, with its pulse pounding in our temples” (Ortega y Gasset, 2004a, 572; Ortega y Gasset, 1954, 325) pertains instead to the intrabody in the organic sense, and only in a relative manner, since the flow of my blood can indeed be given, firsthand, in the external perception of third persons and constitutes a mundane or cosmic event that the doctor can examine, compare, record, etc. In “‘Don Quixote’ in the Secondary School” (“‘El Quijote’ en la escuela”) of 1920, perhaps Ortega’s most vibrant defence of biologicistic vitalism, the radical and primary vitality is not identified with organized life, which is recognized in the organs of the living being, all endowed with colour, shape, and objective identity, but rather with the “organizing life,” the “living life” that underlies and stimulates such organization—the life that has even created it (Ortega y Gasset, 2004c, 405–408). Here too one recognizes the same ontological problem: namely, the vital impulse is equally manifested in phenomena lived in the first person (such as pain, or fleeing due to fear) and in other heterogeneous processes not lived and not liveable from within (such as internal secretions, bodily fluids, etc.). The former are given in plenitude in my own experience; the latter come to appearance only when they are objectified through intersubjective knowledge. In short, what is the ultimate criterion of embodiment? Is vitality an immanent experience of an embodied subjectivity, or is it the cosmic energy of the all-inclusive whole of which I am just an accidental outpouring?

I do not mean to deny that both ontological alternatives have to face important challenges and that finding meaningful links and fruitful connections between them is still a highly relevant philosophical task. My point here is only to stress that Ortega moves far too peacefully and quite unconcernedly from one view to the other, from one methodological commitment to the other. His idea of a new philosophical anthropology as a key discipline for philosophy is surely in need of both approaches, but the problems I have mentioned reinforce the impression that an anthropology conducted in the natural attitude cannot be the point of departure, but rather the point of arrival of first philosophy.

This beginning of an immanent, general conceptualization of bodily self-experience did not find any further development in Spanish phenomenology. Later on, Ortega himself moved away from this theme due to his strong desire to remove all organicist connotations and vitalistic presuppositions from human life. As José Gaos has indicated, and as José Lasaga has defended more recently, after the publication of *Being and Time*, Ortega rediscovers the more radical intentions of his own thinking; Heidegger's work helps him to read *Meditaciones del Quijote* and *El tema de nuestro tiempo* in another ontological light. He then abandons any hesitation about "radical reality," and comes to defend the thesis that only life as biography, not life as biology, is an absolute given at the origin of all sense and being. In this way he begins the "second voyage" of ratio-vitalism. However, in relation to the analysis of embodiment, he might have thrown the baby out with the bathwater. From this moment on, the Madrid philosopher thinks of the body itself as an established reality belonging not to the self, but to the circumstance in which the self lives. In *What is Philosophy*, in *Meditations on Technique*, in "Asking for a Goethe from Inside," the body is a non-absolute datum, a formation of sense, even "an interpretation," as is said in the 1940 Argentine course on historical reason (Ortega y Gasset, 2009, 533–534). Thus in Ortega's mature philosophy, the intrabody of 1925 is paradoxically displaced: it is now situated in the circumstance, in the surrounding world, and is distanced from the lived ego that projects him/herself towards the environment. Vitality, the flesh, is just another circumstantial portion of life, like the soul, like the things around us, like the people that populate my world—perhaps the most intimate fringe of the circumstance, but in any case external to the immanence of the ego. The example that Ortega uses in this 1940 course—namely, his own liver, operated on by the French surgeon Gosset—indicates to what extent he now blurs the duality of forms of access to the phenomenon of the body, as if the intrabody could in the end be converted into a pragmatic item of the operative self. Paradoxically (or perhaps not), this second attempt to navigate the metaphysics of human life parallels the descriptive dismissal of embodiment that can be read in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Both approaches turn out to be phenomenologies of being-in-the-world without taking the radical embodiment of the ego into account.

I would like to end, then, with a counterfactual conjecture that the reader will know how to pardon in its exaggeration. It has been said that if Husserl had published the second book of *Ideas* around 1914–1915, when the text was basically complete, the destiny of transcendental phenomenology and of 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy as a whole would have been different. The keen thematization of bodily passivity with-

in the framework of pure phenomenology would have favoured a non-intellectualistic comprehension of *Ideas I*, with a better understanding of intentional correlation and of the phenomenological reduction. Heidegger's attempt to overcome Husserlian phenomenology would have been much more difficult. This conjecture also has an easy translation to the Iberian extreme of the European continent and to the Spanish-speaking world. In Spain, the professor of metaphysics who had passionately dedicated himself between 1911 and 1913 to the study of everything published by Husserl, and of everything coming out of his new school, would have read with utmost interest that peculiar research on the material regions of being and on the very special status of the body that is at stake in the communication between all of these regions. And this in turn would surely have influenced the direction of philosophy written in Spanish, since both Unamuno and Ortega were following the trail of the "man of flesh and bone," struggling to introduce it at the heart of philosophy and metaphysics. Yet it is clear that no one can take counterfactual conjectures and wishful thinking too seriously.

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