1972

The Political Thought of Jose Ortega Y Gasset.

Wilmer Albert Sweetser

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College*

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THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF JOSE ORTEGA Y GASSET.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, Ph.D., 1972
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THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF JOSE ORTEGA Y GASSET

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Political Science

by

Wilmer Albert Sweetser, M.A.
Louisiana State University
December, 1972
Jose Ortega y Gasset, oftentimes like Don Quixote, has the proportions of a hero. In the Quixotic theme, Ortega jousted with his environment and sought to achieve a humanization of his surroundings whereby a "world" could be made of them. And, in this conflict, there was always the meaningless and the absurd weighing upon him and seeking to smother the breath from his aspirations and projects. Framed within this context, within the permanent, always undecided life struggle of which Quixote is a symbol, a presentation is made of Ortega y Gasset's political thought. Albeit on a more modern and political plain than that ridden over by the ancient Manchegan, the probings into the multiple dimensions of man by Ortega can be as provoking as those presented so long ago by Miguel de Cervantes.

To take upon oneself the responsibility of presenting Ortega's ideas on politics, without his leave or warrant, opens avenues to accusations of presumptuousness and audaciousness. The writer does not deny that the task was approached with enthusiasm and verve; yet a restraint is employed throughout the study by having
Ortega speak for himself whenever possible. Also, where it has been necessary to use logical processes to project his thought, the writer's attitude has been that of "being positive with caution." The occasional modesty of tone, however, will not minimize the importance of the conclusions reached -- it is believed the over-all study will speak for itself.

Beyond the challenge of extracting and presenting the political ideas of Ortega y Gasset, which has been in itself a quest of an amor intellectualis, it is hoped that some contribution is made toward refuting a too familiar assumption in Western civilization: the leyenda negra in general but especially the belief that Spain has yet to produce a modern, first-class, philosophical mind. This "black legend," having its origin partly in the consequences of the Protestant Reformation and resulting in the treatment of Spanish civilization in a derogatory fashion, has been under serious attack in more recent times. It is sincerely desired that this presentation will add in some small way to the growing, permanent testimony in refutation of the myth, and further, that José Ortega y Gasset will be accorded his proper place among the pioneers of modern, Western thought.

Research material relative to the study and its related topics were found to be available in several language editions. Reliance was, however, on those
published in English and Spanish. The English works were of two types: translations of Ortega's primary works, articles, and lectures; and analytical studies concerning various aspects of his writings, for example, his philosophy, historical methodology, or particular view of a cultural subject. At present, there is no comprehensive study of Ortega's political thought, and many of his essays and lectures with political content have not been translated into English. Whenever possible, extant and quality translations have been used but reliance upon Spanish editions was essential.

Even in his native language, there is a continuing compilation and publication of Ortega y Gasset's writings. The various editions of works appearing in the Obras completas (Complete Works), begun in 1932 and now expanded to some eleven volumes, are still deficient in a number of essays and lectures. That Spanish politics is responsible for this lack can only be suspected, and whether or not any future release of unpublished material will have relevance to this study is not known.

Bibliographical comprehensiveness in English and Spanish, therefore, is not presently possible and this study makes no such pretense. A wealth of material is available, however, and research efforts have shown it to be sufficient to encourage rather than to deter the
efforts of the writer, and to be as well within his linguistic abilities. There is the ever inherent problem of thought transmission in proper context from one language to another. Yet, the possibilities of substantive errors by the writer have been lessened through the assistance of the Spanish Departments at Spring Hill College and Southwestern at Memphis. Where an error occurs, it is the sole responsibility of the writer.

In the encouragement of this endeavor, I am most grateful to the Department of Political Science at Louisiana State University. Acknowledgement is given to Professor Allan Richards for suggesting the topic, and his sound advice on numerous occasions. To the dissertation director, Professor René deVisme Williamson, is expressed my deepest appreciation. His scholarly example, never failing kindness, and cherished friendship have immeasurably lightened the task. Recognition is also accorded to my wife, Mrs. Harriet Sweetser, whose patience and cheerful companionship throughout my academic pursuits have often been severely taxed but thankfully have never waivered.

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

1972
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ABSTRACT

THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF JOSÉ ORTEGA Y GASSET

by

Wilmer Albert Sweetser

From the time of Plato's Republic to the present, philosophers concerned with and seeking an understanding of man as a political being have advanced numerous theories relative to this condition and its implications. Unlike the Republic of Plato, the Leviathan of Hobbes and the Social Contract of Rousseau, there is no work containing the political thought of José Ortega y Gasset -- a twentieth century, Spanish author-philosopher who died in 1955. Although a voluminous writer, Ortega wrote no such work, nor has there been any attempt by others to bring his ideas on politics together in an organized manner. Research, however, has indicated that diffused throughout a lifetime of numerous and varied writings are the basic concepts whereby an Ortegan political philosophy may be constructed. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to present Ortega's political thought within the framework of a value theory. As such, the primary concern is not with any set of laws or generalizations established.
by scientific techniques with a scientific rigor. Rather, it is a selective compilation of the ideas of a modern philosopher into a system of moral principles and norms that should regulate human behavior -- standards that are especially relevant to judging what is ethical, moral and just in political life.

To give the presentation of Ortega's ideas a coherence, the quality of being logically integrated, the deductive approach is employed with the overall format proceeding from the general to the particular -- from Ortega's given principles to their necessary conclusions. Within this format, three methods are used: the historical; the philosophical; and the comparative. The historical method lends itself to Chapter II, and covers those biographical and bibliographical aspects pertinent to a general understanding of Ortega's life and major publications. The philosophical method, essentially deductive in character, begins with an examination of Ortega's basic postulates, or "first principles," and seeks to explain, through logical processes, the Ortegan philosophy of politics with specific reference to his:

a. theory of knowledge (Chapter III);
b. concepts of man and society (Chapter IV);
c. theory of the select minority (Chapter V);
d. existentialism (Chapter VI); and
Allied with and an expansion of the historical method, the comparative method is employed throughout the study as an auxiliary means of clarification. By comparing the essentials of Ortega's philosophy of politics with those of other political philosophers a better comprehension is sought.

The final section, Chapter VIII, is primarily inductive and conclusions warranted by the particulars of the study are given. There, the position is taken that the political thought of Ortega y Gasset ends with "expectations unfulfilled." Yet, rather than invalidating the study, there is the belief that his ideas provide a comprehension of the modern mentality, and especially an understanding of the political philosophy of Individualism in the twentieth century. The study, then, is not only important to the student of politics, but also of significance to the sociologist and psychologist. Even where Ortega's solutions are incomplete in resolving the problems raised through his probings into the multiple dimensions of man, there is the provocative stimulation of the reader to continue the search for those values whereby modern man can understand and protect himself from governmental systems threatening to destroy the human personality.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is the presentation of the political thought of José Ortega y Gasset -- a twentieth century, Spanish author and philosopher who died in 1955. As a "philosophy of politics," it is essentially the study of a value theory.¹ It does not, therefore, deal with any set of laws or generalizations established by scientific techniques with a scientific rigor. Rather, it is the selective compilation of the ideas of a modern philosopher into a general framework of moral principles and norms that should regulate human behavior -- standards that are especially relevant to judging what is ethical, moral and just in political life.

With this distinction, the study places Ortega y Gasset in the position of a value theorist. His ideas

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on the nature of knowledge, of man and of society are
examined in relation to his ethical premises and postu­lates. And, how he answers questions on the purpose
of the State; the justification of political power; the
demarkation between human liberty and governmental
authority; and the manner in which political power ought
to be used and its limitations are presented. In that
the political thought of Ortega is concerned with ends
or final values, his concepts will not be empirically
verifiable. The resolution of this problem will depend
either upon an agreement with the Spanish philosopher's
premises, or upon whether there is any value in the study
of "the seamless robe of philosophy speaking with a social
[and political] emphasis."2

From the time of Plato's Republic to the present,
philosophers concerned with and seeking an understanding
of man as a political being have advanced numerous theo­
ries relative to this condition and its implications.3

2. George Catlin, "Political Theory: What Is It?"
Political Science Quarterly, Vol. LXXIII, March, 1957,
p. 12.

3. The position that man is by nature a "political"
being presents two possible questions: First, the histor­
cal process whereby he became political; and secondly,
the philosophical position, the rationalization, that
he is by nature thus. Although there is evidence that
certain States have an historical basis, coming into
existence in time and place by conquest, kinship, or
compact, an exact and empirical substantiation has not
been applicable to man per se. The traditional Greek-
Christian concept, the one subscribed to by the writer, is
Unlike the Republic of Plato, the Leviathan of Hobbes and the Social Contract of Rousseau, there is no work containing the political thought of Ortega y Gasset. Ortega himself wrote no such work, nor has there been any attempt by others to bring his ideas together in an organized manner. Research, however, has indicated that diffused throughout a lifetime of numerous and varied writings are the basic concepts whereby an Ortegan philosophy of politics may be constructed.

A justification of this particular effort could be in the task itself -- the compilation of the ideas of the Spanish intellectual leader and spokesman for governmental reform into a systematic treatise of political thought. There are, however, several other, more cosmopolitan benefits to be derived from the effort. First, the political concepts of Ortega y Gasset did not come from an intellectual vacuum. During his life, the drama of politics in Spain, in Europe, and in the world was being played within the setting of an international society which sought solutions to the problems resulting from: World War I; the collapse of empires; the rise of Fascism and Communism; the failure of the League of Nations; World War II; the formation of the

that politics, as ancient as man's history, has its basis in human nature and is necessary to his existence and development.
United Nations; and the ideological struggles of the "Cold War." Much of Ortega's political thought is the result of these conflicts within and between political communities proposing alternatives, and they were most often conflicts between the is and the ought to be. Yet, because Ortega's writings are framed within a context of time, situation analysis, and important as "era" studies are to the historian, some additional answers are needed to answer charges that the study might be: outdated and otherworldly; intellectually and ethically sterile; or permeated by a Spanish parochialism.  

There is partial substance in the accusation that a study of this type suffers from an "intellectual and ethical preoccupation." In defense, the position is taken that such an effort never is unwarranted, nor is it outdated or otherworldly. It is Ortega's concern for the crucial, moral questions in political society which enables him to treat with a human constant -- the ethical dimensions of man. If the "scientist," or the "empiri-


5. This agrees with John H. Hallowell's position in Main Currents in Modern Political Thought (New York: Holt, 1953), p. 8. He states that ethics and man's political acts have been intimately related throughout history. See also: J. Messner, Social Ethics: Natural Law in the Modern World (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1952),
cist," does not recognize the ethical positing, then a second justification is made. 6

The question is asked: Can there be any agreement to the consideration of Ortega's political thought as an art? By this is meant: Do Ortega's ideas represent a handbook on the processes of governing to be consulted by those persons seeking instructions for the governance of States? But, this is an unstable position to argue, for the historical situation in which the politician of practice has to act is always unique by reason of environmental dynamics. Even should the politician succeed in eliciting a system from the works of a bygone writer, it inevitably would be a system more applicable to an age already past. Thus, if man acting politically can neither be guided, nor ordered, by a knowledge of past principles, and this seems irrational, what is the most stable justification for the study of Ortega y Gasset's political thought? The defense must be based upon more than an

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6. Eugene J. Meehan, The Theory and Method of Political Analysis (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey, 1965), p. 47, states that the political "scientist's" approach is value free. By this he implies that if the "scientist" can treat observed expressions of values as data, he cannot, qua scientist, express a preference for one set of values in preference to another. The political scientist might not expel philosophical theory from the field, but, because of the problem of quantitative measurement, he would question its importance.
academic interest, for this, only by itself, would be a low estimate of its usefulness, and if this were the reason, there would be little value in studying any past political philosophies.

The primary justification of this particular study is as follows: If the concepts contributing to the political thought of José Ortega y Gasset are so closely tied to the conditions of the era in which they were developed, how can they have relevance to present, or to future conditions? This discrepancy is the keystone of Ortega's importance to the student of politics. It is through the assistance of contrast with other civilizations, past and present, that the student is made aware that the principles upon which his civilization is founded are distinct and unique. So, one's own civilization is distinct, and others are foreign? No! The "others" -- José Ortega y Gasset among them -- are representations of stages in political thought of which the present stands as a temporary terminus. Ortega's philosophy of politics is, therefore, a manifestation of western civilization which is not foreign.


8. The study of politics, political philosophy being within its scope, has recently been espoused as the "master" of all studies dealing with the community of man. See:
Historical and concerned with ethics as it is, Ortega's political thought gives comprehension to and acquaintance with the modern mentality -- to an understanding of man in the twentieth-century. There is the belief that this study, then, is not only important to the student of politics, but also of significance to the sociologist and the psychologist. Even where Ortega's solutions are incomplete in resolving the problems raised through his probings into the multiple dimensions of man, there is the provocative stimulation of the reader to search for his own answers.9

To give the presentation of Ortega's ideas a coherence, the quality of being logically integrated, the deductive approach is employed with the over-all format proceeding from the general to the particular --


9. Beyond the mere acceptance of any political philosophy, complete or not, there is the continuing need for critical self-analysis to define and defend one's own philosophical position. See: David G. Smith, "Political Science and Political Theory," American Political Science Review, Vol. 51, September, 1957, p. 734.
from Ortega's given principles to their necessary conclusions. Within this format, three methods are used: the historical; the philosophical; and the comparative.\(^{10}\) The historical method lends itself to Chapter II, and covers those biographical and bibliographical aspects pertinent to a general understanding of Ortega's life and major publications.

The philosophical method, essentially deductive in character, begins with an examination of Ortega's basic postulates, or "first principles," and seeks to explain, through logical processes, the Ortegan philosophy of politics with specific reference to his:

a. theory of knowledge (Chapter III);

b. concepts of man and society (Chapter IV);

c. theory of the select minority (Chapter V);

d. existentialism (Chapter VI); and

e. concepts on the State and role of government (Chapter VII).

Allied with and an expansion of the historical method, the comparative method is employed throughout the study as an auxiliary means of clarification. By comparing the essentials of Ortega's philosophy of politics with

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\(^{10}\) The techniques of these methods are described in: William Leo Lucy, *History: Methods and Interpretations* (Worcester: Holy Cross University Press, 1948), and Wilson Gee, *Social Science Research Methods* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1950).
those of other political philosophers a better comprehension is sought.\textsuperscript{11}

The final section, Chapter VIII, is primarily inductive and conclusions warranted by the particulars of the study are given. There, the position is taken that the political thought of Ortega y Gasset ends with "expectations unfulfilled." Yet, rather than invalidating the study, it is an encouragement toward a deeper understanding of the philosopher. There still exists a vast amount of his unpublished materials: lectures, lecture notes, and comments on his readings of other authors; personal correspondence; and letters and memoirs of close associates and co-workers.\textsuperscript{12} From these sources could be


\textsuperscript{12} The quantity and quality of this material is difficult to ascertain. What exists is held by the Spanish government, and it has been made available for publication only in a piecemeal fashion. Several studies on Ortega note this problem. See: José Ortega y Gasset, \textit{What is Philosophy}, "Translator's Preface," trans. Mildred Adams (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964); Christian Ceplecha, \textit{The Historical Thought of José Ortega y Gasset} (Washington:
obtained a better understanding of the origin of his ideas, and some knowledge of his evolving concepts in relation to the personal problems of his life. This presentation, however, is limited to the published writings of Ortega, and only the instances where he acknowledges the influences of others is noted.\(^{13}\)

In summation, the purpose of this introductory chapter has been to point backward and to point forward. Backward in the sense that what is attempted is a particular presentation which has not been previously undertaken, and forward in that the endeavor makes a contribution to an understanding of the modern political mentality. The scope of the study is defined, and the methods employed toward that end in each of the following chapters are also described. Within each chapter are two reference points: the central theme of the chapter and the relationship of the chapter to the over-all study. The last chapter brings the entire effort together and presents

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\(^{13}\) Ortega, in his published works, recognizes especially the influences of Heraclitus, Renan, Kant, Bergson, Nietzsche and Dilthey. The degree of each's influences is a controversial and intriguing subject. See: José Sanchez Villasenor, *Ortega y Gasset Existentialist: A Critical Study of His Thought and Its Sources*, trans. Joseph Small (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1949), pp. 11-36.
the conclusions justified by the material covered in the prior chapters.

Throughout the presentation, there is the balancing of circumspection with assertion. There are limitations in any study made on the ideas of another individual -- in effect, the attempt to speak for him. What is written does not suffer from complacency or timidity, but from the realization that the study of politics -- political philosophy -- is as dynamic as the men who make it. Within these safeguards, there is the belief that the ideas of José Ortega y Gasset provide a valuable source of ethical norms whereby modern man can evaluate and resolve today's political problems.
CHAPTER II

ORTEGA'S LIFE AND WORKS

The December 1955 edition of the Wilson Library Bulletin had among its obituaries the following notice:

October 18. JOSÉ ORTEGA Y GASSET, Spanish writer and philosopher who was also a teacher, essayist, journalist, politician, and founder of several intellectual magazines; in Madrid; seventy-two. Revolt of the Masses, Toward a Philosophy of History, Concord and Liberty, and Invertebrate Spain are among Señor Ortega's works translated into English that have had widespread international circulation.¹

To Spain, the death of Ortega presented the loss of her most prominent literary figure of the first half of the twentieth century, and an author considered by some to rank second only to Cervantes.² Yet, this man of a five-fold career, variously termed the "Philosophical Pope of Spain," and the "refined humanist," was considered, with the exception of a small group of devotees, by those readers in the United States familiar with his name, to have been a man of one book -- The Revolt of

¹ Vol. 30, p. 298.
the Masses. Pre-eminent and as widely read as this one work was and although it was reviewed as a "truly original contribution to philosophy," it was generally unknown to the English speaking world the high intellectual status which had already been accorded to this voluminous author, not just by Spaniards, but by Europeans and Latin Americans as well. Ernst Robert Curtius, the German culturalist, has listed Ortega as one of the twelve peers of contemporary intellect, and the French, novelist-journalist Albert Camus wrote that "Ortega y Gasset, after Nietzsche, is perhaps the greatest 'European' writer." Displaying an unusual literary cosmopolitanism, it was the Wall Street Journal that hailed Ortega as having "rounded and co-ordinated . . . the material of Walter Lippman, Frank Simons, and Sir Arthur Salter." This comment by the Journal was, however, only


on the basis of the Revolt, and was shaded with an economic bias.

One American writer, with a knowledge of Ortega's other works, has noted that his reading offers "a seedbed of ideas, anticipating or at least accompanying men such as Spengler, Jaspers, Heidegger, and Toynbee." And, since his death, at least two publishing houses in the United States have had translated and have released an ever increasing number of his works. For a few years after his death, scholars and students presented posthumous, analytical studies of some specialized aspect of his writings. Still, even in the light of Ortega's continued influence and following in Spain, Europe and Latin America, the interest of the English speaking world in him remains narrowly restricted to those few in philosophy, literature, and Hispanic studies with a very particular focus. There persists a general ignorance and a lack of appreciation for one of the most rewarding minds of this century.

Mildred Adams has remarked in explanation of this regrettable phenomenon that:

... Ortega's introduction, in what ever guise, ... so long in coming ... can be attributed only to the curious gulf which separates the United States from Spain. Had Señor Ortega with all his achievements, with his fame in Europe and South America, been a Frenchman, an Englishman,

a German, his works would have been known here, either in the original or the translation, long before this present day.

But Spain is a different matter. Only romanticists, more interested in the picturesque than the actual, go there of their own volition. Only men anxious to win South American trade read the language after they leave school. So this extraordinary individual who combines the skill of a philosopher, a teacher, a critic, an editor, a journalist, and a statesman... remains unknown to American readers...

Before the presentation of Ortega's philosophy of politics, and in pursuit of some knowledge of the man, it appears, therefore, that an intermediate, biographical portrait is in order. This is not necessarily offered as any revelation of the origin of his ideas. As intriguing as the sources of Ortega's thought might be, many difficulties are associated with the problem, and a great deal of controversy is attached to the issue. Bibliographical completeness also is not possible for there is no critical edition of Ortega's Obras Completas nor any comprehensive study of his papers, lectures, and personal library. Especially omitted are attempts to probe into Ortega's mental complexities which would indeed be presumptuous. What is given are those facts of his life as known, and the environmental circumstances which had a direct influence upon his writings.

Born in Madrid in 1883, José Ortega y Gasset was

the son of a family distinguished in literature and politics. Privately tutored until the age of eight, he was reading and writing at the age of four, and when he was seven years old he is said to have memorized the first chapter of *Don Quixote* in the space of three hours.

In 1897, the precocious youngster completed his secondary education at the Jesuit Colegio de Miraflores del Palo in Málaga with high honors. Following a year at the Internado de Deusto in Bilbao, Ortega entered the Universidad Central in Madrid and completed his formal education there in 1904. His course of studies had included law, literature and journalism but his primary interest was

9. George Tyler Northup, *An Introduction to Spanish Literature* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), p. 450. Also, Christian Ceplecha in his *The Historical Thought of José Ortega y Gasset* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1958), pp. 1-2, give the following family information: His paternal grandfather, José Ortega y Zapata held a position in the colonial government of Cuba, his father, José Ortega y Munillo, at various times, was the editor of *La Iberia*, *La Patria*, *El Debate*, *El Parlamento*, *El Conservador* and *Los lunes del Imparcial*; Ortega y Munillo also served for many years as a deputy in the Spanish Cortes. His mother's father was the founder of *Los lunes del Imparcial*, which was considered one of the most influential literary periodicals of the time.


11. The bachillerato (B.A.) was granted by the Institute de Málaga in 1897; the licenciado (university graduate) by Universidad Central in 1902; and the doctorado (Ph.D.) by Universidad Central in 1904. In the article "The Cynical Mourners," *op. cit.*, p. 470, it is stated that the Jesuits expelled Ortega from the Internado de Deusto for opposing the Spanish-American War. Ceplecha, *op. cit.*, p. 3, has found no corroboration of
philosophy. Reflected in his first published article in El Imparcial of March 14, 1904, was a philosophical preoccupation which was to permeate his many and varied activities. With that article he was to consider his profession to be that of a philosopher. 12

The years 1905-1907 found Ortega at the Universities of Leipzig and Berlin where he heard lectures given by Riehl, Simmel, and Dilthey. 13 Also, he attended the University of Marburg in 1908 where he became acquainted with Herman Cohen, the Neo-Kantian philosopher. 14 During these years, he occasionally wrote articles for both El Imparcial and a new, liberal publication, Faro. The theme of his writings was the development of a twentieth-century philosophy -- "to cultivate ideas, not reform customs; to make culture, not to urge morality." 15

this dismissal.

12. Ceplecha, op. cit., p. 4, quotes from Joaquín Iriarte-Agirrezabal, Ortega y Gasset, su persona y su doctrina (Madrid: Editorial "Razón y fe," 1942), when he notes that Ortega says in his article that "our illusion of free will, according to Spinoza, is no more than our ignorance of the causes that make us work," thus setting a tone for his future efforts.

13. Ibid., p. 5, Ortega was awarded a grant of 4,500 pesetas from the Spanish government to study in Germany.


It was also during his travels between Spain and Germany that Ortega received an appointment as "Profesor de la Escuela Superior del Magisterio" in Madrid, and his lectures began to reflect a criticism of the Spanish State. In this position, the twenty-five year old philosopher found himself allied with a movement, the "Generation of 1898," which was seeking a new Spanish Renaissance following the disastrous defeat by the United States in the Spanish-American War. With patriotic, intellectual, and artistic overtones, the movement recognized that Spain had become destitute, and its leaders were determined to do something about it. The reforms advocated were multi-faceted with each individual supporter representing a particular aspect of the "Generation."

To some it meant a strengthening of national will; to others it meant a breaking with the past and a Europeanization of Spain; and to many there needed to be a revitalization of education, of the arts, and of letters. The politics of the group ranged from conservatism to socialism, and in religious postures from clericalism to anticlericalism and religious freedom. Yet, for all its divergencies, there was a community of purpose -- the boss system, political jobbery, tyranny, and the ignorance of the great majority of the Spanish people had to be eliminated. Education was the primary solution, and seeking to start from the top the "effort was to
train devoted, intellectual leaders whose influence would penetrate to the masses."\textsuperscript{16} Spanish authors in their literary endeavors were to seek inspiration from contemporary European writers by orientating their works toward real life; and Spanish artists were to find their aesthetic delights in the warm pastoral beauties of Spain and not in cold portraiture of the past.

Although younger than most of the Generation of 1898, Ortega was of a kindred spirit, and he both wrote and spoke in denouncing the poor conditions of Spanish life. Politically, he initially supported the Socialists; in education he argued for the establishment of State supported, secular schools and the suppression of the Jesuit controlled colegios; and in religion he advocated toleration. Yet, Ortega, in his youthfulness, went beyond the Generation of '98. He may have allied himself with such movement leaders as Valle-Inclán, Azorín, Baroja, Maeztu, and Unamuno, but he sought to make Spain a vital part of liberal, humanist Europe, and raise both Spain and Europe to the "height of the times."\textsuperscript{17}

In his opinion, both were living in the past.

Following a visit to Italy and a return to Germany

\textsuperscript{16} Northrup, op. cit., p. 421.

in 1911, Ortega seemed to have settled into the routine of his duties as Professor of the Chair of Metaphysics of the Universidad Central. Within three years, in 1914, he was to publish two works of major significance. The first, developed from a speech entitled *Vieja y nueva política* (Politics: Old and New), and delivered before the League for Spanish Political Education, attacked the Spanish monarchy as decadent, the Socialists and Anarchists as too dogmatic, the Liberals as ineffective, and the Republicans as uncompromising. Ortega challenged the League to be experimental, to look for new social forms, and to support and adopt only those which would promote democracy and justice in Spain. No longer to be the strongholds of vested interests, the advent of a "new politics" meant that Spain's monarchy, army, clergy, labor force, and educational system would become truly national in character.¹⁸

The second work, a thin volume of essays given the title of *Meditaciones del Quijote*, was modestly introduced by the thirty-one year old teacher stating that:

Under the title of Meditations this first volume announces several essays on various subjects of no great consequence to be published by a professor of Philosophy in partibus infidelium. Some of

them, like this series of Meditations on Quixote, deal with lofty subjects; others with more modest, even humble subjects; but they all end by discussing Spanish "circumstances" directly or indirectly. These essays are for the author -- like the lecture-room, the newspaper, or politics -- different means of carrying on one single activity, of expressing the same feeling of affection. I do not claim that this activity should be recognized as the most important in the world; I consider myself justified when I observe that it is the only one of which I am capable. The devotion which moves me to it is the keenest one which I find in my heart. Reviving the fine name which Spinoza used, I would call it amor intellectualis. These are therefore essays in intellectual love.19

A German influence can be discerned in this early collection, for along with the Roman, Ortega believes German culture is one of the two main-streams of Western thought. Europe's progress toward the modern era had begun with the influx of the Germanic tribes into its history. But, more important, Ortega employs a literary method whereby he treats his meditations as "salvations."

Through this technique he looks at:

   . . . a man, a book, a picture, a landscape, an error, a sorrow -- to carry it by the shortest route to its fullest significance. . . . like the useless remains of a shipwreck, in such a position that the sun as it strikes them may give off innumerable reflections.20

By this interesting literary device, he explores ideas of metaphysical depth, philosophical illumination, Mediterranean culture, and the lethargies of Spain.


20. Ibid., pp. 31-32.
Ortega's position is one that is dissatisfied with mere surfaces. He keys his search toward deeper meanings, and in a somewhat Hegelian vein, he seeks to penetrate what he terms the "concept." 21

Significantly, it is also in this early work that his philosophical principle "I am myself plus my circumstances, and if I do not save it, I cannot save myself" is advanced, and it becomes the fundamental "argument" which connects his various, individual meditations. 22 Rather than a series of independent theses, the book is coherently connected and closely woven. Julián Marías in his "Introduction" to Ortega's first work notes that:

The purpose is to meditate on Quixote, not through a whim, nor for pleasure only, nor even out of curiosity or the simple desire to know, but in order to know what we have to reckon with. This requires, first of all, to get out of oneself, and enter into what Ortega is going to call from now on the circumstance: "the mute things which are around us." That circumstance is primarily Spain. . . . Quixote represents for Ortega the key to Spanish reality, so problematical and contradictory; in other words, the problem of its destiny. 23

Continuing his journalistic activities, Ortega's articles in El Imparcial appeared with regularity, and in 1915 joining with Baroja, Azorín, Valle-Inclán and Pérez de Ayala was founded España: Seminario de la vida

nacional. Following a military revolt in Barcelona, he published an article in *El Imparcial* pointing to the collapse of Spanish civil authority, and demanding the calling of a Cortes to draft a new constitution. As a result of criticism of the article by the paper's editor, Ortega left *El Imparcial*, and with several other writers founded the newspaper *El Sol*. This Madrid daily publication was to become very influential among Spanish intellectuals and the middle class as well. Its political commentaries, often critical of the government, resulted in the newspaper's being suppressed on several occasions during the 1920's by the regime of Primo de Rivera. The editorials by Ortega in *El Sol*, however, did cover a wider variety of topics: Spanish pride, castles, education, science, poetry, historiography, Hegel, Proust, architecture, and women. Through the popular means of a newspaper, the author was increasingly becoming an idol to a growing force of spirited and also anti-monarchical Spaniards.

Of further influence to the movement was his


second major work, España Invertebrada (Invertebrate Spain) published in 1922. Intended as a critical survey of four-hundred years of Spanish history, Ortega told his readers in the "Preface" that:

In working toward a solution of political problems, I do not think it entirely useless to place them in their proper historical perspective, and then to stand off at a distance and look at them. Seen thus, they seem to clear of their own accord, and to take on the form and outline which best reveals their true reality.

Therefore the theme of these essays is historical, and not political. The judgements that concern groups and movements in modern Spain must not be taken as those of a combatant. They are the fruits of long and leisurely contemplation of the national scene. They have been directed by aspirations which are purely theoretic, and therefore without offense.27

It soon became evident, however, that Ortega had no intention of being a political non-combatant. Although he begins the work with an analysis of the shortcomings of past Castilian leadership, an explosive thesis becomes quite clear:

In a nation, when the mass refuses to be a mass -- that is to say, when it refuses to follow the directing minority -- the nation goes to pieces, society is dismembered, and social chaos results. The people as a people are disarticulated and become invertebrate.

In Spain we are now living in the midst of an extreme case of this historical invertebration.28

He also sees the individualism of the Spaniard as having


degenerated into anarchy which had been complicated by a collective manifestation in the various Spanish social groupings:

> Spain is today not so much a nation as a series of water-tight compartments. . . . Each group lives hermetically sealed within itself. It feels not the slightest curiosity about what happens to its fellow groups.  

It was this extreme form of class particularism that Ortega believed was the major cause of the disasters which had befallen Spain. The ability of Castile to command and her force of arms had long ago brought Spain unification and expansion, but never a national soundness. After four-hundred years, the 1920's witnessed the nation "not so much a people as a cloud of dust that was left hovering in the air when a great people went galloping down the high road of history."  

Clearly, then, *Invertebrate Spain* marked an attitude which distinguished Ortega from the Generation of 1898. He sought to Europeanize Spain as opposed to Unamuno's "Spanish gospel," and in this work, there was no obsession for the Spanish past. Included among those as unfit to lead were not only the masses but the rulers and servants of the monarchy. And, if his concept of an "Eminent minority" was adverse to democratic and social-

istic movements, his intellectual liberalism would make him a republican *sui generis* and an outspoken opponent of the Rivera dictatorship.\(^{31}\) This somewhat equivocal position would cause Ortega no little amount of consternation in the early days of the Republic, and especially after his elite thesis of a "league of intellectuals" received additional amplification in his later publications.

For all of his many writings, Ortega had made no attempt to systematize his philosophical ideas, but in 1923 he set about this task in the publication of *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (*The Modern Theme*). Based on a series of lectures presented at the University of Madrid during the 1921-1922 school year, and with a brilliant and penetrating insight, Ortega makes *life* the supreme value. By means of an attack upon the "pure reason" of Descartes and Kant which had so much been in vogue, the Spanish philosopher offers his "vital" or "historical" reason whereby the classical concept of *Being* is rejected as the principle of identity. In its place, "my life" becomes the point of departure for an understanding of reality. Ortega argues that: Rationalism had made reason an absolute definitive for all life; that it had sacrificed all other values to itself by abstracting from

reality; and that real life had consequently been lost in the process. Far from being an irrationalist, Ortega seeks to give reason its proper place -- it is to be an instrument of living, not life itself. The new basis for understanding man, therefore, is not "being," a static and general term, but "life" with its drama, mission and vocation. The essential question for man thus becomes not "What am I?" but "Who am I?" 32

Elaborating on his earlier principle, "I am myself plus my circumstances," Ortega held that a person is not just his life within himself, he is one who lives with other selves, responsible to a context wider than himself, and, therefore to be understood only in that total context. The process of how one can know his life, vocation, or mission is "vital" or "historical" reason. Reason thus no longer treated life as a static abstraction but becomes subservient to dynamic and vital life, thereby interpreting reality and not dictating to it. Thus:

The modern theme comprises the subjection of reason to vitality, its localisation within the biological scheme, and its surrender to spontaneity. . . . Pure reason has, then to surrender its authority to vital reason. 33

32. White, op. cit., p. 252.
The publication of the 1932 work was almost simultaneous with his founding of a new magazine, Revista de Occidente. Soon to rank among the best of Europe's intellectual journals, it was to feature Spain's most prominent authors and poets — Alberti, Espina, Jarnés, Lorca, Marichalar, Marañón, Morente and Vela. But, the Revista was also a method whereby European and other intellectual activities could be brought into Spain.

Sitting there in Madrid he reached out and garnered the seeds of culture wherever they matured — French art, American astronomy, Pavloff's experiments and Keyserling's philosophizing, English economics, Mexican and Russian statecraft — and scattered them broadcast over his country.34

By 1928, Ortega had become not only Spain's most prominent literary personage but his publications were enthusiastically received by audiences of students and intellectuals throughout the Spanish-speaking areas of the Western Hemisphere. International recognition would be accorded to him, however, after the publication of two works, La Rebelión de las masas (The Revolt of the Masses) and Misión de la universidad (Mission of the University), in 1930.

The Revolt, variously reviewed as a "truly original contribution to philosophy," and as "one of those books which must be taken into account by anyone who would

the supreme reality and the only subject of life and history."

34. Adams, op. cit., p. 375.
pretend to be conversant with the life of his time," received almost immediate, worldwide attention. In his "Prefatory Note" Ortega stated:

In my book España Invertebrada, published in 1922, in an article in El Sol entitled "Masas" (1926), and in two lectures given to the Association of Friends of Art in Buenos Aires (1928), I have treated the subject developed in the present essay. My purpose now is to collect and complete what I have already said, so as to produce an organic doctrine concerning the most important fact of our time.

And, the "most important fact" was that European civilization had been "vertically invaded" by a new phenomenon in human society -- a barbarian, mass-man. This new barbarian, the result of a vastly expanded population, was spoiled by modern conveniences, security, and all the other advantages of the twentieth century. Knowing nothing but what he liked, egocentric, immoral and without a philosophy, the mass-man was an intellectually lazy man, and one who had no real standards other than "opinion." His opinions and what he liked must, therefore, be what everyone else must like for "to be different was to be indecent." Further, anything having excellence, individuality, or quality -- any person or thing which was


different -- had to be crushed and eliminated. Typical manifestations of mass-men led by mass-mediocrities and examples of this retrogression of modern society were Fascism and Bolshevism; yet the menace of "vertical" invasion was universal, and the western democracies were also internally threatened. The solution to the catastrophe was for Europe collectively to engage in a great, unifying enterprise -- the building of Europe into a great, national State.\textsuperscript{38}

Ortega thus explains the demoralized affairs of Europe and the world as due to an inversion of values with the masses refusing to allow themselves to be led. But, the directing minority had also defaulted by not knowing how to lead. There remained, then, a need for something more to be accomplished than a "European nationalization." The purpose of his next book, \textit{Mission of the University} was to overcome the general culture of the barbarian mass-mind by replacing it with a "true" culture -- "the vital system of the ideas of a period."\textsuperscript{39}

As to the barbarian's "new morality," Ortega wrote:

\begin{quote}
The great task of the present age, in the field of morality, is to convince common men (uncommon men never fell into the snare) of the inane foolishness which envelops this urge to
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[38] Ortega y Gasset, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 183. See also José Ortega y Gasset, "The Unity of Europe," \textit{Atlantic Monthly}, Vol. 167, April 1941, pp. 432-442.
\item[39] \textit{The Revolt of the Masses}, p. 42.
\end{footnotes}
revolt and make them see the cheap facility, the meanness of it; even though we may freely admit that most of the things revolted against deserve to be buried away. The only true revolt is creation -- the revolt against nothingness. Lucifer is the patron saint of mere negativistic revolt.40

These two works, The Revolt of the Masses and The Mission of the University, critical and dissatisfied with modern civilization as they were, contained no pointed suggestion as to the political philosophy through which reform could become possible. Speculation suggests that Ortega's taking an active role in Spanish politics temporarily posed a distraction to the completion of his philosophical efforts, for in January of 1930 the Rivera regime collapsed and Ortega completely committed himself to the movement for Spanish constitutional revision.41

Under an indecisive monarch for nearly a year, the country struggled through a series of conciliatory attempts at constitutional monarchy, but a number of military mutinies and civil disorders finally resulted in the establishment of martial law. During those troubled months, Ortega continued his political articles, and joined with a number of Spanish intellectuals in the formation of a movement, La Agrupación al servicio de la república (The League for Service to the Republic.)42

In the elections

40. Ibid.

41. Ceplecha, op. cit., p. 22.

42. Salvador de Madariaga, Spain: A Modern History
of June 28, 1931, the Agrupación, although not a political
party per se, had fourteen of its members elected to the
new Constituent Cortes with Ortega representing León.
The king, Alfonso XIII, having fled, the Agrupación
stressed that its purpose was not revolutionary. What
was sought was the construction of a republican system
by means of a peaceful transition. When attacked by
those advocating radical changes, the members of the
League, however, refused to engage in any of the heated,
partisan politics and vitriolic argumentation before the
Cortes. It was in disillusionment, therefore, that
Ortega resigned his seat, and with his fellow intellectu­
als disbanded the League by the end of 1931. In expla­
nation of his actions, it has been noted that:

Only men whose lives are spent in activities
that are chiefly mental know how much of a sacri­
fice that entry into the daily details of politics
meant. He and his fellow intellectuals -- Manuel
Cossio . . . Gregorio Maranon . . . Perez de
Ayala . . . América Castro; even Unamuno himself --
accepted government responsibility out of loyalty
to an ideal that Americans well understand, just
as they can understand the disillusionment that
came with practical politics.43

During the next four years, 1932-1936, Ortega
returned to his books and lectures, and such works as
Meditación de la técnica (Meditation on Technique),


Esquema de la crisis (Scheme of the Crisis) later included in En torno a Galileo (Regarding Galileo), and Historia como sistema (History as a System) were produced. Although each was subtle and many-sided, Ortega's central theme never varied: he sought to explain the nature of major historical crises, how, and why they occurred.

Beginning with an examination of the hundred years marking the transition from the middle ages to the modern era, 1550-1650, Ortega reflected upon a number of "distrusts": first, the distrust of the intellectualist traditions of Western philosophy; and, secondly, the distrust of natural science. The reasons for his questionings were argued on the grounds that what was called the "scientific method" could not successfully be applied to the study of man -- "most contemporary scholars have found it a very great deal easier to assemble aggregates of data than to raise ultimate questions."44 And, with reference to traditional philosophy, Ortega stated that "the 'idealistic' philosophical reaction to 'materialistic' science was equally ineffective in the study of man, since its concept of 'spirit' was a disguised naturalism, static, and purely intellectualized."45


to an earlier position, the philosopher held that man did not have a nature but only a history; and in making himself -- continually becoming -- there was no substantial reality. In that man is only what has happened to him, history becomes the only ontology -- where mechanical reason and pure science had failed, only historical reason (vital reason) explains the nature of being and the kinds of existence. 46

Although personally aloof from Spanish politics, Ortega's works of the period 1932-1936 were written in the political environment of a Republic that was disintegrating into anarchy and creating political animosities which would cause Spain to suffer four years of bitter civil war. Yet, his writings were not solely the product of his reflections upon Spain's chaos. His major concern was for the fate of modern civilization, especially Europe, which in order to survive had to avoid the "ossification of its traditional faith through an arteriosclerosis of its beliefs." 47

With the outbreak of the Civil War in Spain,

46. This principle is important to Ortega's theory of knowledge and will receive special attention in Chapter III.

Ortega fled into exile, first to France, then to the Netherlands, later to Argentina, and finally to Portugal. Out of sympathy with various elements of the Republic as well as with the Fascists, he was outlawed by both parties. The philosopher, by 1936 in his fifty-third year, was also in ill health and soon to undergo a serious operation in Paris.\(^8\) As one who had spoken so strongly against monarchy and dictatorship, and had worked in the founding of the Republic, he was not to be forgiven by those expatriate, republican elements for what was considered to be desertion by those who confused their own political prejudices with their judgment of his philosophy.\(^{49}\)

\(^{48}\) Lorenzo Giusso, "José Ortega y Gasset," Living Age, Vol. 341, January 1932, pp. 441-442, in a translation from La Stampa of Turin, Italy, presented a rare physical description of Ortega at the time of his participation in the Constituent Cortes. Giusso described him thusly: "His dark olive features, square, determined jaw and well-proportioned figure indicate vigor, and the decisive impetuosity in his eyes certainly does not suggest a languorous philosopher absorbed in the absolute. At first sight, Ortega y Gasset looks as if he had once been a wrestler or a fencing master. His person is as anti-romantic as his philosophy." The trying times of the years preceding the Civil War and a serious malignancy had devastated his health by 1936 in contrast to Giusso's impression of him five years earlier.

\(^{49}\) At the outbreak of hostilities, Ortega and a number of other prominent Spanish intellectuals signed a manifesto pledging support to the Republic. Among them was the physician-historian, Dr. Marañon; the diplomat-novelist, Perez de Ayala; and the historian, Menendez Pidal. After a series of Republican atrocities and the increased dominance of Communists and Anarchists, most of the signers, many of whom had been prominent in the Republic's founding, fled abroad and repudiated their support of the Republic. The philosopher Unamuno and
The free thought of Ortega, on the other hand, made him a dangerous agitator against the ideology of Spanish Fascism. It would be nearly ten years before the Franco regime would permit his return to Spain, and then only with government restrictions upon his travels, speeches, and writings.

Exile and poor health did not mean a curtailment of Ortega's writing, nor of his lectures. While in France, the Netherlands, and in Portugal he wrote articles condemning as "forms of hemiplegia" the forces of Right and Left; he criticized the pacifism of British liberalism as contributing to the collapse of the League of Nations; and he consistently argued for the unification of Europe -- a unity within which continental diversities were meaningful but not hostile. With the outbreak of World War II, Ortega was forced to leave Europe for Argentina where in a series of articles published as Del imperio romano (On Imperial Rome), he challenged modern civilization to construct a new social order --


a new faith -- as the only means of survival whereby the world could avoid a complete social collapse. 51 Reviewed by a number of periodicals in the United States, the four essays were a continued elaboration of his favorite theme to which the philosopher added "the paradoxical, ironical peculiarities of his own original mind . . . as slippery as an eel and as full of springy checks and balances as a cat's legs." 52 Exactly what the "new faith" or new social order was, Ortega gave little indication. But, his continuing refusal to provide a solution, or a "new revelation," was not necessarily an "invitation to despair." Rather, it was Ortega's consistent challenge to all philosophers to supply a new faith in an era of social collapse -- a new philosophy, inspiring and practical enough to restore the world's faith in human cooperation. 53

A critical review of Concord and Liberty written

51. Published under the title of Concord and Liberty (New York: W. W. Norton, 1946), translated by Helene Weyl.


53. The stability of Rome, for example, was based upon a combination of concord and liberty, and this national harmony was the result of tenets whereby the citizenry may have vigorously disagreed in the law's application, but accepted without question the law's validity and the necessity for the exercise of supreme power. Without espousing any form of government as the most conducive to concord and liberty, he stated that a nation's thinkers must re-discover its institutions
by Jerome Frank in the Saturday Review of August 10, 1946, challenged Ortega as being a "defeatist" resigned to the inevitability of totalitarianism. The difficulty, according to Frank, was the result, not just of Ortega's central theme, but of the essential principles of Ortega's philosophy of history which denied him the achievement of certainty and the freedom from doubt. Thus, vital or historical reason, for all of its sophistication in the demanding of solutions -- "new faiths" -- presented a thirst which could never be sated but which Ortega nevertheless had to strive to quench.

As aware of this difficulty as his critic Frank was, Ortega undertook in 1940 to systematize his ideas, and published in that year Ideas y Creencias (Ideas and Beliefs). Yet, this, the last of his major works, was a fragment, a "first chapter," which was never completed. To a world of readers, advocates and opponents, what had hopefully promised to be the introduction to a complete political philosophy, soon to be followed by a

in "its own innermost being if it wants to lead a life of freedom." Concord and Liberty, p. 47.


55. Ceplecha, op. cit., p. 29.

sequel which would discuss the State, the law, the nation and the inter-nation, was left unfinished due immediately to what the author referred to as "urgent matters," and, in a few years, his death.  

Regardless of its incompleteness, Man and People presented important clarifications as to Ortega's sociological position. By a closely argued process he examined the meanings of "society" and the "social." Significantly, he also probed into the question of "how man knows what he knows." His answer was that man knows only through his senses; yet man did not allow himself the time to examine that knowledge. The result was that human life was lived in terms of inferences -- the common beliefs held in a particular era. Termed by Ortega "usages," they constituted in their totality, "society." Proceeding into an examination of usages and linguistics, the philosopher ended his work with an essay on public opinion and public power. Also, in his conclusion to the fragment, Ortega promised that more would come through the subtle posing of the question: What hope is there


for man when he cannot, or is unprepared, to examine and evaluate the usages of his time? Here again, Ortega carried his readers along in the expectation of receiving a future answer. Disappointingly, the followers of the philosopher were left deprived of a finalizing and comprehensive political philosophy.

As previously noted, the Franco government in 1945 had consented to the philosopher's return to his native Spain. But, Ortega's return was not in official honor, for he was denied his Chair at the Universidad Central and he was told to confine his work to cultural subjects -- no further social or political themes. With the Spanish people, however, his popularity had not waned. When, after returning from twelve years in exile, he began his first series of public lectures in Madrid:

Every seat in the columned auditorium at Madrid's Club Mercantil had been taken, but still the people came. Mink-coated ladies and threadbare scholars jostled for places behind the doors, crowded onto the balcony overlooking the hall. They waited patiently for the wiry little man with unruly white hair to step to the gold desk on the dias. When he did, they burst into cheers. They clapped and shouted so long that they seemed almost hysterical. The man smiled, slowly raised his arms for silence. Then he began to speak.

60. By Spanish law dating to the post-Napoleonic period that regulated university life, a professor who was in disfavor with a government could not be deprived of his chair nor its emoluments. He could, however, be prohibited from teaching. See Ceplecha, op. cit., pp. 29-30.
The speech José Ortega y Gasset made that night was on an academic subject — Arnold J. Toynbee's *Study of History*. But all over Madrid... it was the talk of the coffee-houses.61

Ortega had returned, and his remaining years were spent in his homeland with only a rare, occasional trip abroad. When visiting the United States in 1949, as a guest-speaker at the Goethe Bicentennial in Aspen, Colorado, he still displayed an optimism about mankind and he welcomed as normal and healthy the doubts that from time to time plagued humanity. In his address to the convention, and in his talks with newsmen, his statements expressing a hope for the future noted that:

... Man needs faith... he needs belief as a soil and a solid ground where he may stretch his limbs and rest. Man is constantly getting lost... but being lost is actually a dramatic privilege and not an evil. When lost, the man who has faith turns himself into an instrument of orientation to guide man and to return him to himself... If man had not been lost, countless times, on land and sea, the points of the compass would never have been developed.

... I do not recollect that any civilization ever perished from an attack of doubt... I do not see the world as darkly as many. People should not believe the politicians. I am optimistic about the fate of Europe, and America can help to save what it is possible to preserve of European civilization, principally by spiritual aid.62

With a decline in health, watched by the government,


62. Ortega's comments are quoted by *Time*, in the article "Basic Human Standards," *op. cit.*, p. 60.
and ignored by the Spanish press, Ortega's remaining years in Spain were unproductively spent in "a time of silence."

Shortly before his death at age seventy-two of cancer in 1955, he told a friend:

In times of passion, the duty of the intellectual is to remain silent, besides in times of passion one has to lie and the intellectual has no right to lie. . . . I am here [under the Franco dictatorship] but I do not exist here. I do not want to take part in anything.63

And, for what could serve as his epitaph, he had written:

The supreme value of life — just as the value of money is in spending it — is to lose it on time and in good grace.64

This, Ortega had done and, in his somewhat Quixotic fashion, he had seemed to value his philosophical journeys above their destinations. He had challenged the contemporary world; he had given it something to think about; and, in being a seedbed of provocative ideas which knifed into the errors of the time, he had, and has today, those among his readers who are devoted in their partisanship as there are those who are violent in their opposition.

Since 1955, there have been numerous, posthumous publications of various lectures, writings, and miscellaneous commentaries of José Ortega y Gasset.65

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64. Ibid.

65. Important examples are: *What Is Philosophy*,
enterprises, the continuing translations and releases offer the prospect of an intellectual atmosphere conducive to a better understanding and appreciation of one of the most provocative minds of the twentieth century. Approached without a disdain for his "vital context" and "without prejudice against the idiosyncracies which are the price of their spontaneity," as well as the avoidance of any over-patronizing, hero-worship or idolatry, the works of Ortega "should be seriously considered in terms of the hard core of philosophical reflection through which they achieve unity and stature."66

Such an over-all philosophical consideration would be an exhaustive and delicate undertaking, for Ortega was broad in his range of interests and closely attached to the dispositions and vicissitudes of his age. It is possible, however, to narrow the scope to only those ideas necessary to the projection of a philosophy of politics, and it is toward this purpose that the succeeding chapters are directed. Through a step-

translated by Mildred Adams (New York: W. W. Norton, 1960), which presents a course of lectures first given in Buenos Aires in 1928, and repeated in Madrid in 1929; The Origin of Philosophy, translated by Toby Talbot (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), a recent translation which initially was to serve (1940) as an "Epilogue" to a fellow philosopher's work on a history of philosophy; and, the Revista de Occidente has published two additional volumes of the Obras completas, which include a number of political articles by Ortega.

by-step presentation of the writings of Ortega on various philosophical and political topics, a logical projection of his political philosophy will emerge. Following the standards established in this chapter's general survey of his life and works, Ortega's concepts will be serene in temper, display an enthusiasm for life and hold a strong distrust for abstractions. More significantly, his principles will be based upon what he believes is a dynamic man and his circumstances. In this there will be no fixed norms or a static system of ethics. What is sought is a political philosophy compatible with the ever changing conditions of man.
CHAPTER III

ORTEGA'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

The first concept to consider in presenting the political philosophy of José Ortega y Gasset is his "theory of knowledge." A theory of knowledge -- an epistemology -- is a basic characteristic of a comprehensive political philosophy. The particular principles of a theory and the importance assigned to them vary from philosopher to philosopher; yet the concept and its logical foundations, explicit or implicit, are essential fundamentals.¹ Although an epistemological examination is not always necessary to the understanding of a political thinker, especially if the study is narrow in its scope, it is of critical significance to an understanding of Ortega's political thought. His ideas on knowledge, its types and the means whereby it is obtained -- through

¹ "... political philosophy cannot avoid concern with [the] epistemological. ... This concern may be explicit or implicit but it is never totally absent." See: John H. Hallowell, Main Currents in Modern Political Thought (New York: Holt, 1953), p. 8. Another study on the importance of an epistemology to the understanding of political philosophy is: A. R. M. Murray, An Introduction to Political Philosophy (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1953), Chapter I.
the senses, by a priori processes, by scientific techniques -- have important consequences when applied to his basic political assumptions. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to present Ortega's views on the nature, limits and validity of man's knowledge. From this, it will be possible to ascertain the extent to which his basic premises can be considered as true and rationally justified, or if he holds that such a knowledge is possible.

Historically, from the time of Socrates, three positions have developed relative to a theory of knowledge, and within each position there have been numerous variations. Of the major theories, one maintains that truth is ascertained only by empirical observation -- the truth or falsity of a proposition rests upon its scientific verification. Man's rationality in this case has at most an instrumental capacity in the determination of the effective means for achieving the desired ends. It is impossible for "reason" to determine whether the ends "ought" to be sought, or if they are "proper" for man to seek.2

Another theory of knowledge has held that truth

2. In varying degrees, this position has been held by: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, George Berkeley, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Auguste Comte, Karl Marx and Bertrand Russell. Empiricism reached its ultimate form in the skeptical philosophy of David Hume.
is established by \textit{a priori} methods -- a process of rationalization independent of any sensitive experience. This "rationalistic" school maintains that categorical answers are given as the product of abstract reasoning, not only devoid of sense experience, but without any reference to the historical or environmental contexts affecting the particular subject.\textsuperscript{3}

The third position, differing from the "empirical" and the "rational," has taken the form of a composite. Holding to a middle ground it:

a. Rejects the view that valid knowledge must be limited to sense knowledge;
b. Disputes the doctrine that abstract reasoning, divorced from the totality of experience, can establish truths about reality; and
c. Holds that the intellect and reason give us knowledge of the essences and properties of things which is more than a mere enumeration or a collection of relations that man has sensorially experienced.\textsuperscript{4}

By the utilization of these principles, it is possible for a meaningful, political reality to exist; that the reality's existence does not necessarily depend upon man's knowledge of it; and that man has the faculty to comprehend something about the reality's essence. It also follows that a philosophical subscription to these

\textsuperscript{3} Among the supporters of this position have been: Plato, Augustine, Descartes, Kant, Fichte and Hegel.

\textsuperscript{4} Henry J. Schmandt, \textit{A History of Political Philosophy} (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1960), pp. 19-20.
premises implies the acceptance of the possibility of determining ethical ends within the reality and the capacity of man to answer questions in regard to the "oughtness" of political activities.\(^5\)

More than being philosophical exercises, each of these general theories has had important ramifications when projected into the concrete order of politics. For the reasons to be given, however, Ortega rejects each of them, and he attempts to formulate his own theory of knowledge outside the mainstreams of western philosophy. Before proceeding into an analysis of the Spanish philosopher's position, there are several characteristics peculiar to his epistemological writings that require an explanation. First, the developmental pattern of his ideas reveal an almost continuing metamorphosis.\(^6\) Like a physical substance which undergoes a transformation when affected by an external force,

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5. Initially developed by Aristotle, this epistemological system has been followed by Cicero, Aquinas, and the Scholastics -- Suarez, Vitoria, Bellarmine and Maritain.

Ortega's thought processes, reflected in his major works, react and respond to the conditions of his environment. This especially is apparent in regard to the influence that particular schools of thought have upon him at a given time: Scholasticism -- the Jesuit Colegio de Miraflores del Palo; neo-Kantian -- the Universities of Leipzig and Berlin; and Existentialism -- his later trips to Germany. To single out any one of his works and attempt to use it as indicative of his theory of knowledge, is at most an examination of only a particular phase of his intellectual development.

A second characteristic concerns the near-heretical style, the literary technique, whereby Ortega presents his theoretical concepts. The formal philosophical devotee finds himself confronted with an Ortegan format that reads like a "prose of intuition" rather than a treatise based upon logical progression. One reason for this "style" is that Ortega uses as his mediums of presentation the newspaper, the periodical, the essay and the lecture. His "observations" on landscapes, pictures, books and persons, the world and its things, are portrayed in a wide range of possibilities for the human being to experience. This he does, often using


7. Christian Ceplecha in his The Historical Thought
the metaphor, in an elegant prose displaying a genuine love of life; yet Ortega is always the intellectual and never forgets his belief in the primacy of thought. His constant objective is to achieve a reconciliation between the age-old ingredients of epistemological antagonism -- life and reason.

Lastly, and contrary to the charge of some of his critics, Ortega in the sincerity of his objective is no mere "fan of modernity." He has little patience with those who "scampered from fashion to fashion." Cutting across his various philosophical phases is the consistent belief that life is essentially problematical and man has to be continually evolving in order to meet the challenges of new problems. To do this is not to be "in fashion," but to be ever conscious of man's place in the historical sequence. The past is examined and carried within man, but only as a basis for new ideas. These "new ideas" of Ortega, often bedevilling in their

of José Ortega y Gasset (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1958), p. xi, quotes Guillermo de Torre, "Ortega y su palabra viva," Atenea, Vol. CXXIV, enero-febrero, 1956, pp. 20-21, on the point that Ortega preferred to speak rather than write -- "...three-fourths of his prestige and intellectual influence is due fundamentally to his mastery of the spoken word." His writings are a kind of dialogue with the reader which maintains attention by vivid illustrations and the use of the aphorism.

appearance to the reader seeking a consistent philosophic pattern, comprise what he believes is the real quest of truth. To the Spanish philosopher, knowledge is not in the static order of the abstract, but is what is here and now of essential significance to the living. It is in reference to this aspect of Ortega's thought that George Pendle has stated:

The "idealistic" philosophers of the past confined their gaze to the eternal — "the eternal," from which all time and movement were excluded, as belonging merely to the less-real world of the senses, the world of "appearances." Ortega, never forgetting his relation to eternity, works in the world of time, the world where drains and poetry, love and turbines, exist, and change, and are important. ¹⁰

The first major work presenting Ortega's analysis of the conditions of the mass-age in the twentieth-century, a study essentially focused upon Spain, is his Meditations on Quixote.¹¹ In an attempt to penetrate the genuine soul of his native country, Ortega's diagnosis of the intellectual situation is predicated upon the principle that the primary contact of all things is to the reality of existence. A "real" philosophy, if it is to be rooted in a vital enthusiasm, must stress the living and have some universal characterizations.¹² Reacting against his

¹⁰. Ibid., p. 522.


initial training in scholastic philosophy and his education in Germany, Ortega initiates a critical evaluation of Rationalism and Idealism which culminates in his *Revolt of the Masses*. By an intricate system of argumentation, not only are these two "isms" denounced as unrealistic, but his attack is extended to a challenging of Empiricism as being too arbitrary. In reference to the first two isms, they made the subject the primary substance which could exist without things or accidents; and, in regards to Empiricism, things were made the true reality which existed independently of their subjects. Using a totally concrete technique of reconciliation, Ortega concludes that subject and accidents cannot exist independently, they need each other, and they are inseparable. It is with this basic concept that he is able to establish his position that: "I am myself and my circumstances. . . ." Later, in his *History as a System*, he elaborates on the principle by stating that:

Human life is a strange reality concerning which the first thing to be said is that it is the basic reality, in the sense that to it we must refer all others, since all others, effective


or presumptive, must in one way or another appear within it.\textsuperscript{16}

With things -- accidents and circumstances -- being essential parts of the human person by which he lives, and with human life constantly changing, Ortega's premises lead toward a form of subjective relativism. Logically, the extension of such a philosophical position into the social order implies a personal perspectivism; and when it is projected into the political order it provokes anarchy. Ortega, however, in \textit{The Modern Theme}, denies that his concepts have these results. Granting that each person sees a different "world" does not necessarily mean that the different views among men produce anti-social or hostile attitudes. Quite the opposite, for in each man's view there is partial truth and ultimately the many views are complementary.\textsuperscript{17} What Ortega seeks to accomplish is to give the "personal perspective" an objective value so that when it is extended into the sphere of "oughtness," the products will not be social confusion and political dissonance. What develops is a new perspective on reality which Ortega believes provides


for an orderly continuity of human thought that rationally passes from one philosophical system to another. In the harmonious multiplicity of all points of view, past and present, no single position dominates the universe. Each philosophical system is articulated with the vital perspective from which it emanates, thus permitting its connection with other future or exotic systems. 18

How is it possible for Ortega to arrive at these conclusions? His answer is in the relativity of truth and falsity. Each of the philosophical schools of the past was true for its proponents because they saw in their system a means for continued existence. To the present philosopher, such a system might be either true or false depending upon its current applicability. It is the task of man's vital reason to evaluate the concrete situation and to determine the contemporary theme. Toward this objective Ortega asks:

Is it not a theme worthy of a generation which stands at the most radical crisis of modern history if an attempt be made to oppose the tradition and see what happens if instead of saying, "life for the sake of culture," we say, "culture for the sake of life?" 19

At this stage of his philosophical development, Ortega, in renouncing Empiricism and Idealism, inclines

18. Ibid., p. 92.
19. Ibid., p. 70.
himself toward a form of Relativism with truth on the verge of being renounced to save life. To overcome this dilemma, he attempts an inter-penetration of the two -- life has to be intellectual, but at the same time the intellect has to be alive. This is the responsibility of vital reason, the perspectivistic and individualistic theory through which Ortega believes the world can be truthfully seen. Yet, to place his philosophy in the realm of Relativism requires a serious consideration, for his stated positions are that Relativism is a "calamitous experiment," and Skepticism is a "suicidal theory."  

Is science and philosophy more than sets of convictions which have truth only for a fixed period of time? Does it mean that Ortegan thought is undergoing a transformation toward the middle-rationalist position? The reader at this point is left perplexed, for the philosopher ends his Modern Theme in the belief that absolute and eternal truth is not attainable by man who was corrupt and finite. The multitude of opinions and tastes which men held in various eras, which were held by different races, and which were maintained by varying political systems are used by Ortega to illustrate his belief. Truth remains a most difficult problem, and it


is continually confused by being overlapped with what is termed "culture." In the writings which follow The Modern Theme, Ortega continues his struggle to establish an epistemology by some formula which will harmonize reason and life, the always paradoxical ingredients of truth.

With the publication of a series of works in the early 1930's, there is the expectation that an Ortegan epistemology will emerge. What is presented, however, is another stream of probings and searchings. Provocative, subtle and many-sided as they are, the writings display a continuing, intellectual conflict within the author. Rationalism and Idealism finally being completely discredited, Ortega seeks a refuge in Relativism, and he states that:

Reality is mere interpretive intellectual reaction to that which we originally find surrounding our Ego. True reality cannot be known to the intellect. It has no being separate and independent from us, but its essence is completely expressed in its being an advantage or obstacle. . . . 24

22. Ibid., p. 37.

23. The Revolt of the Masses; The Mission of the University; Meditation on Technique; The Scheme of the Crisis; Regarding Galileo; and History as a System.

The instability of Relativism, however, gives Ortega's demanding mind no rest, and in his last work of the period, *History as a System* (1936), he grasps for something of a more enduring quality. In place of man with a nature and a substantial reality, he substitutes man with a history of continually becoming. If man is what has happened to him, *history* becomes the only ontology. Where reason and science have failed, an "historical" reason, not unlike his previous "vital" reason, explains the nature of being and the kinds of existence.

Is historical reason the new epistemology, the "new faith," promised by Ortega to his followers? No, for *History as a System*, with all its sophistication in demanding solutions, contains no systematized theory of knowledge upon which an historical reason can be based. This, he explains, will be the purpose of a forthcoming work, *Ideas and Beliefs*. For whatever reason -- the Spanish Civil War, his exile, ill health, a "gagging" by the Franco regime -- the promised work remains fragmentary. Although Ortega promised much in the beginning chapter, the work is left unfinished. As a consequence, what exists of an Ortegan epistemology is enigmatic and open to cutting criticism. From 1924 until his death in

1955, he promises a definitive work with additional promises being made in each succeeding publication. None of the promises are fulfilled; yet his works in the backdrop of dictatorships, civil and world wars, and philosophical conflicts continued to attract followers "by the transparent elegance of his style, at once stimulating and subtle in its shadings, sharp in its irony, rich in allusions and evasions." 26

The question now is whether or not Ortega's fragmentary theory of knowledge contributes to the projection of a political philosophy. Measured in terms of traditional value theory, the Ortegan epistemology is not only incomplete, but it is outside the three historical patterns. Any reference by the Spanish philosopher to a general framework of moral principles and norms to which human conduct should conform would have to be based upon a theory not holding reality to consist of knowable, immutable truths. In effect, what Ortega does is ally himself with the pre-Socratic philosophy of Heraclitus, a philosophy holding to the principle of "pure happening" -- the substantial variation of all existence. 27


27. Heraclitus (c.540-e.475 B.C.) was a Greek philosopher born at Ephesus. He has been called the "father of metaphysics," and held that everything is in a constant state of flux -- the only reality is change or becoming. For this philosopher, science would be a virtual impossibility since nothing is certain and
An Ortegan theory of knowledge predicated upon the principle of pure happening, however, does not imply life of an alogical nature, nor life that is merely emotional, sentimental and intuitional. To Ortega, it is a concept whereby man's ambition is challenged to act in accordance with the "best" of his ideas, and to this end knowledge is placed in the service of life. The determination of what is best is made in reference to a positivistic-biological value system. Man's intellect, incapable of attaining truth, is still an important instrument in the satisfaction of his needs. Scanty and utilitarian, the theory's justification by Ortega is in his belief that through its acceptance the inner, personal life of man and the richness of his relationships with his fellow human beings can be protected from the dictates of the modern, all-powerful State. Yet, the consequences of Ortega's epistemology, regardless of his expectations, increase rather than diminish the problematical aspects necessary. Ortega gives support to this position in his chapter entitled "The Attitude of Parmenides and Heraclitus." See: José Ortega y Gasset, The Origin of Philosophy, trans. Toby Talbot (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), pp. 79-96.


of his political thought. This becomes evident in an examination of the next concepts necessary to the construction of a theory of politics -- the doctrines of man and society.

CHAPTER IV

HIS THEORIES OF MAN AND SOCIETY

The study of political philosophy is not necessarily a study of epistemology. However, since Ortega y Gasset's theory of knowledge is basic to his political thought, and since it constantly influences his works, a description of it has been given. The task now becomes to see how his epistemological concepts affect his doctrines of man and society. In regard to the importance of these doctrines to the study of a philosopher's political thought, it has been stated that:

The history of political thought amply illustrates the intimate connection between an individual's concept of the nature of man and his political philosophy. It is trite but none the less important to note that every social and political order must ultimately rest upon a philosophy containing certain basic assumptions about man. . . . If we know what man is, we can then determine how he should act and what objectives he should pursue. And if we possess this knowledge, we are in a position to ascertain the role that the state should play and the goals it should seek.¹

With the purpose of this study being the presentation of the ideas of Ortega contributing toward a political philosophy, the theoretical structure of his ideas in the final analysis will be determined by his concept of man's nature and end. It is, therefore, the purpose of this chapter to search out those of Ortega's ideas relevant to his basic assumptions about man -- an Ortegan psychology -- and to place Ortega's man in what he believes is the appropriate societal context. But, before proceeding toward these objectives several preliminary observations are necessary.

The initial consideration is the difficulty of philosophically classifying his writings. From what has been given relative to his theory of knowledge, there is the characteristic of "openness" as the result of its positivistic-biological basis. Knowledge is a thing of flux in which man's intellect is placed totally in the service of human life. The reasons for this difficulty in classification, the epistemological openness, is that Ortega is the rare philosopher who recognizes the problematical quality of serious mental endeavor. He stops short of closing his system by refusing to impose the

which emphasizes the quality of rulers, their selection and the normative principles whereby they govern. He does not restrict his definition to ideas alone, but includes their impact on political activity in regards to the defense, reform and abolition of social institutions.
conflicting schools of thought. In his own search for answers, he had passed through three stages of intellectual development: Objectivism (*Personas, Obras, Cosas*); Perspectivism (*Meditaciones del Quijote*); and finally Ratio-vitalism (*El tema de nuestro tiempo*).²

Secondly, even though Ortega's epistemology is "open" and knowledge is totally in the service of life, Ortega refuses to be either idealistic or anthropocentric. He does not hold man to be the only reality, nor does he hold man to be the most important reality. Human life is the "basic" reality simply because all other realities appear within it.³ This does not mean, however, that human life is something within which all other things in the universe exist. Ortega believes that man's life, especially the life of each person, is beyond definition in terms of having a specific nature, being regulated by

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an established set of laws, and being composed of any
given substance. Although it kept itself in a bodily
existence, life is not reducible to a man's body for this
is in contradiction to the principle of historical-vital
reason. It seems at this point that Ortega's epistemo-
logical basis denies any possibility of a doctrine of
man developing. Yet, "in spite of its allusions and
elisions," there does emerge an Ortegan psychology.

Just as was the case in positing an Ortegan theory of
knowledge, the scalpel of intellectual abstraction is
applied, the plethoric tissues are removed and a central
mainstream is revealed which courses throughout his writings
--- a consistent doctrine of man.

What, then, are Ortega's ideas regarding human
life? Is it a consciousness, a mind, a spirit, a soul?
These were answers proposed by the various Idealist
philosophers, and just as Ortega rejects these possibil-
ities, so does he reject the Realist's position of life
as a philosophy of matter. Essentially, Ortega believes
that not only are the ontological systems of the two
isms in error, but that each has serious deficiencies
in their analyses of human existence. So, if life is
neither mind nor body, is Ortega forced into positing
a neutral position which concludes life can be either

abstract or concrete depending upon the particular viewpoint at hand? The difficulty in applying this type of philosophical position to Ortega is that on the one hand he would have to accept a quasi-traditional ontology, and on the other hand he would have to take a neutral viewpoint. In a complete departure, he says that life is not a thing and not a being, it has no nature nor any fixed status, life for Ortega is a "happening." As noted earlier, this position corresponds to the epistemological system of Heraclitus -- the dynamics of becoming. And, only such a theory of life is logically consistent with Ortega's beliefs. A doctrine of man, however, demands more than the reduction of life to a mere theory. Heraclitus was not in error, his concept of flux was incomplete. In fact, Ortega finds all previous "isms" failing in whole or in part as gratuitous theories superimposed upon human life. Life, like knowledge, was dynamic, it had to be given an account of, and the only proper theory applicable was one resulting from an accurate description of it. No a priori, mental gymnastics would suffice. That

5. The philosophy of Heraclitus has been previously noted and Ortega's affinity with that position. In History as a System and Other Essays Toward a Philosophy of History, op. cit., p. 203, Ortega specifically says: "In order to speak, then, of man's being we must first elaborate a non-Eleatic concept of being... The time has come for the seed sown by Heraclitus to bring forth its mighty harvest."
which did apply to man's basic reality was Ortega's principle of ratio-vitalism.

His ratio-vitalism offers both its negative and positive considerations. From his "I am myself and my own circumstances," a basis is had for his descriptive ontology. Mind, body, physical and social environments are all realities with which man has to live and struggle. Each man, living in a world he is born into without initial choice, strives with his particular and concrete circumstances. Generic, abstract living is not possible, and to live requires a constant dialogue with one's environment. Thus, the first principle of Ortega's doctrine of man is that life is not a subjective occurrence, but a positive and objective event. Helped or hindered by the individual's own psychological complexion, his personal character traits, man makes his life and strives toward the attainment of his vocation by acting and reacting to an existence of complex situations. Man, composed of mind, body, psychological character, and inheriting a national-historical tradition has to constantly ask himself in whose service these forces function --- in effect, "who" and not "what" he is. The major questions of life, therefore, are not

immaterial but material.?

Taking on a positive posture, the Ortegan psychology seems to point toward a categorical imperative not unlike the Kantian rule of each man acting as he must and doing that which he has to do. Does this mean the subscription to moral or normative rules? Summarizing Ortega's answer to this question, José Ferrater Mora states:

It is nothing of the kind. It simply means that we must bow to our purely individual call, even if it runs counter to the conventional rules of morality. It is possible . . . to offer resistance to our destiny. But our life will be then less authentic and, to a certain extent, less real. To do what we have to do seems a pure tautology. It is rather a way of enlightening us about the fact of our concrete actions, if they are to be real and not merely symbolic, must spring from the sources of our authentic, and often hidden, ego, and must not be diverted by any conventional rule, by any of the many temptations leading to the falsification of our existence.8

From this summation, numerous questions and indeed strong objections can be raised: What can be known of one's "authentic" ego? Is an authentic life possible? Are conventional and moral norms to be cast aside? Yet, whatever the protest, the challenger would have to face Ortega on a common ground, and it would have to be on the metaphysical rather than the ethical to be meaningful.

7. Ibid., p. 45.
Using the concept of freedom as an example, he states in his *Revolt of the Masses* that man is free by compulsion, and even when he forsakes it, he makes the decision beforehand. Man commits himself, not for moral and ethical reasons, nor even because of "noble" motivations, but because commitment is an inescapable, inexorable facet of life. Man is committed to freedom, he is free by compulsion, and his freedom is absolute.9 It is not something he is endowed with but something that he is. And, it follows that there are no rules whereby man is forced to make his life. Human life is a problem consisting of the problem itself. In his *Toward a Philosophy of History*, Ortega uses the figurative, Spanish term *quehacer* -- what has to be done -- and the problem, the task, the basic rule is the discovery of our being.10 Man has to be constantly deciding what he is going to do with his life, and he is fatalistically determined to exercise his freedom in the pursuit of his destiny.11 If his life becomes "inauthentic," his freedom is not necessarily decreased for to be free means the possibility


of deciding or not deciding what has to be done, or
discovering or not discovering his being.

Life being a "trouble" beset by problems, there
is little wonder that it and its many implications have
preoccupied the minds of all ages. Man has indeed been
plagued with all sorts of choices posited by philosophers,
theologians and an almost full range of thinkers of
every type and field of inquiry. "Blueprints" for living
have been and were constantly being prepared to guide man
in the construction of his life. But, can man really
make his life like other things -- ships, houses, air­
planes? There is little doubt that it is done, and man
is constantly perplexed by the diverse possibilities
from which to choose. What helps him to decide, to
exercise his freedom of choice? To this question, Ortega
replies: society; the circumstances of our lives; and
the past, personal and collective. Whatever assistance
used, the decision is personal and vital, the drama each
has to act out, and the "shipwreck" he finds himself in. ¹²

Thus it is that man searches for certainty, for
safety. He needs to know what he can rely on.
And life is always supported by a system of beliefs
(creencias) on which man stands, by which he
lives, even though he may not even be conscious
of them. But when these beliefs fail man, or
when a situation arises for which man has no

¹². José Ortega y Gasset, "In Search of Goethe
XVI, December, 1949, p. 1165.
beliefs, he must search for some support; and he does this by means of thinking. . . . It is only when man is in doubt that he must form ideas, opinions, regarding reality, about the facts of a new circumstance.  

The primary and radical meaning of life thus becomes biographical and not biological. Its meaning is fully comprehended only when it is presented in narrative form describing the situations and events which have confronted it, and the vital designs which have served as foundations. The dramatic character of human life has been attributed to many factors, but to the Spanish philosopher, the fact that man was an ephemeral and transient being is the most important.

Man is always in a hurry. . . . Pressed for time. . . . He cannot wait. . . . He cannot form projects only to be carried out in an indeterminate future. He must strive urgently, hurriedly, for the main aim of his life: the liberation toward himself.  

What, then has Ortega finally come to in his human psychology? The man in contradiction to the English, metaphysical poet's "no man is an island?" Is human life absolutely independent? Is it an incommunicable reality? The answer is, No! It may be useless to search for a transcendent reality, and it may be that human life is not the sole reality, but those aspects will not drive


man to despair even when he is disillusioned in those beliefs which previously have enhanced his existence. For, that which saves him is a small group of people who are ready and capable of grasping the unpredictable nature of man's existence. They hold to their own beliefs; yet they have the initiative to start anew in the never-ending quest for fresh forms and manners of living. The role of this "select minority" will be examined in the next chapter, but the immediate problem is to relate Ortega's psychology of the individual to his doctrine of society. In effect, to view Ortega's man as a social being.

Without diminishing the freedom of the individual, Ortega never denies that man is also a social being.\textsuperscript{15} He recognized the influence of society and its problems upon man; and, indeed, his various psychological theories usually result from his studies of concrete, societal actualities.\textsuperscript{16} Just as his doctrine of man develops from his societal observations, so too does a doctrine of society emerge. It can be recalled that Ortega promised for over twenty years to publish a work devoted entirely to these

\textsuperscript{15} Without going into the various theories by the proponents and opponents of the position that "man is a social being," it is sufficient to note that, to Ortega, for man to be otherwise would be contrary to his concept of historical, vital reason.

\textsuperscript{16} Invertebrate Spain, The Revolt of the Masses, and Man and Crisis, all previously cited, were each basically studies and analyses of social problems and circumstances.
doctrines, including one on the political community, but this ambition was never accomplished. Again, abstracting from his extant publications, a wealth of material is available whereby a doctrine of society can be projected. Initially, the focus is upon the construction of a general theory -- society-at-large -- with particular ramifications to be discussed later.

Society, defined as "a group of persons regarded as forming a single community, especially as forming a distinct social or economic class," would be to the Spanish philosopher a misnomer. Like the Ortegan individual, society has no fixed nature, but is a concrete, living reality with only a history. Thus, to speak of "society," is to pay attention to the particular, historical development of each society, and not to conclusions drawn from abstract reasoning on the topic in general. However, the study of particular societies ultimately contributes to a comprehension of the features that are shared. Societal knowledge can thus be conceptualized, but with the cautionary note of "occasionality," for:

There are concepts called . . . "occasional;" e.g., the concept "here," the concept "I," the concept "this." Such concepts or significations have formal identity that serves precisely to guarantee the constitutive nonidentity of the

matter signified or thought of through them. All concepts that seek to think of the authentic reality, life, must be "occasional" in this sense. There is nothing strange in this, since life is pure occasion. 18

Life being an occasion, society, just like the physical world, is nonetheless that part of the total environment in which man has to function. And, as the physical environment pressures man, so too does the societal through its mores, customs and ordinances to which man acclimates himself. 19 In the task of life, society is one of those auxiliaries helping man to decide and exercise his freedom of choice; yet, beneficial as it is, it is also a force that stifles, oppresses, and is harmful. How is this possible? To explain the simultaneous nature of societal effects, a further examination of this complex situation is needed.

First, Ortega does not deny the necessity of society, and his conclusion is neither the result of a priori rationalization nor because of empirical, historical evidence that normal man has ever existed in a condition other than societal. The bases for society --


19. Ibid., p. 210: "But experience of life . . . is made up . . . of the experiences that I personally have had. It is built up also . . . by the society I live in. Society consists primarily in a repertory of usages, intellectual, moral, political, technical, of play and pleasure."
for man's being a social creature -- is more profound. Its cause is in his concept of "belief" which is not the product of individual thought nor of the thought of particular groups. Ortega's "belief," neither idea nor opinion, is always the product of a "collective nature." For the sake of social concord, society's providing of beliefs prevents the chaos of dissent -- the disorder of formless matter and extreme confusion. Society's destiny thus becomes interwoven with the fate of the individual. Secondly, the Ortega position that beliefs are "after-the-fact" implies that society is never original for it only organizes and collects usages and opinions of the past. In his Concord and Liberty under the title "Philosophy and Society," even philosophy is a social fact, and it is reinforced by being taught in educational institutions and published in books. But, it is never

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20. José Ortega y Gasset, Concord and Liberty, trans. Helene Weyl (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), p. 19: "A belief in the strict sense of my terminology is unlikely to occur as a belief of individuals or particular groups. Since it is not mere opinion, an idea, a theory, it will normally be of a collective nature. People are inclined to believe in company and not of their own accord. A belief functions when established in a social environment by virtue of its 'collective validity' -- that is, regardless of the adherence of individual persons or groups."

creative, it is the late outgrowth of prior happenings.²² It is for this reason that Ortega speaks of society as a tyrant, and he uses the thesis to explain the decadence of his native country in *Invertebrate Spain.*²³ To Ortega, then, society is beneficial to man, but it is also harmful. Life for the "authentic" man who is in quest of solutions to his problems -- to salvaging his own shipwreck -- receives on the one hand a life-line from society; yet, to the contrary, he must struggle against society's falsifications of life. Above all, man must guard against his possible estrangement from the society he needs.

How does one solve the dilemmas presented by the Ortegan doctrine of man in conjunction with his doctrine of society? The proposed solutions are found in three of the Spanish philosopher's propositions appearing peacemeal in his works: *Concord and Liberty; and History as a System and Other Essays Toward a Philosophy of History.*

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The first of these propositions, as conditioned,

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-107. Ortega concludes the section with the statement that: "The social constituent of philosophy clearly forms the most superficial part of its reality -- the bark of a tree, as it were. Society is never original and creative."

23. See: p. 170 of Mildred Adams' translation, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1937), where he states: "The abstract divinity of 'the collective' is coming back to exercise its tyranny; indeed it is already creating havoc . . . ."The quotation is from the section entitled "The Increasing Menace of Society."
Is that even though man is a social being, he is not
totally so. It is true that he subscribes to, or suc-
cumbs to social pressures, but he also resists its forces.
Man has, therefore, both social and anti-social impulses
which come into play wherever men live together.24
Secondly, a society, in time and place, has to be grasped
in its entirety. Every social fact is interlocked with
other social facts; and each of society's functions pre-
supposes and in its turn is presupposed by others.25 The
third and more complex proposition has as its basis the
statement that what have previously been considered socie-
ties have never really been so, that is, men moving and
acting in a common space or environment, men living with
the rest of men, and men coexisting with others in associ-
ations regulated by ordinances of conduct.26 That which
gives society its real character and saves it from individ-
ual chaos on the one hand while guarding it from a detested,
collective formalization on the other are the human,
personal relationships of love, friendship, and kinship.

on to say: "In view of this, does it not mean garbling
the facts and barring, from the outset, the way to a true
understanding of the eternal tragedy that is human co-
existence, when such a reality is simply called 'society?'
Why omit in the name the antisocial component?"

25. Mora, op. cit., p. 60.

26. Concord and Liberty, op. cit., p. 25, and
History as a System and Other Essays Toward a Philosophy
of History, op. cit., p. 49.
As a result, the real society is harmonized by balancing the human with the social relationships. Only in such a situation is it possible for the individual to be free, spontaneous and authentic without his being radically estranged and alienated from the inescapable fact of society.

These, then, are Ortega's doctrines of man and society, and the solutions he offers whereby their inherent conflicts are resolved. In their resolution, the importance of each philosophical component is noted: his theory of knowledge; his doctrine of man; and his doctrine of society. But, in each component, a substantive question is left unanswered, and although variously phrased, it is a common problem. Epistemologically, it is posed in Ortega's belief that knowledge is rooted in man's ambition to live in accordance with the best of his ideas. Psychologically, there is Ortega's belief that man must live an authentic life. And, in his doctrine of society, it concerns the role societal knowledge plays in saving man from his "shipwreck."

The possible disposition of what in time and place is the "best," the "authentic" and the "necessary societal beliefs" is only briefly suggested in discussing the issues above. Generally, there is the reference to the role of: "Those individuals ready and capable of . . . having the initiative to start anew in the never-ending quest for
fresh forms and manners of living." Specifically, however, it involves what will be termed Ortega's theory of the select minority. By means of logical projection, this theory will imply that Ortega's man will receive assistance to meet his need for some type of certainty, and also that the assistance will be provided by an "elite." Without infringing upon man's freedom, for man is still free to choose, the minimum service by the elite will be to give man some understanding of his life and what is basic to it. The possibility of man's despairing in the face of the endless process of becoming and the flux of societal beliefs can be thus alleviated through this service. This theory of a select minority providing an elite counseling, however, is more than just another routine concept of Ortega's to consider. There is in its consideration the possible transition from the purely philosophical order to the concrete order of politics. In the movement toward a comprehensive political philosophy, an Ortegan elite theory would be, therefore, an important link. For this reason, it is given special attention in the following chapter.

27. Supra, p. 71.
Theories of "select minorities," or "elites," are not new concepts. Without tracing their development or possible relationships, it is, nevertheless, significant that José Ortega y Gasset develops his elite concept as a means whereby the organization and direction of man and society can be explained. In his *Invertebrate Spain* he states:

A nation is a human mass which is organized and given structure by a minority of chosen individuals. Whatever our political creed, we must recognize this truth. The legal form . . . can be as democratic or even communistic as you choose; but its living and extra-legal constitution will always consist in the dynamic influence of a minority acting on a mass.

This is a natural law, and as important in the biology of social bodies as is the law of densities in physics.¹

And later, in *The Revolt of the Masses*, he notes:

Society is always a dynamic unity of two component factors: minorities and masses. The minorities are individuals or groups of individuals which are specially qualified.²

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² José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, 79
To avoid any initial confusion in Ortegan terminology, he denies the necessity of his "select minority" being either political or economic. Rather, his minority is based upon personal distinction, merit and accomplishment, and it is composed of those persons who lead lives of effort and excellence who go beyond the ordinary in the performance of their duties and obligations. It is this elite who really leads society and gives it the basic framework for its existence.

The first of all social acts is the organization of a human mass into those who lead and those who are led; in others, a certain ability to let themselves be led. Without a minority to act on a collective mass, and a mass which knows how to accept the influence of the minority, there is no society, or there will very shortly be none.

Noticeably, there is a reciprocal action between the elite and the masses, for if a societal living of the masses is impossible without a directing minority, this same elite cannot exist by and of itself; indeed, it exists for the masses. The masses and the select minority are, then, the two interdependent classes. They are not based upon economic, political, or social distinctions, but upon an aristocratic, exemplary differentiation.

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3. Ibid., p. 15.
4. Invertebrate Spain, op. cit., p. 65.
How does Ortega identify these superior individuals? Through the use of historical-vital reason, and in conformity with the principle, Ortega takes various periods of history to exemplify his elite: Athens -- the polis, with a superabundance of accomplished personages (to its own misfortune he concluded); Rome of the Republic; France of the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries; Great Britain of the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries; and Spain during and shortly after the Reconquista. It was the select minority in each of those particular societies who created the artistic, religious, scientific, and technical innovations necessary to achieve their State's era of greatness. Each aristocracy, in its own time and place, was well organized and each member within his own, particular group could rely upon his fellows in a period of crisis. Yet, each elite had in its own time succumbed to the complacency of security, failed in its obligations and consequently had degenerated.

... too much security demoralizes men more than anything else. Because they came to feel too secure, all the aristocracies of history have fallen into irreparable degeneracy.5

Thus, the study of society, as predicated upon the interactions between elites and masses, is essentially a

study of group dynamics, but not in terms that are always progressive. Particular elites degenerate and with them their societies -- each society being a total process of social interactions. This interpretation of history not only is a repudiation of the "concept of progress" used by various historians but the "great man" theory as well.6

Select minorities having a time-place identification, what general characteristics identifies the "masses?" Again, it is not a division of social classes into "upper" and "lower." The mass differentiation is reserved for those persons who set no value on themselves. "Just like everybody," they are happy to feel like everyone else, and they possess no quality of excellence.7 The mass is, therefore, a sociopsychological fact which even includes those among the intellectual life of a society -- which of its own seems to require and presuppose an amount of achievement; yet:

\[ \ldots \text{in the intellectual life} \ldots \text{one can note} \ldots \text{the pseudo-intellectuals, unqualified, and unqualifiable, who are by their very mental texture, disqualified.} \ldots \text{On the other hand,} \]

6. Ibid., p. 17: "History is not made by one man -- however great he may be. History is not like a sonnet; nor is it a game of solitaire. It is made by many people: by groups of people endowed, collectively, with the necessary qualities." Ortega, at least on two occasions, came close to contradicting himself when he wrote about Julius Caesar and Mirabeau. See, especially, the article "Mirabeau o el político," Obras completas (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1969), Vol. III, p. 603.

it is not rare to find amongst working men, who before might be taken as the best example of what we are calling "mass," nobly disciplined minds. But, whenever the masses refuse to continue their anonymity, when they believe themselves capable of directing, and when in their envy, hatred, or ignorance they rebel against the elite, the society is destroyed. Only the constant and proper ordering of society's public affairs by the select minority can forestall a rebellion -- the masses can never be permitted to act of or by themselves. They must be influenced, directed and organized. Just as life is a continual process of becoming, those exemplary personalities possessing diverse talents and a collective heterogeneity of excellence have to be as well dynamic and unsated in their direction of the masses.

It is exactly the reverse of this normal condition -- the proper relationship of elite to masses -- that has caused the direst problems of the twentieth-century. The select minority has been vertically permeated by the masses -- a new form of barbarian invasion. Causative factors in the degenerative process are many: population explosion; scientific over-specialization; and, most certainly, the degeneration of and failure by the elite in the application of their vital reason. Not to be equated solely with a proletarian revolution, for the

8. Ibid., p. 16.
scientist, especially, has made his contribution as a "learned ignoramus," the revolt of the masses has affected "everyone" into being "everybody." Without direction, the masses do not know what they can become, and having only appetites and rights, they feel and thus demand direct action as the only means of satisfying their drives. Even countenancing violence, the twentieth-century mass-man neither has the need of, nor the time for, reason or discussion. Controlling the State, the new barbarians impose their form of order with whatever means suit their purpose.

As previously noted, Ortega denies the existence of abstract values -- codes of ethics are valid only in time and place. But, the masses of the twentieth century have moved toward an existence of no beliefs. This is not just an ammoral divorcing of ethics from politics. It is a total, societal immorality. The problem for Ortega becomes: How is it possible to reform the present-day man of the masses? The solution he offers will have to be conditioned by two questions: (1) Do the masses want to be reformed? (2) Even if they do, is not the socio-political

9. Ibid., p. 18.

10. "Today's mass-man, with no vital project," says Ortega, "is always ready to play at anything, and so he has welcomed the 'false dawns' of Fascism and Communism." In Chapters X and XI of Invertebrate Spain, op. cit., he accuses Fascism of being inherently contradictory, and he attacks Marx's economic interpretation of history for its false promises. See: pp. 172-201.

11. Supra, pp. 54-59.
structure erected by them too huge an impediment to be overcome? The only immediate possibility Ortega sees is that the masses will so punish themselves that in frustration, exhaustion and fear of annihilation, a return will be made to a societal direction by a select minority.12 Watching the devastation of the Spanish Civil War, the brutalities of World War II, and the potential self-destruction posed by nuclear conflict, Ortega thought such a reformation imminent. At the time of his death, however, the destructive potential of the masses had not diminished but had been magnified.

Under-developed as the Ortegan concept of elites or selected minorities is, his observations establish a link between his writings and those of the twentieth-century school of "civilized humanists."13 And, the connection is more than that of just philosophical theory.

12. *Invertebrate Spain, op. cit.*, p. 68.

13. "Civilized Humanism" is the title given by Michael Weinstein to one of the three major political philosophies developing in the twentieth century. Concerned with the quality of modern life, its "philosophers form no relatively coherent school of thought;" yet, their ideas are similar in that they believe human beings transform the world through their activities, and they act in relation to others through social processes. Their central concern "is with the uses that human beings make of their civilization." Included in this group as philosophical theorists are: George Santayana, Alfred North Whitehead, Bertrand Russell, R. G. Collingwood, Elijah Jordon, F. S. C. Northrop, Lewis Mumford and Pitirim Sorokin. See Weinstein's book: *Philosophy, Theory and Methods in Contemporary Political Thought* (Glenview: Scott, Foresman, 1971), pp. 79-102.
The sociopsychological and, perhaps, even the pathological ramifications of select minorities-masses gives Ortega a connection with the school's causal-empirical theorists as well. In this regard, Michael Weinstein has written:

As the expression of civilized humanism in empirical theory, the theory of political elites defines the public situation through the concepts of ruling class, elite, or oligarchy. Underlying the idea of a directing minority is the notion of a dominant and organized cross section of activity. . . .

political elites . . . represent social types or people whose characters have been organized around particular cross sections of activity. Ruling classes represent the dominance of certain usages of cultural objects and justify their leadership in political formulas that express the public importance of the particular cross sections of activity identified with the regnant social type. 14

True, Ortega's use of the term "aristocracy" does not necessarily imply that his elite is synonymous with government, and neither does he project any detailed formulas which are employed by any, given select minority.15

14. Ibid., p. 13. The author considers the three "master" political philosophies of the twentieth century to be: Pragmatism; Existentialism; and, Civilized Humanism. Each of these philosophies has its particular, causal manifestation in respectively: The theory of Pluralism; Organization theory; and, the theory of Political Elites. Thus, that part of Ortega's writings which was philosophically in line with Civilized Humanism would have its causal counterpart in the theory of Political Elites. See also pp. 5-11.

15. If an aristocracy is not synonymous with government, how does it implement its public policies? Basically a problem of "linkage," Ortega never answered this question directly. The involvement of Ortega and his "League for the Service to the Republic" sought to provide intellectual leadership to the Spanish constitutional assembly of 1931. Disillusioned and holding themselves above partisan politics, all fourteen of the
He does emphasize, however, the vital significance of particular elites in their various public situations, and he describes their societal functions in the complex organization of their respective political communities. It is in serving more as a seedbed of ideas that Ortega, in his *Invertebrate Spain, Mission of the University* and especially *Revolt of the Masses*, shares the civilized humanist position with its more noted, causal proponents -- Harold D. Lasswell, Gaetano Mosca and Robert Michels.

Whatever his contributions to, or his similarities with causal, elite theory, it is in the philosophical area of civilized humanism that Ortegan concepts find themselves more applicable. A major theme shared is the belief that the contemporary political crisis is the result of attacks upon the format of cultural objects comprising modern civilization. The "barbarian" assault comes from the masses who are imbued with ideals of romanticism and naturalism; language becomes debased; personal and individual values are gradually destroyed; and, there is a constant surrendering to immorality.  

16. José Ortega y Gasset, "The Unity of Europe,"
In opposition to this barbarianism, Ortega and the civilized humanists championed the "ideal of a world civilization synthesizing the foremost contributions of the diverse historical civilizations," thus, "no particular civilization would be viewed as necessarily superior to others."\(^{17}\) It was this cosmopolitan manifestation that had placed Ortega at odds with Unamuno and the Generation of '98. But, it is also a distinction whereby Ortega achieves a following beyond that which is parochially Spanish.

In addition to the concepts surrounding the "invasion of barbarians," there is another important area of ideas that brings Ortega within the framework of the civilized humanists: value problems resulting from the encounter of western European peoples with other peoples -- societies -- of the world. To explain


17. Weinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 10. Also, as a specific example of Ortega's thought in this regard, and as an application of the principle of historical reason, he held that to look at a Spaniard as a Spaniard was to look backward. If Spain were to be alive in the twentieth century, it had to look at itself in the context of the times; therefore, in a European and World context if it sought to better itself. The community in which the Spaniard lived was no longer Spanish but cosmopolitan. For a partial, translated expression of his position, see his essay "Concerning Pacifism," trans. A. Pastor, *The Nineteenth Century*, July, 1938, pp. 20-34.
the ramifications of the encounter, it began with the explorations and colonizations undertaken by the European nations. Other societies were discovered which had different religious, moral and value systems from those of Western civilization, and in the resulting clashes the European pattern was imposed as the superior system. In more recent times, that early, somewhat Christian missionary posture has been challenged by an anthropological approach. This latter response considers each societal system with its particular religious, moral, and value system only as conditions relative to time and place; thus, it is possible to objectively examine and comprehend each society and how it developed.

It is this "conventional" approach to societal value systems and ethics by the Spanish philosopher that provokes the sharpest criticism from the Aristotelian-Thomists.18 Yet, the Ortega who writes the *Revolt of the Masses* sees those masses as standing for no value — immorality rather than ammorality. Anarchical and violent, the barbarian masses abolish legal proceedings, and to impose their whims they take direct action. To control those masses, he urges the government of law and norms,

for "a life without principles is a greater privation of self than death." Thus, in summation, confronted by a world crisis, the Ortega who approached ethics in a conventional fashion and treated life as a superfluity, now sees Western Civilization on the verge of extinction. With the absence of norms, the repudiation of laws and a loss of morality -- without commandments, laws, duties, and sanctions -- the Ortegan resolution is in a recourse to an elite, a select minority. Unlike other civilized humanists, however, who project solutions in terms of governmental frameworks whereby the will of the elite is transmitted into a value system of public policy, concrete Ortegan solutions remain truncated. Through the use of historical-vital reason, he eloquently describes the crisis, but:

Rather than launch a noble adventure with no other guide but the truth, he does not hesitate to leave his most penetrating and dramatic work, The Revolt of the Masses, mutilated and incomplete. We suspect a secret fear of exposing himself, of correcting the vitalistic immorality evident in his previous writings.

So, again, Ortegan observations fall short of projections in the real order; and in this case there could have been a specific application to the area of


the State and politics. Exercising the clinical ability of a medical diagnostician, he can and does elucidate upon the causes of societal ills, but like today's specialized diagnostician he is unwilling to apply the final treatment or to provide those surgical skills necessary to complete the cure and rehabilitation of the patient. Every avenue leading toward the development of a political philosophy thus far, it would seem, has been left dead-ended. With the approach well paved by the fundamentals expressed in the *Revolt of the Masses*, what prevents Ortega from developing a civilized humanist philosophy of politics? The answer to this question, and an answer which keeps the elite ideas of Ortega solely in the area of political "thoughts" will be proffered in the ensuing section. Before proceeding with that topic, however, several concluding remarks are necessary.

First, in order that it not appear that Ortega has been judged too harshly in his failure to formalize his ideas into political institutions and practices, it must be noted that Ortega consistently abhors formalization of any kind. He realizes that society is an element in which man has to move, but that with its rules, customs, and usages a too burdensome pressure is often brought to bear. The State -- the superlative of society -- is one of society's pressures, and indeed, the strongest force, and man needs it lest he be required to do every-
thing by himself.21 The State, however, unlike Hegel's mystical being, is not everything in society, it is only a part. This does not imply that man can escape the fact of its existence or its pressure, but to relieve this force, Ortega advocates that the State envelop the social body with the greatest amount of elasticity. For this to be accomplished, the people must be able to shape their State after their own vital preferences instead of warping themselves into any rigid mold of the State. In this fashion, the State functions like a skin.22 Man has "life in freedom" when the State operates as an expansive cover. When it operates more as an orthopedic apparatus, then man has only a restricted "life of adaptation."23 The State's role, therefore, is two-fold: (1) it is an occasional concept with a meaning dependent upon particular societies in time and place, and (2) it has the responsibility of always preserving a certain degree of identity. For Ortega to posit any ideal or practical type of State and form of government would be by his implications not only presumptuous but preposterous.

Secondly, the works of Ortega which relate to the school of civilized humanists, both philosophically

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22. Ibid., p. 47.
23. Ibid.
and empirically, stand for the most part, outside the mainstream of his philosophy. *Invertebrate Spain*, *The Revolt of the Masses*, *The Mission of the University*, and a small number of essays were each directed against a particular problem which was then more than adequately analysed by a similar pattern of techniques and themes — group dynamics, sociopsychological analysis, elites, masses. Undercurrents of his more consistent principles, however, undermine those works, and the results or conclusions in terms of concrete recourses were left lacking. A great deal of the misconceptions had about Ortega in regard to his over-all philosophy, has been due for the most part to those three works. They have been the ones most read, whether fully understood themselves or not, with the result being that the total spectrum of his ideas has been seldom examined or taken into consideration. In short, those writings are representative of only a certain phase of his intellectual development, and one that was virtually terminated with the collapse of Republican Spain. Regardless of whatever reasons caused his change of focus, it is to his later works that one must look for the development of his more consistent themes, albeit some of his primary concepts had appeared earlier in embryonic forms.

Lastly, it is not impossible for Ortega to have developed a complete political philosophy by a logical
and empirical progression from the principles he set forth in those works corresponding to civilized humanism -- had he made, of course, one significant alteration. George Santayana, an American "civilized humanist," has "developed a comprehensive, carefully articulated, philosophy of life and civilization" with basic concepts comparable to those of Ortega. Problems of liberty and civilization, government and politics, as well as a theory of elites are worked out in detail. But, Santayana takes the step that Ortega avoids. The American formalizes and thereby rejects the concept of constant flux. The image projected by Ortega, in contrast to that of Santayana, is a State and its attendant political system not only being divorced from ethics, but also being separated from any meaningful authority to sanction. It is apparent that these two principles go logically hand-in-hand in a philosophy of anarchic idealism, and such a position is reinforced by the absence of any formalized institutions.


26. This could explain why the Anarchists, especially in Spain during the 1920's and early 1930's, read Ortega with some interest. Without championing their cause, he was, nevertheless, providing them with ideas upon which to base their action. See: Hugh Thomas,
consequences of his thought? It seems that, on the one hand, he is writing against the concrete causes of a deplorable situation; and, on the other hand, trapping himself in the abstract order by supporting principles which can have the self-same effects. This concrete-abstract paradox will receive attention in a later chapter, but it is important to note at this point that Ortega the "civilized humanist" could have avoided the inherent contradictions. On at least two occasions, the Spanish philosopher openly confronted issues which were more profound than those usually encountered in the course of his descriptive writings of the past or of the present -- the resolution of which would have enabled him to escape from his inconsistencies. In his Revolt of the Masses, he asks whether or not the mass-man can be re-awakened to a personal life, but he replies by saying "this frightful theme is too virgin." A second confrontation occurred in "En el centenario de Hegel," ("On the One-hundredth Anniversary of Hegel"), when he asks the question, "Who am I?" but, again, he declines to go beyond his "myself and my circumstances" in an


27. Obras completas, op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 131-133. Also on p. 190 of the Revolt of the Masses, op. cit., he states: "This great question must remain outside these pages."
answer which is essentially historical. 28

The expectation that Ortega's theory of a select minority would lead to the development of a political philosophy comparable to those of the "civilized humanists" is thus left unfulfilled and in a paradoxical position. But, this does not imply that Ortega's ideas, whether causal or philosophical, are not without merit. As is generally the case with most of his writings, and especially those on this subject, Ortega is acutely aware of the problems confronting the twentieth-century man. He describes what he believes are the causes of the problems, and he offers a solution. He refuses to suggest, however, the means whereby his elite concept can be projected directly into a political context. If this is a criticism, then it is offered to Ortega's credit that he stimulatingly and provokingly penetrates a crucial area of political thought -- the philosophical bases of elite forms of government. Also, as source material, the quality of Ortega's observations gives him a stature far above the majority of those writing on this particular topic and the other conflicts in evidence or developing from attempts to put such theories into operation.

Finally, and lest what has been said be taken in any wise as a concluding judgment, the venture by Ortega

into the realm of civilized humanism is only a temporary deviation. There is another aspect of his thought to be presented, and no final evaluation can be given until this position is examined. In the next chapter, the focus is upon Ortega's philosophy considered in reference to its existentialist content. From this over-view will emerge clarifications of his theories and doctrines which have been only alluded to thus far. For, his existentialist views are the primary mainstreams influencing almost the entire spectrum of his writings. With only a vague appearance in his early works, this twentieth-century movement will gradually dominate his later publications. And, if a comprehensive political philosophy by Ortega remains possible, it will be contingent upon the positions held by him and permitted by the tenets of this philosophy.
CHAPTER VI

ORTEGA'S EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism is a philosophical movement which has reached its full development only in the last fifty years.¹ Claiming among its forerunners such philosophers as Augustine and Pascal, it is Sören Kierkegaard who is generally acknowledged as the movement's founder.² This nineteenth-century, Danish philosopher reacted against the cold, impersonal abstractions of the Hegelianism then dominant in northern Europe and, in turn, emphasized the concrete, spontaneous and free aspects of man's existence. From Kierkegaard to the present, Existentialism has been much less a set of doctrines than it

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¹. Lee Cameron McDonald, Western Political Theory: The Modern Age (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962), p. 403, notes: "Existentialism is a much misunderstood but highly important twentieth-century phenomenon, perhaps the most significant philosophic movement yet to rise up in this century. . . . its political consequences are tremendous."

². Existentialism resists precise definition either as a collective "ism," or as a distinct "school" of philosophical thought. For this reason the word "movement" is used here rather than the narrower term "school." A movement includes several schools with one or more important factors -- whether of starting point, method, or doctrine -- in common.
has been a certain approach to philosophy common to a
number of thinkers with divergent concepts. For all
its variances, the movement's thinkers, in their common
approach, have stressed man rather than nature, the
richness of man's personal life and the essential quality
of the relationships among men. Concerned primarily with
the "human" person, the Existentialists usually have
been more occupied with psychology and ethics. But,
this does not say enough, for in these two divisions of
philosophy, the movement has departed from the traditional
formats. It has stressed the concrete rather than the
abstract, the particular rather than the universal truth,
and human feeling and the will rather than the pure
intellect.

Although the Existentialists have no set doctrine,
each of the movement's philosophers have also approached
their efforts with a practical and vital concern for
man. To them, philosophy is not a mere speculative
undertaking. Each thinker, albeit in varying phraseology,

3. Examples of individual differences in basic
doctrine are: the Protestants Kierkegaard, Jaspers and
Tillich and the Catholic Marcel are Theists. Nietzsche,
Camus, Sartre and Heidegger are Atheists.

4. Philosophy to the Existentialists is "... an
experiment in which the philosopher is not an observer
detached from the data and manipulations, but a person
who 'stands in the very core of the experiment himself'.
..." Thus, the Existentialist does not split thought
and action, but takes them together in the human situation.
See: Michael Weinstein, Philosophy, Theory, and Method
stresses the importance of man's "authentic" existence. And, each argues against the individual drifting along with the crowd. Positively, they believe that man must be himself, face his own situation however tragic, accept his responsibilities and choose his own course deliberately and freely. In subtle philosophical formats that often ramble in scope, the Existentialists seem to be both apolitical and even antipolitical in some cases. In the following analysis, however, there is little doubt that the movement's concepts have very significant political ramifications.

With regard to political philosophy, Existentialism requires the theorist to reorientate himself away from the search for fixed classifications whereby human behavior can be explained. The new focus is the condition of man — in effect, the consequences of man's social and political structures. The model of the "authentic" man is then referred to man's "human," or actual, position. More often than not, the Existentialist con-


5. "The hallmarks of Existentialism have been the continued attempts to give a serious analysis of human existence and describe the tragic price that one must pay to live authentically in the twentieth-century." Weinstein, op. cit., p. 54.
cludes that the freedom of man has been denied and restricted by the prevailing structures. In that these structures are reinforced by prevailing ethical and philosophical systems, Existentialists find themselves in a position of being opposed to the social and political status quo. It is for this reason that the movement has been identified as "revolts against," or "revolts within," various political systems. There is inherent in this revolt an explanation as to why the philosophers of the movement choose to describe rather than to define. Essentially, the authentic man must have the freedom to realize his potential. To conceptualize man's knowledge, nature and conditions, social and political, would be to impound a free existence. The only boundaries applicable to man are those things beyond his potential. Existentialists in their political philosophy; therefore, seldom set forth a comprehensive political philosophy; that is,

6. Eugene J. Meehan, Contemporary Political Thought: A Critical Study (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1967), p. 384, notes: "The human predicament is defined by the Existentialists in purely subjective terms. 'Existence precedes essence.' Man is born into the world as a body of possibilities; what he is at any moment in time is what he has experienced. Man defines himself by experiencing and by acting; he creates his values by living and by choosing."

7. Three things which Existentialists generally consider beyond man's potential, or his "boundary conditions," are: his being in the world; his being among others; and his death. See: Ibid., p. 57; and William Ernest Hocking, "Marcel and the Ground Issues of Meta-
to the point of implementing their ideas in the concrete order of politics. Politics is for them "that field in which the fateful organization of the power of one man over another is established." 8

When the movement's theories of society and the State are examined, there are additional departures from past philosophical positions. First, they hold that man is not just the basic unit, but he is the only "real" unit. Men are found in numerous groupings -- economic, social, religious, political -- yet, the choice of belonging is man's and the collectivity cannot presuppose or infringe upon man's freedom. He is free to join and free to resign, and he gives only what he chooses of himself to the group. 9 As a political theorist, where society and the State are concerned, the Existentialist becomes, therefore, more of a descriptive ethnologist with his primary focus upon how authentic man's condition is in time and place. And, the task of the Existentialist philosopher is to exhort man to realize his fullest


8. Breisach, op. cit., p. 235. Also, McDonald, op. cit., p. 407, notes that Jean-Paul Sartre especially attacks the concept of the natural community. The community is established out of fear, maintained by terror, and is artificial.

9. This denies the theory of "group" psychology. The only psychology applicable is that which is egocentric.
potential.

These characteristics of Existentialism appear to have been formulated and made applicable to the "Spectator" himself -- José Ortega y Gasset. To give the description a more special application, the works of the Spanish philosopher are now approached from this outlook. To avoid, however, a reiteration of what has been previously written, an introductory summation portrays Ortega as a philosopher of culture, but:

... a culture recognized as ephemeral and relative, no more than a natural process of living bound down to existence, spurning hierarchical standards, rejecting the bigoted savants of the last century. ... 10

To Ortega, this does not mean a philosophy of moribund pessimism. He approaches reality with a kind of "love" that sees even in the lowliest creature a drive for fulfillment. Disgusted with the past philosophies that spoke of distant perspectives, he focuses his attention on the immediate environment -- on the problems of day-to-day living. With a "philosophy of the day," the

triumph of life's values becomes Ortega's unvarying theme in all his reflections. It is this theme that provides the key to all his philosophical studies, and it is expressed in a literary style having an elegance and charm not to be found in most philosophical studies. Other than being a philosopher, Ortega is also a psychologist, and he explores man's emotions and his relationships with others in a penetrating insight into group dynamics. But, above all, life is the supreme value — reason, pure reason, must be subjected to living and become vital reason. Human existence is valuable in itself, and it does not need rigid confinement by asceticism, culture, or justice. Even though men have lived: ...

for religion, for science, for morality, for economics; they have even lived to serve the will-o'-the-wisp of art or of pleasure; the only thing they have not tried is to live deliberately for the sake of living.

Thus, life is its own justification, the supreme value of existence — superior to all norms, irreducible to concepts, and fascinatingly ephemeral in its eternal evolution.


Critics of Ortega's theme have sought to trace his thoughts to numerous sources: Renan, Goethe, Bergson, Fichte, Dilthey, Heidegger... et al. And, in attacking the ideas of those writers, they have sought to destroy the position of Ortega. Such an approach might be acceptable if the purpose was to criticize from the philosophical position of an opposing value system. The task at hand, however, is to present those ideas of the Spanish philosopher which flow from his basic principle -- his existentialist tenets -- and then to capture their relevance in regard to a political philosophy.

So, returning to the Ortegan theme of "life as the highest value," it must be noted that life suffers from a basic insecurity -- the historically, inexorable environment. Without knowing how and without having given existence to himself, man finds himself "undergoing a process of radical disorientation." The intellect becomes man's instrument whereby he confronts his situation and seeks to provide for his vital needs. By functioning in a human life moved by the constitutive urgencies of this life, the intellect has its practical


14. The Modern Theme, op. cit., p. 79.
usefulness. And, with intelligence being practical and utilitarian, the driving force of thought becomes the demanding desire to ground itself in living, and, so, to live to the maximum of man's particular ideas. Only in this way can man's life be fruitful, genuine, and authentic. Carried to its logical conclusion, ethics becomes equated with life's vital necessities, and the intellect becomes subject to man's will.

In Ortega's ethical framework, values are predicated upon a vitalistic type of morality, and he defined them as "a strange, nebulous class of objects which our conscience encounters outside itself as it encounters trees and men." A value is a truth only because it pleases man in time and place, or, because he desires it. Possessing both negative and positive properties, a value presents dimensions of quality, hierarchy, and materiality. Taken collectively, however, it is erroneous to consider them as a system of prohibitions and generic duties which were the same for all individuals. Each

15. Martin Nozleck, "Unamuno, Ortega, and Don Juan," The Romantic Review, Vol. 40, December, 1949, pp. 268-274, elaborates on this theme by using Ortega's defense of Don Juan as an "authentic" man rather than being the hedonist who refuses to conform to established norms of conduct. Don Juan is an example of the free man whose intellect is grounded in living.


17. The Modern Theme, op. cit., pp. 71-77, Chapter
human, individually or in a group, has his own values --
the professor, the politician, the woman of the world --
and because each person possesses his own, untransferable
destiny, values are matters of expediency and personal
propriety. As for duty and obligation, these are things
that are "superabundantly added to that which is necessary
and essential," and they are only "needed to fill the
emptiness left by illusion and enthusiasm."\(^{18}\) It is
because of this ethical vitalism cutting through his
thought that Ortega refuses to institutionalize his
conclusion in the Revolt of the Masses. Nothing is more
opposed to his moral concepts than a mandatory system of
rigid norms. For the Spanish philosopher, ethics and
duties have to be freely accepted rules of conduct,
otherwise, man can neither be free nor authentic.

Clearly, Ortega's vitalistic ethics have become
a self-determining system that stands apart from tradit­
ional norms. With one's own life being the ethic, it
becomes a moral imperative for each man to strive for
the fulfillment of his destiny -- to realize his ever-
becoming potential.\(^{19}\) Reason is to serve this purpose,

VIII, "Vital Values." Reference is also made to the
hierarchy of values in Ortega's article "The Pride of
the Basques," Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 207, January, 1961,
p. 114.

19. Ibid., p. 1341.
and this is what he means in the Modern Theme when he 
states: "Pure Reason must yield its dominion to Vital 
Reason." But, if man has the vital imperative to act 
in accord with his destiny, how does Ortega explain the 
paradox of man being a prisoner of his environment -- 
himself plus his circumstances? To this question, he 
replies that man is free to accept or avoid his destiny. 
Man is not only free, but he can never be sure what his 
vocation is. Life, then, the supreme value with its 
own vital imperative, is also an uncertainty in which 
each person constantly faces the danger of not being 
able to realize his true self. It is for this reason 
that Ortega constantly stresses that, rather than be 
faced with despair, man should be inspired to approach 
his life as a challenging mission.

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21. José Ortega y Gasset, History as a System and 
Other Essays Toward a Philosophy of History, trans. Helene 
Campbell in his article "Free Will and Determinism in the 
Theory of Tragedy," The Hispanic Review, Vol. 37, July, 
1969, pp. 375-382, also elaborates on man's freedom in 
terms of his will by contrasting the views of Pérez de 
Ayala with those of Ortega. Citing sections from The 
Revolt of the Masses and two articles from the Obras 
completas, Campbell concludes that Ortega believes the 
world to be determined and unchangeable, but that within 
the world, man possesses "the power to choose what he will 
do and be." Man is "obliged to exercise his liberty of 
choice, for even doing nothing represented a decision."

22. Indeed, it is the "superior man" who selects 
objectives beyond himself, and places himself in their 
service. Obras completas, op. cit., see especially
These principles, which recur throughout Ortega's various writings, reflect the four central themes of existentialism: (1) the description of life as a unique happening; (2) the opposition to any philosophical system that posits a complete explanation of man's being; (3) the obsession of man for an authentic life; and (4) the disassociation of man from himself. \(^{23}\) Sensitive to the over-all conditions of his half of the twentieth-century, the "Spectator" sees all the promises of past philosophies, and theologies as well, failing to protect the freedom of the individual. Most of the abuse man is enduring is in turn sanctioned by some "rational" format. In a parallel with the dehumanization man suffered during the middle ages, contemporary man is again finding his rights and duties contingent upon his being a functionary in a highly bureaucratic society. The tragedy of modern man is that he is compelled to live within the system's guidelines; thus, to stay alive, a human being has to give up not only his freedom but the essence of his being. In

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Volume IV, pp. 181-182. This is in accord with Ortega's position that "freedom" is a lack of restraint and not lack of causation. Free will is thus synonymous with self-determination. The "ordinary man" interprets the world, on the other hand as something definite and fixed. See: Jose Ortega y Gasset, "Time, Distance, and Form in Proust," trans. Irving Singer, Hudson Review, Vol. 11, Winter 1958-1959, p. 508.

effect, man is not himself and his circumstances, but one totally conditioned by his societal as well as his biological environment -- a position of complete impotency. Just as the Renaissance and Reformation had served to revive medieval man to his status of a human being, Ortega and the Existentialists seek to provide a "new revelation" whereby the authentic man can again be possible. 24

The question remains, however, as to what that new revelation consists of whereby man can lead an authentic life and be inspired to pursue his life's mission. It is to this end that Ortega sets out to fully develop his principle of "vital" reason. After proposing the concept in his Modern Theme, written in the early 1920's Ortega left its development suspended in his thought patterns for nearly a decade. 25 Perhaps it was because of his involvement with Spanish politics, or due to his deviation into the civilized humanist domain of elites, masses, and barbarians. But, for whatever reason, the principle re-emerges in more refined terms by the mid-1930's and its newer exposition is to refute some

24. History as a System and Other Essays Toward a Philosophy of History, op. cit., p. 223.

25. In Ortega's "Preface" to The Modern Theme, op. cit., p. 9, he notes that the work had its origin in a series of lectures he delivered to his students during the school year 1921-22.
misconceptions that developed concerning several of his earlier statements.

One misinterpretation resulted from the Ortegan emphasis on life. This led some of his readers to assume that the Spanish philosopher's position was purely vitalistic -- a biological philosophy. As early as 1924, Ortega denied this meaning, for "biological vitalism" was applicable to scientific thought and was in no way suited to his purpose as it did not allow human freedom or originality. The second interpretation possible, that of philosophical vitalism, was more of an epistemological method, and it was this type of vitalism that Ortega left for later elaboration.

To reduce the element of ambiguity, it must be here noted that philosophical vitalism has at least three meanings:

1. To the Pragmatist, knowledge implies a biological process which is totally subject to physical laws -- a completely empirical process.
2. To Evolutionary Materialists, knowledge is an intuitive process in which rationalism is denied as well as any epistemology per se.
3. To the Existentialists, knowledge is of a

rational character, but life has to be the focus of philosophical endeavor and the task of reason is to seek an understanding of life's meaning.\textsuperscript{27}

It is the third type of vitalism which comes the nearest to Ortega's concepts and purposes, and it is this basic position that begins to clarify in his later works.

With his distrust of both Idealism and Realism -- pure reason and physical reason -- Ortega does not leave for himself the positions of being either neutralist or irrationalist. His task is seen as being one of not developing a new theory of reason, but of orientating it toward life. Human life is not imbued with reason, but man develops it and he uses it. Man not only has to cope with his circumstances, but he has to relate to his surroundings as well.\textsuperscript{28} And, although man's environmental relationships and encounters are not always rational, his life without reason is impossible. Reason being

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{28} History as a System and Other Essays Toward a Philosophy of History, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 170-171. Ortega goes on to say: "If with serene self-mastery he uses the apparatus of his intellect, if in particular he uses it in orderly fashion, he will find that his faculty of thought is ratio, reason, and that in reason he possesses the almost magic power of reducing everything to clarity ... penetrating it by analysis until it is become self-evident."
\end{footnotesize}
especially utilitarian, man has to know how to act. He has the freedom to seek out his destiny, and it is his reason that saves him from despair — his "vital" reason.29

Vital reason, being an adjunct to the reality of life for Ortega, also carries with it the implication of its serving as an approach — a method. Yet, what is its course, its rules? Ortega rejects traditional norms -- ethics -- so, what system could be used? Here, Ortegan philosophical vitalism turns to the empirical guidelines of experience, and this is what gives life its dramatic character -- the "shipwreck" man confronts. In a play on words, it is man, not viewing his circumstances, but rather in view of his circumstances, who is acting, or more properly re-acting. As a result he acquires "convictions", positive and negative, which take the form of "ideas" predicated upon evidence and experience.30 It is by his ideas that man seeks his authentic self, and acts toward the fulfillment of his destiny.31

What Ortega finally comes to in his elaboration of vital reason is a life's reality having its source


in historical experience; thus, his vital reason becomes
in his later works "historical" reason.\textsuperscript{32} The principle
"I am myself and my circumstances," is to become in its
final form an attitude that man is not an immutable being
living in one historical period but a creature whose
reality is solely determined and crucially molded by
his history -- past and present. Just as the Ortegan
restriction of the concept of ideas is to provoke strong
disputations among and between philosophers and psychol­
ogists, his merging of vital reason with an historicism is
to open additional avenues of criticism.\textsuperscript{33} Regardless
of whether the concept is interpreted rigidly or moder­
ately, its influence upon his previous doctrines of man
and society becomes immediately evident. Also, his
elaboration of the concept is eventually to be extended
to the question of the nature of philosophy itself.

This last facet of Ortegan existentialism -- a
philosophy of philosophy -- is given primary attention
by the philosopher in his essay "Notes on Thinking: Its
Creation of the World and Its Creation of God."\textsuperscript{34} Seeking

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., pp. 92-96. Ortega discusses this
topic under the title "Brief Digressions on the 'Histor­
ical Sense'."

\textsuperscript{33} Mora, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 42-46, examines the flaws
in Ortega's philosophy as well as the implications his
historicism has in regard to metaphysics.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Concord and Liberty, op. cit.}, pp. 51-82.
to resolve the role of philosophy in the life of man, Ortega projects its justification only in so far as it contributes to man's living. As knowledge has been described as a vital function in this regard, so too has philosophy to be constantly renewing itself in the service of man. It must be more than a mere logical format established over two-thousand years ago which may or may not be applicable to the time at hand. There is no denial that purely logical thought is a philosophical process, but it is irrelevant unless it is related to the concrete order, includes the philosophical order, and is utilitarian. The quest for truth, always in flux, has especially to be undertaken in the proper historical context.

There is little doubt that traditionalists in ethics, logics, metaphysics, psychology, and even pure philosophers take issue with Ortega's existentialist thought. There can be no denial, however, that the course he follows focuses upon human life and its conditions. Although he chooses a route that is in opposition to normative systems and one that is essentially critical, he is no pessimist. What he seeks is to free man from prior systems of thought which in their manifestations have been not only abusive but have subjected the activities of each human being to a regime of codified, pre-defined categories. Ortega is therefore, reluctant ever to define. His medium is description, and in his
writings on human life, this approach is not an inconn-
sistency. For, to define is to limit, and life, always
changing, out-distances any conceptualization. The
"seed of Heraclitus grown full" thus allows for human
possibilities to be realized. If man is to be free and
authentic, the imposition of artificial or arbitrary
boundaries contradicts the meaning of life. True, man
functions under restraints, but these should at best be
only "possibilities" of human choice. This, however,
leads to other areas of examination, and the task now
is to project Ortegan thought into the area of politics
-- in effect, to relate his philosophical existentialism
to his political thought.
CHAPTER VII

HIS CONCEPTS ON THE STATE AND THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

To give clarification and unity to the concepts discussed in this chapter, a brief prefacing includes two of Ortega's recurring views concerning man and society. The first is his view of man with regard to the individual's group-societal relationships. It is recalled that the Ortegan man is an "historical being among others." As such, the individual human being is the only real social unit. There is no denial that society is a condition in which man has to live; yet, other than this overall grouping, the philosopher does not recognize any other sub-units which have usually been considered as purely social. For Ortega to have done so would have meant that man's freedom would have suffered from excessive group demands. Also, the individual would have been placed in too many "circumstances" which pressured him to concede in obeisance to an imposed collectivity. To Ortega, societal groupings are always prejudicial to human freedom per se, and there is always the inherent danger of human choice being preempted by group associa-
ations. His opposition is especially directed against associations which are involuntary in nature rather than those which are solely voluntary. The individual can lend his support to a sub-societal grouping, but the choice must be his own. It also follows that a man's support of a group implies that he shares in the recognized as well as unrecognized consequences of that membership.\footnote{Existentialists never tire of pointing out that not even soldiers can escape morally from freedom by pleading that they had to follow orders in every case. See: Michael Weinstein, Philosophy, Theory, and Method in Contemporary Political Thought (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1971), p. 59. Ortega would not have used the term "morally," but rather the term "consequence."}

The second prefacing issue involves what Ortega and other Existentialists refer to as the "public situation." This condition is viewed from the two ways in which the human being, as he is affected by the political order, can be studied.\footnote{Ibid.} From one point of view, the human condition is observed as it occurred in the lives of past human beings. Investigating those lives in their particular time-place environment, Ortega then relates them to the over-all social and political situations and gives a descriptive interpretation of the degree of personal freedom peculiar to the given era. By using this technique, Ortega's role is that of an historical ethnographer.
and not that of a political philosopher. He uses this technique on past and present public situations. But, he then expands upon these time-place observations by adding his own specific experiences. With this combination, he establishes a philosophical framework and makes it accessible to his readers as "experiences of men in the various conditions of contemporary societies." Using the other viewpoint, Ortega observes the public situation in terms of the possibilities man has for living an authentic life in the time-place circumstances he describes. The description includes a criticism of the philosophical system then current and constricting the individual. His criticism, however, is always negative. Ortega does not propose an alternate political philosophy -- either for the past public situations, or for the present. To advocate a political philosophy would be contradictory to the existentialist position of each person arriving

3. The existentialist political philosopher thus employs the technique of "representation," whereby: "All that the historian or ethnographer can do, and all that we can expect of either of them, is to enlarge a specific experience to the dimensions of a more general one, which thereby becomes accessible as experience to men of another country or another epoch." Weinstein, Ibid., quotes from Claude Levi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), p. 17. He further notes that such efforts can be judged only on what is called the "agreement of personal testimonies."

4. José Ortega y Gasset, Concord and Liberty, trans. Helene Weyl (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), pp. 9-48. The essay "Concord and Liberty" is an example of Ortega's use of this technique. Basically, it is a
at his own norms through the continual process of actualizing his possibilities. Thus, what Ortega has to say concerning the political order will only go so far as saying what must not be done if man's freedom is to go unthreatened. He will not presume to tell man what he has to do.

With these conditioning aspects in mind, what does Ortega have to say about the State -- its origin, nature, and purpose? What are his ideas on government -- its role, form, and relationship to the governed? At this point, and on the basis of what has been said, there is little doubt that the philosopher's attitude toward these subjects is negative. He considers the State to be the "superlative" of society, and it is the strongest instrument of social pressure. Because of its potential for oppression, Ortega advocates that its authority should be very elastic.\(^5\) These are important characteristics, and they will be elaborated upon later in their more proper context. For developmental reasons, the immediate objective is to examine what Ortega believes is the origin

\(^5\)\textit{Concord and Liberty, op. cit.}, p. 33. Ortega notes: "A state always and essentially exerts pressure upon the individuals who constitute it. Proceeding by means of domination and rule, it cannot help making itself felt as coercion." In the same work, p. 105, Ortega gives his explanation of the term "superlative."
of the State.

Until the writing of his last work, Man and People, Ortega had given the subject of the State only an incidental consideration, and then only as its aspects related to his various other topics. In the chapter entitled "What People Say: 'Public Opinion,' Social Observances,' Public Power," he sees the State as being the result of strength -- the power manifestation of man. Life is a drama and as such it has its plot. In that man's ideas constitute the essentials of that plot, how and by what means can he fulfill his destiny? The State, as a power manifestation, varies in man's ideas but has its origin, nevertheless, in those ideas. That it is natural is not self-evident. Its "naturalness" is predicated upon it being accepted by man's prevailing ideas. Because these ideas have become usages, the State has become an established means of power, and has come to exert its constraint upon everyone in the form of a "binding observance."


7. Ibid., pp. 258-272.
The binding force exercised by these observances is clearly and often unpleasantly perceived by anyone who tries to oppose it. At every normal moment of collective existence an immense repertory of these established opinions is in obligatory observance; they are what we call "commonplaces."8

The two, marked characteristics of a binding observance are given by Ortega as:

(1) that . . . whatever be its origin, it does not present itself to us as something that depends upon our individual adherence but, on the contrary, is indifferent to our adherence, it is there, we are obliged to reckon with it and hence it exercises its coercion on us, since the simple fact that we have to reckon with it whether we want to or not is already coercion;

(2) contrariwise, at any moment we can resort to it as to an authority, a power to which we can look for support.9

Interestingly, the two characteristics attributed to the State have also been attributed to public opinion, to law, and to government. Ortega recognizes this, and points out that past philosophers have made an error in separating these aspects of a single collectivity. Society, as a body of usages, imposed itself upon man; yet, it is an authority to which recourse can be had for protection. Being an imposition and a recourse, the State -- the superlative of society -- is in essence a power, "an insuperable power facing the individual."10

8. Ibid., p. 265.
9. Ibid., p. 268.
10. Ibid., p. 269.
The State, then is an energetic emanation of ideas expressed in public opinion and inseparable from it. Where men have erred, says Ortega, is in giving the name "State," and "society" to a collectivity; and, it has resulted in a euphemism that has falsified man's view of his collective life. That which has been taken to be "societal" has implied harmonious relationship. What has received little or no consideration is the fact that societal relationships are also dissocietal -- unharmonious. There is that "never-ending struggle between its genuinely social elements and behaviors and its dissociative or antisocial elements and behaviors."¹¹ For any society to exist with a minimum of genuine sociability there is the need for a public power to intervene. The State, through its government and law, is the institution, and its auxiliaries manifest the necessary strength for society to endure.

There is in Ortega's description all the material elements traditionally attributed to the State: people, territory, and government. Also, to the State, supported by public opinion, he gives that essential of power which distinguishes it from other societal groupings. As long as the State is an obligatory observance backed by established opinions, it is empowered with absolute, coercive

¹¹. Ibid.
authority to intervene even in violent form. This is the State as described by the "Spectator." His description does not mean he accepts it as natural, true or untrue, good or bad. It means simply that the State has its origin in the ideas of man, that it is supported and perpetuated by public opinion, and that it comes into existence when the society develops and ceases to be primitive. Man thus has created a special body empowered to act in an irresistible form.\textsuperscript{12}

With regard to the question raised by political philosophers as to what gives unity to the body politic, Ortega lends no support to the State being a spiritual or a biological entity. Each of these theories implies a totalitarianism which Ortega cannot accept -- their being antithetical to the need of man to be free if he is to be authentic.\textsuperscript{13} Nor can he accept any mechanistic theory as that which gives unity to the State. To do so in this case would deny the social aspects of man's character, and it would reduce man to being somewhat of a gear in a motor. For Ortega, the only theory of unity which is acceptable is one that recognizes the individual as the primary unit of the body politic whose end is

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 272.

\textsuperscript{13} To deify the State as Hegel did, Ortega declares a senseless mysticism. See his Revolt of the Masses, trans. anon. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1957), pp. 127-136.
separate and distinct from the social whole. This is not a State that operates in conformity with either fixed biological or mechanical laws. It is a State predicated upon a foundation of free human beings which in no way impairs the realization of their developing potentials after its establishment. The State is not divine in origin, but the product of man's ideas; and, as such, it is an artificial thing subject to man's determination. The measurement of its being "good" or "bad" is only in the sense that it must be dynamic in relation to historical reason. Corporate or collective "good" above the lives of each individual has no place. In this sense, the unity of the State is equivalent to the sum total of each person's desires, interests, passions, and intelligences; and its service is that of an apparatus of perfecting.¹⁴

Of the three theories whereby the State historically comes into existence -- force, kinship, social contract -- there is no question that Ortega subscribes to the force system. Whether it is the effort of young men or mature men, that which predominates in man's earliest social organizations is power. In power there is conflict and war. War calling for a leader, discipline,

authority and law, a spirit of societal concern develops, and the primitive life in common eventually projects the idea of a primeval political association.\textsuperscript{15} It is not the family that is the primal unit of early political association, but age classes that dominate through strength. In time and place, hordes become tribes and tribes become "bodies politic." The unification is affected by power, and the social classes are differentiated between on the same power basis. "And, all this indistinguishably merging into one phenomena," Ortega says provides "the irrational historical origin of the State."\textsuperscript{16} By taking this position, the problems of philosophical origin and rational justification for the existence and authority of the State have no place in Ortegan thought. As to man's continuing need for the State, his explanation rests on a quite elementary truth -- it is an historical fact! And, this "historical fact" is given sustained support by man because it proves itself \textit{useful}, otherwise, it could not have existed since the beginning of recorded history.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} History as a System, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 28-29.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 31.

\textsuperscript{17} David Easton, \textit{The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 223, finds a similar basis for political science. He states: "Like all social knowledge, political science has its origins and continuing support in the obvious fact that human beings find it useful. If men
The positing of the State as an historical verity relieves Ortega of any need for the mental gymnastics which have plagued other political philosophers on this subject. As for the question of political authority -- the legal and moral power of the State to require obedience -- this too becomes irrelevant. For, authority is in the ideas-beliefs of men, and it is established there by obligatory observances, usages, and public opinion. Like the State, authority is an historical fact, and man must reckon with its coercive power. There is, therefore, no need to justify it by any complicated and unreal divine, designative, or translative theories.\textsuperscript{18}

How does the State prove itself useful? Inasmuch as the State operates through its government, Ortega's answer to this question becomes an inquiry into the activities of government. But, government has two purposes: proximate and ultimate. What does he have to did not feel that political science does or might ultimately satisfy some human purposes, it could scarcely have existed for over two thousand years."

18. These theories have been used to explain the source and justification of political authority. Divine theories hold that political power is vested by God directly in a person or group; translation theories hold that God bestows power in the political community as a whole and not in one or a number of persons; and the designation theories hold that civil power is transferred to its holder by God once the political community designates the ruler, person or group. These concepts are theistic examples, but there are other types. See: Henry J. Schmandt and Paul G. Steinbicker, Fundamentals of Government (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1963), pp. 91-95
say about those functional and operational means which contribute to the attainment of immediate governmental objectives? And, what does he hold is the specific purpose for which the State exists and toward which those in authority are obliged to work? The inquiry thus entails the ethical aspects of first discerning the essential principles that "should" determine the purpose of the political community; and, second, arriving at Ortega's basic standards according to which political action "ought" to be conducted.

Ortega recognized the importance of observing the actual format of social life in its particular historical setting; and then seeing how it operates in terms of what the people believe are the ideal, philosophical ends. Every volume of the Obras completas is filled with these observations. He is also aware that States violate in various degrees the purposes, expressed in terms of public opinion and beliefs, for which it, the "superlative of society," is brought into existence. For this reason, he uses the word archetype instead of ideal when speaking of States, and for that matter, politicians as well. The ideal is desirable, but not possible; and, thus, the archetype is the highest possible form of reality.19 Ortega also recognizes that the State is

only an instrument in the life of a nation. The State, therefore, is not to be considered as an absolute value, for in history it is "the vitality of the nation that triumphs, not the formal perfection of the State."²⁰

And so, Ortega is aware that while some States have attained a close approximation to their purpose, others have made radical departures. His historical observations can only reveal what States in time and place have held and sought as their objectives, and what States have deviated. The political writings of Ortega, in this regard, do not reveal what he sees as the archetype or possibly even as the ideal. To find these answers, it is necessary to return to his basic philosophy.

The justification for this "dropping back" is in the significance of problem itself. Very careful consideration must be given to the subject of State "purpose," for what Ortega holds in this regard determines his views as to the "means" -- the functions and activities -- which the political community through its government can utilize. The only approach to this issue, therefore, is through what Ortega believes are the natures of man and the body politic. There is, perhaps, no other question in political philosophy which is more dependent upon one's philosophy than that of the ultimate purpose

²⁰ Ibid., p. 631.
of civil society. It is, therefore, from the premises established in previous sections that Ortega's view of the ultimate objective of the State is arrived at; and the method employed is that of comparing his concepts with other prominent theories which have pertained to the subject.

One of the theories relative to the purpose of the State has been Anarchism. Defined as:

... an attempt to establish justice (equality and reciprocity) in all human relations by the complete elimination of the state (or by the greatest possible minimization of its activity) and its replacement by an entirely free and spontaneous cooperation among individuals, groups, regions and nations,21

anarchism further considers the State an instrument of domination and exploitation and human nature as essentially good when uncorrupted by the political community and its established institutions. The State with its government must be abolished and replaced by some form of voluntary, noncoercive association. No person or group has the authority to rule over any individual against his will.

To Ortega, this theory is fundamentally defective in that it denies the necessity of any coercive organization in human society. The absence of such a power

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results in chaos and disorder; and, in reality, anarchism is un-historical for it reverts man to the primeval condition of the herd.\textsuperscript{22} As to the "goodness" of man's nature, Ortega states that:

\begin{quote}
Man, in a word, has no nature, what he has is . . . history. Expressed differently: what nature is to things, history, \textit{res gestae}, is to man.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

Thus, man in time, because the human factor is changeable, can and has been bad, better, and worse. As a free being, he would continue to be whatever he decided.

Collectivism is another type of concept which has been concerned with the purpose of the State. Consisting of a number of theories grouped under this title, collectivism pertains to a trend in social development that repudiates the \textit{laissez-faire} practices of the nineteenth-century. In its extreme form, it advocates government intervention in the economic and social life of the community on a large, paternalistic scale. Finding expression in the doctrines of Communism and Socialism, there are several varieties of each "ism" which differ in extent and degree of government control.

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{History as a System}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 217.
\end{quote}
and ownership; in the means to accomplish those objectives; and in the philosophical concepts which underlay the programs.

Communism, advocating state ownership of the means of production and equal distribution of wealth, is based on the concepts of dialectical materialism, historical determinism, and class struggle.\textsuperscript{24} The role of the State varies during the various stages of the communist process, but in the final phase, political government, class distinctions and human conflict disappear. Ortega's opposition to this form of collectivism is consistent and relentless. He attacks it in his \textit{Invertebrate Spain}, in European newspapers and in many of his lectures as an "essential retrogression," which is "anti-historic" and "anachronistic," -- the "monotonous repetition of the eternal revolution," that "devours its own children."\textsuperscript{25} And, in his essay on \textit{The Unity of Europe}, Ortega describes it as one of the situations of "frightful homogeneity" toward which the world is sinking.\textsuperscript{26}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{24} George H. Sabine, \textit{A History of Political Theory} (New York: Holt, 1953), pp. 752-768.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{25} Revolt of the Masses, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 92-93.
See also: P. deCles, "Through Spanish Eyes: Two Spaniards on Spain, I., Ortega on Bolshevism," \textit{Living Age}, Vol. 344, April, 1933, pp. 130-132, which is a partial translation from \textit{Neue Freie Presse}, a Vienna liberal newspaper.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{26} José Ortega y Gasset, "The Unity of Europe,"
\end{flushright}
Ortega's intellectual attack against communism, however, is by means of his principle of historical reason. First, the economic interpretation of history is applicable to only a given time; and, second, man's social classes have not always been economic classes. But, what is the most presumptuous about communism is its totalitarian quality which forces man into a pre-conceived form. This is in direct conflict with Ortega's principle of life as a thing in constant flux, and it denies the freedom of each human being constantly to search for his own destiny. Any type of collectivism which frustrates man in his quest is therefore, an arbitrary imposition upon human life which in the proper and original sense is "each individual's life seen from itself," and which is always "mine" and "personal."  

At odds with Anarchism and Collectivism, Ortega also strikes out against Fascism. To the Spanish philosopher, nothing is more ridiculous than this theory which holds the State to be an absolute consciousness with a will and a personality of its own, for this is carrying the idolatry of the State to its ultimate pinnacle. The two characteristics which especially mark fascism, how-

27. Man and People, op. cit., p. 58.
ever, are "violence and illegitimacy."\textsuperscript{28} It is illegitimate -- "illegitimatist" -- paradoxically, in that it not only obtains power illegitimately, but once in power, "it also exercises it illegitimately."\textsuperscript{29} Violence, the consequence of illegitimacy, is not only the means of obtaining power, but once the regime is established, violence is continued as the only means of enforcing law. Violence is the essence of law and the law is violence! There is, therefore, no meaningful theory applicable to fascism, because its rationale is simply force. This "cult of the fait accompli" is a negative force and can be established successfully only upon the weaknesses of man.\textsuperscript{30}

Hence, to Ortega, both collectivism and fascism are historical retrogressions back toward a form of primitivism. There is no hope for the world in these two "false dawns." To what theory, then, does Ortega's ideas of man, society, and the purpose of the State appeal? Certainly not to "Liberalism," for this also is associated with the past. If the task of the philosopher is "nothing else than an uncovering, a bringing to the surface, of what is lying in the depths," what

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} \textit{Invertebrate Spain}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 195.
\item \textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 199
\end{itemize}
Based upon what has been noted concerning his basic concepts, that "ism" which most corresponds to his ideas as to the purpose of the State is Individualism.

There are so many interpretations of this theory that it is difficult to reduce them all to a single common denominator. Perhaps a description in the broadest sense is one that holds that the welfare of the political community is best served by permitting each human being the widest scope of freedom consistent with the freedom and safety of its other members. The State -- government -- is restricted to the functions of maintaining order and protecting each individual's freedom. Its interference into various societal endeavors is kept to a minimum, or at least is denied any promotive functions. Not to be confused with the economic "liberals" of the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, nor with that of the biological-evolutionists of the last century, Ortegan individualism advocates the highest level of possibilities for authentic existence within the specific time-place frame of the society. Since life is dynamic, so too must the State be as well. If the State becomes static, and if man becomes sated in that condition, he becomes, in effect, dehumanized -- this is

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man's "perpetual risk." Government is not to replace man, the basic unit of society, with a purpose of its own. Rather, its purpose is to provide that environment in which it is possible for each man to perform his particular functions in a way beneficial to himself—materially, socially, and intellectually. And, to do that which is the most conducive to free, human living, the political environment must be one of peace and justice.

The good of society, the sum of personal goods, is undermined and weakened when injustice in any form exists. In a certain sense, "justice" is the "soul" of the political community for unless this characteristic permeates the State, its true end is perverted. Since the time of Aristotle, classical political theorists have distinguished between three kinds of justice: legal, distributive, and commutative. With the rise of the modern, nation State, a fourth type—international—was added. These distinctions correspond to the various possible relations between man and his fellow human beings. But, Ortega gives his own meaning to justice,


33. The relation of the individual to the State is regulated by "legal" justice; the relation of the State to the individual by "distributive" justice; the relation of individual to individual by "commutative" justice; and the relation of State to State by "international" justice.
and as a part of man's life that stood in the need of a new revelation, Ortega states that:

... among the various ways in which we can behave to our neighbors our perception selects one in which it finds the special quality called "justice." The capacity for perceiving, for thinking justice, and preferring the just to the unjust is primarily a faculty with which the organism is endowed in order that it may promote its own peculiar and private convenience. If the sense of justice had been pernicious, or even superfluous, to the living being, it would have meant so heavy a biological burden that the human race would have succumbed. 34

Justice, according to the Spanish philosopher, therefore, comes into existence in the format of a convenience that is vital, but at first only in a subjective form. As such, "juristic sensibility" has no more value than one of man's biological functions. Once society has emerged from its primitive condition, the sentiments of man give way to necessity and justice. More than a "binding observance" or something comparable to a biological function, justice becomes a thing having the "irresistible demand for its own existence" -- even though it can be a negative pressure upon man and thereby become an inconvenience. 35 Apart from human sentiment and biological utility, justice acquires a value in itself -- it is a


35. Ibid.
"plenary sufficiency."

There is little doubt that the Ortegan concept of justice is predicated upon the strongest of bases, and its importance cannot be overemphasized. In his existentialist description of human life as the reality, as a unique adventure in the quest for authentic existence, the relevance of his concept to the role and functions of government becomes very clear. Indeed, the very freedom of the human being is predicated upon justice. With ethics divorced from politics, it is justice that fills the ammoral void and protects man's individualism.

But, justice is not self-sufficient, nor is it a substantive thing. Just as personal rights and privileges are not passive possessions and mere enjoyment, justice represents a standard attained by personal effort. In his essay entitled "The Self and Others," Ortega says:

Nothing that is substantive has been conferred upon man. He has to do it all for himself. . . . it is because of his effort, his toil, and his ideas he has succeeded in retrieving something from things, in transforming them, and creating around himself a margin of security which is always limited but always or almost always increasing.

If man is to plan his attack against his circumstances,

36. Revolt of the Masses, op. cit., p. 64.

if he is going to humanize the world, that political system is unjust which permits its citizens to be dominated by things. Man has to govern things himself, he has to impose his particular will and design upon them, he has to realize his ideas in the outer world, and he has to shape the planet after the preference of his innermost being. To Ortega, this is not irresponsibility, but responsibility. Man's destiny is in action. He does not live to think (contrary to the Idealist and the Rationalist), but man thinks in order to survive. Man is never sure that he is able to carry out his thought and he is never sure that he is "right," but if he is to be more than an animal in a zoo, man must have the freedom of his actions. Justice is that "plenary sufficiency" which enables man to put himself, not just to the service of his own being, but to the service of the world.

Beyond the existentialist task of merely describing concrete human existence, Ortega joins his thought with action in the human situation. His theories are not things in an intellectual vacuum, but projections that are particularly adaptable to the present time. As one author notes:

38. Ibid., p. 404.
It is "the theme of our time," a time of crisis in which beliefs are being dissolved and in which new ideas are taking shape preparatory to becoming new beliefs to replace the old ones. This new theory of reality, to which Ortega gives expression in his philosophy ... establishes once again a theoretic solution to the cleavage between man and his universe. ... 39

Human affairs are not res stantes, but to Ortega they were historical phenomena -- pure movement and perpetual mutation. It follows, then, that law -- all the rules of conduct established and enforced by the authority of a given political community -- has to be dynamic as well. If there is to be a liberation of human activity from radical limitations, law cannot be static, for there is no form of justice more arbitrary than that circumscribed by the clause rebus sic stantibus. Traditional law has been "a collection of rules for paralytic reality." 40

But, as historical reality changed all the time, it comes "into violent conflict with the stability of law which is a kind of straitjacket." 41 And, as Ortega points out, "a straitjacket put on a healthy man would certainly drive him raving mad." Law, therefore, must be dynamic if the political system is to avoid the unjustnesses of a status quo; and this is also applicable to those

41. Ibid.
rules regulating the relations between political societies, that is, international law. 42

Ortega's positions on the topics covered in this chapter never change. Beyond what has been covered and abstracted from his extant publications, however, little can be added. It is to the earnest credit of his intellectual "integrity that up to his death in 1955, he understands and yet refuses to cheer on those activities whose increasing vogue would vindicate his theories." 43 To the civilized humanists -- Santayana, Whitehead, Jordan, Northrop, Sorokin -- Ortega leaves a storehouse of ideas for projection, both philosophical and causal. And, to the existentialists -- Jaspers, Hocking, Camus, Marcel, Sarte -- Ortega's legacy of thought is a virtual cornucopia. 44 Whether or not Ortega would agree with the conclusions of any of these writers, however, remains a matter of conjecture. To a world of readers, opponents as well as advocates, what Ortega promises as an introduction to a complete political philosophy remains just

42. Ibid., p. 26.


44. Eugene J. Meehan, Contemporary Political Thought (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey, 1967), p. 392, notes that Jaspers and Marcel especially followed the tradition of Ortega. Of interest is that Jaspers supported a democratic form of government whereas Marcel advocated an aristocracy.
that. His Ideas and Beliefs which would, he states, treat with the concrete instrumentalities of the State was terminated by his death with only the introductory section completed.
The purpose of this study has been the presentation of José Ortega y Gasset's political thought within the context of a value theory. As such, attention was focused upon discerning his principles and norms applicable to human behavior and especially relevant to judging what was ethical, moral and just in political life. A logical integration of his ideas was sought through the use of the deductive approach. Following a biographical and bibliographical chapter familiarizing the reader with those aspects of the philosopher's life, succeeding chapters proceeded from Ortega's stated principles to their necessary conclusions. In a systematic and methodological format, the concepts examined were his: epistemology; psychology of man and society; theory of the select minority; existentialism; and, finally, ideas on the State and role of government.

Throughout those chapters, it was seen that a consistent line was drawn by the philosopher -- he refused to formalize his philosophical attitudes. Had Ortega institutionalized his principles, further study would
have been possible with reference to the form of government advocated and its ramifications. And, Ortegan political thought would have achieved the dimensions of a comprehensive political philosophy with his abstract principles being implemented in the concrete political order. To have ended the study with such an accomplishment would have been the ideal for the cataloguer of political ideas. But, Ortega's philosophy does not permit the ideal conclusion. His political philosophy stands as incomplete; yet, in this position, it also remains inherently noncontradictory and perpetual in its appeal to researchers.

The explanation for this conclusion, and one that has been in evidence since the positing of Ortega's theory of knowledge, is that Ortega's philosophic thought is dynamic -- "the seed of Heraclitus grown full." Passing through several phases of intellectual development, even making a surface deviation culminating in the Revolt of the Masses, there seems to be no constant philosophical mainstream coursing in his works. For all the multifaceted aspects of his writings, however, Ortega's ideas finally reveal their existentialist orientation. It is from this perspective that Ortega must be considered, albeit in some of his works the "ism" exists only as a deep under-current. The understanding, therefore, of the basis for his philosophy of "beings in constant
change" provides the key to much of what Ortega wrote and, indeed, why he refused to posit certain conclusions.

In a literary sense, José Ortega y Gasset the Existentialist, carries his readers along in situations comparable to those found in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. As if by design, the reader, in a series of Quixotic parallels, finds himself accompanying "Don" Ortega in his intellectual jousts against the forces seeking to dehumanize mankind. The reader also discovers that he often has been led, somewhat like the donkey after a carrot, by Ortegan promises of various intellectual rewards -- of "new revelations" -- in return for his academic endeavors. And, the reader in a final analysis might arrive at the conclusion that Ortega has not conducted him to any philosophical "inns." Rather, Ortega has carried him along and then left him to marvel only at the brilliant aspects of the literary journey. But, what of the vistas acquired as a result of one's Ortegan travels? Are they of enough value in themselves to have warranted the undertaking? Answers to this question depend upon why the philosopher is read, what he has to offer, and the reader's own system of values. Contingent upon the reader's purpose or position, Ortega can either infuriate, or he can impress his fellow-travelers.¹

Those infuriated by Ortega, to one degree or another, generally express the opinion that their study of his works leaves them with the "feeling of expectations unfulfilled." True, he broaches a wide range of controversial topics in his writings, but there is no cohesiveness in his efforts and he comes to a halt too quickly without sufficient elaborations. In this regard, the researcher seeking a comprehensive political philosophy can discover that what he believed was an ideal effort is frustrated at the end. Other critics oppose their intellectual journey with Ortega even while the tour is in progress. They variously attack what is read as being: a relativistic dilettantism in metaphysics; a "sinister light" contributing to world horror by divorcing ethics from politics; an agnostic attack upon society's Christian foundations; and an irrational assault upon whatever "ism" the particular opponent of Ortega is trying to defend.

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This study, however, has not been undertaken to reach any critical conclusions. The motivation has been the writer's belief that the Spanish philosopher has something to say worth the effort of reading. But, beyond the special interests of the writer, to whom are the writings of Ortega y Gasset of value? Who will find his political thought useful? In his broadest appeal, Ortega's works are meaningful to those having the concern that mankind is being dehumanized by the forces of modern civilization. If only negatively, Ortega provides biting criticisms against the rigid dogmas and political systems that seek to concretize human beings into predetermined categories, whether it takes the form of rationalism, scientism, or totalitarianism. There is little doubt that Ortega is a spokesman for the integrity of the human personality, and his maximum affinity is with those theories sharing a similar position. (See: Figure I, p. 148).

To Anarchism in general, even though Ortega rejects the theory, there is an appeal in the shared belief that men join together in their labors because of a mutual self-interest.4 Man's joint endeavors must not be the

4. It is recalled that both the Anarchists and the Syndicalists in Spain had recourse to Ortega's writings in the 1920's and early 1930's. Ortega denounced the groups because of their resort to violence and murder. Philosophically, Ortega held that the two groups were trying to affect ends that were "un-historical" and out
FIGURE I

POLITICAL THEORIES RATED WITH REFERENCE
TO THE EXTENT OF STATE FUNCTIONS

THEORIES OF COLLECTIVISM

Maximal

THEORIES OF INDIVIDUALISM

Minimal

I. ANARCHISM
(Ortega's Political Thought)

INDIVIDUALISM

COMMUNISM

THEORETICAL SOCIALISM

III. FASCISM

II. WELFARISM

* Oscar H. Ibele, Political Science: An Introduction (Scranton: Chandler, 1971), p. 62. Ibele uses the diagram to illustrate the maximal and minimal roles of governmental activity in a clockwise fashion.
result of any force by the coercive instrumentalities of the State. There is also a common opposition to this institution because of its inherent presumptiveness and interference which debases man's intellect and personality. The State is always an impediment to man's aspiration to live an "authentic" life. From without and within, Ortega and the anarchists are opposed to any association unless it is founded upon a non-compulsive and voluntary membership. With Nihilism, Ortega has less affinity, for this broad anarchic negation repudiates all established ideas, institutions, practices, and standards. Yet, in accord with the nihilists, Ortega denounces all traditional abstract, logical, metaphysical, and speculative systems, as well as all orthodox religious beliefs. In their places are advocated, to a degree: emotionalism; hedonism; humanism; and either deism or atheism. The incidence of appeal increases between Ortega and Anarchism's Syndicalist and Guild Socialist positions. Of the two, Guild Socialism is most in agreement with Ortega's basic political ideas. The State is retained, but only with the minimum of power and a small number of bureaucrats. What is sought is the abolition of the stultifying monotony of life and the exploitation of man caused by modern of place in the twentieth-century. For a short description of the Spanish Anarchists and Syndicalists see: Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 40-44.
technology's mechanistic techniques of mass production. In this regard, Ortega's concepts of man and society provide the Guild Socialists with arguments against what is seen as a rigid uniformity imposed by an economic-political coalition that destroys the human personality.  

The second "ism" in the first quadrant of Figure I, Individualism, is divided into three subdivisions: Classical Liberalism; Classical Capitalism; and Conservatism. Ortega's affinity with this group has been examined in Chapter VII, but more than advocating the principle of "the lest government is the best," the philosopher maintains that "the best government is that which promotes the most individual freedom." Thus, Ortega is in agreement with Individualism's general attitude that the State should not be abolished, but the autonomy of the human person should be protected against governmental encroachments. Further, government should only protect its citizens, it must never determine, especially in matters of morals, public opinion, and religion. Ortega does not agree with Classical Liberalism's principles of rationalism and empiricism, nor with

5. Oscar H. Ibele, Political Science: An Introduction (Scranton: Chandler, 1971), pp. 68-69, notes that: "The contemporary scene with its beatniks and hippies and with the rise of the New Left . . . betrays aspects of the older nihilism among some of its adherents. A number of youthful rebels have begun to criticize 'the Establishment.' . . . they seem to be in revolt against aspects of modern civilization which they believe tend
its appeal to a "higher law." There is accord, however, on the autonomy of the individual and the concept of the State as a means rather than end. Also, there is a marked similarity in their belief in "voluntarism" -- that society ought to be a series of voluntary acts. This conviction common to Ortega and the Classical Liberals is that which makes it possible for man to live an authentic life, have an originality of thought, and realize the ambitions of his ever-developing personality.

Additional examples of similarities between Ortega and the other types of Individualism could be given. The increase of significant differences in philosophical foundations, however, would weaken the possible comparisons and make their logical association increasingly tenuous. What has been noted, for the most part, are the areas of closest accord and affinity which can be used by the various "isms" represented in the first quadrant of the diagram. This has been done, but, in making the comparison of ideas, an additional purpose has been served: the classification of Ortega's political thought. Based upon the incidences of agreement and disagreement, Ortega's ideas are neither expressly anarchistic, nor are they completely compatible with the
traditional individualistic positions. Ortega's thought, in effect, overlapps Anarchism's maximal theory, Guild Socialism, and Individualism's minimal theory, Classical Liberalism. The conclusion, therefore, is that the philosopher's position is that of being in approximately the center of the diagram's first quadrant (Note: Shaded area of Figure I).

Beyond this philosophical juxtaposing, the study of Ortega's political thought has a more important dimension. That which adds to Ortega's position among the philosophers of modern western civilization, accounts for his following, and explains the widespread attention given to his works, even by those hostile to his concepts, is his evaluation of contemporary human conditions. In a lively and brilliant style, he describes and explains the situation of modern man and compares it with what he believes man's authentic existence should be. His


7. This is a conclusion significant in itself, for it conflicts with the opinions of several authors who, looking only at the surface of Ortega's writings of the "select minority" period, have been misled in placing him in the minimal area of Fascism.
conclusion that man's situation stands in the need of correction does not include the means of affecting the correction; yet this omission does not destroy the inherent worth of his evaluation. For, a careful study of the questions raised by Ortega in his value discussions are of positive use. The aspects of social and political life that he examines are usually those neglected by researchers primarily concerned with only explanations. In stressing the human aspects of man, Ortega's writings have merit, therefore, to the student of political science, sociology, and psychology.

Finally, Ortega and the other existentialists provide source material for those in political science engaged in causal theory. In the belief that man's predicament is caused by the inadequacy of previous scientific outlook, the collapse of rationalism, the depersonalization of technology, and the collectivization of man, a concentration of criticism occurs. Focusing attention upon the human condition and its boundaries, Ortegan concepts contribute to those concerned with the formulation of "organizational" theory. Describing this


9. To Ortega, one of the boundary conditions of the human situation is the historical fact of "being among others," and the mode of this societal relationship
Organization theory constitutes a revolution in political thought in that traditional political theory distinguishes the state from other associations as the container of all social existence while in organization theory the state is seen as merely one of many organizations, performing functions that cannot be determined prior to observation.¹⁰

The association of Ortega with organization theory is thus through its consideration of "the bureaucratic social technology as a decisive aspect of the contemporary public situation."¹¹ In Ortegan terminology, the "bureaucratic apparatus" through which collective tasks are performed in industrialized societies, corresponds to the sub-societal units which are non-voluntary, oppose man's creative freedom, exploit his talents, and submerge his authentic existence. Clearly, this is one of the consequences of social and political life in the twentieth-century and it is a condition that Ortega denounces. It is also a subject that is being given closer examination by those who see a highly bureaucratized State as a danger to all systems of representative government.¹²


¹¹. Ibid.

¹². See: David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney, The Lonely Crowd (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); William H. Whyte, Jr., The Organization Man (Garden
The writings of José Ortega y Gasset thus have their place in political philosophy, and, complete or not, they achieve what the philosopher sought, for in 1933 he said:

It is not that I must think in black or white: on the contrary I do not believe that I am thinking politically at all yet at every instance I am searching for the truth of our time... he who wishes to live a sincere life must do likewise.¹³

And, in 1941 he added:

My work is the obscure, subterranean task of a miner. The job of the intellectual is ... to clarify things a little.¹⁴

Ortega did think politically, search for the truth of our time, have a concern for mankind, and seek to understand the human condition. Regardless of whether he convinces or antagonized his readers, he nevertheless challenges and provokes all to follow in their own quest for what is real and meaningful. In the drama of world politics expressed in conflicts between ethical systems of "ought to be," Ortega sweeps all established formats aside as contributing to man's inhumanity to man. Truth, relative to time and place, had to be used in the service

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of life and not in its destruction. As long as there are those who share a similar belief, the concepts of the "Sage of the Escorial" will continue to have an appeal.


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ARTICLES CONSULTED


"Philosophy in Balance." Saturday Review. April 5, 1941, p. 5.


Candidate:  Wilmer Albert Sweetser

Major Field:  Political Science

Title of Thesis:  The Political Thought of Jose Ortega Y Gasset

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

October 10, 1972
VITA

Wilmer A. Sweetser was born in Mobile, Alabama, October 12, 1930. He received his diploma in 1948 from McGill Institute, Mobile, Alabama. He served in the U.S. Army on active duty from 1950-52; he graduated magna cum laude in 1956 from Spring Hill College in Mobile where he received the B.S., majoring in Political Science and minoring in History and Philosophy. In 1961 he received his M.A. from the University of Detroit in Political Theory. Before entering Louisiana State University in September 1964 to begin work on the Ph.D., he was Lecturer, Instructor and Assistant Professor at Spring Hill College in Mobile from 1956-1964; Teaching Fellow at the University of Detroit, 1956-57; Visiting Assistant Professor during the Summer of 1965 at the University of Alabama. During his years of study at Louisiana State University he was a Teaching Fellow and Visiting Assistant Professor. Since 1970 he has been Assistant Professor and Acting Chairman of the Department of Political Science at Southwestern at Memphis.