

ORTEGA ON LIBERALISM AND DEMOCRACY: REVISITING AN OLD DISCUSSION

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Ortega's liberalism

I propose to address, in this paper, as the title makes it clear, the problem of the liberalism of the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset. A problem that has already been discussed many times, is still the subject of huge controversies, but which, in my opinion, deserves us to return to it once again. I am interested, above all, in highlighting the philosophical foundations of this liberalism, which make it different, both from classical liberalism (especially that of John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, who will always be a reference for Ortega), but also from more recent liberal varieties. If we look at this issue from a generational point of view, I believe that we will discover some similarities between Ortega's political thought and that of some distinguished representatives of liberal thought in Germany, at the time of the Weimar Republic. However, I don't think we can talk about a direct influence¹. The similarities are most probably the outcome of an identical historical circumstance, characterized by the growth of totalitarianism, in Germany and Italy as well as in the Soviet Union.

The Spanish philosopher, as I believe everybody knows, tells us about his philosophical trajectory in a 1934 text – which remained unpublished until his death – entitled “Prologue for Germans.” An important event in his years of training was, he tells us there, his move from a philosophy of construction – of a synthetic subjective activity that is added to every encounter (Ortega, 2009: 140), as he himself characterized Kant and Neokantianism – to a philosophy that aspires to

¹ Contrarywise, Ortega's influence on some intellectuals of the Weimar period was based, above all, on the Spanish author's pessimism regarding the possibilities of triumph of liberal democracy. On this subject, see Hacke (2018: 347).

give us the presence of things in their most intimate being. This move would have happened around the years 1912-1913. Its importance will never be questioned by Ortega, until his death, in 1955, regardless of the variations in the appreciation of the philosophical meaning of that move. Due to the importance that Ortega himself always gave to it, I will be interested in analyzing this event to understand which were its consequences (if they existed) regarding his political thought and his liberal creed. An authorized Ortega scholar like Javier San Martín considers these consequences to be very significant. It is all the more necessary to clarify this point as, before and after those years, Ortega never stopped proclaiming his adherence to liberal ideas. I will address this issue of there being two liberalismisms in Ortega – one before and the other after 1913 – (or even three, according to some commentators) in the final section of my paper.

The time that separates us from Ortega, who died in 1955, is already relatively long, but some of the most obvious features of the society of his time – and others that, although not immediately obvious at the time, could be guessed by the Spanish thinker – still remain alive in our own society. Furthermore, what Ortega means by liberalism, throughout his life, also deserves to be clarified. Ortega, as I just said, always defined himself as a liberal thinker, even in his youth, when he showed a certain proximity to the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party. Furthermore, regarding 19th century liberalism (Tocqueville's, Stuart Mill's, or Herbert Spencer's, for example), Ortega always argued that his was of a different type, because the 20th century needed a new type of liberalism. Regarding Spencer, namely, Ortega mistrusts his optimism about the prospects of ending the wars simply due to the common interests of the leading European commercial powers in the existence of peaceful trade relations. Industry, for Spencer, looked like a good thing, and war like a bad thing, however, Ortega adds, in the 20th century one begins to see that these two activities are more entangled than it seemed in the 19th century (Ortega, 2004c: 546). Mill is looked at with more favorable eyes, since he was less naïve than Spencer, and could foresee the tendency – that would culminate in the 20th century – to increase the power of the state over the individual. Moreover, Mill was able to see the danger of the uniformization of

European life and the narrowing of human possibilities that this uniformization represented (Ortega, 2010: 431).

What this new form of liberalism will consist of, perhaps a statement by the young Ortega, dated from 1908, can already give us with a first clarification. Says Ortega: "Liberalism believes that no social regime is definitively fair; the norm or idea of justice always demands a beyond, a human right not yet recognized and which, therefore, transcends, surpasses, the written constitution." (Ortega, 2004a: 143) A few lines earlier, in the same article, Ortega had stated that liberalism is the "system of revolution," that is, it is the affirmation of the reality of the moral ideal, as opposed to revolution without a system. The influence of Paul Natorp's *Social Pedagogy* was crucial to Ortega during his Neokantian training in Marburg, although it will decrease in the following years². In these early years, however, the influence of Natorp explains why, for him, socialism means above all a cultural movement and not class struggle; an identification of socialism and Marxism is for Ortega a falsification of historical truth.

In what some scholars call the "second phase" of Ortega's liberalism, the author establishes a distinction between liberalism and democracy (which we did not find in the first phase and which, in the terms in which he does it, seems quite original to me), seeking to show that, although they are not incompatible, they constitute, notwithstanding, different answers to two different problems. At the basis of this difference is, according to Ortega, the distinct origin of these two notions; liberalism has its origins in ancient Germanic law, which, having lost its validity in the economic and religious organization of the Middle Ages, nevertheless persisted in the political organization of feudalism. Democracy, on the contrary, has its origins in Roman law, which, studied in universities from the end of the 12th century onwards, provides the juridical basis that legitimizes the independence

² Very significantly Ortega welcomes the election of Pablo Iglesias (the founder of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party) to parliament saying that he is a man penetrated by a single idea. And this idea, that brings Iglesias closer to Giner de los Rios – one of the main representatives of Spanish Krausism – is still, according to Ortega, the "Europeanization" of Spain (Marías, 1983: 48). However, the problem of Spain, the importance of the national problem as opposed to socialist internationalism, will prevent Ortega from adhering to the political program of the Spanish socialists. As we will see, in the second phase of Ortega's liberalism the national problem will acquire even greater importance.

of Italian cities from the restrictions on their sovereignty imposed by papal and imperial power. Therefore, Ortega also says, the so-called Roman freedom – as well as its survival in the legal tradition of the West – has nothing to do with the freedom of liberalism, but rather with the autonomy of state power in relation to any interference from outside.³ That is what the “warrior spirit” means for Ortega. As he explains, in a text published in *El Espectador*, it is not the conquest of a piece of land because of its economic value (like the modern investors praise their stockings according to their value in the Stock Exchange market), but instead the possibility of a way of living free from state interference (Ortega, 2005b: 499). Everywhere where Germanic law triumphed, after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the right of individuals before the state power was acknowledged. The defense of such rights is based on a legal system that aims to avoid excessive interference of the public sphere in the private sphere.

These considerations of a historical nature – whatever one may think of them – are tightly linked to Ortega’s diagnosis of his time, in Spain and in Europe. The biggest problem for the European states seems to lie in the fact that the tension between democracy and liberalism has faded, not in favor of one of the conflicting terms, but of the emergence of a human type and a cultural milieu that, as a consequence of 19th century optimism, are no longer up to this tension and its demands. Such tension did not exist for Ortega when, under the influence of Neokantianism, he claimed to be a liberal socialist. It will be the philosophical turn of 1913 that will lead him to evaluate political and social systems, in the first place, in terms of the possibility they open for the fulfillment of personal life, that is, for each human being to achieve the project of fidelity to the vocation that he discovers as his own. This is where Ortega thinks democracy comes into tension with liberalism. Only the endurance of this tension, as it seems to me to be his opinion, makes it possible that one fulfills the mentioned project. We will see below that this is the diagnosis that some years later, in *The Revolt of the Masses*, Ortega will make of his time and the anthropological type that prevails in it.

³ In the last section of this paper, we will see that, for the old Ortega, “Roman freedom” has a slightly different meaning.

Of course, it is not very easy to say when the “second phase” of Ortega’s liberalism begins. Jesús Díaz Álvarez says that, in relation to the alleged several phases of Ortega’s liberalism, it would be more prudent to talk about preponderant topics rather than a rigid division in periods (Díaz Álvarez, 2013: 268). Of course, it is possible to argue that the year 1913 – or perhaps 1914, when the *Meditations on Quixote* were published – represents a decisive turn. Pedro Cerezo acknowledges the importance of this last date (Cerezo, 2011a: 273). However, although this is true in general terms, perhaps, if we look more closely at the development of Ortega’s political ideas, this appears not so evident. I am thinking, namely, in a series of articles, published in 1919 in *El Sol*, entitled in Spanish “Ante el Movimiento Social.” There, he claims to be still a democratic socialist, as he had done in a series of newspaper articles published before the First World War – or at least to be a proponent of democratic socialist solutions to the social problems –, and, at the same time, restates that a socialist form of state does not allow a dictatorship and warrants the freedom of every citizen (Ortega, 2005a: 268).

Liberalism and social problems

The vast majority of modern liberal political philosophies have, at their starting point, the objective of responding to a question posed in the 18th century by Immanuel Kant, namely: how is it possible to reconcile the will of each person with the will of all? However, half a century had not yet passed when Tocqueville recognized that freedom is the origin of private hatred that separates citizens, while despotism creates a generalized indifference towards public problems (Tocqueville, 1968: 249). In order for neither one thing nor the other to happen, the French author thinks that, similar to what he saw happening in the United States – a federal state made up of several states with great autonomy –, the opportunities for citizens to act in common must be infinitely multiplied.

Since Kant’s time, however, the development of capitalism, first in Europe, especially in England and France, then in the rest of the world, has presented political philosophy with another challenge, that

of social inequality. Tocqueville could hardly recognize inequality in the United States that had just emerged from Jefferson's time. There was, among the descendants of the first English colonizers, a reasonably egalitarian society, which allowed Tocqueville to write peacefully:

“[The rich] willingly consent to do good to the people, but they want to continue to keep them carefully at a distance. They think this is enough; they are mistaken. They would ruin themselves in this way without warming the hearts of the population around them. It is not the sacrifice of your money that she asks of you; but rather that of your pride.” (Tocqueville, 1968: 250-251)

Furthermore, Tocqueville, when evaluating the liberal heritage, introduces an interesting distinction between political liberalism and economic liberalism, arguing that one does not imply the other. He notes, in fact, that liberals from the economic point of view, in the 18th century – that is, the physiocrats, followers of *laissez-faire*, *laissez-passer* doctrine – were not politically liberal. Their liberalism was compatible with the permanence of the Old Regime society. Such liberals, argues Tocqueville, preferred a regime that was favorable to their doctrines and helped them to impose them, rather than a regime in which the power of the state was limited (Lefort, 1986: 216).

As I have already said, I believe that it has rarely been noticed that many of Ortega's reflections, in the phase of his so-called “second liberalism,” after 1913, are in line with the reflections that many German liberals were making during the Weimar Republic. These are authors that Ortega rarely quotes and with many of them he would probably not even be acquainted, despite the familiarity he has always maintained with German thought. However, Alejandro de Haro calls our attention to the influence, in the first phase of Ortega's liberalism, of some German social-democratic thinkers (Haro, 2015: 480). It would also be interesting to investigate if – besides the experience of the Spanish civil war – the failure of the Weimar Republic was not one of the causes of Ortega's later pessimism⁴.

⁴ Suanzes-Carpegna talks about the influence of the Weimar Constitution in the Spanish Constitution of 1931, which he labels a socialist democratic one. Moreover, he stresses the fact that some

The role of the state in the economy, one of the most controversial issues for liberal thought, was evaluated in a quite similar way by Ortega and by Weimar liberal economists and politicians. We see an important German liberal economist, Moritz Julius Bonn, complaining about the alliance between private capitalism and the state in the years following the First World War, one of the most harmful consequences, in his opinion, of the war economy. On the other hand, some of the social concerns of German liberals at the beginning of the Weimar Republic, as stated, for instance, in the manifesto of the German Democratic Party of November 1918, were already the subject of many articles and conferences by Ortega in the years immediately preceding the beginning of the First World War. The social problems will still be in Ortega's mind many years later, when, after the establishment of the republic in 1931, he founded, together with some friends, the Association at the Service of the Republic. Under the motto "Nación y Trabajo!" (Ortega, 2006a: 101) – one of the Association's slogans – we find some social concerns not very different from those of the contemporary German liberals. Ortega will also appeal, at that time, on behalf of a liberal policy, in favor of state intervention in the Spanish economy. This is manifest in the various proclamations of the Association at the Service of the Republic, where the issue is addressed several times.

Now, liberal thought, until the end of the Second World War, only sporadically expressed similar concerns regarding social inequality. There are exceptions, of course. One of the most notable, in the years following the First World War, is that of the German economist and reformer Friedrich Naumann. The most eminent representatives of liberal thought analyzed recent trends in capitalism, contrasting them with capitalism prior to the First World War, but they did so, almost exclusively, with the aim of highlighting either its progressive cartelization and its alliance with the banking sector, or its capacity for technological innovation, combined with new methods of business management. Many liberals will also accept the analyses, in the same sense, carried out by the social democrat Rudolf Hilferding, which

left-wing oriented Spanish intellectuals played a strong role in Parliament during the draft of the constitution, and among them the mentions Ortega, who in 1931 could hardly be counted among left-wing intellectuals (Suanzes-Carpegna, 2017: 357).

would have a great influence on the Marxist thought of his time. Another exception is Moritz Julius Bonn, of whom I have already spoken. Faced with the economic crisis unleashed in Germany at the end of the 20s of the last century, Bonn – who was not a radical – is farsighted enough to realize that job security and the protection of the unemployed is a condition for the stability and development of a capitalist society (Hacke, 2018: 320). It is from the point of view of his liberal conception of the economy and the state that he argues that, in times of crisis, the social tasks of the state – such as the fight against unemployment – increase rather than decrease, a statement very similar to what John Maynard Keynes defended.

Ortega’s overcoming of the “old” liberalism

The complexity of contemporary problems means that, for Ortega, neither Macauley and Stuart Mill, nor Tocqueville offer satisfactory solutions (Ortega, 2005c: 362). Ortega calls them “old liberals” and with this designation he refers to the fact that the entire thought of these authors developed at a time when the social and collective dimensions of life, and their power over the individual, were still a very recent phenomenon. There is, says Ortega, something beneficial and something terrible in the social fact, and the ancient liberals could only see what was beneficial in it. Regarding this subject, however, it seems to me that there is some coincidence between Ortega’s concerns and Tocqueville’s. Both recognize that on behalf of freedom, freedom can be destroyed. On the one hand, economic freedom and political freedom may not coincide; but, on the other hand, the political representation of society can escape the latter’s control, leaving individuals in a situation in which they merely enjoy a formal freedom. Therefore, in *The Revolt of the Masses*, Ortega, referring to the new liberalism he proposes, says that it will be – I quote – “less naive and more cunning” than the previous one (Ortega, 2005c: 361).

Ortega titled chapter XIII of *The Revolt of the Masses*, precisely, “The greatest danger, the state.” The Nietzschean resonances of this chapter are evident, but I believe, however, that a commentator of Orte-

ga as authoritative as Pedro Cerezo overvalues them (Cerezo, 2011c: 350). Ortega's question to which he seeks the answer is: "how far can the power of the state go?," whoever commands and whatever the arguments with which that command is legitimized. As Ignacio Sánchez Cámara states, Ortega's liberalism is based on the distinction between the legitimacy of the origin of power, on the one hand – and, in this case, the liberal who is also a democrat will say that the origin is grounded in the will of the people – and, on the other hand, the legitimacy of the exercise of that same power (Sánchez Cámara, 2005: 190). Of course, when Ortega puts the question in these terms, he leaves another question unanswered: since being a Democrat and being a liberal are not the same thing, can one still be a liberal if one is not a Democrat? The fact that Ortega did not answer this question, or, perhaps better, was not even able to formulate it, constitutes, in my opinion, one of the weakest points of his political philosophy. Perhaps what some people call Ortega's "third liberalism" (Álvarez, 2013: 278) is a consequence of this failure.

However, when it comes to questions of legitimacy, Ortega, in his "second liberalism," says some very interesting things, for example, when he argues that liberalism means the preference for two closely linked procedures: mediation and reflection. Two procedures that, in the 20th century, entered into crisis. I think we will never fully understand what Ortega meant by the expression "revolt of the masses" if we do not understand that it simply diagnoses a revolt against these procedures, while it identifies the subject of this revolt, who is nothing more than the "mass man." It still remains to be seen why the mass man revolts. At first glance, he shouldn't do it, because his mentality as an heir, which Ortega so often emphasizes, would more naturally predispose him to peacefully enjoy the wealth and the well-being that he neither created nor sets himself the task of increasing. Now, it turns out that, as a certain historical level of civilization cannot be maintained through mere enjoyment and as the mass man is incapable of renewing the creative force of culture, his attitude of mere enjoyment will lead him to a disaffection with culture itself. Pedro Cerezo (2011b: 355) clearly characterized this process of disaffection, that brings the Orteguian mass man closer to the man of resentment, of which

Nietzsche spoke, also showing how it leads to the refusal of mediation and reflection and the preference for direct action. Resorting to direct action means the refusal to give reason and a kind of blind will to be in the right track, as well as the tendency to impose one's own opinions.

Above all, the liberal ethos constitutes for Ortega a guarantee that direct action will not become the norm of state power. It is not a contradiction in terms to say that direct action and state power can be combined. It was the loss of this ethos that gave rise to the opposite totalitarianisms that Ortega saw rising, in his time, whether on the ruins of the Weimar Republic, or following the Russian Revolution of 1917. These two regimes have some common characteristics, such as the permanent mobilization of citizens, the exploration of emotions and feelings and the use of direct action. In other words, the opposite of the mediating and reflective procedures that constitute the liberal spirit that should animate democracies.

Now, Ortega also speaks of an alliance between the principle of freedom and the legal norm (Ortega, 2008: 86). In an ideal society, this alliance – in other words, democracy mitigated by an abundant dose of liberalism – would guarantee the possibility for minorities to exercise their influence and for the masses to access the greatest number of goods possible. However, this articulation between minorities and the masses is not, in my opinion, completely clarified. Does the idea that the masses should be docile to the actions of minorities necessarily stem from a liberal conception of society, and can it be compatible with the idea of democracy? Of course, everything will depend on what is meant by docility and the action of minorities. But this is a question to which we barely find a satisfactory answer in Ortega. Now, Sánchez Cámara (2005: 198) says that the Orteguian concept of mass-man does not endanger the liberal ideas and, moreover, is in deep agreement with the traditional liberal way of addressing social and political issues. However, the same author makes another important remark: he says that Ortega's notion of liberalism has its roots not only in modernity, but in a much more ancient tradition of liberal thought. Perhaps he is right. However, this "ancient tradition" (one thinks of Cicero, namely) only acquired real importance for Ortega, in our opinion, in the phase of his "third lib-

eralism.” We will try to shed some light on this problem in the next and last section of this paper.

Ortega’s liberalism: the philosophical groundwork and personal experiences

The peculiar characteristics assumed by Ortega’s first and second liberalism also have to do, obviously, with the circumstances in which the Spanish philosopher’s thought developed. This circumstance, let us remember, is Spain in the first half of the 20th century, a Spain that, at the end of the 19th century, lost its colonial empire, proved it was incapable of finding a well-defined political direction in the last years of the so-called era of the Restoration, and which – as Ortega, in his youth, recognized more than once – has kept a distance, since the 17th century, from the direction followed by European culture. To say it all in a single sentence: Spain did not enter modernity. Later, some traumatic personal experiences, like the Spanish civil war, the exiles and a rough return to Spain, will fashion his third (and rather conservative) liberalism.

It is therefore necessary, thinks Ortega in his youth, to make Spain enter modernity, to recover its 300-year delay in relation to the more advanced and educated Europe, and to assimilate the science and philosophy that, since Descartes, characterize the European culture. This Europeanization program, which Ortega clearly formulated from 1906 onwards – and which he modified to a large extent from 1913 onwards – was carried out under the auspices of Neokantian philosophy (San Martín, 1994a: 32). As the main representative of this first trend, we find the writing *Social Pedagogy as a Political Program*. In its initial form, it was a Conference given in Bilbao, in March 1910, which had its first edition in the form of an autonomous publication in 1912. As I said above, it was written under the influence of Paul Natorp. The relation between the individual and society is exposed by Ortega in the following terms:

“[] the concrete human reality is the socialized individual, that is, in community with other individuals; the loose, isolated, absolutely solitary individual is the social atom. There is only really and concretely the community, the multitude of individuals influencing each other.” (Ortega, 2004d: 95)

I would also like to emphasize that, in this same text, Ortega makes an important quote from Paul Natorp’s *Social Pedagogy*, which largely influenced his educational ideas, as we already know, at this stage of his life (Ortega, 2004d: 97). In it, Natorp argues that an organization of social life that wants to be truly human is dependent upon the accordance of the education of the individuals that compose it with its own ideals. It is no coincidence that Plato’s example is also mentioned by Ortega in this context. In fact, this close relationship between social organization and the education of individuals is, as we know, one of the most important themes of the *Republic*. In this “liberal socialism,” the theme of the independence of the individual from the state, although already present, seldom comes to the forefront. It seems that, for Ortega, the main task of a liberal policy is the education of the individual to his ethical responsibilities as a human being. Only educated men can enjoy real freedom.

These ideas, whose corollary is the affirmation that it is necessary to educate human beings for their own humanity, will not disappear from Ortega’s thinking. It is also worth noting the permanence of an opposition, characteristic of his younger years – that which exists between human beings and orangutans (i.e. educated and non-educated men) –, which we find repeatedly after his farewell to the Neokantian philosophical milieu in which he was trained. In a very interesting article, dated 1915, entitled “Freedom, divine treasure!,” we can observe the permanence, at the dawn of his “second liberalism,” of themes characteristic of the first. I quote:

“All the silent work of history is intended to be nothing other than a pedagogy of the nerves to make them abandon the perspective that the orangutan had, to make them irritated by what orangutans were not moved. [...] From this infra-human creature to the English nobleman who says

“my home is my castle”, marking a kind of an ideal orbit assigned to each personality, in which no one can interfere, which everyone has to respect, goes a long distance; precisely, the history of man, culture, civilization.” (Ortega, 2004b: 891)

From a social and political point of view, Ortega’s “second liberalism” has a different nature. More than anyone, Javier San Martín called our attention to the fact that, since Ortega’s philosophy, from 1913 onwards, cannot be understood if we dismiss the relevance of his quick and deep assimilation of the phenomenological thought, also his social and political philosophy must be understood from this new point of view. Of course, San Martín does not deny that some Neokantian themes still pervade Ortega’s writings after 1913. However, this is not very important for us now. What really matters is a clear understanding of what an adherence to phenomenology entails. For San Martín, the basic reality, according to phenomenology (or, more exactly, Husserlian phenomenology), is the individual human life. In other words, it is intentional consciousness, its acts, and the correlation between them and the objectivities meant in them. Now, someone may ask, what consequences (if any) for social and political life must we draw from this adherence? Or, to put the same question in other words, is it possible that Ortega’s political ideas (and even his political engagements) clarify the political scope of a phenomenologically oriented philosophy? To these questions, San Martín answers “yes.”

The grounds for his answer can be found in the distinction, we have already addressed, between liberalism and democracy (San Martín, 1994b: 209).⁵ This distinction, that, for Ortega, is also a distinction between the Old German law and Roman law, allows us to see the deep relation between liberalism and phenomenology. Both reckon that any program of political or cultural salvation entails the acceptance that a return to personal life of immediate consciousness is mandatory. This recognition explains why, according to San Martín (1994b: 210), the

⁵ As I said above, this distinction appears in the “second phase” of Ortega’s liberalism. To my knowledge, San Martín never seems to acknowledge the distinction between a second and a third liberalism. However, in his writings about Ortega he always stresses the importance of distinguishing the first Neokantian phase from the second phenomenological phase.

program of Europeanization of Spain seems to lose its importance in Ortega's mature writings. A built a political program for the Spanish circumstance means that, regarding Europe and especially Germany, Ortega's generation only needs to appropriate what is the most characteristic feature of German thought: the recognition of the immediate life, which has shaped the ancient German law, and shapes now the spirit of the phenomenological philosophy that began in the year 1900.

Philip Silver defends a position similar to that of San Martín. Acknowledging like San Martín and many others the importance of the "phenomenological turn" of 1913, Silver quotes an Orteguian sentence of the *Meditations on Quixote*, where Ortega speaks of the need of "experiments of a new Spain," to connect these experiments – i.e. the social and political perspectives opened by Ortega's book – with Ortega's philosophical level in that year (Silver, 1978: 129).⁶ Silver goes even so far as to say that the new level attained by the Spanish philosopher entailed the rejection of the perspective of "salvation," defended during the Neokantian phase. Now, I have some doubts about this and not only because the idea of salvation appears in the *Meditations on Quixote*. "Salvation" matches quite well with the phenomenological perspective, that means to grasp things as they are given, regardless of previous judgments or prejudices.⁷

To speak of a "third liberalism," it is probably necessary to place Ortega's thought, at least from the late 1930s onwards, in the context of the weakening of European liberal democracies in the period between the two world wars. This period is characterized, among other factors, by the emergence of totalitarianism, whether communist, in the former Soviet Union, or Nazi and fascist in Germany and Italy. But even in this case, the reasons for Ortega's well-known pessimism and disenchantment in the face of the emergence of these two types of totalitarianism (and perhaps also of Franco's dictatorship in Spain) can only be fully understood if, first, we understand the philosophi-

⁶ Pedro Cerezo (2011: 287ff) wrote a nice comment to this sentence. The author makes a connection between the *Meditations on Quixote* and the paper "New and old politics." While the paper addresses the political differences between Ortega's generation and past generations, the *Meditations* emphasize the philosophical differences that underlie those political differences.

⁷ On the problem of "salvation" see Marías (1983: 90ff.) Unfortunately, Marías never understood the meaning of the phenomenological turn and even sees an alleged overcoming of phenomenology, by Ortega, in texts where Ortega employs the phenomenological method.

cal position that lies at the basis of our author's liberalism since 1913. There is a statement by Tocqueville that seems to me to be deeply in line with Ortega's liberal thought and that, therefore, I believe it is pertinent to quote:

"I have always believed that this regulated, sweet and peaceful servitude, of which I have just painted the portrait, could be combined, better than one imagines, with some of the external forms of freedom and it would not even be impossible for it to establish itself in the shadow of the people's own will." (Tocqueville, 1968: 349)

Ortega had already addressed these issues in *The Revolt of the Masses*. But there is, according to Ortega, something more. Ancient liberalism believed in human sociability, failing to note that sociability and unsociability go most of the time together. Thus, the only occupation we might have with social and political issues – says Ortega in *On the Roman Empire* – was, precisely, not to occupy ourselves with them (Ortega, 2006b: 103), as harmonious coexistence between human beings would take care of everything. Ortega's distrust of human sociability and the impossibility of finding a state of definitive balance between sociability tendencies and antisocial tendencies is in line with ideas he had developed several years earlier, namely in *The Revolt of the Masses*. However, the tone with which they are expressed is markedly more pessimistic. It is the most noticeable features the essay *On the Roman Empire*, which many Ortega scholars consider representative of his third and final liberalism (Díaz Álvarez, 2013: 268).

The belief that a harmonious coexistence between human beings can be achieved once and for all is still a trace of that mentality of the "heir" that Ortega had denounced; tan heir is someone who thinks that he can simply live on the basis of the advantages of a past that others have conquered for him. But this is not the whole story. Such a belief, according to Ortega's later thinking, manifests the ignorance of the fundamental anthropological fact, discussed by Ortega in *Man and People*, that man is the greatest danger to man. Dissension, rather than harmonious expediency, appears to be the rule in human affairs. Hence Ortega seems to me to be formulating a new question: is there

no form of freedom other than that of liberalism, namely, that Roman freedom that Cicero spoke of, which consists of harmonious coexistence between citizens who wish to live in the same fashion?

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