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PRESENCE AND ABSENCE OF EXISTENTIALISM IN SPAIN

One of the conclusions drawn from international assemblies, meetings, philosophical journals and catalogues of publishers the world over, a conclusion which is acknowledged nowadays by the majority of thinkers, is that philosophy about the middle of the 20th century manifests two tendencies—Neoscholasticism and Existentialism. Occasionally, some philosophers rank Marxism as a third tendency but it is a well known fact that its interest and importance are foreign to philosophy.

Neoscholasticism—almost exclusively Neothomism—is concerned with the past, maintains that the solution to problems, at least in what is essential, exists in the present, and that this solution needs only to be awakened, disentangled and perhaps developed, above all, accepted. In no way is it to be discovered or invented, least of all sought after without previous certainty of being solved. One fact must be emphasized, namely, Neothomism appears to be a philosophy whose truth is determined rationally and independent of faith; nevertheless, all Thomists are Catholics (according to Maritain¹, only those Catholics are Thomists who are *sufficiently* intelligent to be such; this is a statement in which Gabriel Marcel² has found a self-evident example of venial fanaticism.)

On the other hand, Existentialism of Kierkegaardian lineage, developed for the most part during the last quarter century, seems to be the philosophy of the future, at any rate of the present. It is spoken of everywhere, it floods bibliographies, newspapers, conversations, including, so they say, customs. Existentialism sometimes pervades monastic retreats; universities are the only institutions that are somewhat reluctant to accept it.

This situation of philosophy, reflected like a concave mirror in North and South America, prevails, however, with one exception. In Spain, the presence of Neothomism in religious orders, seminaries, official teaching since 1939 and in publications of this origin is undeniable, while Existentialism seems to be non-existent. What can the reasons possibly be for this absence?

¹ *Foi en Jésus-Christ et monde d'aujourd'hui* (Paris 1949), p. 26.

² "There we have the statement of a fanatic pure and simple; and we could show how it is possible to proceed, by scarcely perceptible stages, from such a venial fanaticism to a fanaticism that is not venial." *The Dublin Review*, Nr. 449, p. 11 (London 1950).

TWO HYPOTHESES

Those who are inclined to be mindful above all of the circumstantial and external aspects of problems will doubtlessly examine the possibility of coercion. Nowadays though, coercion is as well disseminated as *bon sens* was in the time of Descartes. Obviously it has different forms, and, needless to say, some are more troublesome than others. The form of coercion typified by the office of Censorship with red pencils, whose meshes, by the way, are not always quite so tight and which many times let big fish escape, is not the only kind to be considered. There is also the party as well as the enterprising press, intellectual groups in power, conditions for prospering in public teaching, editorial policies, the necessity of printing at least 10,000 copies of a book, above all the widespread social pressure which is always the strongest and which imposes certain *taboos* under the threat of the most effective reprisals. Then too, there is the power of international organizations of intellectual nature which dispose of great economic resources and are capable of controlling the success of thinkers and writers according to the particular attitude they choose to take toward their works, organizations which have almost divine powers, since they create from nothing—it is not difficult to find examples—and they threaten with annihilation.

The situation of coercion, on the other hand, is quite normal. Intellectual life has always been developed under its command; the only exception being, perhaps, and that only in part, the period embracing 1815 and 1914. Therefore, one must always bear in mind that pressures are exercised on writers and men of science but, conversely, they are never adequate to explain the facts, except the cases in which coercion is converted into something which transitorily suppresses all intellectual life.

At any rate, this first hypothesis could only be valid for one tendency of Existentialism but there are others for which another course must be immediately sought.

The second hypothesis is that of the cultural backwardness of Spain. It is a well known fact that since the beginning of the 18th century European ideas have invaded Spain, generally by way of the Pyrenees, and especially in the 19th century, with a retardation of approximately 15 years, that is, one generation.³ Perhaps this is what happens with Existentialism; perhaps it has not yet reached Spain.

The truth of the matter, however, is quite the contrary. Let us begin with Kierkegaard who was known in Spain at an early date. Unamuno learned Danish in order to read his original text. His article, "Ibsen and

³ Cf. J. Marías: *El método histórico de las generaciones* (Madrid 1949).

Kierkegaard" dates from 1907; Unamuno's later works starting with *The Tragic Sense of Life* (1913) and *The Agony of Christianity* (1924) are full of allusions to his "brother" Kierkegaard; Lowrie⁴ has stressed the fact that Unamuno is one of the first to have made Kierkegaard known in Spain and Spanish America; *The Concept of Dread* was translated into Spanish in 1930.

With regard to phenomenology, Ortega, in 1913, the date of *Ideas*, wrote an article "On the Concept of Sensation"⁵ in which he exposed and commented on the doctrines of Husserl and of several of his disciples. The doctoral thesis of Zubiri⁶ and of Gaos⁷, supervised respectively by Ortega and Zubiri, deal with phenomenological questions. The former dates from 1921, the latter, from 1928. Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen* was published in Spanish, translated by Morente and Gaos, in 1929.

Finally, Heidegger's philosophy has been made the subject of study in Spain for a long time. Ortega mentioned *Sein und Zeit* in February 1928; around the same time Zubiri pursued his studies in Freiburg; in 1933 he translated *What is Metaphysics?* I myself recall having read *Sein und Zeit* in 1934 when I was a student of twenty years of age.

This means that Spanish philosophers have been familiar with the origins of what is commonly known as Existentialism perhaps even before the other European countries. It is not unusual: Brentano has been translated into Spanish since 1926; Spengler in 1923; Dilthey, studied thoroughly by Ortega in 1933, is translated entirely by Spaniards in Spain and Mexico. Therefore, the second hypothesis is also quite inadequate.

What is the true situation of Spanish philosophy of our time? In my opinion, Spanish thought in the 20th century has anticipated the majority of discoveries made by philosophers known as Existentialists and, at the same time, has constructed a whole part of its doctrine unknown in other places and has prevented it from falling into certain errors whose consequences are beginning to be visible. For this reason, Existentialism has not been a surprise in Spain, even less a revolution; on the contrary, it surprises us a little to see ideas which we have read in Spanish 10, 15, perhaps 30 years ago presented as the "last word." Using a few examples, I shall attempt to prove this fact.

THE STARTING POINT

It would be inaccurate to say that the Spanish philosophy of our time has the thought of Unamuno as its source. First of all, because Unamuno,

⁴ Walter Lowrie: *Kierkegaard* (Oxford 1938), p. vii, 8, 12.

⁵ *Obras completas*, I, p. 245 ss.

⁶ *Ensayo de una teoría fenomenológica del juicio*.

⁷ *La crítica del psicologismo en Husserl*.

who made most important philosophical discoveries, was not strictly speaking a philosopher and the character of his work and of his thought is a serious philosophical problem⁸; moreover, because the philosophical tendency *sensu stricto* is born of a statement of the metaphysical problem which signifies an essential rectification of Unamuno's, above all of his "method." It is necessary to add however that it was Unamuno who called attention to decisive questions, who created an appropriate climate, who felt the necessity of making a new philosophy, who foretold, finally, perhaps the first in Europe, what was going to be the metaphysical thought of the past fifty years.

In 1904, Unamuno wrote; "This lack of imagination, which is the most substantial faculty, that which puts the substance of our mind into the substance of the soul of things and of men, this lack of imagination is the source of the lack of charity and of love. But there is something still deeper, something which will seem even more absurd to many, and this is that we do not believe in the existence of our neighbors, because we do not believe in our own existence, I mean in the substantial existence"⁹. And then: "Tell me, why must there be a world and not rather nothing at all? Existence has no reason for being, because it is above all reasons"¹⁰.

And the first page of the *Tragic Sense of Life* tells what the subject of his interest is: "The man of flesh and blood, he who is born, suffers and dies—above all dies—, he who eats and drinks and plays and sleeps and thinks and wills, the man who is seen and heard, the brother, the true brother." "And this concrete man, of flesh and blood, is at the same time the doer and the supreme subject of all philosophy, whether certain would-be philosophers want it or not."¹¹ The "only question" for Unamuno is that of survival: I will die, and I need to know if I will die completely or if I will survive. The desire for immortality, the necessity for justifying it rationally, is the true starting point of philosophy. Unamuno made the idea of death the center of his thinking; his whole philosophy is a *meditatio mortis*, in spite of what he called the scientific inquisition, that is, the intellectual attitude which consists of forgetting the fact that men are mortal and are not resigned to it.

In order to understand death, Unamuno has to know first of all what life is. But he is an heir of Kierkegaard, of William James, of Bergson; he is an irrationalist, because he believes that reason is incapable of grasping

⁸ Cf. Julián Marías: *Miguel de Unamuno* (Madrid 1943, 3rd edition Buenos Aires 1953). I have planted here the problem of a philosophical interpretation of Unamuno's work and its metaphysical significance.

⁹ *Ensayos*, V, p. 73.

¹⁰ *Ensayos*, V, p. 78.

¹¹ *The Tragic Sense of Life*, chap. I.

the individual, temporal and mobile reality of existence and of human life. Reason hardens what is alive, kills it, paralyzes it. There is absolute opposition between reason and life. Unamuno has to make a detour, whose consequences have been fruitful: instead of constructing a system of philosophy, he writes novels and dramas.

I have explained in detail my theory of Unamuno's novels, which I have baptized with the name of *existential*, or, better still, *personal novel*.¹² *Paz en la guerra* (1897), *Niebla* (*Mist*, 1914), *Abel Sánchez* (1917), *La tía Tula* (1920), *San Manuel Bueno, mártir* (1931)—what type of novels are these?

I have read Simone de Beauvoir's article "Littérature et métaphysique" (1946), in which she discusses the possibilities of the novel, developed by Sartre and by herself. "Si la description de l'essence relève de la philosophie proprement dite"—says Simone de Beauvoir—"seul le roman permettra d'évoquer dans sa réalité complète, singulière, temporelle, le jaillissement original de l'existence."¹³ Allow me to quote myself and to reproduce here some lines from chapter IV, "The novel as a method of knowledge" in my book on Unamuno (1943):

"Unamuno's novel puts us in contact with that true reality which is man. This is, above all, its role. Other modes of thinking start with previous and abstract plans. . . . Unamuno, on the other hand, obtains the greatest possible clarity and authenticity for the object which he tries to bring home. He endeavors to go to the very core of the human drama and to relate it in a simple way showing it for what it is. The mission of the existential or personal novel is to make evident to us the story of the person allowing him to develop his intimate movements openly before us in order to scrutinize in this way his innermost nucleus. It intends simply to show human existence as it is.

"The attainment of this depends on the recourse which is most perfectly adapted to its temporality: the narrative. It does not deal with the static display of a structure, for example, a psychic structure or "figure," not even with the phases in which it unfolds itself, but rather *attends* to the very make-up of the personality, in time. Thus, one can see human life from within itself, reliving it, without converting it into a "thing," without looking at it as something ready made which is outside of us. The novel is

¹² I had sketched this theory in an essay "The work of Unamuno: a problem of philosophy" (1938) whose publication in the Spanish review *Hora de España* was impeded by the difficulties of the civil war (now printed in my book *Presencia y ausencia del existencialismo en España*, Bogotá 1953). I have developed it in my book *Miguel de Unamuno* (1943).

¹³ S. de Beauvoir: "Littérature et métaphysique", in *Les Temps modernes* (Paris, April 1, 1946), p. 1160-1161.

realized in time, it endures, and moreover captures a vital time, a quick or slow rhythm which is that of a life, very distinct from the time of the clock which continues advancing while we read; thus, the novel constitutes the organ adequate for showing us something which also happens temporally. The two, novel and life consist essentially in temporality."¹⁴

"The personal novel is a *method* of which ontology can make use as a previous stage. We have seen how the temporal and living mood of the narrative brings us to the reality itself of the story or life of the human personage. This is its most fruitful mission. It constitutes a pathway of access to the object which is human existence and its personality, to that which is to be the subject of philosophical inquiry. It puts us in contact with the very reality which we have to describe and conceive metaphysically. And this is *method* in the full and original sense of the word. Unamuno's novel gives us the first living and most effective insight into man; and this is, unavoidably, the starting point of all possible metaphysical knowledge; the encounter with reality which is to be its subject."¹⁵

"In other words, it is the first step towards being elevated to existential analytics or to a metaphysical study of human life and of the problems which affect the very being of man. It represents a previous stage in which the first contact with the object of philosophical meditation can be made. A contact, in which the latter is shown in the fullness of his richness and plasticity, in his authentic temporal being, in a position, therefore, for serving as a basis and support for phenomenological reflection."¹⁶

THE BEING OF MAN

This metaphysics, Unamuno did not create. I have explained the reasons for it and in the last chapter of my book I have traced the general lines from which the philosophical system of Unamuno might have consisted, had he had such a system. This frustrated metaphysics embraces nevertheless truths of the first order, discoveries which cannot be read without surprise, especially if the dates are considered. Ortega is the one who has constructed a metaphysics *sensu stricto*—although it is still not systematically exposed—and after him his immediate or indirect disciples, those who belong to what is beginning to be called "the school of Madrid."

Ortega's first book, *Meditaciones del Quijote*, dates from 1914. It begins with a study of the relations of the I with its circumstance, *circum-stantia*, that which is around me. What I do with my circumstance and what precedes the two abstract terms of that relation is *my life*, the radical reality to which we have to refer all the rest. "We have to seek our circumstance

¹⁴ J. Marías: *Miguel de Unamuno* (1943), p. 68-69.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

such as it is, precisely in what it has in the way of limitation, of peculiarity, the proper place in the immense perspective of the world. . . . In short: the reabsorption of circumstance is the concrete destiny of man. . . . I am I and my circumstance and if I do not save it I do not save myself."¹⁷ "In comparison to the immediate, to our spontaneous life, everything that we have learned seems abstract, generic, schematic. Not only does it seem to be so: it is. The hammer is the abstraction of each one of its strokes."¹⁸ Ortega, moreover, writes that "the definitive being of the world is not matter nor is it soul, it isn't anything determined but on the contrary, a perspective."¹⁹

This same book gives us a description of a forest, an analysis of its reality from the point of view of this philosophy.²⁰ In order to make that analysis he uses the idea of truth as *alétheia*, as discovery, revelation, unveiling.²¹

In 1922, Ortega was adding new precisions to his idea of human life: "Life is a restive fluid which does not let itself be retained, grasped, saved. While it continues to be, it continues to cease to be irremediably. . . . Life is not a static thing which endures and persists: it is an activity which is spent in itself."²² Two years after: "To live is certainly to deal with the world, to resort to it, to act in it, to busy oneself with it."²³

I should like to recall other more recent tests dating from 1933–35 which emphasize the very character of the being of man: "There is in man, it seems, the unavoidable impression that his life, for that reason his being, is something which has to be selected. The idea is stupefying because this means that, unlike all other entities in the universe which have a being which is given to them already predetermined and *for that reason* exist, namely, because they are already without question what they are, man is the only and almost inconceivable reality which exists without having an irremediably predetermined being, which isn't immediately and already what it is but which needs to have its own being selected. How will he select it? Without doubt, because one represents in his fantasy many types of possible life, he notes, upon having them before him, that some of them attract him more, pull him, claim him or call him. This call which we feel toward a type of life, this voice or imperative shout which ascends from our most radical depths, is the calling. For man, what he has to do with it

¹⁷ *Meditaciones del Quijote. O.C.*, I, p. 322.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 321. (Thirteen years later, in his excellent analysis of the instrument (*Zeug*), Heidegger writes: *Das Hämmer selbst entdeckt die spezifische "Händlichkeit" des Hammers. (Sein und Zeit, p. 69).*)

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 330–337.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 335–336.

²² *O.C.*, II, p. 512.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 601.

is not imposed but certainly proposed. And life acquires through it the character of the realization of an imperative. In our hands is the decision to realize it or not, to be faithful or to be unfaithful to our calling. But this, that is to say, what we really have to do, is not in our hands. It comes to us inexorably proposed. I have here the reason why every human life has a mission. The mission is this: the consciousness which each man has of his most authentic being which he is called to realize. The idea of the mission is, then, an essential ingredient of the human condition."²⁴

I have chosen this text from several formulations of these ideas because it was published in French in 1935 and is accessible, with its context, to readers of that language.²⁵ For the same reason I quote another passage appertaining to the study *History as a System*, published first in English in 1935 and in 1945 in a French translation which certainly contains numerous errors capable of making the thought of Ortega confusing: "Man has no nature. Man is not his body, which is a thing, nor is he his soul, psyche, conscience or spirit, which is also a thing. Man is not anything but a drama—his life, a pure and universal event which happens to everyone and in which everyone is, in his turn, only event. All things, whatever they may be, are now mere interpretation which one exerts oneself to give to what he finds. Man does not find things but rather assumes or supposes them. What he finds are mere conveniences and mere difficulties for existing. Existing itself is not given to him "ready-made" and fondled like to the stone. . . . Unlike the self-sufficient being of the substance or thing, life is the indigent being, the entity whose only attribute is, properly, needs. . . . This vital program is the *ego* of each man, that which he has selected among diverse possibilities of being which at each moment unfold themselves before him. . . . I invent projects of doing and of being in view of the circumstances. This is the only thing that I find and that is given to me: the circumstance. . . . Man is the novelist of himself, original or plagiarizing. Among those possibilities I have to choose. For that reason, I am free. But, let it be well understood, I am *perforce* free, I am whether I want to be or not. Liberty is not an activity which is exercised by an entity who, separately and before exercising it, already has a fixed being. To be free means to lack constitutive identity, not to be assigned to a determined being, to be able to be other than that which one was and not to be able to be established once and forever in any determined being. The only thing that is fixed and stable in the free being is the constitutive instability."²⁶

²⁴ *O.C.*, V, p. 209–210.

²⁵ *Mission du bibliothécaire*. Archives et Bibliothèques (Paris 1935).

²⁶ *O.C.*, VI, p. 32–34. In English, in the volume *Philosophy and History*, edited by Klibansky and presented to Cassirer (Oxford University Press 1935) and in Ortega's volume *Toward a Philosophy of History* (Norton, New York). In French, in the volume *Idées et croyances* (Stock, Paris 1945), p. 89–92.

One could accumulate texts by Ortega which add new light to this nucleus of fundamental ideas, but we do not have time to dwell upon it. Let it suffice to see clearly the point of view from which he plants the problem. I am simply going to recall a few more lines from the *Meditación de la técnica* (1933), which will help to understand his thought: "If you think a bit you will find that that which you call your life is only the eagerness to realize a determined project or program of existence. And your "ego," that of everyone, is only that imaginary program. . . . I have here the tremendous and unparalleled condition of the human being, which makes something unique of him in the universe. . . . An entity whose being consists not in what it already is but even in what it isn't, a being which consists in not even being. . . . In this sense man is not a thing but a pretension, the pretension of being this or something else. Each epoch, each nation, each individual modulates the general human pretension in a different way."²⁷

These passages, where, it may be said in passing, certain reefs with those which others have crossed upon are carefully avoided, are sufficient for making Ortega's attitude toward human life understood and for measuring his extent, but it is necessary to emphasize that I am only trying to give some samples of his metaphysical thought.²⁸

But the story does not end here. In the philosophical atmosphere whose creator and inspirer is Ortega, other thinkers of his generation have worked effectively. Manuel García Morente, Juan Zaragüeta, in an independent way Eugenio d'Ors, have enriched Spanish thought with other books which are worthy of being considered since they deserve to be studied seriously by the one who wants to become acquainted with the philosophy of our century. Above all, Zubiri, one generation younger,²⁹ catholic like the last three, has united the immediate Spanish philosophical tradition with the thought of Heidegger, whose disciple he was too, a profound theological formation and choice knowledge of languages and oriental religions and at the same time of mathematical, physical and biological sciences. He has added important precisions to the idea of man and of history and has planted the problem of God in a completely new way.

²⁷ *O.C.*, V, p. 334-335.

²⁸ An exposition of the sum total of Ortega's philosophy may be found in my *Historia de la Filosofía* (7th edition, Madrid 1954), p. 435-454. Cf. also J. Marías: *Filosofía española actual: Unamuno, Ortega, Morente, Zubiri* (Buenos Aires 1948), and above all J. Marías: *Ortega y la idea de la razón vital* (Madrid 1948). (English translation in *The Dublin Review* (London 1949), Nr. 445 and 446; German translation, 2nd ed., Stuttgart 1952; French translation of the two latter books together: *Philosophes espagnols de notre temps*, Paris, 1954.)

²⁹ Ortega was born in 1883; Morente in 1886 (died, after his conversion to Catholicism and his ordination, in 1942); Zaragüeta in 1883; d'Ors in 1882; Zubiri in 1898.

Xavier Zubiri, indeed, in his bulky volume entitled *Naturaleza, Historia, Dios*,³⁰ has penetrated the problem of history and especially of the history of philosophy. His writings on the idea of philosophy in Aristotle, on Socrates and Greek wisdom, on Greece and the survival of the philosophical past have shed new light on ancient thought and its relations to us. He has sketched an idea of history based on the distinction between potencies and possibilities and on the notions of situation and freedom.³¹ But, above all, he has discovered an essential dimension of existence or of human life through which man is not simply "thrown" (*geworfen*, according to Heidegger) but "implanted" in the being, is not only existent but "religated" to existence: it is the ontological idea of *religation* which has permitted him to state the metaphysical question of "deity" first, then of God, and what the origin is of a renovation of catholic thought in Spain.³²

On arriving at this point, I seem to hear a slight irritation in the reader's voice: "Now then, why have you said that there is no existentialism in Spain? You have just shown that several of the most characteristic theses of German and French existentialism have been developed in Spain fifteen, thirty, perhaps fifty years ago, that "existential" or if you will "personal" novels have been written a long time ago, that you yourself have formulated their theory. Wouldn't it be more sincere to say simply that there is existentialism in Spain, but that it is little known abroad?"

Nevertheless, since these theses, the ideas which I have mentioned do not pertain to an existential philosophy but to *another radically different form of philosophical thought*, I have to insist that there is no existentialism in Spain aside from Unamuno who was perhaps *as much an existentialist as he wasn't a philosopher*.

VITAL REASON

"Existentialism" is quite an ambiguous word; some of its representatives do not find it suitable now and prefer to avoid it. Perhaps its meaning is going to be restricted and that name will designate the philosophical position which plants the fundamental problem as a question of priority of existence over essence, that is, in terms too scholastic which actually give up renovating metaphysics and getting to the bottom of the problem. At all events, the majority of tendencies have some common characteristics especially the descriptive and pure phenomenological character whose negative aspect is a certain *irrationalism*. On the contrary, Ortega's metaphysics and the whole current of thought which takes it as the starting

³⁰ Madrid 1944. The writings which it comprises were published between 1933 and 1942, except for some unedited ones.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 389 ss.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 425 ss.

point are defined essentially by the use of the method of *vital reason* about which I want to say one word before closing.

In the 19th century, the intellectual pattern was "explanatory" science and consequently pure or abstract reason. But life and history are "inexplicable" in the sense that they can't be "reduced" to an explicative principle—the famous problem of "historic laws"—and if one wants to do it, one takes from them what is most peculiar to them and falsifies them. Interest in concrete vital reality led very soon to irrationalism: Kierkegaard, James, Bergson, Unamuno, Spengler,³³ and philosophy depended on description which takes things as they are without substituting them with constructions *a priori* and whose most perfect form is the phenomenology of Husserl and his school.

One must ask oneself however if one can be limited to description. Life is given to me but it is given to me unmade and I have to make it with things. I have, then, to possess in some way the reality which does not yet exist. Life is a project; one must prelive it imaginatively. Only one horizon of possibilities makes life effectively possible, a figure of *world* on which I can count. Mere description is incapable of apprehending reality. It dissolves it in "moments" or "notes" and allows to escape the connections of the real thing, those which permit me "to know what to hold by." Now then, this is the most profound and original meaning of reason: *to give reason—lógon didónai*—for something, according to the expression of Herodotus and Plato. Description is certainly necessary but absolutely insufficient; I mean insufficient not only for becoming acquainted with life but for *living*. Each moment I have to choose what I am going to do, what I am going to be. To do this, I have to know on what I am relying with regard to my situation and give reason for it. Vital reason, whose doctrine was formulated at a very early date by Ortega, is *life itself* because life is really the organ of understanding: to understand is to see something function *within my life*. Vital or living reason is indeed the reason for life, the concrete reason such as goes on when one tries to decide and choose what I am going to do.³⁴

Reason is discovered, certainly, *in the breast of life*. At the same time one takes intellectual and theoretical, that is, rational possession of human life and arrives at a suitable doctrine of reason, of which those of the past make up only a chapter. I have dared to define reason as "the apprehension of reality in its connection."³⁵ And one sees that vital reason is reason with-

³³ Cf. Julián Marías: *Introducción a la Filosofía* (Madrid 1947, 3rd edition 1953), chap. V.

³⁴ Pardon the difficulty, the probable obscurity of this overly condensed page, which sums up in a few lines several chapters of doctrine. Cf. J. Marías: *Introducción a la Filosofía*, chap. II-V.

³⁵ *Introducción a la Filosofía*, p.175.

out more and that it is only necessary to add that adjective because, in general, when one speaks of reason one thinks of the partial and abstract forms—pure, physico-mathematical, etc. reason. Vital reason, therefore, is the method of philosophical knowledge of reality, of *any reality whatsoever*.

This point of view, as it is to be supposed, has serious consequences. It is impossible to enumerate them here, even to expose them. It is, however, necessary to say that vital reason—whose concrete form is *historical reason* because life is historical in its very substance—, which is a *narrative* reason, is possible only if it is completed with an *analytical* or abstract theory of human life by means of which one arrives at *universal and necessary* statements, but which in order to become *real* knowledge needs an individual, circumstantial and historical concreteness.³⁶ This idea of reason, finally, leads to the undertaking of a general reform of logic, until now reduced to abstract thought, and should plant the problem of forms and structures of concrete thought and above all the theory of concept as “significant function,” not as a simple abstract scheme such as is considered even today by logic.³⁷

These few pages show just how Spanish philosophy of our time is related to “Existentialism,” being—because of very clear historical reasons—something quite different. I believe that in order to perform that difficult task of constructing a new philosophy in which numerous Europeans and Americans are engaged one needs to resort to all the efforts which are proposed to attain it. This is the reason why I have wanted to remind readers of some features of a trend of thought which may contribute another way of looking at things.

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³⁶ Cf. *Introducción a la Filosofía*, chap. V.

³⁷ I have sketched a criticism of traditional logics and an outline of the postulates of that total reform in the book quoted, chap. III-V and, above all, VII (p. 297 ss.). On the theme of this article I have given more precisions in my course “Unamuno and Ortega: A Chapter in the History of Contemporary European Thought” (Harvard University, Summer School, 1952).

* Translated from the Spanish by Janet Aronson Weiss.