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Del Mar Blasco Lorenzo, M. 2024. "Context, Vision and Legacy : Five Approaches to Understanding Ortega's Work, Life and Influence" [in English]. *Filosofiya. Zhurnal Vysshey shkoly ekonomiki [Philosophy. Journal of the Higher School of Economics]* 8 (4), 232–236.

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## CONTEXT, VISION AND LEGACY\*\*

FIVE APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING ORTEGA'S WORK, LIFE  
AND INFLUENCE

FRANCISCO, A., ED. 2023. *ORTEGA Y GASSET, SU VISIÓN DE ESPAÑA* [IN SPANISH]. MADRID: SEKOTIA

DOI: 10.17323/2587-8719-2024-4-232-236.

The present work is a collection of chapters written by different authors and coordinated by Cardells-Martí, that address the vision of Spain presented by José Ortega y Gasset and reflected in the *Manual para estudiantes de español de las secciones bilingües*, published by Spain's Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports. The book's content is divided, besides the introduction, into five parts, which cover the monarchy, the "Reconquista," America, the Church, and Ortega's relationship with history in general and within the context in which he lived. The various authors and chapters reflect different concerns and objectives, so that, while some parts seek to identify the historical causes of certain claims made by Ortega, others conduct a historical review to verify or refute certain ideas presented by both Ortega and the aforementioned manual.

In the introduction, Cardells-Martí highlights *España Invertebrada* as the work that inspires the studies compiled in this volume. The book's coordinator proposes reading through Ortega's work from its context, namely, the fall of the Spanish Empire, the author's motivations and the influence all this has had on subsequent historiography. To this end, Cardells-Martí dedicates the first pages to detailing the historical moment and national sentiment inherited by Ortega, the goals he proposed that make his vision original, and the legacy he left for subsequent generations, concretely materialized in the *Manual para estudiantes de español de las secciones bilingües*. The

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second part of the introduction briefly introduces the chapters that make up the book and their respective authors.

The first chapter, written by professors María and Laura Lara Martínez, addresses the monarchy as it appears in *España Invertebrada*. This text starts from Ortega's generally negative view on monarchy, specifically regarding the Visigoths, the process known as the "Reconquista," the unification of Spain under the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic Monarchs, and the decline of the Spanish Empire after the death of Philip II. According to the authors, Ortega identifies a perpetual decline in the nation's formation process, which in many ways is explained by the absence of conscious and leading minorities. While disagreeing with this, the researchers dedicate a great part of the chapter to reviewing the entire history of the Spanish monarchy (from King Argantonio to the fall of Franco's dictatorship) and pointing out those historical facts that either refine Ortega's assertions or show them to be uncertain. In the chapter's conclusion, the authors explain in what way they believe there have indeed been select minorities in Spain and how certain ideas of Ortega, such as the role of "the people" in the constitution of Spain and the colonization of America, are historically questionable. As a final point of reflection, the authors analyze the influence that Ortega's thoughts and views on the monarchy have had on later historic texts, specifically the *Manual para estudiantes de español de las secciones bilingües*.

Cardells-Martí is the author of the second chapter, dedicated to the "Reconquista" and the Spanish identity. The very concept of "Reconquista" is presented by the author as somewhat ambiguous and one that has generated a long historical debate, in which Ortega y Gasset participated. The chapter comprises analyses of the different positions that have been defended on this subject from the late 19th century through the 20th century. Ortega's stance is explained as a reactive response to Modesto Lafuente, whose historical vision had become the status quo: while Lafuente saw the Visigoths as the true origin of the people of Spain and Islam as "the others" or the enemy that was heroically expelled, for Ortega, the reconquest is a project led by Castile that fails, as it does not achieve true unity, setting a tone of mediocrity for the rest of Spain's history. In addition to Modesto Lafuente, the text discusses the debate between Américo Castro and Claudio Sánchez Albornoz, that is, between understanding Spanish identity as a Judeo-Christian-Islamic multiculturalism or as essentially Christian-Roman. Cardells-Martí takes a historical-causal approach in exploring the different ideas that arise when explaining the Reconquista and dedicates much of the chapter to exposing

the elements that lead Ortega to take his position (not only the Spanish context but also the significant influence German thought had on him). This, however, does not prevent the author from pointing out those of Ortega's claims that have been questioned, as well as the weak points in the arguments of the aforementioned authors. As in the previous chapter, the influence of Ortega's thought on the *Manual para estudiantes de español de las secciones bilingües* is examined, particularly in its explanation of major processes of change as the result of tension between the masses and the ruling minority. Additionally, it is noted that there is no section specifically dedicated to the reconquest in the text, and that there is a notable historical imbalance, which the author even accuses of being an attempt to conceal reality.

The third chapter focuses on the relationship between Ortega and America. After presenting the vision of America as a potential future paradise that prevailed in Europe during the 19th century, Montojo Sánchez details the four trips Ortega made to America and his view of the continent before, during, and after those trips. According to the author, Ortega showed little interest in America until his first trip to Argentina, where he felt intellectually supported and acknowledged. Beyond the personal details of his travels, Ortega identifies the colonization of America as the great "popular" achievement of the Spanish nation, which, however, did not come to fruition due to the lack of a common project and select minorities. The author briefly outlines the sections of *España invertebrada* where Ortega mentions America, its constitution, and its relationship with Europe. Once again, the chapter concludes with a reference to the *Manual para estudiantes de español de las secciones bilingües*, which, as the author stresses, contrasts with Ortega's vision, as America and Hispanic-American history are treated sparsely and superficially in the manual.

In the fourth chapter, Glicero Conde Mora analyzes the relationship between Ortega and the Church and religion. The author approaches this topic from a biographical perspective, structuring the chapter around key moments in Ortega y Gasset's life that explain his relationship with the Church and Christianity: it is noted that Ortega's father had distanced himself from religious practice, and thus his son inherited and maintained this same stance despite being educated in Catholic schools. Much of the chapter's conclusion is devoted to the death of Ortega, about which there are two main versions: one stating that he died hugging a crucifix and praying and another denying it. Above all, the chapter aims to show that, although Ortega y Gasset was not a believer, his thought and writings neither invite nor lead to a theoretical rejection of God or anti-clericalism. On one hand,

Ortega seems to approach religion from a purely sociological perspective, examining the historical approaches and departures the masses have had throughout European history. On the other hand, the author refers to the Second Republic and Ortega's denunciation of the anti-clerical violence to argue that Ortega had nothing against ecclesiastical institutions. After briefly mentioning the relationship between Ortega and Herrera Oria, the author concludes by aligning himself with Julián Marías in asserting that there is nothing in Ortega's thought that is incompatible with Catholicism.

In the final chapter, written by Andrés-Gallego, the relationship between Ortega and history is analyzed, understanding this relationship in a broad sense. In the opening lines, the author expresses a desire to understand not so much Ortega's ideas, as the motivations he had for writing *España invertebrada*. Starting from certain themes, such as the German influence on Ortega's thought, the nation's decline, his negative view of medieval Spain, and the supposed elitism of the philosopher, Andrés-Gallego revisits many of the most important episodes in European history. The chapter is largely devoted to explaining certain historical realities that occurred before and during Ortega's intellectual agency and that explain, to a greater or lesser extent, certain ideas that appear in his texts.

As outlined, the volume written by various authors offers a multidimensional exploration of José Ortega y Gasset's thought and his vision of Spain, addressing from different perspectives his philosophical, political, and cultural conception of the country. Throughout the various essays, the authors analyze Ortega's influence on the construction of a modern Spanish identity, his critique of the masses, and his interpretation of Spain's past and present. Key aspects of his work, such as *España invertebrada*, are also discussed, where Ortega highlights the structural problems of the nation and their possible solutions from a philosophical point of view. However, the different perspectives, objectives, and approaches of the authors result in a certain lack of coherence and cohesion. While some essays focus more on philosophical aspects, others address political, historical, and biographical issues, without a clear unifying thread. This disparity of approaches makes for a fragmented analysis and hinders a coherent reading.

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*Del Mar Blasco Lorenzo M. [Дель Мар Бласко Лоренцо М.] Context, Vision and Legacy [Контекст, видение и наследие] : Five Approaches to Understanding Ortega's Work, Life and Influence [пять подходов к пониманию творчества, жизни и влияния Ортеги] // Философия. Журнал Высшей школы экономики. — 2024. — Т. 8, № 4. — Р. 232–236.*

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ORTEGA Y GASSET, SU VISIÓN DE ESPAÑA / ED. POR A. FRANCISCO. — MADRID : SEKOTIA,  
2023.

DOI: 10.17323/2587-8719-2024-4-232-236.