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Nicolai Hartmann and José Ortega y Gasset
An overview of an intellectual relationship based on the correspondence of two philosophers from 1907–1912

– Dorota Leszczyna –

Abstract: This article is of both a historical and philosophical nature. It aims to present the intellectual relationship between the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset and one of the most influential German thinkers of the first half of the twentieth century, Nicolai Hartmann. It is based on hitherto unknown and unpublished correspondence that the philosophers conducted intermittently between 1907 and 1912. The correspondence was found in the archives of the José Ortega y Gasset – Gregorio Marañón Foundation in Madrid along with other letters that show the relationship between the Spanish author and representatives of the neo-Kantian Marburg School, including its founder Hermann Cohen, as well as Paul Natorp, Ernst Cassirer, and Heinz Heimsoeth.

Keywords: Ortega, Hartmann, Cohen, Natorp, neo-Kantian Marburg School, correspondence, ratiovitalism, phenomenology, idealism.

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1. Introduction. The concept of ratiovitalism in Ortega y Gasset[1]

Ratiovitalism, or the philosophy of vital reason, is the name of the philosophical concept created by the Spanish thinker, essayist, and social activist José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955). Initially, under the direct influence of Marburg Neo-Kantianism and then of phenomenology, he saw in both trends the continuation of modern rational idealism, the elimination of which he made the theme of his work. He wanted to free himself from the dichotomy of idealism-realism and of rationalism-vitalism, and cultivate an out-of-position philosophy, one free from dogmatic advocacy. To this end, he conducted a new critique of reason, which showed its genesis, scope, and boundaries, overcoming the assumption about the pure, autonomous nature of reason and rooting it in life, which is the fundamental reality, given to us directly.

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The impulse for Ortega's project was Immanuel Kant's critique of reason, with the reservation that it did not concern pure reason — which underlies our scientific, *a priori* knowledge about the world, based on universal and necessary principles — but vitality, which is a function of life that seeks to deepen its essence, to make oneself transparent, to see reason as a tool used to clarify the vital irrationality and deal with "the poignant, painful and open question of our existence."[2]

Kant inspired Ortega to revise the problem of reason throughout the entire philosophical tradition. The Spanish author presented it in the form of "two great metaphors": a metaphor of ancient philosophy — along with its extension in medieval philosophy — based on the position of naïve realism, and a modern one, manifesting itself in broadly understood idealism. As Ortega wrote about the metaphor of ancient and medieval philosophy, "The doctrine which recognizes the relationship between the subject and the object as an event as real as the contact between two bodies is called realism. Both elements are equally real: thing on one side and thought on the other. Equally real is the influence that one exerts on the other."[3] Idealism, which in turn represents the metaphor of modern philosophy, starting with Descartes and ending with phenomenology, is a position where "Things do not come to consciousness from outside, but constitute its contents, are its ideas."[4]

Ortega was convinced that the beginning of the era, i.e., his own era, had to face a difficult but also necessary task of bringing about the "Copernican revolution" and working out a new metaphor of reason, consisting in "unification of Aristotle with Descartes," where unification would also mean overcoming them. Ortega understood "overcoming" in line with the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, based on the mechanism of dialectics, in which the thing to be overcome is only negated in a specific way, thus being preserved at the same time.

Ortega found the possibility of such simultaneous negation and preservation, or overcoming of ancient realism and modern idealism, in philosophy, coming from the source fact of life, which cannot be reduced to subjectivity (subject, I, consciousness, spirit) nor objectivity (world, nature, things). Life is their original reality; it is their dynamic co-existence, the mutual and continuous "happening."

> Things happen to me just as I happen to the things, and neither they nor I have any other original reality beyond the one determined in this mutual happening to each other. The category of "absolute happening" is the only one from the point of view of the traditional ontology, from which one can begin to characterize this strange and radical reality that is our life.[5]

Life, as an absolute happening, is not general and abstract in nature, but always concrete. It is the life of an individual who wants to "save their circumstances," give meaning to their world and realize their own unique vocation. Therefore, the vital rea-

[2] Ortega y Gasset (2008): 533. All Ortega y Gasset's texts quoted in this article have been translated by its author.
[3] Ortega y Gasset (2005): 515.
[4] Ibidem: 516.
[5] Ortega y Gasset (2009): 158–159.

son is not some alienated reason, belonging to the postulated or transcendental subject, a reason whose role is reduced to cognitive and intellectual acts only, but the practical function of a concrete, individual man thrown into the world, giving him the opportunity for free, conscious, and authentic acting, shaping and designing his existence in all its possible areas. In other words: according to Ortega, vital reason is an actual, real, living human being that has to face circumstances and make real his specific life.

> To live, to exist means to be closed, uncertain, imprisoned in a thing that is mysterious and different from us, which is our circumstance, the world. Therefore, in order to find some certainty, just like a drowning man moves his arms, our salvation lies in thinking. I do not exist because I think, but I think because I exist. Thinking is not the only and original reality, but thinking and reason are reactions to which life forces us. They have their source and their meaning in the radical, primal and frightening fact of life. Pure and alienated reason must learn to be vital.[6]

The project of conducting a new critique of reason, which would be consistent with the level and spirit of the times, did not emerge in the mind of the Spanish philosopher in a sudden and unexpected way. Nor was it the result of an illumination that would happen to him, as it did to Descartes, but of Ortega's many years of research, his struggle with philosophical tradition, above all with the one from which he himself grew directly, i.e., from Neo-Kantianism in the interpretation of the Marburg School and the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. He accused the first trend of hermeticism, of excluding the ontological and metaphysical problems from the area of philosophical investigations, and of idealistic superstition. In turn, in the second trend, he saw a lack of regularity and idealism, more camouflaged than Neo-Kantianism and thus more dangerous. Therefore, despite his initial fascination with phenomenology, he rejected its reductions as well as the concept of the transcendental self, consciousness, and intentionality, which in his opinion are not what is given, but only what is assumed. They are hypotheses, so they cannot be a starting point for philosophical reflection.

An important role in Ortega's project of a new critique of reason, i.e., overcoming the idealism and intellectualism characteristic of Marburg neo-Kantianism and phenomenology, was played by his contemporary philosophers. Particularly important was Ortega's dialogue with other students of Cohen and Natorp, including Heimsoeth, Scheffer, Tatarkiewicz and Hartmann. Ortega had a unique philosophical bond with the latter. For this reason, it is worth taking a closer look at their intellectual relationship, because it had an impact on the genesis of their philosophical concepts.

2. The aim of the article

This article is of a historical and philosophical nature. It aims to present the intellectual relationship between the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset and one of the most influential German thinkers of the first half of the twentieth century, Nicolai Hartmann.

[6] Ortega y Gasset (2006): 743.

It is based on hitherto unknown and unpublished correspondence that the philosophers conducted intermittently between 1907 and 1912.[7] The correspondence was found in the archives of the José Ortega y Gasset - Gregorio Marañón Foundation in Madrid along with other letters that show the relationship between the Spanish author and representatives of the neo-Kantian Marburg School, including its founder Hermann Cohen, as well as Paul Natorp, Ernst Cassirer, and Heinz Heimsoeth.[8] Ortega studied at Marburg in late 1906 and early 1907 and 1911; when the flourishing Marburg School attracted many international students wishing to study critical idealism in accordance with a source-oriented philosophy.[9] That, in turn, followed a specific historical line of development, leading from Parmenides and Plato through Descartes, Leibniz and Kant.[10] Ortega's decision to study in Marburg was dictated primarily by his Spanish circumstances, namely Spain's philosophical backwardness compared to other European nations and his desire to instill a "culture of ideas," philosophical terminology, and intellectual rigor. During his first stay in the town on the Lahn, Ortega established relationships with the Marburg professors and the students there and was closest to Hartmann. Together they attended Cohen's and Natorp's seminars and engaged in passionate philosophical disputes about Plato, Kant, and new philosophical trends, including phenomenology. Even after they departed from Marburg, their friendship remained unbroken, as evidenced by the letters they exchanged in which philosophical content of interest to their later work can be found. Hartmann and Ortega discussed philosophy above all in their letters, each in his own way wishing to overcome the highly abstract and idealistic program of the Marburg School. Their first step toward that end was their encounter with phenomenology. Interestingly, their letters show that the Spanish philosopher took up the path of phenomenology in 1907, earlier than Hartmann, seeing it primarily as a method of doing philosophy and not as philosophy par excellence.[11] At this point, it is worth noting that Ortega was the first philosopher in Spain and one of the first in the world to write about phenomenology, initiating at the same time the process of translating the works of the representatives of this movement into Castilian.[12] On the other hand, although Hartmann did not persuade Ortega to turn to Husserl's philosophy, he influenced many other philosophical projects undertaken by the Spaniard, including his interpretation of Plato's philosophy and later Kant and Hegel.[13] Moreover, he was Ortega's link to

[7] See Hartmann's and Ortega's letters located in Archivo Fundación José Ortega y Gasset – Gregorio Marañon under the reference numbers: C-17/1; C-17/2; C-17/3; C-17/4; C-17/5; C-17/6; C-17/7; C-17/8; C-17/9; C-17/10; C-17/11; C-17/12; C-17/13.

[8] See Cohen's and Ortega's letters located in Archivo Fundación José Ortega y Gasset – Gregorio Marañon under the reference numbers: C-58/1a; C-58/1b and C-58/1c. See Natorp's and Ortega's letters located in Archivo Fundación José Ortega y Gasset – Gregorio Marañon under the reference numbers: C-68/2a, C-68/2b, C-68/2c. See Cassirer's and Ortega's letters located in Archivo Fundación José Ortega y Gasset – Gregorio Marañon under the reference numbers: C-57/26a, C-57/26b, C-57/26c, C-57/26ch. See Heimsoeth's and Ortega's letters located in Archivo Fundación José Ortega y Gasset – Gregorio Marañon under the reference numbers: CD-H/23 (1); CD-H/23a and CD-H/24.

[9] See reflection on this subject in Leszczyna (2012): 47–59 and 75–92.

[10] See Cohen (1918): XXVXXVI.

[11] See Hartmann (1908): C-17/5.

[12] See reflection on this subject in San Martín (2012): 79.

[13] For more on this philosophical influence, see Orringer (1979) and (1984). The following thinkers also wrote on Hartmann's sources of Ortega's philosophy: Cerezo Galán (1984): 272–338; Morón Arroyo (1968): 345–350 and San Martín (2012): 71–76.

the Marburg School. It was primarily due to his persuasion and friendship that the Spanish philosopher decided to go to Phillips University for the second time in 1911. After his return to Madrid, Hartmann and Ortega maintained regular contact through letters, exchanging information on their philosophical research. Nonetheless, after 1913, it became evident that a distance had emerged between them. It was primarily due to the political situation, i.e., the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Hartmann's service at the front, and Ortega's extraordinary involvement in the socio-political affairs of Spain. The last of the philosophers' letters to be discovered dates back to 1921. That is a breakthrough date because it was then that Hartmann's work *Grundzüge einer Metaphysik der Erkenntnis* was published, a copy of which the German philosopher enclosed in his letter to Ortega. There is no trace of further exchanges, which does not necessarily mean that the correspondence had come to a halt, but since it has not been found thus far, the present paper is limited to the letters from 1907 to1912 and their philosophical content. We can distinguish three key issues that constitute the field of their discussions. First, the method and system and their mutual relations; second, psychology and its role in philosophy; and third, biology and its philosophical approach. Furthermore, a lot of space in these letters is taken up by matters related to events in Marburg. Particularly interesting seems to be the information on what was going on in the local philosophical school in the critical year of 1912, i.e., when its founder Cohen retired.

3. Transcendental method and descriptive method.

The first and most significant problem that emerges from Hartmann's and Ortega's letters is the issue of method, which is not surprising if one considers the philosophical provenance of both thinkers, namely, the program of the neo-Kantian Marburg School. Not only was the method a tool for philosophizing, but it also acquired the status of philosophy itself in that school. For the Marburg thinkers, philosophy is a method, but not just any method: it is, as Natorp wrote in "Kant und die Marburger Schule," a "proper method," i.e., a transcendental one.[14] It has its origin in Kant's philosophy and is clearly distinguished from the psychological, metaphysical, and logical methods. In the Marburgian view, the transcendental method transcends the act of experience in a methodical way and thus reveals its basis conceived as pure law. For that reason, it becomes a method critical of both "metaphysical abuses" and "lawless empiricism," thus marking the close relationship between philosophy and mathematics.[15] Moreover, it acquires a dynamic character. It is an endless process and creative development in which an eternal movement of thought toward a being occurs.

> This is precisely what philosophy as "method" means for us: fixed "being" must fall into a "gait," a movement of thought. Only in this way can the Eleatic, and in general the idealistic equating of being with thinking lose its seemingly bleak tautology, which grounds being in thinking only by means of freezing thinking into a new thing-like being.[16]

[14] Natorp (1912): 200.
[15] Ibidem: 198.
[16] Ibidem: 199. The translation of Natorp's texts is by the author of the present article.

Due to the processual and dynamic understanding of the transcendental method, the idealism characteristic of the Marburg School is not the idealism of static, Eleatic being but the "idealism of movement and change," where being and thinking present themselves as an infinite task and acquire the character of *fieri*.[17] What is more, the method thus conceived includes the requirement of its unity through which "this proper cognition, the ultimate unity of cognition, and thus the creative act of culture, is established."[18]

The above rather succinct presentation of the Marburg School's treatment of a method is necessary to understand the polemic that Hartmann and Ortega engaged in. From the perspective of the research conducted so far, there is much to suggest that Hartmann's 1912 paper, "Systematische Methode," was written in the wake of a discussion with Ortega that provoked the German philosopher to organize and show the connections between transcendental, descriptive, and dialectical methods. That discussion, conducted by letter between 1907 and 1910, concerned the problem of the unity of method and the relation of the transcendental method to the descriptive methods.

As we can read in Hartmann's letters, since 1907 Ortega had already been working on a new vision of aesthetics aimed to be based on the descriptive method which he called the phenomenological method. Hartmann was greatly impressed by Ortega's philosophical intentions, as he wrote to him in a letter from Riga in December 1907, as follows: "You are, as far as I can see, on the best way not only to transform aesthetics but the whole philosophical system. An undertaking I admit to being extremely courageous and deserving of the highest respect."[19] However, Hartmann had many doubts about Ortega's proposed method. It was the descriptive method that the Spanish philosopher desired to make primary, thereby relegating the transcendental one to the background. It can be assumed that in this area Ortega was influenced by Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen*, published in 1900, where phenomenology was presented as descriptive psychology with its descriptive method.[20] Nonetheless, for Hartmann the transcendental method as the method of establishing all principles took precedence not only over the descriptive method but over every philosophical way of thinking, and he continued to defend that position in the article "Systematische Methode" cited above. When Hartmann spoke of precedence, he meant logical precedence, for the descriptive method already contains specific conceptual determinations even if it is not aware of them, and these, in turn, have their logical source in the principles established by the transcendental method.

Hartmann raised doubts about several notions and distinctions that appear in Ortega's letters. First, the Spanish philosopher introduced the concept of phenomenology into their correspondence, which he based on the distinction between *factum* and fact (*Tatsache*). By the latter, he meant "something given, not yet determined and not yet constructed."[21] Hartmann did not fully understand that definition and asked if it meant "a thing, without justification."[22] In doing so, he pointed out that the descriptive method

[17] Ibidem.
[18] Ibidem: 200.
[19] Hartmann (1907/1908): C-17/2. The translation of Hartmann's texts and letters is by the author of the present article.
[20] Łaciak (2004): 191–192; Peucker (2002).
[21] Hartmann (1907/1908): C-17/2.
[22] Ibidem.

advocated by Ortega, although it plays a vital role in the process of cognition, is the lowest part of the method, and therefore cannot have primacy over the "embracing polarity of principle and object" of the transcendental method. Hartmann was similarly critical of the notion of "descriptive necessity" that appears in Ortega's letters. He saw it as an abandonment of a systematic attitude. He wrote that in his view, there is and can be only one kind of necessity in philosophy: "synthetic or systematic necessity."[23] It was about striving for the unity of cognition, which was related to the Marburg idea of the unity of consciousness and the postulate of the unity of method presented earlier. Following what Hartmann wrote in his letter, Ortega distinguished between two kinds of necessity, "descriptive" and "constitutive and normative."[24] Of the former, Hartmann wrote:

> There cannot be such a necessity, in my opinion, even in the most external problems, where everything dissolves into infinite functions of ideas. But also there, it has only a temporary value, being only the expression of a certain stage of the problem of true systematic necessity (which in the final sense would be defined as "the necessity of problems" or "the unity and continuity of problems").[25]

Nevertheless, Ortega had a precise aim to assign primacy to the descriptive method in the field of aesthetics. Namely, he wanted to separate it clearly from the other parts of the system, i.e., logic and ethics. In this respect, he followed the path set by Cohen, although he turned out to be more radical in this endeavor than Cohen was. The similarity of Cohen's and Ortega's intentions was noted by Hartmann, who wrote in one of his letters: "Cohen, in my opinion, overemphasizes the separation of the various parts of the system of, for example, logic and ethics, or ethics and aesthetics, highlighting the differences existing between them. You fall into a similar trap, but you fall into it even deeper. Cohen, if not explicitly, then tacitly, nevertheless preserves the unity of method."[26] Obviously, Hartmann did not claim that there were no differences between the various parts of the system, but he regarded them as secondary to its unity. As he wrote, "Unity is logically prior to difference," just as "the system itself is logically before its parts."[27]

The consequence of Ortega's introduction of two methods, transcendental and descriptive, and two kinds of necessity, normative and descriptive, was to produce two distinct groups of disciplines, and thus, as it were, two distinct systems. The former included logic and ethics, while the latter included biology, aesthetics, philosophy of religion, and psychology. They became, as Hartmann wrote, "a second system grounded methodologically in itself, which admittedly remains in relation to the first, but only in an external and accidental relation."[28] In turn, that led to a breakdown of the system unity, which constituted the starting point for philosophical problems. In this sense, the system was primary to the problems, and various problems emerged from its unity.

[23] Ibidem.
[24] Ibidem.
[25] Ibidem.
[26] Ibidem.
[27] Ibidem.
[28] Ibidem.

Therefore, the abandonment of the latter was unacceptable to the young Hartmann, and he saw the error committed by Ortega during his deliberations. According to him, the error was rooted in the introduction of the second method, i.e., the phenomenological or descriptive one, because the unity and continuity of the system is grounded in the unity and continuity of the method.

4. Psychology and its place in the system of philosophy

Hartmann and Ortega introduced the issue of method and the relation between transcendental and descriptive method into the discussion concerning psychology. The discussion was not new, for it had been going on in the field of philosophy for a very long time.[29] Many thinkers from that time took part in it, including the Marburg thinkers who took a stand against psychologism yet did not want to give up the philosophical reflection on psychology.[30] It is worth noting that Cohen, the founder of the Marburg School, was influenced in the early years of his career by the social psychologists and linguists Heymann Steinthal and Moritz Lazarus, as evidenced by his 1866 article on Plato.[31] Cohen's "discovery" of Plato's theory of ideas was conceived due to a mental process subject to mental laws.[32] Cohen's interest in psychology was noted by Natorp, who in "Kant und die Marburger Schule" wrote about it as follows: "If even Kant, as well as Cohen in their early writings, did not fearlessly avoid the language of psychology, they accentuated the essential difference of the transcendental point of view from that of psychology."[33] The dissimilarity of the psychological and transcendental viewpoint pointed out by Natorp eventually led the Marburg thinkers to anti-psychologism. However, that did not mean "excluding psychology as such from philosophy" but merely showing that psychology could not form the basis of philosophy.[34] That was due to the Marburg thinkers' assumption that we do not arrive at states of consciousness directly but by reconstructing them based on the products of consciousness. In that way, psychology, from being the first science, became the final science, for "it is not possible to arrive directly at what is directly experienced psychologically except by turning away from its objectification, which for this reason must already be objectively grounded in itself."[35]

Husserl also took a critical stance on psychologism in *Logische Untersuchungen*. Admittedly, he still defines phenomenology as general psychology but, as Piotr Łaciak rightly observes in his article, he distinguishes between the psychological in the psycho-

[29] See on this topic Noras (2017): 5–23.
[30] Schmidt (1976).
[31] Cohen (1866): 403–464. See the reflections of Noras (2015): 153–170.
[32] "Plato's theory of ideas is a discovery. I call a discovery such an extension of scientific knowledge, which through an effective a priori combination transforms the a posteriori material of knowledge and makes available new avenues of investigation. For not only does the essence of discovery consist in what directly brings out the treasure of truth, but at the same time and most often what opens up new fruitful sources of knowledge. Both conditions are fulfilled in Plato's theory of ideas [...]. Every discovery is a mental process." – Cohen (1866): 403. The translation of Cohen's texts is by the author of the present article.
[33] Natorp (1912): 198.
[34] Ibidem: 198.
[35] Ibidem.

logical-naturalistic sense and the psychological in the psychological-descriptive sense. As the Polish researcher wrote:

> In the naturalistic sense that which is psychic is a causally conditioned process and has the status of a fact appreciated as a state of the psychophysical subject, that is, transcendentally appreciated. On the other hand, in the psychological-descriptive sense, the psychic is understood as a phenomenon existing in and for itself, a self--perpetuating phenomenon that is not a symptom of something extra-conscious but a phenomenon with its immanent content.[36]

The convergence of Marburg neo-Kantianism and phenomenology in terms of anti-psychologism also did not escape the attention of the Marburg thinkers, including Natorp, who wrote in "Kant und die Marburger Schule" that "in this connection, we have learned little from Husserl's otherwise interesting considerations (in the first volume of the *Logische Untersuchungen*), which we have nevertheless welcomed."[37]

The discussion between Hartmann and Ortega should be set in the context of the Marburg and phenomenological critique of psychologism. Hartmann accused Ortega of an excessively large role ascribed to psychology, with which the Spaniard wanted to fund his conception of aesthetics. Hartmann asked: "How do you intend to avoid in your new systematics the threat of psychology overwhelming everything? You want to gain something for aesthetics by freeing it from the bonds of logic and ethics. But you fall into other bonds, not of logic and ethics, but psychology."[38] Furthermore, Hartmann noted other areas of Ortega's "second system," including biology and the philosophy of religion, which the Spanish philosopher considered to be "part of the psychology sought."[39] For this reason, Hartmann accused Ortega of psychologism, advocating the Marburg interpretation of logic, which, as the science of the source of cognition in pure thinking, formed the basis of the entire system.[40] The importance of logic for the Marburg system of scientific idealism was emphatically expressed by Natorp:

> In the source, broad sense of rational science, it [logic] has for us a higher rank; it includes not only theory as the logic of possible experience, but also ethics, as the logic of the formation of the will, and even aesthetics, as the logic of the pure formation of art. As a result, it justifies further unpredictably expanding fields of science: the social sciences, the historical sciences, the sciences of art, also religious studies, and thus the so-called human sciences, not only the natural sciences themselves, not to mention mathematics.[41]

Hartmann, who at that time held a firm Marburg position on psychology, was therefore not convinced of Ortega's new project, or, to be more precise, of how it was to be implemented. Thus, he asked his Spanish friend: "Is there really anything won by this

[36] Łaciak (2004): 192 (trans. D. L.).
[37] Natorp (1912): 198.
[38] Hartmann (1907–1908): C-17/2.
[39] Ibidem.
[40] Hartmann (1908): C-17/3.
[41] Natorp (1912): 216.

procedure [the procedure of grounding aesthetics in psychology]? Is anything gained beside the loss of continuity of method? Does psychology itself gain anything from it?"[42] He answered the above questions in the negative, stressing, however, that he had to think about those issues carefully and awaited further clarification from Ortega.

5. Letters between Hartmann and Ortega in 1912

Hartmann and Ortega's written discussions on philosophy continued in 1912 after the Spaniard departed from his year-long stay in Marburg. At that time, biology was particularly crucial to them, and that was related to Hartmann's then publication *Philosophische Grundfragen der Biologie*.[43] The German philosopher sent one copy of his work to Madrid, not expecting Ortega's thorough reading and review. The latter, however, surprised him by sending a letter with many remarks and observations, which became the cause of their subsequent polemic. "My dear Ortega!"– Hartmann wrote – "First of all, I would like to thank you for all your warnings! Because Cohen no longer cares about my further development and my German friends are too busy with themselves to have time for me. You are now the only one who gives me advice [...] From a philosophical point of view, you are my criterion of certainty."[44]

Ortega was very impressed with Hartmann's new book, although he was not uncritical of it. He pointed out that the concepts used by the German philosopher were too static. He also had some objections to Hartmann's concepts of selection, intentionality, and categories of life. He wrote in response to Hartmann's letter from Spain as follows: "Your comments on the biological problem are less comprehensible to me. The 'flexibility' of biological terms is, of course, wonderful. Nevertheless, should it be that the only rules, such as transformism, are mutable? I believe we have no other choice in this matter – just as in astronomy, we have no choice with respect to the motion of the Earth."[45]

Ortega's remarks directed toward Hartmann's work were rooted in his philosophical fascinations at that time. Those included Schelling's philosophy and its teleologism, on the one hand, and Bergson's intuitionism, on the other. The Spanish philosopher became interested in them in the context of his preliminary research on the philosophy of life and the vital origin of reason. These sympathies were not shared by Hartmann, who wrote to Ortega:

> But you cannot be serious in praising Schelling's teleologism. It was him I had in mind as an example of a false philosophy of life. And I can do nothing with Bergson in this direction. Lossky's intuitionism appeals to me more, especially his earlier works. But still, I cannot gain much from him. (Recently Natorp has criticized Bergson extensively in his psychology; I found the criticism too one-sided [...]).[46]

[42] Hartmann (1907): C-17/2.
[43] Hartmann (1912).
[44] Ibidem: C-17/11
[45] Ibidem.
[46] Ibidem.

Hartmann criticized Bergson for the vitalism present in his philosophy. The criticism likely influenced Ortega's later comments on intuitionism. Suffice it to mention the Spanish philosopher's 1926 work *Ni vitalismo, ni racionalismo*, where he made a clear distinction between his position, i.e., ratiovitalism, and Bergson's intuitionist vitalism.[47] Ortega defined the latter as a philosophy that recognized that above reason there existed another cognitive power closer to reality, allowing us to grasp that reality directly. Thus, instead of thinking conceptually about things and analyzing them, it proposed their "inner experiencing" and non-conceptual grasping. Consequently, it did not immobilize things and did not make them into an abstract scheme, but got to know them in their dynamics, changeability and vitality. That was also the essence of Bergson's critique of the intellect, which was a power appropriate to science but not to metaphysics. The latter needed to establish the rule of intuition, for the concepts of the intellect are incapable of expressing the richness of reality and life. Meanwhile, intuition was conceived by Bergson as "a trans-rational intimacy with living reality, making life a method of cognition which is in opposition to the method of reason."[48] It was the last element that underpinned Ortega's dispute with Bergson. For rationalism accepts no other method of theoretical cognition than the rational method. However, at the same time, "the problem of life, as the problem of the thinking subject of this system itself lies at the center of this system."[49] In ratiovitalism, the problems of the relation between life and reason come to the fore, where the latter turns out to be "a small island, surrounded by irrationality."[50] In this way, the opposition of theory and life, highlighted earlier in intuitionistic vitalism, is treated in ratiovitalism as "a particular case of a broader and more primordial opposition between the rational and the irrational."[51]

In addition to his work *Philosophische Grundfragen der Biologie*, Hartmann also sent Ortega the above-mentioned article "Systematische Methode." He wished it to contribute to their subsequent discussion, especially since the German philosopher, like Ortega, increasingly felt the need to extricate himself from the Marburg way of thinking.

> Right now – he wrote in one of his letters to Ortega – I am trying to remove the blindfold that Cohen and Natorp have tied over my eyes. And above all, I am dealing with the phenomena that seem closest to me: the German and Russian intuitionists, the phenomenologists, Meinong, and some psychologists. However, it is not enough to simply read and learn about everything. I must process it simultaneously and incorporate it into my current version of the system.[52]

Ortega failed to meet Hartmann's expectations and neglected to read "Systematische Methode." Instead, he studied his publication from Cohen's Jubilee Book. That, in turn, was not to his liking because of the philosophical hermeticism it presented. He also

[47] Ortega y Gasset (2005): 715–724.
[48] Ibidem: 717.
[49] Ibidem.
[50] Ibidem.
[51] Ibidem.
[52] Hartmann (1912): C-17/12.

asked Hartmann to open up to other philosophies than German, for example, French philosophy. In response, Hartman wrote:

> If you would like to say something about my "systematic method" and give me some hints on how to improve certain things, I would be extremely grateful. I understand very well that you are so sceptical about my second essay (the one for Cohen): it is very poor indeed. But I think of it as an excellent introduction to the discussion.[53]

The article "Systematische Methode" was necessary for Hartmann insofar as it raised several issues central to his new research. Those were "the absolute priority of *ratio essendi* in the transcendental perspective, independence of descriptive reality, and, above all, the irrationality of categories and the dialectic of being."[54] He also stressed that the article gave him the foundations for the study of ontology, on which he then began to work intensively. In turn, he responded to Ortega's request to study also other than German philosophy as follows:

> Dear friend, you must forgive me and not ask for everything at once. You want me to delve into French philosophy. I fully appreciate the need. But you do not appreciate the awkwardness of my northern head. When I have a system, I will have room for other philosophically important cultural phenomena. According to our arrangement, I must take a different path from you; and, therefore, I cannot refrain from asking you to point out all that I am doing wrong. I hope, however, that there will be good things in it, too.[55]

Hartmann further informed Ortega about how his article "Systematische Methode" was received in Marburg. He wrote about the criticism he had received from Cohen and Natorp, who did not like the text at all. Instead, he was surprised by the positive assessment of Paul Scheffer, his peer studying at Marburg, with whom both he and Ortega had become very friendly. "I have heard," he wrote to Ortega, "very nice things from Scheffer: for the first time in my life because until then he had been negative towards everyone I knew."[56] He added that "There are in fact theses in this essay which I hope will become the program of my future."[57]

From Hartmann's letters, Ortega was also able to learn about the events in Marburg. Notable among those was the arrival at Philipps University of Georg Misch, a pupil of Wilhelm Dilthey who had been appointed associate professor in Marburg.

> I became friends with Misch – wrote the German philosopher to Ortega. – Despite our differences, he is a very talented person, especially when it comes to his readiness to help. Now we sometimes discuss together; not much comes of it, but I feel a certain possibility of collaboration. I owe all this to my greater inner detachment from the Marburg School, which has long ceased to exist as a subjectivity of science.[58]

[53] Ibidem.
[54] Ibidem.
[55] Ibidem.
[56] Ibidem.
[57] Ibidem.
[58] Ibidem.

In turn, among the adverse developments in the Marburg School, Hartmann mentioned the appointment of Erich Rudolf Jaensch, a Breslau-born experimental psychologist, as a full professor. He established the Institute of Psychology in Marburg, which he headed until he died in 1940. Despite his outstanding merits in psychological research, he became infamous for his relations with National Socialism, especially his involvement in the *Gleichschaltung* Nazi project, i.e., the unification of social, political, and institutional life. As he was an enemy of neo-Kantian philosophy, his appointment at the Philipps University was described by Hartmann as "a dagger driven into the heart of the Marburg School."[59]

6. Hartmann's last letter to Ortega

After 1912 there is a long break in the correspondence between Ortega and Hartmann. That was mainly because of the political situation. From 1913 the Spanish philosopher became increasingly active in the socio-political life of Spain. At that time, he founded the first quasi-political grouping, the League of Political Education of Spain, growing into the spiritual and intellectual leader of his generation, known as the 1914 Generation. On the other hand, Hartmann was sent to the Eastern Front at the outbreak of the First World War, where, due to his linguistic abilities, he served a long time as an interpreter in one of the prisoner-of-war camps. After the war, Ortega's distance from the world of German culture became so considerable that he virtually broke off contact with his Marburg comrades, focusing instead on the project of the Europeanisation of Spain, which he wanted to achieve through European philosophy and science. Nonetheless, Hartmann did not forget his old comrade and tried to renew their old contact. Ortega, however, for some unfathomable reason, remained silent. Finally, in 1921, the German philosopher sent what was probably his last letter to Madrid. He enclosed his latest publication, *Grundzüge einer Metaphysik der Erkenntnis*, stating that it represented a revolution in the theory of cognition. Hartmann's letter indicates that the silence on Ortega's part somewhat embittered him but at the same time still held out hope for a revival of their intellectual relationship. He wished to encourage the Spaniard to come to Marburg, which, because of the war, "has not only not lost its philosophical spirit, but has become more vital than ever before."[60]

Did Ortega reply to Hartmann's letter? Unfortunately, it has not yet been established. Most likely, like several previous ones, the letter remained unanswered. That, in turn, raises the question of why the Spaniard broke contact with the world of German philosophy, with which he had been so profoundly connected. Indeed, external circumstances alone cannot be blamed for the state of affairs. It was also due to Ortega's personality and his decision to follow his philosophical path, different in form from the one the German philosophers were used to. It was a path of essayistic philosophy and journalistic style, a committed philosophy and, as he wrote years later, intended for the Spanish-speaking reader. Therefore, Ortega did not write *urbi et orbi*, but he intended

[59] Ibidem.
[60] Hartmann (1921): C-17/13.

to reach the Spaniards' and South Americans' hearts and minds since only they could understand the reasons for his taking up philosophy. Nevertheless, after several decades and many disappointments on his native soil, Ortega decided to renew his relations with German philosophers. From among the Marburg thinkers, he contacted Heimsoeth, whom he invited to lecture in Madrid. The plan was not finalized due to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, and Ortega himself had to go into long-term exile. It was not until the late 1940s and early 1950s that he returned to Germany, where his lectures could be heard at the local universities and other institutions. It was also the time of his meetings with Heidegger, whom he admired but often criticized in his works. From Ortega's letters to Heimsoeth, we learn that he was invited to Hartmann's jubilee in Göttingen. Unfortunately, in the end, he did not attend it, instead attending a conference in the United States. "What a pity," Ortega wrote to Heimsoeth from Lisbon in 1949, "that Nicolai Hartmann's celebration took place on the eighteenth of this month, for I would have gone to it with great pleasure so that the three of us could meet there – aside from Tatarkiewicz – we, the only survivors of that unlikely Marburg."[61]

Ortega's anticipated meeting with Hartmann never took place. The German philosopher died in 1954 as the result of complications from an earlier accident. Ortega shared his fate a year later, in May 1955, having lost a heroic battle with an incurable disease.

Finally, it is worth noting that although Ortega broke off relationships with his Marburg comrades for many years, he systematically followed their philosophical achievements, often drawing inspiration for his philosophy from them. He also initiated translations of their works into Castilian, published by Revista de Occidente, a publishing house he founded. The same happened with Hartmann's works, which the Spanish philosopher intensely studied and analyzed, referring to them explicitly or implicitly in his works and lectures. Hartmann remained philosophically close to him to the end, although he criticized him for being too conceptually formalistic. The Spanish author saw the most potential in Hartmann's study of philosophy classics: Plato, Kant, and Hegel. He also agreed with Hartmann on the rooting of philosophy in history and acknowledged its problematic nature rather than the systemic one. For Ortega, as for Hartmann, the good history of philosophy is the history of philosophical problems, and proper thinking is systematic thinking. That philosophy is primarily about the love of truth, that is, "the strict subordination of ideas to what presents itself as real, without additions or rounding off."[62] For Ortega, Hartmann was precisely the best example of this philosophical "honesty"; he wrote of him that "with such great care he stops at the point where the thing begins to be unclear and turns to the reader saying: 'I know no more about this.'"[63]

[61] Ortega y Gasset (1949): CD-H/24.
[62] Ortega y Gasset (2009): 149.
[63] Ibidem.

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