

Lost in the maze? Husserl, Ortega and Gaos facing the challenges of cultural diversity

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Abstract

This article tries to show the way in which three prominent 20th century philosophers — Edmund Husserl, José Ortega y Gasset and José Gaos— have dealt with cultural diversity. Linked to each other by strong intellectual ties, the protagonists of the text propose three different ways of approaching this crucial and thorny issue in which the role assigned to reason is of special relevance. Husserl will trust her fully. Ortega, even the most Husserlian Ortega, will considerably lower such claims. And Gaos, radicalizing the perspectivist theses of his teacher, will consider that it is better to assume his impotence. The set of mirrors that the essay intends to create with the intersection of the three proposals aims to highlight the relevance of the philosophy made in Spanish in the most pressing debates of the present.

Keywords: Cultural diversity, rationality, historical reason, Europe, Husserl, Ortega, Gaos.

I. Introduction. Maps for the maze

In 2001, the General Conference of UNESCO approved the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. In it, and in analogy with the concept of biodiversity, it was established in its article 1 —Cultural diversity, the common heritage of humanity— that “[...] cultural diversity is as necessary for the human race as diversity biological for living organisms ”¹. Beyond the theoretical doubts that the analogy between biological diversity and cultural diversity may suggest, such a statement is important because it does nothing other than clearly express the triumph of the idea of diversity in contemporary societies. After centuries of prevalence of cultural monism, of assuming the idea that one can only be fully human in one way, it is necessary to recognize that pluralism has made its way as a common belief, at least in the West and in theory.

The problem is that the outbreak of monism and the celebration of diversity has produced, together with enormous and unquestionable benefits, certain “collateral damage”. Indeed, accepting the fact that humanity inevitably declines in the plural has given way, not infrequently, to a certain diffuse ideology that Fernando Savater has called the idolatry of diversity (https://elpais.com/diario/2004/07/01/opinion/1088632807_850215.html). Such idolatry is nothing more than the penultimate enunciation of an old doctrine, relativism. The professing idolater argues that cultural diversity is a value in itself. But if this is so, it is incapable, in principle, to distinguish between, if I may express myself, good and bad diversity. And there are many cultural practices that are deeply immoral to us because they

violate equality, freedom and the dignity of people. Genital mutilation or other discrimination based on sex, skin color or religion are very common in all cultures. They are practices that make sense, "good" sense, within the belief systems that sustain them, but we do not think that they should be assumed or tolerated. From this perspective, if what the cultural idolater is trying to do with his unfettered celebration of diversity is to defend a community of tolerant and respectful humans, he should abandon relativism as a traveling companion. The pure exaltation of differences is as straight a path to barbarism as the most dogmatic monism, by not allowing us to make reasonable judgments about which differences are good or, at least, harmless, and which are not.

Given the above scenario, I believe that in our growing multicultural societies we are thus faced with the following situation. Most of us are pluralists — or at least we think of ourselves as such—, we think that cultural diversity is a wealth that we must preserve because there is no single way to live a full life. But we are also aware that there are many degrading and unacceptable cultural practices. The problem is that on both the first and the second there is a great disparity of opinions that are often contradictory. It is not easy to agree on the various forms of good life that can be assumed or on what we must discard as intolerable; and more taking into account that Western culture has been plagued with impositions and violence exercised in the name of Truth, Freedom, Good, Justice or God, capitalized. How can we know, then, that when we are calling something "bad diversity", intolerable, we are not projecting our most solid and unsustainable prejudices or, simply, our own particular beliefs, and infringing the freedom of others? How to avoid that the necessary defense of cultural wealth and variety overlaps with pure and unsustainable relativism?

Finally, how to orient oneself in the growing cultural labyrinth in which our late modern societies have become? In the pages that follow, I will try to show some of the maps that three important philosophers of the 20th century drew to move in this labyrinth: Edmund Husserl, José Ortega y Gasset and José Gaos. Such maps will feature reason and the possibilities it offers us to walk our way. Husserl will have full confidence in his power. Ortega, at least until the 1930s, will play a melody of Husserl-Liana tonalities, although he will lower his strength with large doses of historicity and contingency. And Gaos will radically develop some of his teacher's perspectival theses and proclaim, in a line that seems to me in certain respects very similar to that undertaken by Rorty or Vattimo, that it is better to assume their impotence.

II. Edmund Husserl. The Europe project and cultural diversity

In Husserlian phenomenology, the concept of the world of life occupies a central place. Such a concept, which has made a fortune in contemporary philosophy and sociology and which, contrary to a fairly general belief, does not come from what has been called the "last Husserl", is traversed, like others equally essential in that philosophy, due to extensive tensions, far from being univocal⁴. One of its fundamental meanings, which is what I am now interested in highlighting, understands the world of life as *Kulturwelt*, that is, as a cultural world. And it takes only a cursory glance at such a world to see that it is not one, but many. Culture declines in plural — cultures— and this is attested not only by our most immediate experience, but also by the enormous production historical and anthropological. The cultural variability is enormous and ranges from the way we dress or the way we behave at the table

to our value systems or the gods we believe in. In fact, we are therefore dealing with cultural plurality. And such a thing is recognized and assumed without ambiguity by Husserl. But once the diversity of worlds has been confirmed, the father of phenomenology will go one step further and wonder if the radical difference between them is the last word we can say meaningfully about them, leaving us with no choice but to necessarily assume that all have equal value, that all cultures are equally legitimate.

As is well known, that is the thesis maintained by cultural relativists or idolaters, to use Savater's expression. According to them, Husserl points out accurately in a text on the Origin of Geometry, "every people or group has its world in which everything agrees, whether it is in the magical-mythical or rational-European form, and everything can be explained completely. Every <population> has its "logic" and, according to that, if it were made explicit in propositions, 'su' a priori" (Husserl, 1976, 382). From this perspective it is not possible, in effect, to establish any rational hierarchy between worlds. Each people or human group, as we are well told, has its logic, its a priori, in short, its own rationality for all intents and purposes, its culture, which can never be evaluated from a type of horizon alien to the cultural field itself. In this sense, and as it is clearly manifested to us in the previous passage, the "rational-European" form is, valuatively speaking, neither better nor worse than the "magical-mythical". Nor does it reveal more or less theoretical truths about humans and the world around them. And it is that from this position, any meaning that we want to attribute to notions such as truth, justice, good or beauty — to name just a few of those that we understand as crucial in most cultures— only acquires validity within each of the worlds in which it emerges.

Well, it is not at all an exaggeration to say that Husserlian phenomenology is one of the most powerful responses that twentieth-century philosophy has given to skepticism and its more or less natural allies, relativism and historicism. Let's see it quickly in one of the many narratives that Husserl makes about it.

According to the quote from the Origin of Geometry collected above, the author of *The Crisis of European Sciences* is going to divide cultures into two large blocks. On one side he will place those that fall under the label of "European rationality." On the other, those subsumed in that which in a somewhat broad and imprecise way he calls "magical-mythical rationality", and which in other places, for example in his justly celebrated Vienna Conference, is branded as practical, mythical-religious or rationality. pre-philosophical (cf., Husserl, 1976, 329). With such a macro-division, his deep intention is to highlight the singular, distinctive, specific character of European rationality compared to any other. And the logical question is, then, what is properly that peculiarity that would define European culture and rationality in such a pregnant and clear way? Or to put it another way, what constitutes the identity of European culture so radically to separate it absolutely from the rest, curdling a truly one-of-a-kind type?

Before looking at the Husserlian answer to this crucial question, or rather as a necessary preamble to take charge of the answer, it must be borne in mind that when the founder of phenomenology speaks of Europe, or of European culture and rationality, it does not designate a geographic location. Europe, and by such we must understand the whole of the West, It is what is commonly understood as a spiritual category, a peculiar way of looking at the world that, indeed, was born in such a geographical area, from which it receives its name, but which is by no means exclusive, proper or only representative of the European human .

But what can be that which was born in Europe and, at the same time, does not represent only a particularly European way of life? What “European” look transcends the particularity of Europe? According to Husserl, the one that inaugurates philosophy around the 6th century BC. For the author of *Cartesian Meditations*, as for many other philosophers before him, philosophy and Europe, as a spiritual category, are intimately linked because the emergence of the former in the old continent operates a radical transformation in the way of living and thinking they led. to date the Europeans — as particular at that time as any other. And what does the philosophical gaze incorporate that makes it absolutely new? Well, something very simple to enunciate and complicated to articulate: conducting life according to an ideal of universal rationality, of common reason valid for anyone by the mere fact of being a human. In sum, according to Husserl, it is that idea of rationality that wants to be “neutral” and inclusive of all that is truly human, which supposedly discards any type of surname or particularity, which emerges in an inaugural way in Greece from the hand of the philosophy and what distinguishes European culture from any other, since only in it has it become a tradition, it is true that in a broken way and sometimes with great setbacks, this “enlightened-rational” desire.

Contemplated in this way, the European *Kulturwelt* would be the only one in which, in effect, the curious paradox of trying to transcend in an absolute way and up to its last consequences the own spatial and temporal framework, by wanting to discard everything particular, would occur. everything that is linked to time (*Zeitgebunde*). Thus, it would embody a peculiar type of tradition unknown until then, “the tradition of in-tradition”, as Ortega points out in a beautiful and lucid phrase (Ortega y Gasset, 2006b, 159). Therefore, in this way you lie something does not acquire validity because it is simply branded a European. The criterion of legitimacy is not linked to a group, time or set of beliefs not subjected to examination in which people live in a more or less comfortable and traditional way, but something is validated as true, good, beautiful or just because it is the fruit of the best arguments that can be assumed by anyone in the honest and public exercise of reason, as Kant would say. In this sense — and let me insist on this idea already outlined, since it is central to the Husserlian argument— European culture would not conform to the pattern observed in any other and would be completely different from the rest. Their way of articulating, at least in an ideal sense, would not be inwards, towards the group, people, nation or collectivity that reverently possesses a set of beliefs, but outwards. That is to say, it is not a question of protecting or propping up the inherited “dogmas” at all costs, but of keeping them open and in permanent revision, allowing oneself to be persuaded by a constant give and take of reasons, a permanent *logon didonai* never closed but that would testify knowledge theoretical and practical and would asymptotically reveal a *telos* about the normative and truthful totality of the human.

From what we have seen so far, it is not surprising that Husserl designates European culture — in this normative, categorical-spiritual sense— not only as a culture of ideality, of that which is not linked to time, *theoria* or criticism, but also, and closely related to it, as the culture of autonomy and the absolute responsibility of the subject (cf., Husserl, 1976, 314-348).

In conclusion, and summarizing the position of the founder of phenomenology regarding cultural diversity, we have the following. For Husserl, Western European culture — in that peculiar sense that I have made explicit— is the norm from which to evaluate the rest. The fundamental reason is that with it we find ourselves facing what James Hart has called, following in the wake of the author of *The Crisis*, the passage from the rationality of cultures

to the culture of rationality (cf., Hart, 1992, 643-664) 5. Indeed, the West that Husserl speaks of, more than a set of cultural practices, is an attitude, a new way of seeing the world that is based on reason as ideal. Only from this intellectual and vital position is it possible to truly listen to the different on an equal footing and resolve our cultural conflicts or of any other type without resorting to imposition or violence. That is why he will qualify Europe as a project and present it as the telos of humanity, an infinite journey to which other cultures should contribute and join.

III. José Ortega y Gasset. Cultural diversity in the face of the two movements of historical reason (minimum reading of *Las Atlántidas*)

In an excellent 1924 text entitled *Las Atlántidas*⁷, José Ortega y Gasset follows a strategy similar to Husserl's when it comes to dealing with cultural diversity. Such a strategy consists of addressing this issue from the realization of a diagnosis of the culture, "soul" or European identity.

According to the Madrid thinker, in the 18th and 19th centuries, and in the hands of rationalism in its different variants, the idea prevails that European culture is the incarnation of the human and that the rest of life forms are only relevant in the extent to which they have contributed to reaching the European zenith. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are, says Ortega, "unitarian" (Ortega y Gasset, 2005, 762), without sensitivity to difference and plurality. This is so so that a science like history, destined, among other things, to record changes, completely failed in that endeavor because historians were imbued with an idea that the philosopher is going to brand as false. Namely, that humanity declines in the singular, that there is something like a homogeneous and a priori concept of what humanity is and that Europe is in possession of it. Ortega's radicalism at this point is such that it reaches to maintain that the great failure of liberal, Marxist or Darwinian thinkers, that is, of those who have coined the matrix beliefs of the European culture of the moment, consists in maintaining that "the essential structure of human life has always been identical" (Ibid., 768), that the categories of the human mind have always been the same (cf., Ibid., 770); in short, that the African, the Hindu, or the inhabitant of ancient Rome are essentially the same as us, only at a lower stage of technical and moral development. To think in such a way is a profound mistake and to give up truly understanding the other.

It seems, therefore, that Ortega, like some of the best contemporary philosophy⁸, does not want to spare us the discomfort of the different, confronting us with the perplexity that a different culture supposes in a radical way to challenge our deepest and most obvious beliefs. In short, he does not want to tiptoe over the gross fact of human diversity, whose denial has not infrequently been at the root of the violence we have exercised over non-Westerners. The case of colonialism and its disastrous consequences bears witness to this. Such a position leads him to advocate the interesting concept of "polycentric universal history" (Ibid., 764-766), a new way of practicing this science that would take charge, in the way that cultural anthropology does today, of reconstruct the meaning produced by non-European cultures. Or what is the same, to understand their belief systems from themselves and not as a means to or a step towards the higher type of culture that would be the West.

It must be recognized without ambiguity that this polycentric universal history, this reconstruction of meaning, which will also qualify as the first direction or movement of historical reason, certainly dignifies other cultures, treats them as equals; it is certainly polycentric. That is, there are no hierarchies here; there are no productions of meaning that are judged as better than others; they are simply different. The various traditions rule, they constitute the identities of individuals and peoples and only from them is it possible to make judgments. This movement of historical reason, Ortega himself expresses it, is clearly relativistic (cf., for example, *Ibíd.*, 769).

However, the interest presented by Ortega's approach, like that of Husserl, is that, after this unrestricted recognition of diversity, it does not remain in that first reconstructive movement of historical reason, but rather tries to develop a second direction of it, a second movement that, while taking charge of the contingent and historical character of humans, from being framed in various cultures and traditions, tries to overcome pure relativity, pure difference, the mere plurality that equates all cultures without further ado.

In *Las Atlántidas*, Ortega enunciates the second movement of historical reason in the following way: "But it is not enough, in order to get closer to its fullness, for the historical sense to perceive those profound differences that the human soul has presented over time. When we have keenly understood each age and each people in their differential personality, we will not have exhausted the possible perfection of historical sensibility. It is necessary that of this fine understanding consequences of an estimated order are drawn. [And a little later he emphatically argues] The valuation of the different cultures, their ranking on a scale of ranks, supposes the prior understanding of all of them" (*Ibíd.*, 771).

We then have to estimate, to make a judgment on the different cultures, but how to do it, from where? How to evaluate the rest of the points of view from a perspective - in the background a particular manifestation of the human -? Isn't this postulating something that Ortega always denied, namely, the eye of God, the impossible absolute perspective for him? At this point, the bet of the Madrid thinker happens — and in this he shows, as in many other central aspects of his philosophy, to be a good phenomenologist— by looking carefully at reality, or rather, the various realities that the different cultures. And what do we discover when we do such an exercise. First, that "each culture has enjoyed some outstanding genius for some vital issue" (*Ibíd.*, 771). Asian cultures, for example, have developed a deep sense of compassion and techniques for controlling and ordering desires that are unmatched in the West. His aspiration to the elimination of the individual, being a project completely opposite to the European one, is not without positive aspects that we should learn from in societies, ours, in which the paroxysm of individualism has often been transformed into a pure and irrational whim. Highlighting the genius of the different cultures, Ortega will predict a "new classicism" (*Ibíd.*, 771), one of truth and not imposed, built with the contributions of different traditions. Each town, he will maintain, will become a classic by truly touching successive portions of the real.

Now, bearing this in mind, a question becomes inevitable: what is the most outstanding characteristic of Europe in this polycentric gaze? What is the great contribution of the West to

the world? Well, precisely the recognition of plurality and what it implies. The Madrilenian thinker says: "History [and here we must bear in mind that history is historical reason] when recognizing the relativity of human forms, it initiates a form exempt from relativity. That this form appears within a determined culture and is a way of seeing the world that emerged in Western man does not prevent its absolute character. The discovery of a truth is always an event with a precise date and location. But the truth discovered is ubiquitous and uchronic. History is historical reason, therefore, an effort and an instrument to overcome the variability of historical matter" (Ibíd., 772). But why is the discovery of human plurality the beginning of a type of gaze devoid of relativity? Because only from it, only by feeling the pang of the other, can I realize the limits of my own tradition; I can begin to think that maybe I or my community are wrong, in short, I can experience the philosophical annoyance that for the same question the multiple traditions have given different answers not compatible with each other. To get there, it is necessary to take charge of plurality. This is, on the other hand, what can never be experienced from a clearly relativistic position. The representative of this tradition does not seem to be perplexed or to show concern about diversity; he has no problem with it, and Ortega, very lucidly, seems to say that this is so because this type of gaze is nothing but a dogmatic unitarism multiplied by the number of cultures that we can find. From this perspective, each culture is considered the culture that will always see the others exclusively in terms of itself.

The West has made that mistake many times, assumes the Spanish author, but as far as we know it seems to be the only perspective that has tried to transcend this limitation in a systematic and articulated way and to welcome the uncomfortable gaze of the other. And that, precisely, is what would make it "superior" to the others. The Madrid thinker expresses it as follows: "There is a Chinese culture and a Malay culture and a Hottentot culture, just as there is a European culture. The only definitive superiority of this will have to be to recognize that essential parity before discussing which of them is superior. The Hottentot, on the other hand, believes that there is no more culture than the Hottentot" (Ibid., 757).

In short, the intelligent thesis that Ortega is holding is that we do not have to leave the field of experience to start that second movement of historical reason, the one that deals with the hierarchization of cultures. Without resorting, in principle, to metaphysical assumptions, we would be able to perceive that the genius of the best West ends up being an attitude, a perspective that is more encompassing than the previous ones because it welcomes in a peculiar way the rest of the perspectives — and his own own — and ends up putting them in dialogue, in friction; that is, it ends up considering them from a critical point of view.

Let's summarize the essentials. We have in Ortega two movements, or as he states, two directions of historical reason. The first is the recognition of plurality, the famous "polycentric universal history", in which we reconstruct without hierarchizing the human sense of all cultures. The second has an estimative, hierarchical, evaluative character, and is built from the implementation of that first movement and the attitude that encourages it. If at first the historical reason is "relativistic", at the second it is conducive to a necessary and constant tension between unity and plurality.

If we pay attention briefly to what Ortega said, his melody sounds in important passages similar to the Husserlian. Both consider the West a yardstick against which to measure cultural diversity. But once again, the West we are talking about is a philosophical West, a West that embodies an attitude, a way of looking at the world that is based on the possibility of reasoning, arguing, criticism, autonomy, in freedom. I leave some of the differences between Husserlian and Ortega rationality, even that of the most phenomenological Ortega, for the final section of this essay.

IV. Jose Gaos. From philosophical arrogance to the philosophy of melancholic serenity. The weakening of thinking in the face of cultural diversity

José Gaos, as everyone is known, has been one of the most prominent disciples of Ortega y Gasset and one of the members, along with Manuel García Morente, Xavier Zubiri, María Zambrano, Manuel Granell, Antonio Rodríguez Huescar and Julián Marías, among others, from the so-called 'School of Madrid', a generation of brilliant Spanish philosophers who constellated around the figure of Ortega and who was tragically broken by the cruel and unfortunate Spanish Civil War of 1936. This rupture prevented a reception normalization of their respective thoughts in subsequent generations –as happened to Ortega himself–, something that seems to be beginning to ease, although in a slower way than would be desirable. And I say this because reading these Hispanic classics holds unexpected treasures about some of the most important debates in contemporary philosophy.

That is the case, it seems to me, of the position that can be attributed to José Gaos on the issue of cultural diversity, at least in the way, probably peculiar, that I have to read it and, if I may use the expression, “update it.” Indeed, I believe that the interest of the Gaosian approach to the issue of What this work deals with lies in the fact that it distances itself in some very relevant aspects from both Ortega, at least from Ortega who could be considered more Husserlian, and, of course, from Husserl himself. If in the first two, although with clearly differentiated nuances, it is the more or less tempered force of philosophical rationality that gives identity to European culture and serves to discriminate between cultures, in Gaos there is a profound turn on the possibilities of this and thinks, like the current representatives of weak thought —Rorty or Vattimo—, that only by consciously assuming the weakness of reason, the impotence of philosophy, is it possible to discriminate between good and bad diversity and coexist freely in a tolerant society.

José Gaos's confrontation with human diversity is related, firstly, not so much to cultural diversity itself, but to a radical fact that affects his own philosophy: its unbreakable plurality and historicity. For Gaos, the core line of philosophy since its birth in Greece is made up of metaphysics, a type of discourse whose ultimate goal is to reach the ultimate foundation of everything through reason in order to guide our lives. However, if we take a look at the history of philosophy, the little edifying spectacle we witness is the anarchy of philosophical systems, their manifest discrepancy and incompatibility in fixing the supposedly obvious first principles of reality. Such anarchy seems to indicate the impotence of reason to reach the foundation, it seems to deny the old and beloved rationalist slogan according to which the correct and lucid exercise of the rational faculty would necessarily lead to the incontestable

establishment of a series of principles in which We should all agree (cf., for example, Gaos 1982a, 60-65).

But if metaphysics cannot fulfill its grounding function, what do the successive and radically different accounts of philosophers show us about the foundation beyond? of the impossibility of carrying it out? Gaos' disconcerting and provocative response is that such narratives are nothing more than "personal confessions" (Gaos, 1982b, 416-429), visions or perspectives of meaning distilled by the intimacy of each thinker and translated into concepts; more or less coherent life stories that show, as far as possible, the individuality of each of its makers and the sense with which they have faced existence¹⁰. The same, says the outcast thinker, happens with the different cultures. The world is actually a plurality of worlds, or rather, reality and truth are plural, they respond to openings of meaning or different perspectives and that is why they are constellated in also different belief systems that cannot be unified by the faculty of reason (cf. Gaos, 2009, 47).

But if this faculty cannot achieve an ultimate unification of meaning, if the impossibility of the foundation what it does is to proclaim the dissemination of opinions and worldviews, do we not Gaos condemns the most absolute skepticism, relativism, the grossest arbitrariness? Doesn't your position make you incapable of distinguishing between good and bad diversity? ¹¹ I think the Hispanic thinker would be very surprised at the charge of relativism. His assumption of the bankruptcy of metaphysics and the subsequent outbreak of plurality is not an unrestricted celebration of differences, but the confirmation of what he understands as radical phenomenological data. In the beginning it was not logos, but plurality, and reason does not have enough power to trace it. Indeed, what the philosopher does with his critique of metaphysical discourse is to assume the fragility and limitation of human knowledge, our contingency. For Gaos, as for his teacher Ortega, today it is no longer possible to accept that we have access to God's point of view, not even in an asymptotic way. We are humans, not gods, and we cannot imbibe the attributes that are not properly ours. It is therefore a matter of assuming, once and for all, our humanity, and with it, that all the perspectives or beliefs that make up the personal or community sense are contingent. It is precisely the experience and awareness of this contingency that could allow a true dialogue and encounter with the other, which could perhaps empower us, Gaos points out, for a truly human conversation. Enmeshed in it, we could reduce the degree of violence and contemplate the spectacle of the world and the plurality that is its own without anguish, with one, and it is his expression, "indulgent and melancholic philosophical serenity" (Ibid., 47). To the philosophy of pride, metaphysics, "it is possible to oppose a 'philosophy' of melancholic serenity" (Ibid., 47). A philosophy that, in the face of the diversity of the world, tries to make "men more judicious than they have been up to now" (Ibid., 49) because it makes them notice how unreasonable it is to try to impose a perspective that it believes carries in its within the ultimate principles of the real¹². Since they are all contingent, we should all be tolerant and manage our differences bearing in mind that ideas about the world and humans are always penultimate. In a similar context, the aim is to reach reasoned and always revisable agreements that allow us to develop in the broadest possible way our diverse and often incompatible ways of understanding full humanity. Indefinitive, for Gaos, the limit to cultural diversity would be in the respect that

we humans owe to each other, a respect derived from the awareness of our own finitude: "And against the will to power [of metaphysical pride] it is possible to feel in the luminosity of the evidence the value of the plural wealth of the universe, comprehensive of the rich plurality of individual and collective personalities, races, peoples, cultures. Whoever feels such value cannot but feel disgust at all domination of others and, very first of all, the domination of anyone by himself, correlative in the satisfaction of that rich plurality, and that plural wealth of the universe, which feels that enrich himself at least with the glimpse of the differences vaguely hinted at in the depths of the intimacies of others. He who feels such cannot help but conceive as ideal a single unanimity in the value of the respect of each human being for each of the others, the joy of all in the communion of such unanimity" (Ibid., 47)

V. In conclusion. The maps of the maze. Between the rational foundation and the weakness of thinking

In the preceding sections I have tried to show, hopefully with some luck, some of the ways in which three great philosophers of the 20th century, with obvious intellectual connections to each other, have tried to cope with the labyrinth of cultural diversity. Allow me, to finish, make a small joint assessment of the three maps that I have tried to draw.

As I indicated at the time, the Husserlian model and the Ortega model contained in *Las Atlántidas* have, in principle, quite a few things in common. Not in vain did Ortega study and know well the phenomenology of Husserl, whom he considered one of his teachers, and welcomed the appearance of the first two parts of *The Crisis of European Sciences*, the only ones he knew, as a work in the line of what he was doing with his philosophy of historical reason.

Indeed, both Ortega and Husserl believe that the critical gaze that is born with philosophy is the core of the "West" and that such gaze, with its ideals of freedom, autonomy and reason - nability, coagulates an essential aspect of the human that guarantees that we can discriminate between good and bad diversity. Nothing that violates, as Husserl would say, the *Urstiftung*, the original foundation of that ideal, can be accepted as valid. However, Ortega, even the most Husserlian Ortega, is a philosopher whose idea of rationality is widely pierced by contingency. It is a reason, we could say, subjected to a broad thinning cure based on finitude and historicity; it is a historical reason. That is why he was deeply fascinated and influenced, like so many "disciples" of Husserl, by the reading of *Sein und Zeit* by Heidegger's time. In other words, Ortega's reason is understood as much less powerful than that of the old German master. In the Madrid thinker there is no explicit assumption, which there seems to be in Husserl, that the force of reason should, ideally at least, undo human discrepancies or disagreements if we make a neat, careful and honest exercise of our precious gift. rational. In summary, the common reason that the West discovers with philosophy is for Ortega a reason that discriminates between good or bad diversity because it will always reject the differences that violate the space in which the work of rational life itself is developed, that area where they enter. The various perspectives on the human are in reasoned conflict, but such reason lacks the direction and teleological power that is present in the Husserlian *Vernunft*.

As for Gaos, it seems clear that he still went further than his teacher in the weakening of philosophical reason, at least with regard to the Ortega most influenced by phenomenology that I have contemplated here. If in the author of *The Atlantis* we could see a rationality much more truffled with contingency than in Husserl, in Gaos there is practically nothing left of the old power of reason as a means to orient ourselves in the immense personal and cultural diversity that surrounds us. Gaos radicalizes the perspectivism of his teacher, the lately unreconcilable plurality. That is why it makes a virtue of necessity, and converts the impotence of reason, or, better said, the consciousness of the impotence of reason, into the instrument that establishes the difference between good and bad diversity.

Expressed in a very simple way, if Husserl thought that reason could draw a clear and well-outlined map in which philosophical rationality would illuminate with crystal clarity the resolution of the problems posed by cultural diversity, Ortega — even the most Husserlian — He believed that such a map was much more diffuse and the light much less strong than his teacher thought. Perhaps we could resolve quite a few conflicts with your help, but many others would remain unclear. In any case, the opening of the space of rational life and its not infringement by any of the perspectives, was the maximum guarantee that we had to rule out bad diversity. Finally, for Gaos, the map illuminated by reason cannot solve, in the strict sense of the term, practically none of the conflicts worthy of the name. But this is precisely where we draw our lesson. The impotence of reason should paradoxically produce the evolutionary leap that Husserl attributes to the discovery of the exercise of rationality and make us more tolerant.

The logical question after the cartography carried out is which map is more reliable? Which one will allow us to achieve the objective for which its authors designed it? In short, which one will guide us better in the labyrinth of cultural diversity? After years of clear Husserlian sympathies and confidence in the power of reason and the idea of rational foundation, I am increasingly inclined to think that the old great German teacher perhaps underestimated the force of contingency and plurality. I harbor more and more doubts not about the idea of Europe as a critical exercise of reason, as a defense of freedom, autonomy and dialogue, but about the fact that, mounted in its noble exercise, honest humans can reach incontestable agreements in their "true". I think, pecto, that it is good to always keep in mind Ortega's warning, which Gaos radicalizes, that we are not made for the eternal, that we cannot reach God's point of view. And that when we have tried, things never ended well. In any case, and in times more and more culturally idolatrous, we should not stop thinking about the Husserlian proposal, a proposal that should never be forgotten, which reaches all its depth and power with respect to these issues at the time when the Nazis dominate Germany and drag what was probably the most cultured people of the moment to the greatest moral ignominy in the history of mankind. A faithful and prominent disciple of Husserl, Aron Gurwitsch, expressed on more than one occasion that such barbarism could have been produced precisely by the renunciation of philosophy — a philosophy dominated at the time by the work of Martín Heidegger — to the idea of rational foundation¹⁵. And although I no longer believe in the alternative or foundation or barbarism, I will not be the one who advises against looking again and again at the Husserlian map.

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