

## The reform of Spanish understanding

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## The Reform of Spanish Understanding

The terrible struggle which moves the Spanish people has exposed our whole past, a past which now passes through our minds as if it were a dream. As every Spaniard is now caught up in the tragedy, it could be said, nonetheless, that we are all delirious and that our delirium is our yesterday which 'century by century and drop by drop'<sup>1</sup> is taking place as it is experienced in all our consciousnesses.

The past has lain in the background, behind life in Spain, exerting more anguish on us than on any other nation. It may very well be that other European countries have not felt the same pressure because they have had a clearer understanding of their past, of ideas which have been forged into concepts. It is well known that one of the functions of concepts is to reassure the man who manages to make them his own. In the uncertainty of life, concepts are limits within which we enclose things, safety zones in the continuous surprise constituted by events. Without concepts, life would remain stuck in anguish from which it would not emerge unless life itself was permanent happiness, total presence, the complete revelation of everything which matters to us.

But life does not find itself surrounded by total presences, nor can it remain at the mercy of dark realities. The need to define things, a logical operation so often avoided because it is dry, is a function of life, an intimate necessity linked to love: 'the affliction of love is not cured save by thy presence and thy form'.<sup>2</sup> Presence and form which, in some way, is provided by concepts, by definition.

When ideas are alive they have, at their root, love and the power to cure anguish, which makes it all the more dreadful that we Spaniards have had so few ideas. It is hard for

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<sup>1</sup> Quotation from the poem 'Desde mi rincón' [From my corner] written by Antonio Machado in 1913: '¡Y este hoy que mira a ayer; y este mañana / que nacerá tan viejo! / ¡Y esta esperanza vana / de romper el encanto del espejo! / ¡Y esta agua amarga de la fuente ignota! / ¡Y este filtrar la gran hipocondría / de España siglo a siglo y gota a gota!' [And this today beholding yesterday; and this tomorrow / that will be so old when it's born! / And this vain hope / of breaking the enchantment of the mirror! / And this bitter water of the unknown fountain! / And the way the great hypochondria of Spain / filters through, era by era and drop by drop!'] (Antonio Machado, *Fields of Castile*. Campos de Castilla, edited and translated by Stanley Appelbaum, Dover Publications: New York, 2007, p. 177).

<sup>2</sup> Quotation from *Spiritual Canticle* by San Juan de la Cruz: 'la dolencia de amor que no se cura sino con la presencia y la figura'. *The Complete Works of St John of the Cross*. Vol II *Spiritual Canticle*. Poems. Translated from the Critical Edition of P. Silverio de Santa Teresa, C. D. and edited by E. Allison Peers. London: Sheed and Ward, 1946, P. 238. Peers later changed the translation of 'figura' to 'face' – 'the malady / of love is incurable / except in Your presence and before Your face' in *The Essential St. John of the Cross*. Translated by E. Allison Peers. Start Publishing LLC, 2012, p. 864.

a people with our degree of humanity to live with so few ideas, such a lack of concern with theory. Spaniards have sustained themselves with very few ideas, their number perhaps being in an inverse relation to the stubbornness with which we have held them. We have had few ideas but we have clung to them with an almost cosmic obstinacy and clothed our understanding in them, as if in a monk's habit. For the pure-bred Spaniard, acquiring ideas was like belonging to a monastic order

The question is of such importance that we are compelled to ask: is it possible that there is, in the depths of our soul, no desire for knowledge, none of that loving thirst for presence or form which leads understanding through the arid terrain of logic in order to arrive at clear ideas, shining definitions? Is it possible that Spaniards, who are so rich in terms of their humanity, generosity, heroism and brotherly feelings, have been dispossessed of that wonderful capacity to know, to create clear ideas which can transform dark anguishes? This question would not be so serious if we believed, as has been the norm for many centuries, that theoretical knowledge were a luxury, a means of satisfying an ennobling desire, but something which, in the end we could live without, even if this meant life was somehow lesser. But we no longer believe this. Thought is a necessary function of life; it derives from man's intimate need to *see*, even if only to the slightest degree, with what it is that he has to contend Thought is necessary – today more than ever – because life is not a gift which is given to us as is. but something we have to make for ourselves, because the mysterious solitude which each one of us feels is surrounded by things and events which we do not know, and because there is destruction, death and unreason.

This being so, what have been the consequences for the life of our people, for the most immediate needs in our lives, of this lack of theories, of thoughts, and this poverty of conceptual thinking? Or is it perhaps that our form of understanding has been unusual and heterodox when set aside the great classical forms of knowledge? While Europe was creating the great philosophical systems – from Descartes to Hegel – with all their consequences; while she was discovering the great principles which underlie a scientific knowledge of nature – from Galileo and Newton to the Physics of Relativity –, we Spaniards, save some highly unique, individual exceptions, were nourishing ourselves with other unknowns, mysterious springs of knowledge which had nothing to do with these theoretical wonders, just as our wretched economic life had nothing to do with the splendour of modern capitalism.

So it was, and this meant we were treated with disdain by a prosperous Europe which looked upon us as a backward, obscurantist country only half enlightened, at best a picturesque anteroom of Africa, a Mecca of Romantic orientalism. And from that same Spain anguished voices cried in the wilderness. All the foreignising influence of the *Francophiles* in the nineteenth century and the *Germanophiles* of the last few decades has been an attempt to remedy this ill. Believing we were starved of theories, with generous desire and some good will, they brought the remedy from where, it seemed, there was one.

But none of these remedies seem to have worked, because if we had achieved harmony, we would not have witnessed, on the one hand, a force as monstrous and anachronistic as those which have brought about the present conflict, and, on the other, such unprecedented, unspoilt energy which none of the educated peoples of Europe's great civilisation seem to possess. If we as Spaniards accept responsibility before the world for all that is taking place in our land, we will have to bear a terrible and almost unbearable shame because of the actions of certain social classes and groups; and it would be unbearable if it were not for the compensatory joy, happiness we might say, produced in us by the wondrous resources and the moral capacity which is possessed by our people, and to such a degree that it would be very difficult for the people of any other country to better them. This moral capacity of the people entails feeling no pride either at a *national* or individual level, but simply accepting the fact that this is a painful and arduous task which someone had to take on for himself *and for everyone*, and which fell to the Spanish people. To do naturally what comes to seem superhuman is one of the marvellous qualities being displayed by the people of Spain. The unspoilt, divine natural impulse of a people which, having remained almost on the margins of European culture, today comes to save whatever there is to save in it.

It turns out, then, that our lack of theory does not mean we are detached from the essential destiny of European culture which, in spite of itself, we – or rather our illiterate peasants – are saving. There is some question over whether Europe deserves what the Spanish people is doing for it. Neither Paris nor London deserve Madrid; but if they do not deserve what is being done, they need it. They all need it; and some even deserve it, although even if no one deserved it Man would deserve it from the moment at which some men take action.

The reality is that our present anguish and pain show us that we are not – and if we are not it is because we never have been – detached from what is essential to Western culture. Rather, we have a privileged and deep attachment to it, in spite of the fact that we have not been nourished by its delicious philosophical fruits, that we have hardly had any involvement in its great scientific creations or have not experienced – as has often been said – either a Renaissance, Reformation or Romantic movement. But, this being the case, as it seems to me, that we have not been party to any of those great events in the History of Europe, how can the present situation be explained? How can we have missed all of the changes in social and mental structures which were brought about by those great names? And how, having missed them all, are we now in a position to find a solution for that culture which is undergoing such a grave crisis?.

Let us consider, first of all, what is it that we want, and that it is important, to save. Because when one talks of saving culture, culture should not be confused with the sum of all knowledge. Without wishing to sing the praises of ignorance, we have to be prepared to renounce, for the moment, many of the so-called cultural manifestations of other times and to bear witness to a decline in cultural production. What requires saving is not the cultural luxury of Europe; we do not even know if its cultural methods will survive the great catastrophe which is looming. But even if we were to accept the worst case scenario in relation to the decline in quality and quantity of cultural production, this would not be the decisive point. There is something else more urgently in need of salvation: human co-existence.

Spain grew apart from Europe as the nation's political decline deepened. The last contact between Spanish and European philosophical thought took place at the dawn of the new spirit, the new beginning which boldly began in Descartes who had studied the well-known commentaries on Aristotle by the Spanish scholastic philosopher Francisco de Toledo in the College of La Flèche. In addition, important points in his doctrine were shaped by Francisco Suárez, the subtle philosopher from Granada. Afterwards, a dry, sterile air for thought passed over the Iberian Peninsula. Once Scholasticism, whose last great splendour was seen in Spain, had run its course, nothing new which fitted with the spirit of the times appeared amongst us. Our thinking became paralysed at the same time as the State became ossified.

It is worth bearing in mind that the idea of the State emerged with Western philosophy in Greece. When reason rejects all explanations of reality which have not been found by itself, when the great systems of Plato and Aristotle appear, systems which have nourished so many centuries of European thought, there emerges, as if it were something essential, the systematic idea of human co-existence; the systematization, objectification of human relations within the State.

Ever since then, reason and State have gone hand-in-hand, unimpeded in the West even by the new religion of Christianity which is so alien to both in its beginnings. Christian faith appeals to the inner man and its prodigies work at the centre of the individual. It brought with it a new, revolutionary, notion of man which seemed like madness to Greek thinkers and Roman statesmen. But this antagonism, which led to the shedding of so much Christian blood, was cancelled out at the moment when Christianity crystallised in the shape of the ancient Roman Empire, transforming itself from an obscure, modest, community of brothers who spent their lives praying in the catacombs into the powerful and hierarchical Roman Church. Christian thought, which with Saint Augustine had attempted to re-think in an original form the new reality of a spiritual man contained within its faith, fell prey to Greek thought. The truths of faith are both contained and hidden in Greek terminology, in concepts discovered by Aristotle and Plato, whose thinking is very different from Saint Peter's *spirit of the inner man*.

Christianity was completely unable to attack the idea of the State as such, from the moment it abandoned its primitive and spontaneous structure and crystallised into something so similar to a State that it competed with them, dominating them while it could. Europe's advance has been characterised by a variety of state forms and the constitution of new national States during the Renaissance opens up a whole new era.

And it was precisely in Spain, before any other country, where a State was constituted during the Renaissance. But this, which was our moment of glory, was at the same time our misfortune. When we became a State in such a brilliant fashion and so ahead of time it seemed that we loved deeply; specifically, that we loved with all the notes of our will in tension. What happened all of a sudden that, a few decades later, during the reign of Philip II, a deathly apathy began to invade us, a lethargy which begins among the highest organs of the State and which, in truth, took some time to reach the people? It took centuries for it to reach the people. From this moment of decadence – the death throes of

the Hapsburgs, and then the Bourbons, followed by 'Long live the chains' and 'Spain has no Pulse'<sup>3</sup> – centuries have past and the people have borne the brunt of repeated disasters with their unbreakable will to live.

It is the ruling classes which are losing their will and capacity for thought; they are the ones who know not what to do or think – that melancholic figure of the nobleman strolling along all the boulevards of Castile, that sadness and neglect invading castles and palaces while the people continue to populate a whole distant continent.

There is no State; there is no thought. Neither of these things makes any sense without a will, a concrete and clearly defined will, to live and to act.

This is the moment when the iron dogmatism of Spain takes shape. A closed-minded dogmatism imposes itself on the nihilism of our will, and the dogmas of the Church are combined with other dogmas concerning honour, love, and, the very being of Spain herself.

The grave lack of clear ideas which might verify what it is that ideas were invented for, which might reveal a confusing reality, is intensified all the more when it comes to thinking about the past. The confessional character of our knowledge is intensified to the highest degree when it comes to thinking about what Spain has been and is. Rigid ideas have concealed the problem and even our natural curiosity. It is all dogma: the dogma of a Spain which is united, Catholic and defender of the faith to the point of destroying Spain for the sake of this faith. This was a thesis which allowed the Catholic Monarchs and Cardinal Cisneros to forge a national unity. It is a thesis which persisted as something sacred such that simply calling it into question was as heretical as doubting the Trinity. It was not possible to even remotely raise questions about the past or even the present. History was neither learned nor understood; it was something in which one participated in some mystic fashion and which required no reasoning. That this should happen in relation to the past was a direct consequence of what was happening with regard to the future. The dogmas of what it meant to be Spanish, the dogmatic declaration of our being, of our only possible

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<sup>3</sup> Zambrano is making reference here to famous episodes in the country's history where Spanish people's attitudes and actions worked manifestly against its own interests, contributing in this way to the country's decadence. "Vivan las caenas" [Long live the chains] is the popular chant of absolutists at the return to power in 1814 of king Ferdinand VII, who did away with all the progressive reforms accomplished by the 1812 Constitution. "España sin pulso" [Spain has no pulse] is an article written by the conservative politician Francisco Silvela for the journal *El Tiempo* on August 16, 1898, in which the author criticized the lack of popular reaction and demands for accountability in the face of the state's incompetence during the war in Cuba that led to the loss of the country's last colonies.

form of being, were added to, and were on a par with, those of the Church. By this means, the new dogmas reinforced the old dogmas and themselves.

All of these paths – the paralysation of thought, a dogmatic notion of a single monarchy, a mystical knowledge of the past, and the elimination of all doubt concerning our being and our destiny – led to the same place: the petrification of Spanish life and an increasing detachment from our true capacity to love, which becomes progressively hidden, more distant from the surface, until it withdraws into something similar to the nature and the apparent, phantasmagorical fiction of a State. This is the slow and deeply saddening dismemberment of a society.

At this point, Spaniards fail to make the effort to come to terms with themselves, to turn back towards their primary intuitions concerning reality, towards the original sources of their love, and so find ideas which would reveal this to them and allow them to act accordingly. They could not, nor did they even want to, look backwards to see if they had been wrong.

While, Descartes, in France, in seventeenth century Europe, was momentarily breaking away from all received ideas in order to extract from his solitude a few ideas which were so clear and fruitful that, on the one hand, they laid the foundations of a new knowledge, of a new science – a mathematical Physics which would fill the world with prodigious things – and, on the other, brought with them the seed of all modern idealism, not a single Spaniard, looking in on himself, stopped to examine the steps taken by the Spanish State from the moment of its constitution. If there is such a Spaniard, his work is so enigmatic that even today we are struggling to unveil its meaning.

It was Cervantes who pointed to the failure of Spaniards and who implacably brought to light that marvel of a coherent, clear and perfect will which has remained unused and can only collide with the wall of the new era. It is pure will, detached from its object in the real world since this will invents its own object. When, almost two centuries later, Kant presented the conditions of a *pure will*, he adds nothing which was not already there in the firm loving, in the integrity of will of the Knight of la Mancha.

Cervantes could have studied philosophy and transcribed his idea, his intuition about will, within a philosophical system. But, why should he? Apart from the fact that it made little sense for him to express himself in this way amongst other Spaniards, he had yet more



to say. And the real meaning of his work was about something else: failure. The realistic, resigned, and, at the same time, hopeful acceptance of failure.

Neither philosophy nor the State is based, like the novel, on failure. That is why the novel had to be for Spaniards what Philosophy was for Europe.

Philosophy too begins with man's failure, a complete failure in which he admits his need of rational knowledge, no doubt because whatever form of knowledge he possessed proved insufficient. Religion, all religions, also stem from an initial state of sin, an absolute failure from which man escapes by restoring nature and primary powers by means of faith. The novel is different as it does not pretend to restore nor reform anything; it plunges into failure and, without the need for reason or even faith, finds in it a world. What the novel uncovers is a partial failure, revealing instead a hidden foothold. The novel is forged from a failure in history, a failure in the world. If all exceptional beings were able to raise themselves to the level of history, there would be no novel; what does not become history, because it lacks reality, a connection with other events (because it does not mesh with them), and yet *is*, – what does not become part of history but has a being – is the protagonist of its own life, is an entity from a novel.

The failure of being which is converted into an entity in a novel may be the result of a lack of adaptation due to an intimate human richness, the possession of *something more* than the historical reality of an era. This is the case presented to us by Cervantes: Don Quixote was the pure will of Kant before anyone could think it, before the world need it or could comprehend it; he is, furthermore... what we might term *pure* co-existence with Sancho. The full significance of the evident mystery of the co-existence between don Quixote and Sancho has not yet been revealed because it is a prophecy lacking in presumption of a type of human relationship which has not yet been realised.

The novel assumes a much greater human richness than Philosophy, because it presumes that there is something there, that something persists in failure. The novelist neither constructs nor adds anything to his characters; he does not reform life as does philosophy which creates above spontaneous life a life defined by thoughts – a life which is created, systematised. The novel accepts man just as he is in his failure, while Philosophy advances by itself, making no assumptions.

The Spanish novel, from Cervantes to Galdós, passing through the picaresque, brings to us in its horror of systematic philosophy the true intellectual nourishment of the

Spaniard. It is in the novel where we will see what it is that Spaniards saw and knew themselves to be, as well as what they lacked.

It is when the thesis of the Spanish State fails and its philosophy becomes paralysed that we can truly say that there was no Reformation in Spain, not only in terms of a religious Reformation, a matter which has other consequences, but in the philosophical sense of a Reform of understanding, a Reform of understanding as a means of discovering the principles of new knowledge, as was the case with Descartes, Bacon, Galileo, and many others, the consequences of which fill the whole of the modern era with the great physical-mathematical science and idealism as the idea which man has of himself.

The will of don Quixote runs in a different direction, being linked to the Medieval conception of the world. Otherwise, he would not be a character in a novel but a real historical character and he would not display in his detachment the failure of the Spanish State. It is the failure of our State, more than our political errors and military defeats, which reveals that the illustrious will of don Quixote has no real purpose in Spain and has to take refuge in his madness in order to save, and to realise in some way, his towering and perfect love.

And it is outside of the State, in the very same realm of Cervantes' novel, that is, in the realm of failure, where the other side of the profound morality of the *Quixote* can be verified, as his pure will combines with his *pure co-existence* with Sancho and all the other characters: muleteers, prostitutes, innkeepers, shepherds and galley slaves, in short, the whole Spanish 'pueblo', which parade through the novel.

If Cervantes had done philosophy based on the failure of don Quixote, if he had adopted a reformist attitude in order to find the bases of a new systematised knowledge, he would have found the human bases of a new form of co-existence, a sense of his fellow man which is completely absent from European culture, and increasingly absent with the advance of idealism. The essential solitude on which idealism is founded is, in don Quixote, profound, essential co-existence; wherever his will is, the *other* is there too, the man who is the same as him, his brother, on whose behalf he does, and tilts against, everything. Fellow man is not something which suddenly confronts the solitude of man in our don Quixote; rather, fellow man is, in essence, within that very melancholic solitude. The lonelier and farther from men he is, the more he is united with, and devoted to, them through his will.

This constitutes a terrible accusation against the State which took shape so hastily in Spain and was unable to harvest or feed off that rich substance, that pure co-existence which don Quixote lives. And if he lives it, this is because to a greater or lesser degree it is shared by the people in whom the roots of his existence are buried.

Everyone thinks don Quixote's giants, knights, islands and his strict code of honour are a form of madness. But no-one sees madness either in his deep co-existence with Sancho, his squire and friend, or in his deep trust in man which is so extreme that it allows him to overcome all mockery and resentment. In his adventures on the roadways and in the inns there comes a moment when even the prostitutes, moved by the trust he puts in them, seem to understand to some degree his fraternal treatment. It is resentment which has slowly been poisoning human relations, leaving us confined in dark dungeons of isolation, making man lose the image of man himself and the notion of our fellow man; it makes each man think he is unique and, in doing so, makes him lose all measure of what it is to be human, all notion of himself.

The nobility of don Quixote presupposes quite the opposite of this; he has a very clear and unequivocal notion of his fellow man in the centre of his spirit. He is alone in his determination, but in essence is accompanied by the best of each man that lives in him. Don Quixote both believes in and creates the essential nobility of man, in other words mutual trust and recognition.

He is surrounded by imperfect human relations, if we compare them to his perfect humanity, but it is in their very imperfection that they reveal the true meaning of the life of Spaniards: their trust in the best of man, just as they accept quite naturally that the best is the just measure, the only measure there can be in spite of ingratitude and callousness. In spite of the *practical*-mindedness which leads the man who has been beaten to ask don Quixote not to intervene again on his behalf, there remains in the people who surround him, and who are both rich in substance and contradictory, a sense of community with his high morality.

What has the Spanish State done with all of this? There was no deep reformist attitude which might weigh up the pros and cons of the path undertaken, examine what there was in Spaniards, thus freeing them from the dogmas heaped upon them. There was no statesman, who was also a thinker, to lead us out of the labyrinth into which we had taken ourselves.

No, there was no such statesman because his very existence presupposed an excessive leap forward in relation to what Europe was beginning to do. History does not tolerate such leaps because one only learns through failure, because some events have to take place in order to make others possible, and because reason, as it marches on, does not do so in isolation but in the context of other human realities. If this were not the case, and history only had to do with reason and nothing but reason, no matter how limited and weak man's specific reason were, we would not be today at this tragic crossroads at which we find ourselves.

Our failure in not carrying out a reformation, the reformation of thought and of the State which we needed, caused our clearest understanding to retreat into the novel and our best model of man to remain an entity in fiction. This is the cause of the state of confinement and anguish in which we Spaniards have increasingly found ourselves, a space which contracted over time and in which our energies turned to madness. The world's spaces, which should have been open to us, became walls, high walls off which our desire would ricochet and solidify into anguish.

But this same failure and the extreme and decisive situation in which we find ourselves today demand that, before anything else, we move towards a State with contains our true will. Either we accept the legacy of the past and the call from the future which commands us to gather the fruit of so much misfortune and so many disasters from the past, and so much blood spilled today, in order to maintain a State in which the new human consciousness is revealed, or we all remain as characters in a novel.

As there is much talk of reform throughout these pages, mention must be made of the most renowned and serious reformist attitude there has ever been in Spain, even if it took place in a religious context and not strictly in that of a reformation of understanding or new philosophy. I refer to the works, in word and deed, of Ignatius of Loyola. This was a reformation in the sense that it was a counter-reformation, that is, a reformation to counteract the effects and consequences of the Reformation, but a reformation nonetheless.

It was a reformation, first and foremost, because it proposed not leaving Spaniards in the situation they were in and because it responded, even if only to say *no*, to the spirit of the times. But also because of its method and rationalism, if these two things can be kept separate. If there is any work in our literature which bears any relationship to the *Discourse*

*on the Method* it is the *Spiritual Exercises* of Loyola. There is a relationship in spite of their aims being contrary and in spite of the fact that Loyola's text, even if it was written first, was written to counteract that of Descartes.

There is in Loyola's exercises a rationalisation and mechanisation of faith, almost a mechanics of holiness. This presupposes a belief that the human psyche is composed in such a way that it only needs a certain form of exercise for it to be moulded and shaped anew. The same mind which leads us to believe that physics is possible due to the mechanical and non-metaphysical composition of nature made possible this reliable method of gaining eternal life. There exist laws, conditions imposed by God on man, which, once obeyed, assure happiness and glory; there exists a human soul which can be moulded, that is, known and reformed. This is salvation through method and not through the work of divine grace; it is a question of my faith, and my faith alone, and of other things which depend on me. What greater reformist attitude is there, even if it only serves specifically to close the way to new ideas?

But, of course, if today we feel in need of a deep reformation of our understanding which might dare translate the intuitions which nourish Spaniards into clear ideas, and which might shape our will into a co-existence which we have never before achieved, it is clear that none of that is of any use to us, for reasons too obvious to list. The most important, however, is the thought that this position and the place that Loyola's method leads to are profoundly antithetical to what is most alive and best in our 'pueblo'. This is so precisely because it achieved absolutely what it wanted, and because it is the most distant from being a failure as its meaning and the end of its journey – a journey which historically came to an end some time ago – can be demonstrated clearly. Nonetheless, there is some value in examining closely that terrible will which, as it knew what it wanted and achieved it, may help us to understand the terrible path of our will, the cul-de-sac of a will confined to its object and which is not a failure but a positive evil, as positive as any method can be, perfect as method but based on an absolute lack of trust in man, on the belief in evil and, in the final analysis, on its administration.

All Spaniards of the nineteenth century are characters from a novel. Galdós shows them to us on countless occasions and the absence of Romanticism is as obvious in the image of Spain offered to us in his wonderful pages as is the absence of the Reformation in Cervantes.

Like Cervantes, Galdós did not attempt to reform our minds, although his attitude towards the society of his time, and even his political thought, are more evident in his work. His politics is reflected in his thesis novels which are clearly his worst because they are the least rich in intuitions.

In the drama of our will without object, Galdós offers us a figure which, in its greatness, is almost the twin of don Quixote: Fortunata, the splendid daughter of Madrid, a clear example of a coherent, firm and faithful will which no disaster can separate from itself and on whom all failures leave no more of a mark than rain on a rock. Incorruptible, she preserves *within herself* an idea which is her whole life, an idea, so divinely human and as noble as the high quality of her maternity. She has a divine and at the same time natural quality which needs no confirmation in any human rank. Above and beyond the social, Fortunata is absolutely and completely justified in herself.

What an idea she preserves *within herself*! No doubt it would have been well received and understood if Romanticism had flourished in Spain. In her innermost depths Fortunata had nothing to do with romanticism, but romanticism would have made way for her because it defended the natural in man, that which, because it came before civilisation, had been left, oppressed, at its margins; in other words, the irrational, almost cosmic, zones within man which rationalism had distanced from itself in puritanical horror. Romanticism, of course, also represents other things and the fact that it merely skimmed across our land without penetrating it is a complex affair, all the more so when romanticism turned towards Spain to claim it as a Mecca in some way as it encouraged in France and Germany an interest in Spanish literature and poetry which has never been equalled. All of this requires more attention than can be devoted to it at present; our only interest is in noting that the lack of romanticism amongst us left the pure and perfect will of Fortunata on the brink of madness and in utter failure, in an utterly disastrous situation from which none of the insignificant projects offered to her could save her.

From Cervantes to Galdós, Spanish will has retreated to the popular classes, to the virginal base of our 'pueblo'. It is a firm will which no longer dreams of affairs as lofty as those of don Quixote; rather, combined with instinct, it is maternal vocation in our divine Fortunata, a fierce rebuff, the Celtiberian love of independence as in the Madrid of the 'Dos de Mayo'. That is all that remains to us; the last incorruptible element: will become instinct; all that remains alive beneath the destruction of society and the collapse of the State. The

State, which is, for Cervantes, after the blood he spilled heroically at Lepanto, a series of taxes which brought him prison and misery; the State, the subject of an accusation by Quevedo in his lines 'Spain gave him death and prison / though he made Fortune her slave';<sup>4</sup> the State, the dry udder from which Spaniards cannot extract not just their political sense but their simple daily bread. The State in the nineteenth century: arrogant generals and parasitic politicians, monks without scruples and cheating, cheating everywhere.

All that is left to us is the young women in her espadrilles and her percale skirt and the insignificant, long-suffering, soldier with his hunger and thirst, but no glory, in Cuba and then in Africa; the soldier in his poor, striped, uniform whom we still saw in our childhood – an unforgettable, miserable sight – returning from the defeats in Africa, while the queen and the Infanta Isabel presented a gift to the general who was defending the honour of the Crown. All that remained to us was the 'pueblo', that incorruptible popular will which the anarchy of the Spanish State had not succeeded in corrupting over the centuries.

There are those who doubt that we will triumph while admiring the human values which we have displayed in the fight. And there are those who would wish to continue to be characters in a novel, displaying in their failure all the magical richness of our inner substance, not wanting to submit it to a clear will. But this is pointless. Our past full of misfortunes, the will of don Quixote, embodied today in our fighters, are calling for and demanding that we all create that new and just State which, in its objectivity, will nourish itself on the human co-existence which is to be found in the solitude of our immortal Knight. Now is the time for Spain to accept fully the will of its people and to make it real, without fear or haste, in a State which will restore confidence in man to Europe, to a Europe in decline, and to the world, but especially to that continent which speaks our language; it is time for Spain to restore faith in reason and in justice and to realise it to the best of its ability today.

The Spanish reformation was more profound than that brought about by Descartes and Galileo, than that brought about by Europe; it had to be brought about in our blood and by bloodshed, in life. But blood can also become universal.

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<sup>4</sup> 'Guerra y cárcel le dieron las Españas / de quien él hizo esclava la Fortuna'. A quotation from Francisco de Quevedo's sonnet 'Memoria inmortal de Don Pedro Girón, Duque de Osuna, muerto en Prisión' [Immortal memory of Don Pedro Girón, Duque de Osuna, dead in prison. *Selected Poetry of Francisco de Quevedo*. Edited and Translated by Christopher Johnston. A Bilingual Edition. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 96