

SENSE AND VIRTUAL REALITY IN THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF ORTEGA Y GASSET.

Sentido e Realidade virtual na Fenomenologia de Ortega y Gasset.

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RESUMO

Pode-se dizer que no período de 1913 a 1916, que coincide com a recepção, estudo e compreensão da fenomenologia por Ortega, encontramos importantes reflexões sobre o sentido e a realidade virtual, passando por algumas reflexões sobre a consciência. de imagem. Neste artigo, expomos os problemas e os resultados que Ortega abre na análise desses tópicos durante esses anos.

Palavras-chave: Sentido, realidade virtual, fenomenologia, objeto, imagem, consciência.

ABSTRACT

It can be say that in the period between 1913 and 1916, which coincides with the reception, study and comprehension of the phenomenology by Ortega, we found important thoughts about the sense and the virtual reality, passing through some reflections about the conscious of image. In this work we expose the results and problems that Ortega opens in the analysis of these topics during those years.

Keywords: Sense, virtual reality, phenomenology, object, image, conscious

RESUMEN

Se puede decir que en el periodo que va de 1913 a 1916, el cual conincide con la recepción, estudio y comprensión de la fenomenología por parte de Ortega, encontramos importantes reflexiones sobre el sentido y la realidad virtual, pasando por algunas reflexiones sobre la conciencia de imagen. En este trabajo exponemos los problemas y los resultados que Ortega abre en el análisis de estos tópicos durante estos años.

Palabras clave: Sentido, realidad virtual, fenomenología, objeto, concepto, imagen, conciencia

INTRODUCTION

Preguntémonos por el sentido de las cosas,
o lo que es lo mismo, hagamos de cada
una el centro virtual del mundo.
J. Ortega y Gasset, *Meditaciones del Quijote*

The relationship of Ortega with the phenomenology starts in the third stay of the Spanish philosopher in Germanic lands in 1911¹, and deepens in 1912 when he decides to “truly” study it, taking distance from neo-Kantianism to which he had adhered in previous travels and which he showed critical over time. Ortega was the architect of the introduction of phenomenology in Spain in a relatively early stage of its development. In 1913 he wrote a review to the book of Heinrich Hoffman, *Untersuchungen über der Empfindungsbegriff*, titled *Sobre el concepto de sensación* which appeared published in three deliveries of the *Revista de Libros*, in June, July and September of that year. The second important study of 1913 is the conference *Sensación, construcción e intuición*, dictated by Ortega in June of that year, in the IV congress of the “Asociación española para el progreso de las ciencias”. Once familiarized with the proposal of *Investigaciones Lógicas*, the philosopher shows now interest in the *Ideas I* from Husserl, published short after the first volume of *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*. In the essay *Ensayo de estética a manera de prólogo* and in the *Meditations on Quixote* of 1914, Ortega shows the influence that phenomenology already performed upon his work, something also evident in *Sistema de psicología* (most known as *Investigaciones psicológicas*) which our author wrote between October and March of 1915-1916.²

It can be say that in the period between 1912 and 1916, which coincides with the reception, study and comprehension of the phenomenology by Ortega, we found important thoughts about the sense and the virtual reality, passing through some reflections about the conscious of image. In this work we expose the results and problems that Ortega opens in the analysis of these topics during those years.

The importance of the article *Sobre el concepto de sensación*, lays in the fact that Ortega realizes a balance between the most important epistemological postures at the moment. Besides, it is the first text of phenomenology in Spanish, somehow the first introduction to the transcendental phenomenology in Hispanic language as far as we know

¹ Ortega had been twice in Germany: in 1905 and 1906/7. About the relationship of Ortega with the phenomenology see the works of San Martín, 1994; 1998 and 212. See also Sánchez y García 2016.

² There was no notice of this piece until 1979, when it was published by Paulino Garagori. The text is content in the new *Obras completas*, in the 7th tome.

(Cf. San Martín, 1994, p. 161-246). On the other side, in this work appears one of the most important contributions of Ortega to the phenomenology, namely the translation of the term *Erlebnis* by *experiencia* (*vivencia*), which was once translated as *intimacy*, for example when translate *das sinnliche Erlebnis* as “sensible intimacy” (Ortega, 1913a. p. 627). But already in the third delivery a footnote appears in which the Spanish philosopher clarifies the sense of the term *Erlebnis* and the reasons that justifies his translation by *vivencia*.³

The review that Ortega writes to the Hoffman’s book allows him to carry out a radical critic to the concept of sensation and, from there, to the positivism whose hegemony in the philosophical area was questionless. The critique will extend later to the neo-Kantianism, with which Ortega wasn’t in tuning anymore. But, above all, what Ortega pretend was to expose and discuss the method and the conclusions of Hoffman’s work, for concentrate the readings he realized on phenomenology, in which he saw the overcoming of the others two postures. Besides of Husserl and Hoffman, another important author for Ortega is Wilhem Schapp, who published in 1910 his book *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*, whose influence in Ortega its perceived in various moments of his philosophical program through the years.

Ortega complements the ideas exposed in the review with a conference in which he examines the “three radical positions” that philosophy took those years about the knowledge problem. In *Sensación, construcción e intuición* starts by analyze the concept of sensation. In it, is taken for granted that “the being is the sensed” and that to know is to feel (Ortega, 1913b, p. 644). The radical empiricism of Mach and Ziehen, and the theory of representation, that’s founded in the distinction between ideas and impressions of Hume, end up giving the human being a passive function. As Husserl, Ortega acknowledge the good intentions that, in principle, the empiricism parts of, as well as the validity of the thesis according to which the knowledge cant consist in a copy of the reality or of the being. However, for Ortega, the sensations in which empiricism wants to guarantee the validity of knowledge do not stop being construction of the theory. In a parallelism with the husserlian critique to the natural attitude in Ideas I, Ortega sees in the concept of sensation a heavy scientist load that do not allows to finally describe the phenomena given in an immediate way. The sound and sensation, themselves in person, are not given to us, but are scientific structures (Ortega,

³ “Después de darle muchas vueltas muchos años esperando tropezar algún vocablo ya existente en nuestra lengua y suficientemente apto para transcribir aquella, he tenido que desistir y buscar una nueva. Se trata de lo que sigue: en frases como «vivir la vida», «vivir las cosas», adquiere el verbo «vivir» un curioso sentido. Sin dejar su valor de deponente toma una forma transitiva significando aquél género de relación inmediata en que entra o puede entrar el sujeto con ciertas objetividades. Pues bien, ¿cómo llamar a cada actualización de esta relación? Yo no encuentro otra palabra que «vivencia». Todo aquello que llega con tal inmediatez a mi yo que entra a formar parte de él” (Ortega, 1913^a, p. 634).

1913b, p. 645). To the Spanish philosopher this position stays trapped in the surface of things, turning subsequently in skepticism.

The opposite thesis to the sensualism is the constructivism. The critique is directed now towards neo-Kantianism, especially to Cohen and Natorp, which goes through mere passivity of empiricism to “pure activity” of the understanding. In the constructivism the being is constituted, post, turning an “ideal object” and, the knowledge, an “ideal function” (Ortega, 1913b, p. 649). For the constructivism “to know some data is to determinate it since the system constructed by the subject “to know data is to determinate it from the constructed system by the subject” (San Martín, 1994, p. 148).⁴ Javier San Martín summates this critiques by Ortega to neo-Kantianism like this: “the neo-Kantianism creates a theory and if data is not adjusted to it, worse for the data” (San Martín, 1994, p. 148).⁵ In the same way, E. Inman Fox resumes the epistemological proposal of neo-Kantianism, emphasizing in the *a priori* foundation in which it should be cemented the knowledge, assuming as starting point the scientific model of mathematics and physics (Fox, 1987, p. 22).

According to Ortega, behind every proposition or act of judgment –which he calls here “second grade act”– it’s found an “experience or *individual intuition*” –which denominates “presentative acts or of first degree” (Ortega, 1913a, p. 628). This experience, in the noetical sense that refers to the conscience acts, such as perceive, imagine or fantasize, is previous to any proposition and is in the base of any judgment about reality. Its intuitive character, in the sense of what it’s given in an immediate way, is what allows Ortega to elaborate a critique to the induction and deduction methods. From there it follows to assess the value of the intuition to the knowledge of things.

The proposition: “right now I’m looking the table occupied with books and papers” does not derive its true from nothing besides the objective state to which it refers. The proposition limits itself to transcribe in expression a patent objectivity, immediate, non-inferred. The danger of hallucinations does not jeopardize its true, because I do not speak in it of an object as existing besides and independently of my vision, but what I see, inasmuch as I see it (Ortega 1913a, p. 630).⁶

But, we can question then ¿which object it refers and what is this sense of objectivity Ortega is talking about? In these words it can be anticipated a couple of basics matters of transcendental phenomenology. On one hand, Ortega has understand at this

⁴ “el conocer unos datos es determinarlos desde el sistema construido por el sujeto” (San Martín, 1994, p. 148).

⁵ “el neokantismo crea una teoría y si los datos no se ajustan a ella, peor para los datos” (San Martín, 1994, p. 148).

⁶ “La proposición: ‘estoy viendo ahora la mesa ocupada con libros y papeles’ no deriva su verdad de nada que no sea el estado objetivo mismo a que hace referencia. La proposición se limita a transcribir en expresiones una objetividad patente, inmediata, no inferida. El peligro de las alucinaciones no hace peligrar su verdad, porque no hablo en ella de un objeto como existiendo aparte de independientemente de mi visión, sino de lo que veo, en cuanto lo veo” (Ortega, 1913^a, p. 630).

moment the importance of constitution y, on the other hand, has assimilated the relevancy of “the principle of all principles” that Husserl exposes in the 24th paragraph of *Ideas I*. Ortega’s early reception of phenomenology consists in understood the phenomenological critique to the concept of sensation or, if it wants, “to the constructivist concept of sensation” (San Martín, 1998, p. 98)⁷. Only that in this line we also found a radical critique of phenomenology to the concept of experience.

What matters about intuition, what according to Ortega opens “a new epoch of philosophy” (Ortega 1913b, p. 652)⁸, is that in this the things themselves are given in an immediate way. In the individual intuition of an object Ortega identifies two important elements. First “what the object is” and second: “the note of its existence, here and now” (Ortega, 1913a, p. 630)⁹. In this line San Martín has made notice that phenomenology is for Ortega initially not just “a *description* method” but, above all, “a *legitimation* method” (San Martín, 1998:62). The empiricism and positivism that detaches from him has been focused in one of the most important aspects of individual perception, the fact that perceptions are fleeting, that the objects in them are presented in the temporal flux of the conscious, so that not only does the knowledge cannot consist of a mental representation of the object –which is the fundamental line of modern theory of knowledge– but, in a strict way, it is not even possible to sustain that any object can be known with assurance.

In his *Ensayo de estética a manera de prólogo*, Ortega critiques this representationalist character of knowledge by introducing the notion of the I as an executor I (*yo ejecutivo*). He retrieves the “primary significance” acquired by the first person in expressions like I hate, I desire, I feel pain, etc. It also notices the possibility to distinguish between the pain I feel and that is executing right in that determined moment (the pain as hurting Ortega says) and the pain that doesn’t hurt: “the image of a pain doesn’t hurt, better yet, it drives away de hurt, it substitutes it for its ideal shadow. And vice versa: the pain hurting is the contrary to its image: in the moment it becomes an image of himself it stops from hurting” (Ortega, 1914a: 668).¹⁰ The executor I has the sense of intimacy and shows that behind every concept or image there is a “true being” from where they acquire sense. This sense is the objective reference behind which the operations of subjectivity are found, because “that of them being images constitutes the true being” (Ortega, 1914a, p. 668).¹¹ There isn’t a person, object or thing that doesn’t has a correlative sense to its way to give itself.

⁷ “al concepto constructivista de sensación” (San Martín, 1998, p. 98).

⁸ “una nueva época de la Filosofía” (Ortega 1913b, p. 652)

⁹ “la nota de su existencia, aquí y ahora” (Ortega, 1913^a, p. 630).

¹⁰ “la imagen de un dolor no duele, más aún, aleja el dolor, lo sustituye por su sombra ideal. Y viceversa: el dolor doliendo es lo contrario de su imagen: en el momento en que se hace imagen de sí mismo deja de doler” (Ortega, 1914^a, p. 668).

¹¹ “eso de que son imagen constituye el verdadero ser” (Ortega, 1914^a, p. 668).

That this happens this way is proven in his conference *Sensación, construcción, intuición* by affirming in a footnote that “It is not the intuition, perception or representation, as it is not the judgment, but a *sui generis* function, that can be exercised the same over a perception’s content as over the judge...”(Ortega 1913b, p. 652).¹² But Ortega, who well knows the thesis of *Investigaciones lógicas* and *Ideas I*, and who has accomplished to assimilate as her own the eidetic reduction (and its concomitant essences intuition), holds – just as Husserl does in the first part of the 1913’s work– that empiricism makes a mistake. He affirms that “in every individual intuition this element that individualizes and converts the object in fact can be abstracted, remaining only this un-submissive to time-space narrations, changeless, eternal” (Ortega, 1913a, p. 630).¹³ While it is true that perceptions –or impressions, using a term of Hume that Ortega critic (Ortega, 1913b, p. 644)– are fleeting and that the act elapses in a temporal flux, the empiricism forgets or doesn’t question about how the object it’s given, itself “incorruptible and exempt of vicissitudes” (Ortega, 1913a, p. 630).¹⁴ In other words, Ortega focuses his attention in this moment in the noematic pole of correlation and gives the stride of an individual intuition of an object to an essential intuition to the object. Thereby, we have, on the one hand, the consciousness acts and, on the other hand, we have the objects given to us in those acts and we can not only separates them schematically to realize a description, but, also, we must not confuse each other.

But, what does all this mean? Evidently, that from the consciousness acts the objects get sense and “being validity” –this is a Husserl’s expression. The sense of an object it’s an input of the subjectivity. The object is what it is because it is given. Precisely because it is given or appeared, the object can be known. This is why in the *Ensayo de estética a manera de prólogo*, Ortega states that “we cannot make and object from our comprehension, there cannot exist to us nothing if it’s not converted into an image, a concept, an idea – i.e., if it doesn’t stop being what it is to transform into a shadow or scheme of itself” (Ortega, 1914a, p. 670).¹⁵

To the experience in which objects appear to us, to the acts in which they are given to us, Ortega calls it “executive value” (*valor ejecutivo*), which can be already identify when we reflect about it with the noetic pole in terms of Husserl. Ortega says “To this deficiency of the acts when our conscious lives them in spontaneous and natural attitude we called the

¹² “No es la intuición percepción ni representación, como no es juicio, sino una función *sui generis*, que puede ejercitarse lo mismo sobre el contenido de una percepción que sobre el de un juicio...” (Ortega 1913b, p. 652).

¹³ “en toda intuición individual puede abstraerse de este elemento que individualiza y convierte en hecho al objeto, quedando sólo éste, insumiso a narraciones tempo-espaciales, invariable, eterno” (Ortega, 1913^a, p. 630)

¹⁴ “incorruptible y exento de vicisitudes” (Ortega, 1913^a, p. 630).

¹⁵ “no podemos hacer objeto de nuestra comprensión, no puede existir para nosotros nada si no se convierte en imagen, en concepto, en idea –es decir, si no deja de ser lo que es para transformarse en una sombra o esquema de sí mismo” (Ortega, 1914a: 670).

executive power of those” (Ortega, 1913a, p. 631).¹⁶ But, besides this executive power of the acts, of whom we will talk later, Ortega introduces another concept that can be considered one of his greatest contributions to phenomenology. It’s about the virtual character that acquires phenomenon when the eidetic reduction is realized, this is, when the world is reduced to mere phenomena –even though Ortega certainly doesn’t speak here of eidetic reduction. This is what Ortega understands for phenomena: “the virtual character that acquires when from its executive value is moved to contemplate it in a spectacular and descriptive posture, without giving its definitive character” (Ortega, 1913a, p. 631).¹⁷ Ortega concludes affirming that phenomenology is that “pure description” of the phenomena, is, immediately, “pure description of essences”, its subject is “everything that constitutes the conscious” (Ortega, 1913a, p. 632). In that manner, the problem of sense appears in those early texts of the ortegian *corpus*, by the hand of the constitution problem.

Indeed, the constitution problem it’s formulated by Ortega taking for granted that any possible science –he mentions, for example, psychology, astronomy, and phenomenology itself– can only have sense from the constitution that the human conscience make thereof. He affirms that in all of them “the *existence* of human conscience is a constitutional supposed without whom psychology would be meaningless” (Ortega, 1913a, p. 632). It would be necessary to say that without conscious there wouldn’t be possible to talk about the sense of any object in general. The conscious it’s a “definitive instance” – Ortega says – in which “the being of the objects it’s constituted” (Ortega, 1913a, p. 632). According to the Spanish philosopher, conscious it’s a “limiting object” whose sense appoints towards a being “limitless and absolute” that has as fundamental propriety the intentionality. Ortega doesn’t put it like that, but it is implied by the use of the expression «conscious of». “This plane of primary objectivity, in which everything depletes its being in its appearance (*fainómenon*), it’s the conscious, not as a time-space fact, not as a reality of a biological or psychophysics functions attached to a species, but as a «conscious of»” (Ortega, 1913a, p. 633).¹⁸ This is exactly what further allows to Ortega that the objects “are immediate presences in front of the conscious” and the least matter it’s the discussion of whether or not this objects are real. In this way, phenomenology’s novelty lies in “raising to a scientific method the detention inside that plane of the immediate and patent as such of the lived” (Ortega, 1913a, p. 634).¹⁹

¹⁶ “A esta eficacia de los actos cuando nuestra conciencia los vive en actitud natural y espontánea llamábamos el poder ejecutivo de aquellos” (Ortega, 1913a: 631).

¹⁷ “el carácter virtual que adquiere cuando de su valor ejecutivo natural se pasa a contemplarlo en una postura espectacular y descriptiva, sin darle carácter definitivo” (Ortega, 1913a: 631)

¹⁸ “Este plano de objetividad primaria, en que todo agota su ser en su apariencia (*fainómenon*), es la conciencia, no como hecho tempoespacial, no como realidad de una función biológica o psicofísica adscrita a una especie, sino como «conciencia de»” (Ortega, 1913^a, p. 633).

¹⁹ “elevant a método científico la detención dentro de ese plano de lo inmediato y patente en cuanto tal de lo vivido” (Ortega, 1913^a, p. 634).

It is very clear for Ortega that every conscious act or experience its referred to an “intentional” object –(cf. Ortega, 1913a, p. 636 nota). This object, however, it’s the correlate of the act, only that the object we are talking about here, the one that points to the sense of reduction, it’s not the transcendent object, but the “immanent object”. So that, we have in one side the conscious acts –to perceive, remember, imagine, fantasize, etc.– (the husserlian noesis) and, correlatively, the object to whom the acts refer –the perceived, remembered, imagined, fantasized, etc.– (the husserlian noema). To evaluate from the phenomenology the contribution of the subjectivity in the process of constitution or the giving of sense of an object, Ortega recurs to various examples. One of them appears at the end of the review of the Hoffmann’s book. After talking about how the shape, the size, the color, vary in our perception of the object and of the variations that intervene in this process, how it is the vary in the visual size and the images of the things that appear to us, Ortega gives this simple, but of a strictly phenomenological nature, example: “Take the pencil: put yourself to 30 or 40 centimeters of distance, and it will appear in its natural size. Keeping the same distance, get the window as background and put your vision to the frame of this. The pencil will look then a lot bigger” (Ortega 1913a, p. 638).²⁰

Later, Ortega realizes one of the difficulties of phenomenology, namely: the problem of narration or, what’s the same, the transposition of the experience to the language, the articulation in signs of experiences. This critique is, to our judgment, one of the most solid one that can be made to the phenomenological description. Ortega says, “The narration makes of everything a ghost of itself, it drives it away, it transports it beyond the horizon of actuality. The narrated is a ‘was’. And the *was* is the schematic form that leave in the present what’s absent, the being of what no longer is –the shirt that the snake leaves behind” (Ortega, 1914a, p. 672).²¹ In this same essay *Ensayo de estética a manera de prólogo*, Ortega’s critique points to the ambit of antepredicative experience and let’s glimpse one of the limitations of phenomenology that has to do with the impossibility to describe all the experiences. The being given is always richer than the being that can be described. “In the real world we can have the things before the words in which they are alluded to us, we can see them or touch them before knowing their names” (Ortega, 1914a, p. 679).²² It is necessary to pay attention at this critique

²⁰ “Tómese la pluma de escribir: colóquese a 30 ó 40 centímetros de distancia, y aparecerá en su tamaño natural. Conservando el mismo alejamiento, póngase de fondo la ventana y acomódese la visión al marco de ésta. La pluma aparecerá entonces bastante mayor” (Ortega 1913a, p. 638).

²¹ “La narración hace de todo un fantasma de sí mismo, lo aleja, lo traspone más allá del horizonte de la actualidad. Lo narrado es un «fue». Y el fue es la forma esquemática que deja en el presente lo que está ausente, el ser de lo que ya no es –la camisa que la sierpe abandona” (Ortega, 1914a, p. 672).

²² “En el mundo real podemos tener las cosas antes que las palabras en que nos son aludidas, podemos verlas o tocarlas antes de saber sus nombres” (Ortega, 1914^a, p. 679). In this problem can be see the work from Zirión, A. (2010): “Sobre los límites del lenguaje y las limitaciones de la fenomenología del lenguaje”, *Phainomenon, Revista de Fenomenología*, núm 20/21 – Primavera e Outono, Centro de Filosofía, Universidad de Lisboa, Lisboa, pp. 163-178. This article was published in the book

because it gives precisely in the middle of a big difficulty. Life in its executive character would be the individual, particular and primary or radical reality –as it will be sustain in the *Prólogo para alemanes* in 1934– and the conscious –in its reflexive character– would be an abstraction, a scheme, to summarize something derivative and, therefore secondary. In this critique Ortega will delineate the overcoming of phenomenology, because according to him the radical reality is spontaneous life in its executive character, not conscious life to which one can only access by suspending the first. The duality of life as radical reality is manifested as a “dynamic dialogue”, E. Inman Fox says, between the “I and his circumstances” (Fox, 1987, p. 23 y ss). What we have as result is not a reflexive conscious, but a life in which coexistence is given from the I with the world. This is way Ortega’s calling will be a call of salvation: “Let’s save us in the world, save us in the things”.

The most important thing would be life in its executive character. But philosophy is in other coordinates. The reflexive character of philosophy makes de executive I takes distance from itself and watch itself through an image. Same happens with any other object. Reality, Ortega says, gets unreal when from it we can only retain an image or its spectrum: “...while my vital act of seeing the cypress its executing, it is this the object that for me exist; that I’m me in that instant constitutes for mi an ignored secret” (Ortega, 1914a, p. 677).²³ The real object, we could call it, gets unreal when it transform in an activity of the I. It becomes in an image that Ortega calls “spectrum material” (Ortega, 1914a, p. 675). In some way Ortega here accomplish a critique to phenomenology: his critique directs in particular to the reflexive character of the I. The reflexive I drives away from the executor I when it intends to describe the object presented to itself, so he holds that “our intimacy cannot be directly object to us” (Ortega, 1914a, p. 676).²⁴ The object presented to us and which forms part of the intimacy is lived executively, but the object or image in which one reflects breaks the spontaneous course of the executive. What I know of the sun it’s the image of the sun, as well as what I know of my I is the image of my I (Ortega, 1914a, p. 669). “Every other image has, so to speak, something mine. I see the cypress, I have the image, I have de cypress. In order that, regarding the cypress, it’s *just* an image, but regarding me it’s a real state mine, it’s a moment of mi I, of my being” (Ortega, 1914a, p. 675).²⁵

coordinated by R. Sánchez and E. González Di Pierro, *Pensar la fenomenología desde dentro. Ensayos críticos*, Universidad Veracruzana, México, 2017.

²³ “... mientras se está ejecutando el acto vital mío de ver el ciprés, es éste el objeto que para mí existe; qué sea yo en aquel instante constituye para mí un secreto ignorado” (Ortega, 1914a, p. 677).

²⁴ “nuestra intimidad no puede ser directamente objeto para nosotros” (Ortega, 1914a, p. 676).

²⁵ “Toda imagen tiene, por decirlo así, dos caras. Por una de ellas es imagen de esta o aquella cosa; por otra es, en cuanto imagen, algo mío. Yo veo el ciprés, yo tengo la imagen, yo tengo el ciprés. De suerte que, con respecto al ciprés, es sólo imagen, pero con respecto a mí es un estado real mío, es un momento de mi yo, de mi ser” (Ortega, 1914a, p. 675).

In this way Ortega states that “every image is like executive state mine, like acting of mi I”, with which we agree. But he later states something that doesn’t seem to have sense: the acting of the I is a “feeling” y from that “subjective reaction... we don’t realizes” (Ortega, 1914a, p. 676). If we cannot realize that: whit what right can we affirm that it is indeed a feeling? By affirm it we are already presupposing its knowledge. The reason of that can be Ortega’s disapproval of the notion of conscious in Husserl’s phenomenology (San Martín, 1998). He accepts it in first moment when he defines it as “definitive instance” in which “the being of the objects gets constituted” (Ortega, 1913a, p. 632). But he later commits a critique to the conscious, in order to rescue the executive character of life.

Well, what we have left to see is what it’s the sense of this image we have of the things and its relevancy for phenomenology. This problem will be developed by Ortega in some pages of *Meditaciones del Quijote* and in his *Sistema de psicología*. It is about the proposal of virtual reality. But, what does it means that the image is “virtual”? How is the virtuality we have of things supposed to be understood? First of all, Ortega understand for virtual everything that gets sense only in virtue of the subject (San Martín, 2012, p. 105). The image of the sun is not the sun, but without my I that lives and executes that image of the sun, the sun would not have any sense in his reality, among other things because what the sun is it is in virtue of my I. The I is than in which the presence of things are verified and executed; whoever, executive life, which is the intimacy itself of the individual, stops being intimacy –Ortega states– when it becomes an image. And, besides everything, we have to observe that it is this virtual image the one who grants objectivity to the knowledge, the one who comes to occupy the place of the husserlian noema. While the senses provide “the flesh of the things” or the “surface”, the images, as virtual reality or concept, give us the “deepness”.

The problem Ortega wants to solve before proposing his tesis about virtual reality as lived reality is how to the interior being of a thing is given to us. It is evident that the surface of things is given through sensible experience and through the contact we have from reality via the senses. But the sensualism and the positivism that rises from there stock in the surface of things. In the paragraph of *Meditaciones del Quijote* untitled “Superficio y profundidad”, that follows the description about “The forest” with which starts the “Meditación preliminar”, describes this dialectic that is given between the surface of things, what we receive from our senses, and the deepness of those same things which isn’t granted to us empirically. Indeed, the trees that are seen in the distance constitute the forest we see. But the forest and the trees are two realities that can distinguish one from the other. It is one thing to see the summaries of trees and to focus the look in them or in every one of them, and it is something else to see the forest. Reality presents itself in two ways or dimensions. The trees are physical or patent

realities; the forest is a lived or latent reality. “The forest is a sum of possible acts of ours, which, by realizing, would lose their genuine value” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 765).²⁶

Behind the surface of things deepness is hiding: one is patent, the other latent. For the things that are given in our contour, be this things physical as trees from the forest, or the sing of a golden oriole and the sound of a stream running to a certain distance, all of them “keeps in a virtual distancing” thanks to my I, thanks to one “act mine” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 768). Without my acts, the distance would dispel: the sense of closeness or remoteness would have no foundation. Ortega doesn’t deny there is a “part of reality” that is offer to the senses through impressions. But he denies this is everything that is given from reality, because he recognizes an “afterworld” (*trasmundo*), a deepness on the things that is nor given to the senses neither imposed by the subject. The afterworld or deepness is rather given immediately, which doesn’t mean that it is given and takes sense without any effort from ours. Quite the contrary, the deep world “demands more from us” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 768). The things, before we can divide them in real or ideal or unreal, are “pure presence that joys of a virtual reality” (San Martín, 1998, p. 65s). And Ortega identifies the experiences plane with the virtual character of reality.

With such a proposal, Ortega stands in a critical position in front of empiricism. He shows that the being is not depletes in the sensations or impressions. The positivism moves in the plane of the surface of things, but it does not go any further, to the deep. And the neo-Kantianism moves in the formal and *a priori* structure of reality, but it neglect its factual dimension. In both cases we would have an impoverishment of the world. Ortega says it in the *Meditaciones del Quijote* like this: “To unknown that everything has its own condition and not the one we want to demand it... is the real capital sin... There is nothing as illicit as dwarf the world with our mania and blindness, decrease reality, imaginatively suppress chunks of what it is” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 766).²⁷ This capital sin is a “cordial sin” that derives from a “lack of love”.

But the subject of virtual reality is not run out in these lines. The deepness of things is a virtual quality that unfolds in two planes: first, as spatial deepness, for example when we talk about the remoteness of things, and, second, as temporal deepness in which we see our conscious acts and the temporal modifications in which objects are presented modified and interlaced. So that, we can perceive a color and recognize in the act itself a slight modification respect a memory or a past image, etc. Ortega wants to make justice to the dimensions in which reality is presented, the one of the surface and the one of the deepness –certainly this

²⁶ “El bosque es una suma de posibles actos nuestros, que, al realizarse, perderían su valor genuino” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 765).

²⁷ “Desconocer que cada cosa tiene su propia condición y no la que nosotros queremos exigirle es... el verdadero pecado capital... Nada hay tan ilícito como empequeñecer el mundo por medio de nuestras manías y cegueras, disminuir la realidad, suprimir imaginariamente pedazos de lo que es” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 766).

distinction is introduced in the horizon of a theory of culture that we shall not discuss here. In one side, we found violence from which reality “fall among us”, violence as the beast of a panther that Ortega identifies with sensualism, before which we can keep trapped in the surface of things. On the other side, we found the ideality, the image or the concept of that reality that, in this plane, it's no longer “real” but virtual in which the deepness of things is given: its sense. Without giving up to the surface, Ortega privilege the concept, privilege the sense, because it is in the concept where he finds “the normal organ of deepness”. “The sense of a thing is the supreme shape of its coexistence with the others, in its dimension of deepness” (Ortega, 1914b: 782).²⁸ So, the material existence of a thing is not enough for a theory of knowledge, theory of culture or for a theory of art, because it is also necessary “knows its sense”. And this is the function of the concept. If matter is given to us in the impressions we have of things, the concept or sense is given to us in the relation that the thing has with the things around it and with myself. The concept is therefore a limit, since it presents us where one object ends and another begins. But this limits, “are like new virtual things that interpolate and interject among matters, schematic natures whose mission consist in setting the confines of the beings, approaching them to coexist and simultaneously setting them apart so that they do not confuse and annihilate each other” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 783).²⁹

If life is in spontaneity directions', of the violent appear of the reality to the senses and concept is, as part of rationality, the opposite to this material reality, for being a “spectrum”, it doesn't seems too reasonable choose a spectrum over a material object. An image could never replace the flesh from things. However, the function of the concept isn't to supersede the material reality. Its function is to bestow security through its schematic content: “the concept expresses the ideal place. Without the concept we wouldn't know well where a thing starts or ends; this is to say, the things as impressions are fleeting, scurries, they slip through our hands, we don't possess them. By tie up the concept one with the others, it set them and gives them to us as prisoners” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 784).³⁰

Nevertheless, the concept is not “real”, is a quality or virtual reality; it is senseless by himself. The concept gives us “the shape, the physical and moral sense of things” or, in other words, “the concept will be the real instrument or organ of perception and capture of

²⁸ “El sentido de una cosa es la forma suprema de su coexistencia con las demás, es su dimensión de profundidad” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 782).

²⁹ “son como nuevas cosas virtuales que se interpolan e interyectan entre las materias, naturalezas esquemáticas cuya misión consiste en marcar los confines de los seres, aproximarlos para que convivan y a la vez distanciarlos para que no se confundan y aniquilen” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 783).

³⁰ “el concepto expresa el lugar ideal. Sin el concepto no sabríamos bien dónde empieza ni dónde acaba una cosa; es decir, las cosas como impresiones son fugaces, huideras, se nos van de entre las manos, no las poseemos. Al atar el concepto unas con otras, las fija y nos las entrega prisioneras” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 784).

things” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 784).³¹ Besides everything, the concept cannot replace “the flesh of things” that impressions give to us. That’s why, by relating the concept to a theory of culture, Ortega affirms that culture, that it is now founded or cemented in the concept, “it’s not life completely, but just the security moment, of clarity firmness” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 786).³² The concept, therefore, doesn’t try to substitute spontaneous life, only secure it. As San Martín has said, it looks like Ortega “wants us to impel to the recognition that virtuality its inward in the deepest of life” (San Martín, 1998, p. 70).³³

With these indications, we can notice that Ortega tries to make justice to two opposite thesis, to the thesis of empirism and positivism and to the thesis of neo-Kantianism, which Ortega summarizes in the terms of “sensation” and “construction” in his conference of 1913. This is the same effort that leads *Sistema de psicología* of 1915 and 1916. There we can see how Ortega tries to overcome the modernity through the phenomenology, especially following the line of essential intuition, which is, in his judge, “the great conquest specifically from the XX century”. The value of virtuality in this work lay in the relation that Ortega makes with the three epochs of philosophy that he identifies with the realism of Antiquity, the idealism of the Modern epoch and, finally the phenomenology, which highlights the reflexion about life from whom it takes off to grant it. This is one of the reasons by which philosophy pretends to be an assumption-less science (Ortega, 1915, p. 499). Ortega wants to clarify “the relations between being and thinking” to accomplish with that “a new distribution of jurisdictions among the subject and the object” y to make it, he helps himself with phenomenology and assumes that “the method of the first and fundamental science has to be a method without assumptions, a going integrally from itself: by that, and only by that it is first and fundamental” (Ortega, 1915, p. 459).³⁴ Notwithstanding, the strong impulse of phenomenology is the genesis of vital reason and in his step towards the radical historicity, Ortega will partially move away from this philosophical method.

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³¹ “la forma, el sentido físico y moral de las cosas” o, en otros términos “el concepto será el verdadero instrumento u órgano de la percepción y apesamiento de las cosas” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 784).

³² “no es la vida toda, sino sólo el momento de seguridad, de firmeza de claridad” (Ortega, 1914b, p. 786).

³³ “nos quiere impeler al reconocimiento de que la virtualidad está ínsita en lo más profundo de la vida” (San Martín, 1998, p. 70).

³⁴ “el método de la ciencia primera y fundamental tiene que ser un método sin supuestos, un partir íntegramente de sí misma; por eso y sólo por eso es primera y fundamental” (Ortega, 1915, p. 459).

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