TIME ON A HUMAN SCALE

EXPERIENCING THE PRESENT IN EUROPE 1860–1930

EDITED BY

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Part I

Conflicting Presents in Political Culture

1

Revolution, Restoration, Regeneration: Historical Cycles and the Politics of Time in Spain, 1870–1931

JAVIER FERNÁNDEZ-SEBASTIÁN AND GONZALO CAPELLÁN*

> To me there is no past or future in art.
> If a work of art cannot always live in the present, it must not be considered at all.[1]
>
> (Pablo Ruiz Picasso, *The Arts* (1923))

> Today is always still.[2]
>
> (Antonio Machado, *New Songs* (1924))

> … to live in the real present, since the present is only the presence of past and future, the place where the past and the future actually exist.[3]
>
> (José Ortega y Gasset, *History as a System* (1935))

Questions related to temporality acquired considerable relevance, interest and depth in debates on historical time among prominent Spanish politicians and intellectuals from 1870 to 1931. As we shall see, special attention was paid to the diverse ways of articulating past, present and future across this long fin de siècle. Some individuals even proposed fundamental notions regarding the mechanisms of historical change that they believed were capable of shedding light on certain characteristics of history in general and of Spanish history in particular. In this

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[1] 'Picasso Speaks', reproduced in Alfred H. Barr Jr. (ed.) *Picasso: Forty Years of His Art* (New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1939), p. 11.

[2] Antonio Machado, *Borders of a Dream: Selected Poems* (Port Townsend, Copper Canyon Press, 2004), p. 347: 'Hoy es siempre todavía' (in 'Proverbs and Songs', to José Ortega y Gasset).

[3] José Ortega y Gasset, *History as a System and Other Essays: Toward a Philosophy of History* (New York/London, W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), p. 83.

chapter, we will focus above all on the semantics of a few select yet controversial key concepts – revolution, restoration and regeneration – which were the subject of heated debate during these six decades. Though each of these concepts could be understood and evaluated in very different manner by different historical actors depending on distinct ways of imagining historical time, all three concepts were understood to contain a certain cyclical nature – not only because they referred to historical processes and chained events that could be generically represented in the form of a circle, but also because some of those concepts served as historiographical labels to name specific experiences in Spanish history during this period.

The three key concepts mentioned above were debated across a variety of discursive genres from politics and journalism to science and culture from the last quarter of the 19th century through the first quarter of the 20th century. Alongside associated concepts like generation, epoch, tradition, evolution, modernity, crisis, transition, decadence, renaissance or reform, we find discussions of these temporal categories in Spanish literature, poetry, theatre, visual art and popular culture like newspaper articles and caricatures. This variety of sources reveals a sustained and widespread interest in ideas of the present in Spain during the 'long' fin de siècle.

Within this broad reflection on time, the eminence granted to the present stands out. As a new generation of Spanish intellectuals came of age during the decades of the long fin de siècle and began to challenge the official ideology of the Restoration – the political regime initiated through a coup d'état in 1874 that defeated the First Spanish Republic and re-established the Bourbon monarchy under Alfonso XII – found it necessary to leave the past behind, often viewing it as a burden to be discarded. Numerous texts by young authors, eager to regenerate Spain as quickly as possible, emphasised their commitment to the *present*. They presented the past as an 'outdated' historical time, a hindrance to be overcome. Reflections by poets like Machado, philosophers like Ortega, and artists like Picasso illustrate how, in different contexts and in different ways, Spaniards considered the present – the 'now' – as the *true* time in which all human experiences were condensed. This did not foreclose considerations of the future; in fact, accumulated experiences and expectations of an imagined future were understood to have their true reality in the present.

The period under consideration here was full of unusual experiences, including two republican regimes (1873–74 and 1931–6) in a country with a deeply rooted tradition of monarchy. The fin de siècle also witnessed the traumatic end of Spain's rich imperial history, with the loss of its last colonies following defeat in the Spanish-American War of 1898. The moral crisis resulting from this defeat was one of the catalysing experiences that led a new generation – who often self-consciously described themselves as 'young people' (*gente joven* or *gente nueva*) – to demand a major change in historical direction. This cultural and generational shift of the fin de siècle transcended elite politics. What the fin de siècle generation desired was nothing less than to extricate Spain from the historical decadence in which it had languished since the 17th century in order to set

their nation on the path to modernity and progress, which broadly speaking they identified with the model of Trans-Pyrenean Europe. Moreover, in the first third of the 20th century Spain experienced a genuine 'Silver Age' or blossoming of Spanish culture partly created by this 'new' intellectual generation prior to the Spanish Civil War (1936–9). Many of those writers, artists, poets, philosophers and intellectuals – several of whom saw their careers truncated by the Civil War or went into exile – explored in depth, from different perspectives, the broad subject of modern temporality. In the wake of Ortega, Unamuno and Machado, whose work we shall carefully parse in the following pages, these intellectuals and artists put forth penetrating reflections on historical dynamics and on the trichotomy of past, present and future for Spanish society.

The observations by Picasso, Machado and Ortega with which we began this chapter accordingly reflect a common experience of the present that gained traction in the final decades of the 19th century and emerged dominant in the first decades of the 20th century. It is no coincidence that, in the same year that Marius Zayas' interview with Picasso was published in *The Arts* magazine based in New York, Ortega y Gasset published an essay on present time, translated into English as *The Modern Theme* (1931 [1923]). In this essay, Ortega explored the concept of 'generation' and the historical mission that he felt was incumbent upon him to carry out. Reflecting, above all, on the urgency of the present – focusing on his generation of individuals who reached the age of majority during the long fin de siècle instead of those who had preceded or would succeed him – Ortega developed a philosophy of history that accentuated the present as the frame of action par excellence. Even while emphasising that the present was the most important plane of action, he did not neglect the other two orders of time, acknowledging that the present emerged from the past and was constantly projecting into the future.

Cánovas del Castillo: The Restoration as Historical Continuity

The period of Spanish history that stretches from 1870 until 1931 begins and ends with revolutions. The so-called Glorious Revolution, which broke out in September 1868, gave rise to an early democratic constitution (1869) and later to the failed experiment of an ephemeral First Republic (1873). Criticism of the revolutionary process – which began as early as the autumn of 1868 and lasted until late 1874 – began immediately after the event on both the political left and right. Among the revolutionary ranks themselves, the revolution was reproached for its sterility. As early as spring 1870, one of the most important satirical newspapers of the day referred ironically to the unsuccessful attempts of the 1868 revolution to rapidly attain its objectives (see Ortego's expressive caricature ironically entitled 'The September Revolution marching at giant steps', in Figure 1.1).

Henceforth, the period of renewed stability that brought to a close this turbulent six-year revolutionary cycle was known as the 'Restoration' since it began with

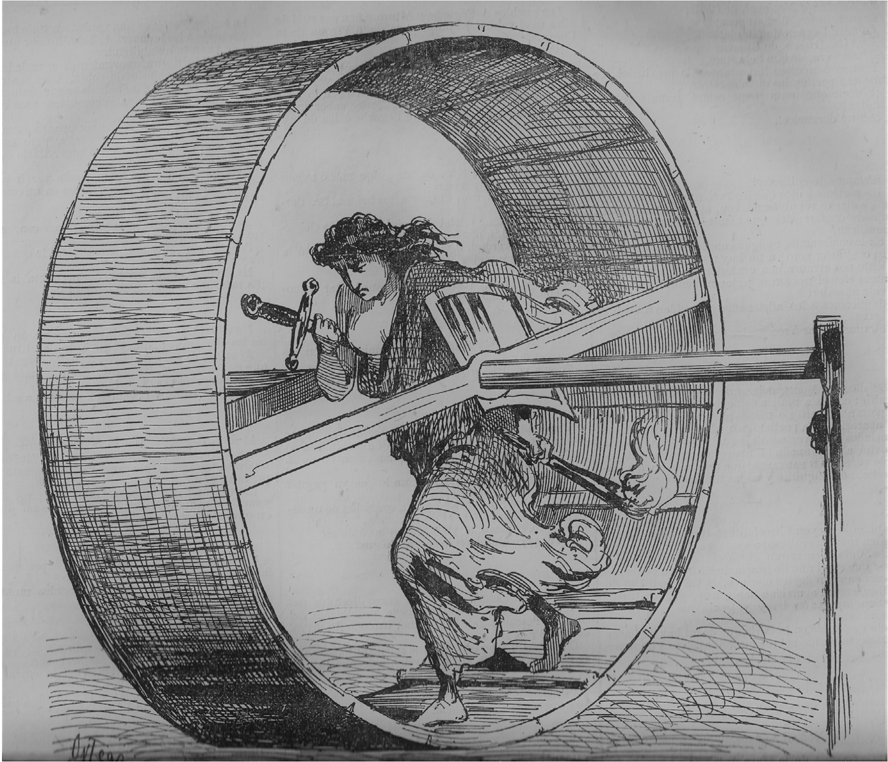

Figure 1.1 Caricature by Francisco Ortego, 'Marcha, a pasos gigantescos, de la Revolución de Setiembre' ('The September Revolution marching at giant steps'), *Gil Blas* (Madrid, 12 May 1870). Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional de España.

the re-establishment of the Bourbon dynasty under Alfonso XII, the son of Queen Isabella II who had been overthrown by the Revolution of September 1868. The term *Restauración*, a label that Spanish historiography has continued to employ to refer to the period from 1874 to 1923, was at the time also understood to be a *temporal* concept – the opposite of revolution – because it involved a conception of time that was diametrically opposed to any historical leap of faith. This was the view of its main architect and ideologue, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, who was both an historian and leader of the Conservative Party. Cánovas declared his commitment to stability and historical legacy when he emphasised in a speech before the recently inaugurated Constituent Restoration Cortes (parliament) of 1876 that his proposal was intended to lend continuity to 'what we cannot but continue, which is the history of Spain. It is inevitable that the past is incorporated into the present'.[4]

[4] A. Cánovas del Castillo, Parliamentary Speech on 11 March 1876, in *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes. Congreso de los Diputados* (hereafter *DSC*) (Madrid, Congreso de los Diputados, 1876), p. 375.

Cánovas argued that this incorporation of the past into the present should occur *gradually* and *progressively*, drawing upon the examples of England and Germany which, unlike France, had developed 'their political movements slowly, successively and gradually' and were not ashamed to 'conserve significant remains of the Middle Ages alongside the major advances of our century'. Such a path of political reform allowed those nations to coordinate the evolution of ideas with the unfolding 'of the country's needs' without recourse to 'violent upheavals and constant revolutions', and without finding themselves having to undo what had been done.[5] The president of the first Restoration government thus revealed the Burkean nature of his ideas of time and history. Four years earlier, in one of his speeches at the most prestigious cultural institution of the period, the Athenaeum of Madrid, Cánovas had explicitly endorsed Burke: 'You know that if our freedoms are tempered by a certain lineage of respectful gravity, it is for no reason other than that we have always acted as if we were before our honoured parents.'[6] For Cánovas, modern revolutions and their advocates sought to break the natural link between past and present, thus violating that 'supreme law' of respect for one's elders that conditioned the present. At the height of the revolutionary period, he noted with bitterness 'what reigns in the present is the selfish desire to organise society for the sole use and benefit of present generations'. These revolutionary attitudes were accompanied, he earlier asserted, 'by disdain for the past and for the future, both within and beyond this world'.[7]

Of course, the past with which the Malaga-born politician planned to connect his present regime in 1876 was not the immediate past of the 1868 Revolution and its legal consequences (materialised above all in the liberal-democratic Constitution of 1869) nor that of the numerous revolutionary crises, upheavals and *pronunciamientos* of the previous decades, but an earlier past. This past, which was much more prolonged, peaceful and profound, was encapsulated in Cánovas' expression 'the history of Spain', which he made clear in his reply to the MP the Marquis of Sardoal.[8] Indeed, Cánovas preferred to bury the other, more turbulent past of the so-called 'Democratic Sexennium' forever. The present thus stretched backwards in time to a longer history of powerful Spain that required erasing, or controlling, the legacy of revolution identified with the 1869 Constitution. This time work is explicit subject of a caricature published in *El Motín* in 1882 (Figure 1.2) which portrays a group of leaders, representatives of the political forces of the Restoration including liberals and former republicans like Emilio Castelar, working together to inter the recent Revolutionary past.

The authentic 'history of Spain' that was worth continuing and introducing into the present (at least according to Cánovas and other champions of the

[5] Cánovas, Parliamentary Speech on 17 November 1876, *DSC*, pp. 3513–14.

[6] A. Cánovas del Castillo, 26 November 1872, in *Problemas Contemporáneos*, I (Madrid, Imprenta de A. Pérez Dubrull, 1884 [1871]), p. 187.

[7] Cánovas, 25 November 1871, in *Problemas Contemporáneos*, I, pp. 74–5.

[8] Cánovas, Parliamentary Speech on 11 March 1876, *DSC*, p. 375.

Figure 1.2 Caricature, 'Constitución de 1869' ('The Constitution of 1869'), *El Motín* (Madrid, 1 October 1882). Courtesy of the Hemeroteca Municipal de Madrid.

Restoration) could be synthesised through a combination of three principles that were appropriated as the defining pillars of the new regime: *monarchy*, *religion* and *Cortes*. Inseparably connected, the principles of monarchy and Cortes were understood by liberal-conservatives to persist into the present in 'all our written Constitutions, in the light of history and in the light of present reality'.[9] The Cortes, as a keystone of representative government, and the monarchy, embodied in the Bourbon dynasty, had now synthesised with 'the interests of the Nation' to the extent that Cánovas could assert that 'it is no longer possible to have a Nation without our dynasty'.[10] In addition to king and Cortes, Cánovas underlined the exceptional importance of the Catholic religion. This was not only for 'sociological' reasons – acknowledging that Catholicism was the creed of an overwhelming majority of Spaniards – but also for its fundamental role as a legitimating element, connecting individuals with the historical foundations of social and political order.[11] In fact, the unity of the nation's social body depended to a large degree upon a unity of faith. Thus, whilst the new constitution of 1876 formally recognised certain religious tolerance, the Restoration would eventually build a confessional state.

Within the intellectual sphere, it was Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo who defined and vehemently defended this supposedly 'national' tradition based upon Spain's

[9] Cánovas, Parliamentary Speech on 11 March 1876, *DSC*, p. 375.
[10] Cánovas, Parliamentary Speech on 8 April 1876, *DSC*, p. 724.
[11] Cánovas, Parliamentary Speech on 3 May 1876, *DSC*, p. 1083; Cánovas, Parliamentary Speech on 8 April 1876, *DSC*, p. 714.

glorious past, in which Catholicism constituted the core of the nation and the essential factor guaranteeing its unity and historical continuity. A young Menéndez Pelayo rescued Spanish science, a home-grown tradition ignored and on occasion vilified by modern Spanish writers who preferred to seek inspiration in foreign authors, reclaiming it for a new national present. Unsurprisingly, some contemporaries interpreted in Menéndez Pelayo's work an attempt at the 'restoration of traditional national thinking' and 'Spanish traditional science'.[12] In his second monograph, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles* (1880–2), which circulated widely and influenced contemporary thinking, Menéndez Pelayo offered an exhaustive historical review of all the authors and texts that had deviated from the Catholic orthodoxy which he identified as a genuinely Spanish tradition. The key element in this vast work was his equation of nation with Catholicism, claiming that the unity of Spain was created via Christianity; because of the Church, he wrote, 'we were a nation, and a great nation, rather than a crowd of motley peoples'.[13]

Miguel de Unamuno: The Eternal Tradition

Conservatives and liberals alike viewed the present as the crucial frame of experience for conceptualising change in Spanish society. The peaceful period starting in 1881 witnessed a negotiated alternation in government between the two main parties that facilitated the consolidation of the Restoration's political system without being seriously threatened by revolutionary action. Nonetheless, by the end of the 19th century, criticism was rampant. Even before the catalyst of collective experience grounded in Spain's resounding defeat by the United States in the Spanish-American War, known in Spain as 'the Disaster' of 1898 (to which we shall return later), leading intellectuals like Miguel de Unamuno began to question the fundamental tenets of the Restoration present. Unamuno went beyond the usual diatribes against political or religious aspects of the regime, instead focusing his criticism on an essential element of Cánovas' legitimising discourse: the latter's conception of history, tradition and the relations between the three orders of time (past, present and future). Unamuno did this in a series of articles titled 'En torno al casticismo', published in the journal *La España Moderna* in 1895 and as a book in 1902 (a French translation was published two decades later as *L´essence de L´Espagne*).[14]

Unamuno began by analysing the 'bitter complaints' circulating in Spain regarding the supposed invasion by foreign culture that drowned domestic traditions and jeopardised the 'national spirit', which he synthesised in the expression 'the

[12] Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, *Epistolario* (Madrid, Fundación Universitaria Española, 1982–91 [1901]), XV, p. 953 and XVI, p. 113.
[13] Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, 2nd edn (Madrid, Librería Católica de San José, 1882), p. 1037.
[14] Miguel de Unamuno, 'En torno al casticismo. La tradición eterna', *La España Moderna*, 74 (1895), 17–40 and *L'essence de L´Espagne*, trans. Marcel Bataillon (Paris, Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1923).

Europeanisation of Spain'.[15] The author who most exemplifies this critical attitude is Menéndez y Pelayo – the champion of 'the cause of tradition' who sought to legitimate 'historical rights and dreams of restorations … unearthing incunabula' – in works like *La ciencia Española* (1876).[16] The Bilbao philosopher consequently directed his irony at those who regard 'the venerable traditions of our elders', 'the alliance between altar and throne', and the glorious episodes of Spanish history as the essence of the nation. Even those theorists of Spanish liberalism who, like Martínez Marina, located the origins of Hispanic freedoms in the medieval Cortes mistakenly projected 'the ideal of the future' upon the past. According to Unamuno, this defence of 'a Spanish art and science' concealed a desire to reduce freedoms, isolate the nation and reject civilisation.[17]

In contrast to these isolationist and parochial attitudes, Unamuno praised the rationalising example of Hegel, whom he deemed the 'Quixote of philosophy' for the latter's titanic aspiration to an absolute science. Paradoxically, Cervantes' Don Quixote – as a 'pure Spanish' character who renounces his Spanishness to reach the 'universal spirit, the man, who sleeps within us' – revealed the path to regeneration for '*our* Spain, that of *today*'. As the literary prototype for the universal and immortal, he who affirms the validity of space and time, Unamuno concluded that this transtemporal Don Quixote 'should be our gospel of national regeneration'.[18] Later, the ever contradictory Unamuno insisted, paraphrasing Carlyle on Shakespeare, that 'the Quixote is of more value to Spain, more than her moribund colonial empire' and that 'we must see the history of Spain in the light of the Quixote'.[19] He did so with his eye on a future that was already manifest in his essays of 1895. Thus he greeted the death of Don Quixote, who henceforth lives peacefully in his people's memory, as Alonso Quijano 'the Good' (in reference to the character's real name of Quijano).[20] The figure of Don Quixote became a prism for contemporary reflections on time and national regeneration when the novel's third centenary was widely celebrated in 1905, including Azorín and Ortega as well as Unamuno.

Unamuno established a close association between his concept of 'eternal tradition', which he defended as an alternative concept to conservative champions of a national-traditional Spain, and *intrahistoria* (intrahistory). He coined the latter to define 'the unconscious in history', a backdrop that remained hidden and largely unalterable beneath the noisy and eye-catching events of history. Drawing upon the Latin verb *tradere*, meaning to deliver or to hand over, Unamuno proposes the existence of 'an eternal tradition, legacy of the centuries, that of universal art and science', a kind of sediment of essential truths gradually deposited over the

15 Unamuno, 'En torno al casticismo', 19–20.
16 Unamuno, 'En torno al casticismo', 35.
17 Unamuno, 'En torno al casticismo', 40, 21.
18 Unamuno, 'En torno al casticismo', 30. Emphasis added.
19 Miguel de Unamuno, '¡Muera Don Quijote!', *Vida Nueva* (26 June 1898), p. 1.
20 Unamuno, '¡Muera Don Quijote!', p. 1.

passage of time and the 'perpetual flow of things'. He developed a series of geological and hydraulic metaphors reminiscent of Braudel's three layers of time or Koselleck's strata (*Zeitschichten*).[21] In Unamuno's theory, intrahistory and true tradition are almost static; they inhabit the depths where the authentic resides. Conversely, ephemeral events that are frequently described as 'historical' (including revolutions) are nothing more than the trivial swell of history, as superficial as 'all that the newspapers report every day, the entire history of the "*present historical moment*" '. Here, Unamuno appears to theorise *two* presents of opposite expansion or profundity: the 'poor crust we inhabit' versus 'the immense burning core that [the terrestrial sphere] carries within':

> the newspapers say nothing of the silent life of the millions of men without history who at every hour of the day and in all the countries of the world rise at the sun's command and go to their fields to continue with their dark and silent, eternal and daily labour, that labour which, like that of the corals below the ocean, lays the foundations upon which rise the islets of History … Upon immense silent Humanity stand those who make a commotion in History. That intrahistorical life, silent and continuous like the very bottom of the sea, is the substance of progress, true tradition, eternal tradition, not the deceitful tradition that is usually sought in the past buried in books and papers and monuments and stones.[22]

In short, neither the noisy and insubstantial events of the quotidian that appear in newspapers nor the great events of interest to scholarly erudition have much to do with the 'true' tradition, in Unamuno's view, represented by the intrahistorical life of the common peoples in the 'quiet and eternal sea' who are the driving force behind true progress.[23] Openly criticising Cánovas and the architects of the Restoration, Unamuno added that those who live like castaways rocked by the waves of 'history' – i.e. politicians – believe that the world is reduced to 'storms and cataclysms followed by calm'. Conversely, the true 'resumption of History in Spain' was not the work of the Restoration of 1875 but of 'the millions of men who continued to do the same as before, those millions for whom the sun was the same before and after September 29, 1868 … they resumed nothing because nothing had been interrupted. One wave is the same water as another, it is the same ripple over the same sea'.[24]

The 'eternal sea' metaphor evoked in Unamuno's writings appears to contradict an action-oriented present. Yet shortly afterwards, Unamuno exchanged a handful of letters with his friend Ángel Ganivet that was later published as 'El porvenir de España' ('The Future of Spain') in the newspaper *El Defensor de Granada* (1898). In this discussion, Unamuno explicitly asserts that this eternal tradition lives '*in*

[21] Reinhart Koselleck, *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik* (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000).
[22] Unamuno, 'En torno al casticismo', 30.
[23] Unamuno, 'En torno al casticismo', 32.
[24] Unamuno, 'En torno al casticismo', 30.

the present, not in the past that is dead forever'.[25] For Unamuno, the emphasis had shifted from the past to the present and from the historical-political to the anthropological-cultural, whereas for Cánovas and other liberal-conservatives, people living now, in the present, were obliged to assume and perpetuate the legacy of the past. Unamuno's hymn to the present is a sophisticated attempt to affirm the universal value of an intrahistorical tradition that paradoxically contained the seeds of a future in its transcendent present. As a result, the young professor at the University of Salamanca could project his ideals vis-à-vis the regeneration of Spain to a European and global present.

The Impact of 1898: The Banner of Regeneration

The precarious continuity between present and past that had dominated the work of Restoration intellectuals like Cánovas and Unamuno was shattered by the turn of the century. Spain's bitter military defeat in 1898, accompanied by the loss of its last colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines), prompted the re-emergence of intellectual engagement with temporality in the public sphere. Although recent historiography has shown that the crisis of national conscience provoked by this 'Disaster' was an exaggerated moral and intellectual overreaction to the event itself in terms of its economic and social impact, period literature reveals how the loss of the Spanish empire was viewed by many writers as an alarming symptom of Spain's present decadence. The twin concepts of disaster and decadence lay at the centre of a political and intellectual discourse that painted a dark picture of Spain's present situation and the evolution of the country over the last centuries. Some of the best-known titles of this genre include Macías Picavea, *El problema nacional* (1891); Ramiro de Maeztu, *Hacia otra España* (1899); J. Rodríguez Martínez, *Los desastres y la regeneración de España* (1899); Damián Isern, *Del desastre nacional y sus causas* (1899); Luis Morote, *La moral de la derrota* (1900); and Joaquín Costa, *Oligarquía y caciquismo* (1901). These writers concluded that a change of direction was required, which generally went hand-in-hand with the demand for urgent reforms and drastic solutions, in keeping with the apocalyptical tone (solutions often adopted a distinctly anti-liberal and anti-parliamentarian nature).

The term that commanded the greatest consensus and functioned as the common denominator for all these criticisms and protests was *regeneration*. Almost everyone agreed, regardless of personal ideology, that it was high time to address the regeneration of Spain. It comes as no surprise that this current of thought associated with the so-called generation of 1898 – which in a literary sense is related to *novecentismo* – would eventually be known as *regeneracionismo*. Spanish *regeneracionismo* (regenerationism) made politicians scapegoats for the country's ills and did not conceal its desire to make a clean sweep of 19th-century

[25] Unamuno, 'En torno al casticismo', 33, original emphasis.

political history. Recently, intellectual historians have interpreted this as a uniquely Spanish version of a series of political and cultural movements that attained popularity across Europe in this period.

Whilst it is true that the 1898 disaster catalysed this process in Spain, many of these ideas had taken shape in the 1880s.[26] Writer and literary critic Luis París, for instance, compiled a series of brief biographies of young authors belonging to a 'new generation who had had the misfortune of living in an age of decadence' in a small book, *Gente nueva* (*New People*) in 1888. París presented this fin-de-siècle generation as victims of a past characterised by backwardness, ignorance, religious fanaticism and a misunderstood 'love of country'. 'The atavism of our grandparents', he insisted, hinders 'our regeneration and the definitive progress of the nation'.[27] In his opening paragraph, París addressed the 'new generation that … will rule tomorrow', urging his contemporaries to overcome the obstacles that 'tradition and the past have left cemented in your path'. Convinced that 'the declines or the renaissances of peoples are marked by the character of men', he encouraged Spain's youth to advance decisively along the path of progress and modernity: 'the future is yours by right and the beginnings of the new century await you to adorn your foreheads with the golden halo of glory'.[28] With their 'unwavering faith in the future', París hoped this generation 'w[ould] have sufficient muscle power to implement the revolution of ideas and to destroy everything here that is obsolete and harmful, subsequently to build upon those ruins the new building of our definitive renaissance'.[29]

In the 1890s, the 'new people' whom París addressed proved to be increasingly combative and self-consciously aware of themselves as a generation with a historical mission of its own to accomplish, suggesting the need to read the fin de siècle as a clearly defined chronological period. The fin-de-siècle generation presented themselves in public through plays like *La gente nueva: comedia en tres actos y en prosa* by Antonio Sánchez Pérez (Madrid, 1895) and several publications, including the journal *Germinal*. Taking its metaphorical name from the novel by Émile Zola, whom this generation saw as reference for their ideals of regeneration, they entered public awareness convinced that Spain's decadence was only a temporary crisis after which would sprout in earnest 'a new world, that germinates'. These young people expressed their conviction that Spain was not dead, but asleep, and had in store 'a glorious germ'.[30] Shortly afterwards, in an article entitled 'La gente joven', they insisted that 'the regenerating work' of the journal would seek the support of diverse social sectors 'eager for new horizons', and that they would

[26] E.g. Lucas Mallada y Pueyo, *Los males de la patria y la futura revolución Española* (Madrid, Tipografía de Manuel Ginés Hernández, 1890) or Macías Picavea, *El problema nacional: hechos, causas y remedios* (Madrid, Librería General de Victoriano Suárez, 1891).

[27] Luis París, *Gente Nueva. Crítica inductiva*, 2nd edn (Seville, Athenaica, 2017 [1888]), p. 68.

[28] París, *Gente Nueva*, pp. 49–50.

[29] París, *Gente Nueva*, p. 70.

[30] Eduardo Zamacois, '¿A dónde vamos?' and 'Germinal', *Germinal*, 1 (30 April 1897), 2.

fight for their ideals until they succeeded in 'imposing by reason or by force what foolish restorationist governments have not dared to do'.[31]

Soon after, the weekly *Vida Nueva* (*New Life*) emerged in the critical present of 1898 with the following introduction:

> We come to disseminate and defend the new, what the public yearns for, The Modern, which throughout Europe is commonplace and does not arrive here because of age-old routine and the tyranny of custom. And this confirms that Vida Nueva will be, not the newspaper of Today, but the newspaper of Tomorrow.[32]

The journal's mission statement, drafted by Eusebio Blasco, echoing verses by the poet Antonio Machado that we shall discuss later, criticises the governments of the Restoration because they have not allowed Spain to leave 'yesterday' or 'enter tomorrow'. The very mission of this youth would be 'to contribute to the work of tomorrow', hence the title carefully chosen to lead this mission:

> *¡Vida nueva!* This is what millions of Spaniards say, tired of the old, of the used, of the failed, of the conventional, of what exists nowhere else but here. *¡Vida nueva!* In other words, new blood in the parties, new blood in ideas, no more ruins, abuse, egoisms above and poor wretches below, despotism, legendary reactionarism.[33]

The enthusiastic and exasperated rhetoric of these young people, however, did not conceal the fact that the political system navigated the crisis of 1898 and continued onwards, with support among not only political, economic and military powers, but also among men of letters. In this vein, December 1900 witnessed the launch of the journal *Gente Vieja* (*Old People*), ironically subtitled 'last echoes of the 19th century'. *Gente Vieja* brought together a handful of celebrated veteran writers of the period (Núñez de Arce, Nakens, Pirala, Morayta, Sellés, Fabra, Llano, among others), most of them advanced in years. In open defiance of the 'young people', they listed 'old boy' supporters alongside their respective ages on the first page of the journal, proudly advertising a total age of around 3,000 years. Their introductory text, signed by Juan Valera de Tornos, explained that the objective of the journal was not only 'to evoke the past' but to 'judge the present' and 'preach about the future' in order to edify the Spanish public.[34]

In the turbulent years around the turn of the century, an anxiety surrounding present and future that had begun to reveal itself in the Iberian world in the 1830s attracted a new wave of public attention to the extent that it became almost an obsession.[35] The titles of various journals and newspapers in the late 19th and early

[31] Francisco Maceín, 'La gente joven', *Germinal*, 26 (29 October 1897), 6.

[32] Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, 'Vida nueva', *Vida nueva* (12 June 1898), 1.

[33] Blasco, 'Vida nueva', 1.

[34] Frontispiece, *Gente Vieja*, 1 (December 1900), 1.

[35] J. Fernández-Sebastián, 'Futuro', in J. Fernández-Sebastián and J. F. Fuentes (eds), *Diccionario político y social del siglo XX español* (Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 2008), pp. 576–88 and J. Fernández-Sebastián, 'A World in the Making: Discovering the Future in the Hispanic World', *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, 11.2 (2016), 110–32.

20th centuries (*La España Moderna*, *Revista Contemporánea*, *España Nueva*, *España Futura*, *La Nueva Era*, *Nuestro Tiempo*, *Nuevo Mundo*, *Revista Nueva*, *Arte Joven* and many others) manifest a thirst for renovation and modernity in certain sectors of Spanish society, vying to 'make up' for lost time and rise to the level of the great expectations of a brand new century. In Madrid circa 1900, 'the slogan was: modernity' according to the future president of the Second Republic, Manuel Azaña, in decades later. This 'modernity' assumed 'two forms' in spirit: 'sadness and violence'. Whilst some prematurely disenchanted young people fell prey to a melancholy apathy, Azaña observed that 'another less peaceful current of modernity verged on the savage', feeding on social Darwinism and Nietzschean morality.[36]

Azaña's diagnosis clearly reflects the fundamental ambiguity of a concept, *modernity*, which in intellectual circles tended to have more aesthetic than strictly political or social overtones, and which could embrace very diverse ideological stances and currents. Indeed, whatever the meaning of the word – which appears occasionally in works by Clarín, Unamuno, Maeztu, Azorín and others – the interest in the most recent, the *newest*, was strikingly predominant in the fin de siècle. Among those who invoked it, the word soon assumed the strength of a slogan, a plan of action directed towards a break with the past in order to head resolutely towards the future, irrespective of the content that each person ideally projected upon that future. Even within literary circles, advocates of modernity like Azorín held that authors of the classic should 'be reviewed and interpreted from a modern perspective', which meant a change in the artist's relationship with time, in which present protagonists prepared to deliberately select and reinterpret their predecessors according to current needs and future expectations.[37]

Madrid became a meeting point for numerous young literati, artists, journalists and policymakers from all over Spain who converged around a variety of aesthetic tastes (naturalism, modernism) and radical, often utopian, ideologies (republicanism, anarchism, socialism), all of them opposed to the prevailing values of the Restoration. Their active participation in a flourishing press, which considerably increased its circulation and included attractive illustrations to reach a greater number of readers, was decisive. Regardless of particular aesthetic, social and political leanings, they were united by a sense of generational opposition to 'old people' and the old system. This shared social identity had a profound resonance for the 'young generation' (*gente moza*) of the fin de siècle, who were convinced that they were constructing a new time in the history of Spain.

One of the most influential intellectuals of the day, Joaquín Costa, succeeded in distilling these ideas into catchy slogans capturing the discontent and desire for renewal among many Spaniards. Expressions like 'oligarchy and *caciquismo*'

[36] M. Azaña, *Discursos políticos*, ed. Santos Juliá (Barcelona, Crítica, 1997 [1930]), pp. 170–1.
[37] J. Fernández-Sebastián, 'Modernidad', in J. Fernández-Sebastián and J. F. Fuentes (eds), *Diccionario político y social del siglo XX español* (Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 2008), pp. 775–91.

(oligarchy and patronage or cronyism), understood to be the defining elements of the Restoration regime, or the demand for 'school and pantry' and 'hydraulic politics' – even the appeal for a 'surgeon of iron', understood as a strong man of exceptional qualities who could remove from power the nation's most encrusted evils – circulated widely. Costa's slogans symbolised the idea of regeneration, energetically calling for the modernisation of Spain in education, science and economic policy capable of increasing agricultural productivity. Costa declared it was necessary to double lock the tomb of El Cid, to prevent him from riding again. In other words, it was time to lay aside yesterday's glories in order to concentrate on the urgent tasks of the *present*. Costa's emphasis on the present was central to his programme of national renewal: '*Let us make up for lost time, banishing the word tomorrow from the dictionary of regeneration*.'[38]

Naturally, the meaning and the connotations attributed to that present varied enormously from author to author. While Costa identified it with the urgent need for reform, Unamuno understood it as the permanent unfolding of 'eternal tradition'. Still others considered the present to harbour conservative interests. A young Ramiro de Maeztu, who gradually developed a reputation for being an ideologue, demanded decisions that would set a course 'hacia otra España' ('towards another Spain') in his 1899 essay of the same name. Maeztu's goal was to propel 'the nation in the current of modern life' by instigating a new industrial economy in particular.[39] In his view, the present had assumed great import even in the reflections of the 'defenders of the national sense of history' simply because they did not believe in the future, which was why 'they seek to embellish their modest and humble present'.[40]

The campaign for the regeneration of *present* Spain, far from being restricted to narrow intellectual circles, soon appeared on the first page of their political agenda, aided by Francisco Silvela's election as prime minister in 1899. Months earlier, amidst the impact of the 1898 defeat, Silvela had published a famous article titled 'Sin pulso' ('No Pulse') which for many readers was an authentic wake-up call. Though a conservative, Silvela used this medical metaphor to diagnose the calamitous state of a society that he described as passive, degenerate and lacking vitality; in short, a heart that had stopped beating. Under such circumstances, he predicted that there would be either a radical change of direction 'reconstituting all the organisms of national life' or disintegration and death. It is understandable, then, that public opinion felt that Silvela had embraced the demand for regeneration as a horizon of expectation shared by the fin-de-siècle generation of politicians and intellectuals.[41]

[38] J. Costa, *Crisis política de España*, 3rd edn (Madrid, Biblioteca Costa, 1914 [1901]), p. 124. Emphasis added.

[39] Ramiro de Maeztu, *Hacia otra España* (Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 1997 [1899]), p. 173.

[40] Maeztu, *Hacia otra España*, p. 136.

[41] Francisco Silvela, 'Sin pulso', *El Tiempo* (16 August 1898), p. 1.

Most of the press, however, betrayed little sympathy for the government's management of reform despite seizing upon the concept of 'regeneration'. Overnight, the word became the height of fashion as well as an object of mockery.[42] The caricaturist for the weekly *Don Quijote*, for instance, drew Silvela on a visit to the province of Valladolid where the politician tries to convince a Castilian farmer of the splendid future awaiting him, pointing to a horizon illuminated by the rising sun of regeneration (Figure 1.3). Meanwhile, the satirical *Gedeón* – which had introduced a regular section entitled 'Regeneration' shortly before Silvela became prime minister – parodied a well-known painting, then very recent, by the artist José Moreno Carbonero. Silvela, the Quixotic champion of regeneration, is portrayed thrown from his steed in spectacular fashion by the blades of false giants whilst his minister Eduardo Dato, cast in the caricature as Sancho Panza, stands helplessly watching (Figure 1.4). Just as the knight of La Mancha had tasted defeat in his battle against the windmills, the fall of Silvela's government appeared to portend the premature failure of the *regeneraciónismo* adventure.

Figure 1.3 Caricature, 'Regeneración' ('Regeneration'), *Don Quijote* (Madrid, 19 January 1900).

[42] J. F. Fuentes, 'Regeneración', in J. Fernández-Sebastián and J. F. Fuentes (eds), *Diccionario político y social del siglo XIX español* (Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 2002), pp. 603–8.

Figure 1.4 Caricature by Sileno, 'Espantable aventura de la regeneración' ('The terrible adventure of regeneration'), *Gedeón* (Madrid, 14 March 1900), parodying José Moreno Carbonero's painting, 'Don Quijote y los molinos de viento'. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Antonio Machado and the Generation of 1914

The failure of regeneration for the generation of 1898 did not prevent its successor, the generation of 1914, from adopting the same desire for political, scientific and artistic renewal. The transition between the two generations is reflected in several poems by Antonio Machado. Machado's reflections on time would become a constant theme throughout his work. In 'Un pasado efímero' ('Fleeting Past') from *Campos de Castilla* (1913), however, Machado describes a typical man of the Restoration regime with greying hair who banally discusses politics in a

provincial circle, whilst conservatives and liberals cycle through turns in government. Machado describes his character as 'prisionero en la Arcadia del presente' ('being imprisoned in the Arcadia of the now'), concluding:

> Este hombre no es de ayer ni es de mañana,
> Sino de nunca; de la cepa hispana
> No es el fruto maduro ni podrido,
> Es una fruta vana
> De aquella España que pasó y no ha sido,
> Esa que hoy tiene la cabeza cana.
> [This man belongs neither to the past nor the future,
> he is simply a nonentity: representing neither
> the good nor the bad in the country but rather
> something worthless and vain,
> that Spain of the past which never really existed;
> the grey-haired decrepit image of Spain.[43]]

The division between a decrepit past and a new Spain bursting with energy is similarly reflected in 'El mañana efímero' ('Fleeting Future'), wherein Machado again describes the traditional Spanish past formed by 'amantes de sagradas tradiciones' ('lovers of sanctified traditions') that must be overcome: 'la España de charanga y pandereta, cerrado y sacristía, devota de Frascuelo y María' ('that Spain of flamenco and bull-fighting, of enclosure and sacristy, worshipping Frascuelo' – the name of a popular bull-fighter – 'and the Virgin Mary'). Though 'ese ayer engendrará un mañana vacío y pasajero' ('the futile past will engender a tomorrow / empty and, luckily, fleeting'), in the present something very different is taking place:

> Mas otra España nace,
> la España del cincel y de la maza,
> con esa eterna juventud que se hace
> del pasado macizo de la raza.
> Una España implacable y redentora,
> España que alborea
> con un hacha en la mano vengadora,
> España de la rabia y de la idea.
> [But another Spain is being born,
> the Spain of the chisel and mallet,
> with that eternal youth which is forged
> from the massive past of the race.
> A Spain implacable and redeeming,
> a Spain which is dawning
> with avenging axe in its hand,
> a Spain filled with fury and ideas.[44]]

[43] A. Machado, *Campos de Castilla*, trans. Patrick H. Sheerin (Soria, Jesús Bozal, 2011 [1913]), CXXXI, p. 138.
[44] Machado, *Campos de Castilla*, CXXXV, pp. 146–7.

Machado's premonition of a regeneration through the hands of an active and spirited youth was confirmed in 'A una España joven' (1914), in which the poet yet again begins by decrying the recent past, 'un siglo vencido sin gloria' ('a defeated century without glory') in retreat, 'un tiempo de mentira, de infamia' ('a time of lies and infamy') through which an old, poor, drunken, grotesquely clad Spain drags itself.[45] By contrast, the new Spain rises up resolutely, proclaiming with all the energy of youth that 'el hoy es malo, pero el mañana … es mío. / Y es hoy aquel mañana de ayer' ('Today is bad yet tomorrow's mine! / Today is yesterday's tomorrow').[46] Furthermore, in a letter from Machado to Ortega dated 17 July 1912, the poet observed that 'today … contains yesterday, while yesterday could not contain today'. Machado thus confirmed Bergson's belief that the present carried the past within itself – not the other way around.[47] This idea reappears repeatedly in Ortega's later work.

A key aspect of this new attitude, already discernible among regenerationists like Machado and Ortega, is that assessing the present is inseparable from a call to action. If the Restoration was despised as part of 'old Spain' that must be left behind, it was necessary to get to work and build a new Spain that looked to the rest of Europe rather than gazing inwards. Moreover, regeneration was seen as an urgent action that required energetic measures. The formulae were diverse. While some, like Machado, appealed to the education of the people and to the young, others trusted in the providential action of an individual 'iron surgeon' or in a 'revolution from above' via a reformist programme driven by those in power, such as the unsuccessful attempt by conservative Antonio Maura in the first decade of the 20th century.

This new attitude to an action-oriented present gave rise to a revitalising movement led by the generation of 1914, which coalesced around 'a unity of experience, feeling and fate that transcended national borders', succeeding the early fin-de-siècle generation of the 1890s and early 1900s.[48] Some of its most prominent members had studied at the best European universities and research centres due to support from the Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios (Council for the Extension of Studies or JAE). This institution, led by the renowned scientist Santiago Ramón y Cajal, had been created by the government in 1907 to promote the internationalisation of Spanish scientists. Ortega, the intellectual leader of the generation of 1914, had in fact studied in Germany with a JAE scholarship. The defining entry

[45] The famous illustrator Luis Bagaría published several caricatures of this false Spain dressed up in carnivalesque masks. See A. Elorza, *Luís Bagaría. El humor y la política* (Barcelona, Anthropos, 1988), pp. 145 and 225.

[46] A. Machado, *Border of a Dream: Selected Poems*, trans. Willis Barnstone (Port Townsend, Copper Canyon Press, 2004 [1914]), pp. 302–3.

[47] Quoted in Jorge Brioso, 'Antonio Machado y la tradición apócrifa', *Anales del Seminario de Historia de la Filosofía*, 24 (2007), 215–36 at 224. See also Antonio Machado, *Juan de Mairena*, ed. Antonio Fernández Ferrer (Madrid, Cátedra, 1986), pp. 221–2.

[48] R. Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 3.

moment of the generation of 1914 was the League for Political Education's presentation in the Comedia Theatre in Madrid on 25 March 1914 where he delivered a resounding speech on *Vieja y nueva política* (old and new politics) in which he openly broke with the Cánovas regime.

José Ortega y Gasset: The Modern Theme

Ortega began by declaring that an unbridgeable gulf had opened between 'the official Spain and the new Spain' with 'new generations' who were 'absolute strangers to the principles, the habits, the ideas and even the vocabulary of those who today control the official bodies of Spanish life'. While the youth looked to the future, the men of the Restoration continued to look to the past. Far from being 'the continuation of the history of Spain', as Cánovas had asserted, the Restoration had brought the end of 'national life'. In *Meditaciones del Quijote*, an essay published earlier that year, Ortega had argued – using a metaphor similar to Silvela's 'Sin pulso' – that the present constituted an age of history in which 'Spain's heart beat the fewest times per minute', bringing the country to the brink of death. Rescuing the nation from this lethargy was 'the lofty mission of the present time' and would require 'a radical shift … in the centre of gravity of the public conscience'.[49] In Ortega's opinion, the definitive crisis of the Restoration was visible in every sphere; there was no turning back. In the face of a 'panorama of ghosts', including antiquated republican ideas that 'smell too much of the 19th century, which for us is as old as the 10th century', Ortega redefined politics, advocating a true liberalism that would place institutions at the service of the nation's interests to quicken the pulse of modernity.[50]

Moving forward in time, it was in 1923 that the Madrid philosopher offered the most solid and systematic reflection upon the concept of generation, a theme that would be addressed by many sociologists of the day, beginning with Karl Mannheim in 'Das Problem der Generationen' (1928).[51] On the basis of his lectures at the University of Madrid in 1921–2, Ortega published *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (*The Modern Theme*) (1923), which crystallised the concern for the present shared by his generation of 1914. It is worth clarifying that by this time, Ortega was already well-known in Europe and both Americas as a tireless advocate of the Europeanisation of Spain, though he would soon become more famous after numerous editions and translations of his work *La rebelión de las masas* (*The Revolt of the Masses*) (1929) were published.

[49] J. Ortega y Gasset, *Meditaciones del Quijote*, ed. José Luis Villacañas (Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 2004 [1914]).
[50] J. Ortega y Gasset, *Vieja y nueva política y otros escritos programáticos*, ed. Pedro Cerezo Galán (Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 2007 [1914]).
[51] K. Mannheim, 'Das Problem der Generationen', *Kölner Vierteljahrshefte für Soziologie*, 7 (1928), 157–85, 309–30.

The first chapter of *El tema de nuestro tiempo* deals with 'La idea de las generaciones'. While its theoretical reflection is based upon particular cases, it is obvious that Ortega has the goal in mind, clearly expressed in his 1914 speech, of ending an historical era and leaving behind Restoration Spain. There are, he says, peaceful, cumulative ages, which continue and develop the paths that begin in the past, and 'ages that sense the immediate past as something in urgent need of reform at its root'. It is these 'ages of belligerent philosophy' that battle to overcome an unacceptable past, ages of initiation in which the young fight for profound historical change. 'Our age', he adds, 'is of this last kind, if we understand by "our age", not that which is now ending, but that which is now beginning'.

In Ortega's view, intellectuals were 'split into two groups'. On the one hand, the majority 'rear-guard mass' was still installed in 'established ideology'. On the other, 'a small minority of vanguard hearts' capable of perceiving a new horizon clashed with the former, who 'defend the old'.[52] The determining factor that marks these competing temporal programmes is generation. A generation 'is like a new social body', Ortega declares, which comes to life in an historical era and contains both the select minority and the mass. The entire dynamic of the historical future revolves around this key concept of generation: 'Generation, dynamic compromise between mass and individual, is the most important compromise in history, the hinge upon which it executes its movements.'[53] Members of each generation are endowed with 'typical characteristics', a 'common physiognomy' that differentiates them from preceding generations. Consequently, men of a particular generation possess a common substratum that elides their differences: 'however much they may differ, they resemble one another even more'.[54] The crucial point is that each generation represents in the course of the history of nations a particular 'moment of their vitality'. In the *continuum* of history, each generation, like a note within a melody, has its own pitch, its own vibration, its own tone: it conceives existence in a specific and peculiar way. One generation is born of another and, following on from each other in time, each receives the legacy of the previous generation without renouncing its distinctive spontaneity. Consequently, the specific 'spirit' of each generation depends upon the balance between these two ingredients, which appear in a more characteristic manner in each of the elements that make up a generation, the masses and the elites. The former tend to settle in the dimension of the past, while the latter – the select minority – remain open to new horizons.

In this paradigm, Ortega identifies two kinds of historical eras, namely 'cumulative eras' (in which the young are subordinate to the old in every sphere of life, as in science, arts and politics) and 'eliminatory or polemic eras' (in which 'the old people are swept away by the young'). Thus one can observe the rhythmic

[52] J. Ortega y Gasset, *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, 13th edn (Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1953 [1923]), pp. 4–5.

[53] Ortega, *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, p. 7.

[54] Ortega, *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, p. 8.

sequence of 'eras of old age and eras of youth' throughout history.[55] If Unamuno coined the concept of *intrahistory*, the young Ortega emphasised what he called '*metahistory*': a knowledge previous to history that had a specific interest in 'the essential structure of historical reality' that rendered certain histories possible. This new discipline, which 'would be to specific histories what physiology is to the clinic', would therefore seek to analyse the primary historiological categories that offer a theoretical framework for history and concern itself with exploring 'great historical rhythms'. In this vein, Ortega considered it perfectly possible 'to anticipate the general profile of the coming age' as, with advances in historical awareness and knowledge, one could 'discover in the present the symptoms of the future'.

Applying to his own era this capacity to diagnose the present and predict the future, Ortega believed that the sensibility of the entire Western world was undergoing a decisive shift in his time. In fact, he believed that Europeans were profoundly disorientated amidst a terrible crisis, the most serious in modern history. In his analysis it would be 'men of contemplation', the intellectuals, who first detected the 'primeval gestures of the new time', later to be supported by the 'men of action' to this newfound sensibility into practice.[56] Because politics had lost its relevance and capacity to mobilise, the signals of what was to come must be sought in science and philosophy. Among those signals, Ortega highlighted the antagonism between 'the specifically modern sensibility' of Cartesian *rationalism*, which inspired revolutions, and *relativism*, which emerged in the 19th century. These two positions are incompatible yet both disregard something valuable. Thus 'neither rationalist absolutism—which saves reason and nullifies life—nor relativism, which saves life, evaporating reason' are acceptable. The historical mission of the generation of 1914, in other words the sensibility particular to 'the age that now begins' was precisely 'the rejection of that dilemma'.[57] The divorce between reason and life, between culture and spontaneity, is a defining feature of European modernity whose origins can be traced back to Socrates.[58] In short, the theme of the present and the task of the new era that he signalled on the horizon was 'to subject reason to vitality', to existence, and 'show that culture, reason, art, ethics … must serve life' and not the other way round.

For this reason, Ortega's philosophy of *raciovitalismo* (ratiovitalism) seeks above all to transform pure reason into 'vital reason'. To do so reaffirms the constitutive historicity of the human being, which on the one hand reflects the legacy of one's predecessors and on the other is projected towards the future within certain circumstances and coordinates. As Ortega would conclude some years later, 'Mankind has no nature, but only history'. Consequently, *El tema de nuestro tiempo* ends with the insistence that the sensibility of the new age should lead the young

[55] Ortega, *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, p. 10.
[56] Ortega, *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, p. 22.
[57] Ortega, *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, p. 31.
[58] Ortega, *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, p. 55; Ortega, *Vieja y nueva política y otros escritos programáticos*, pp. 11–88.

generation to the conviction that the new culture should be at the service of life, a 'vital human phenomenon' that is both biological and spiritual, encompassing science, morality and law as well as art. In Ortega's words, at 'the present hour', the theme of the fin de siècle was the affirmation of this emerging integral culture, which had to recover the spontaneity and vitality that European modernity sought to amputate in its rigidly rationalist and geometric thinking. In his theory of history, Ortega insisted, time and again, that *past and future only existed in the present*. Thus history could only be 'a science of the present'.[59]

Bagaría's caricature (Figure 1.5), published soon after *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, portrays Cajal (who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine in

Figure 1.5 Caricature by Luis Bagaría, 'Una reflexión de Ramón y Cajal' ('A reflection by Ramón y Cajal'), *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 29 June 1924).

[59] Ortega, *History as a System and Other Essays*, pp. 83, 212–13, 223; J. Ortega y Gasset, *Man and Crisis* (New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 1958), pp. 184, 198–9; and J. Ortega y Gasset, *Historia como sistema* (Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1941), pp. 60 and 69.

1906) making a critical comment upon national problems while he looks down his microscope. Indeed, Ramón y Cajal agreed with Ortega, who was a great admirer of his, on two essential points: first, Spain's problem – and not only Spain's – was a cultural problem; second, the microorganisms that damaged the national body were those traditional powers that, as can be read on the small sign that one of them is holding, represented the 'old politics' that Ortega attacked in his speech in 1914. However, beyond Ortega's concern for the present and future of Spain, the philosopher's abiding interest in questions of temporality and the historicity of mankind, and more specifically, the new horizon that opens following the demise of modernity, recurs throughout his work. Ortega's reflection upon the need to transcend and overcome certain aspects of modernity that have become obsolete is one reason for the continued relevance of his work.

Epilogue: Revolution and Republic

The task of Ortega's generation transcended the realms of culture or science to intervene directly in the politics of their time. Ultimately, this crisis in the liberal State resulted in the collapse of the Restoration regime leading to a military dictatorship presided over by General Miguel Primo de Rivera with the consent of King Alfonso XIII in 1923. The young members of the generation of 1914 lived under this new regime. But, as we have seen, those young intellectuals helped to question, erode and finally overthrow the dictatorship. A prime example of this exercise was a famous article published by Ortega in the newspaper *El Sol*. A prestigious liberal publication, *El Sol* had several first-class contributors like the writer Ramón J. Sender or the illustrator Bagaría and exerted considerable influence over public opinion. On 15 November 1930, the first page of *El Sol* featured Ortega's 'El error Berenguer' ('The Berenguer mistake') in reference to the prime minister, Dámaso Berenguer, offering a harsh diagnosis of the dictatorship and an energetic call to collective action:

> I aim today to persuade and not to move. But I have had to evoke with a minimum of evidence what the Dictatorship was. Today it seems like a story. I needed to recall that it is not a story, but that it was a fact … Its actions once established constituted a growing and monumental insult, a crime against the nation, against history, against public and private dignity … The continuity of legal history has been broken. The Spanish State does not exist. Spaniards, rebuild your State![60]

Ortega opposed any attempt to erase the memory of events during the seven years of Primo Rivera's dictatorship. He called on his generation, on all Spaniards at the time, to act: 'We the ordinary people, worthless and far from revolutionary, it is we who must tell our fellow citizens: Spaniards, your State does not exist! Rebuild it!' This was a ground-breaking and rallying message that ended with a hard-hitting

[60] J. Ortega y Gasset, 'El error Berenguer', *El Sol* (15 November 1930), 1.

sentence that would strike deep at the heart of Spanish public opinion: 'Delenda est Monarchia' ('The monarchy must be destroyed').[61]

Ortega thus presented himself as spokesperson for many Spaniards who were unhappy with the dictatorship and with the monarchy of Alfonso XIII, who had consented to it. In those desperate political, economic and social circumstances, a popular revolution led to the Second Spanish Republic in April 1931. Those who experienced that episode felt that it was not just a simple link in the cycle of revolution–restoration–revolution, but rather the end of a cycle. Whilst Cánovas spoke in 1876 of 'continuing the history of Spain', Ortega declared in 1930 that this historical-legal continuity had been irrevocably broken with the advent of the dictatorship; it was necessary to start from scratch. The proclamation of the Second Republic opened a new present, a new time that could be built upon the ideals repeatedly expressed by young Spaniards in the previous six decades.

The first president of the provisional government of the Second Republic, Niceto Alcalá-Zamora, confirmed to loud applause when the Parliament of the Republic convened that 'the triumphant revolution is the last of our political revolutions that closes the cycle of the others and the first, and hopefully the only one, of the social revolutions to pave the way to justice'.[62] Shortly before, Alcalá-Zamora had solemnly declared:

> Today an event has taken place in Spain that will constantly be remembered throughout its History. In the historical strata there is not one hour that is lost, nor a minute that its faithful sensibility does not reflect; but some hours, some days, are flat, and others are hilly; few are the days that can be considered a true watershed, and today is a high point, a supreme peak, an unequivocal turning point in the History of Spain. On the one hand, the very echo of our civil strife, all the enormous and unparalleled struggle between the democratic tenacity of the people and the incorrigible obstinacy of the Dynasty; on the other, the entire horizon that opens with the promise of a peace, a future and a justice that Spain could never imagine as it does now.[63]

At the end of this enthusiastic speech, the president of the provisional republican government paid tribute to those who had fought for Spain's regeneration by looking to the future with optimism, linking past with present: 'This is the vision of the history of a life that we did not live, but to which we are heirs, and of the other life that we shall not live, but which represents the hope of a new and greater Spain.'[64]

[61] Ortega, 'El error Berenguer', 1.
[62] N. Alcalá Zamora, Parliamentary Speech on 14 July 1931, *DSC*, p. 3.
[63] N. Alcalá-Zamora, Parliamentary Speech on 14 July 1931, *DSC*, p. 3.
[64] N. Alcalá-Zamora, Parliamentary Speech on 14 July 1931, *DSC*, pp. 3–4.