

## ■ article

JOURNAL OF CATALAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY,  
Issue 6, 2013 | Print ISSN 2014-1572 / Online ISSN 2014-1564  
DOI: 10.2436/20.3001.02.79 | P. 91-114  
Reception date: 5/07/2011 / Admission date: 12/12/2011  
<http://revistes.iec.cat/index.php/JOCH>

# Eugeni d'Ors. Philosophy and Humanism in the Twentieth Century

Joan Cuscó i Clarasó

Societat Catalana de Filosofia  
jcusco@vinseum.cat

### summary

Eugeni d'Ors i Rovira was the most influential thinker in Catalan culture in the twentieth century. He stood at the forefront of Noucentisme, which he captures in his philosophical novel of 1911 *La ben plantada* [*The Elegant Woman*], the main focus of this essay. The contribution of d'Ors falls within the context of European debates on humanism, its meaning and its value, particularly in the aftermath of the First World War. His work is an interpretation of the Mediterranean and Greek roots of European civilization.

### key words

Eugeni d'Ors, Catalan philosophy, humanism, Joan Maragall, philosophy and art.

A book reaching a hundred years of age is not at all exceptional. What is highly interesting, though, is that a book can succeed over the years (and right from the moment of its first appearance) to enjoy regular reprinting, multiple adherents and numerous replies. Such success cannot be overlooked. If, in addition, the author is a philosopher and the work is one of the main stays of his output, then the matter will most certainly be of interest to us. This is case with *La ben plantada* [*The Elegant Woman*] (1911), by Eugeni d'Ors, a work that is central to Catalan culture in the twentieth century and a pillar underpinning the philosophical thought of d'Ors and the Noucentisme movement.

In Catalan culture, *La ben plantada* marks a turning point. When d'Ors corrected the galleys of the book, Joan Maragall (the reigning Catalan cultural totem up until that date) was on his death bed. Also, the book is a literary work that is highly revealing of Noucentisme poetics. Both statements are quite accurate. That said, however, the most important statement to make is that Catalonia, with d'Ors, turns its eye squarely toward the twentieth century, leaving the nineteenth century behind. As someone who had as little in common with d'Ors as Miquel

Siguan conceded (in a remark made in a seminar dedicated to the Catalan philosopher from the Ferrater Mora Chair at Girona), “He is a figure in our intellectual history who merits and requires review”.<sup>1</sup> D’Ors himself was mindful of this turning point when, in the pages of *La ben plantada*, he compares Adelaisa (the main character in Maragall’s poem *El comte Arnau*) with Teresa (the protagonist and symbolic archetype of his own book). For d’Ors, both expressed strength, but:

“And now that I have mentioned the Adelaisa of Comte l’Arnau it occurs to me to ponder what similarity or dissimilarity to her may mark out the Ben Plantada [Teresa, the titular character of his own book]. The self same Race is there, both women are full of life. But I think Adelaisa is a sense of touch and colour, while the Ben Plantada is Measure. Both aim to reflect instinct. But in Adelaisa, this instinct appears particularly targeted at the purposes of the species, while in my creation what is subtly in operation is the instinct of the Race, that is to say, a thing that is now intelligence and –profound, unconscious– Culture”.<sup>2</sup>

Adelaisa symbolizes the Modernisme movement; the Ben Plantada, Noucentisme. Since no culture is of a single piece, however, the Ben Plantada spurred a string of responses: Santiago Rusiñol published a reply in the pages of *L’Esquella de la Torratxa*;<sup>3</sup> Rodolf Llorens i Jordana turned the book on its head in *La ben nascuda* (1936);<sup>4</sup> Joan Capó, nearly in parallel with d’Ors, wrote *La ben amada* (1911-1914) in the Balearic Islands; and Salvador Dalí penned *La real ben plantada* (1949), combining d’Ors’s Teresa with Lídia of Cadaqués (incorporating the realism of surrealism).

*La ben plantada* is a work that throws open a door onto a greater understanding of Catalan culture in the twentieth century, although d’Ors himself acknowledged in 1954, in *La veritable història de Lídia de Cadaqués* [*The True Story of Lídia of Cadaqués*] that “I confess I have written a book that is too pure” (much as the artist Xavier Nogués had depicted with great accuracy in his etching of 1912).<sup>5</sup> A work that brings the intellectual movement of the twentieth century alive on the page, *La ben plantada* was written in a watershed year for European

---

1 Josep Maria Terricabras [ed.], *El pensament d’Eugenid’Ors*. Girona: Documenta Universitària, 2011.

2 Eugeni d’Ors, *La ben plantada*. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 2004, p. 29.

3 Margarida Casacuberta, *Santiago Rusiñol: vida, literatura i mite*. Barcelona: PAM, 1997.

4 Rodolf Llorens, *La ben nascuda*. Vilafranca del Penedès: Andana, 2005.

5 Eugeni d’Ors, *La veritable història de Lídia de Cadaqués*. Barcelona: Proa, 2002.

culture: in that year, Schoenberg published his treatise on harmony (*Harmonielehre*), Joan Maragall and Gustave Mahler died, Kandinsky produced the painting *Impression III (concert)* and Bartók composed *Bluebeard's Castle*, embodying the anxieties of the period in the figure of a woman (as in the work of d'Ors and also in Schoenberg's one-act opera *Erwartung*, completed in 1909).

*La ben plantada* marks a turning point not only in d'Ors's output, but also in European culture. It is neither a collection of essays nor a volume of philosophical theory (such as the *La filosofia de l'home que treballa i que juga* [*Philosophy of the Man Who Works and Plays*]).<sup>6</sup> Nor is it a text of militant idealism. Nor does it fall halfway between these two stools, like *La vall de Josafat* [*The Valley of Josaphat*].<sup>7</sup> It is a work of creation, expressing philosophical thought, which is expressed differently from, for example, scientific thought. It is the product of the creative act of thinking and, like any other work of art worthy of that name, it outlasts the fleetingness of time. To think, for d'Ors, is to create with all the consequences of creation for human life: *La ben plantada* is not the child of an "artist of the ephemeral" producing "certain manifestations of art which are fully subjugated to the influence of time, situated in time, with their real significance found only in a given segment of time, an era, a century, a season perhaps". Against this weak sort of creation there is true creation, which responds to "the constancy of a work, the firmness of a vocation, against which time can do nothing".<sup>8</sup> And this true creation is what he sets out to do, because a philosopher must be capable of doing it, if he intends to address the matter. Creation involves mastering the will to live by means of the love of wisdom. "One way or another, we must always be learning and in love", writes d'Ors in "L'Aprenent i l'enamorat" ["The Learner and the Lover"].<sup>9</sup> This explains the opposition d'Ors draws between "the man who works and plays" and the "man who smokes and yawns".

Clearly, d'Ors's *Glosari* [*Glossary*] is an effort at dialogue (that updates Plato's ideals in a contemporary setting), but we cannot read all of the glosses

---

6 This book, published in 1914, was the first to collect the journalism of d'Ors systematically. See: Eugeni d'Ors (1995), *La filosofia del hombre que trabaja y que juega*. Madrid: Prodhufi.

7 Eugeni d'Ors, *La vall de Josafat*. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1987. This book, which appeared in 1918, is highly interesting in that d'Ors states clearly from its early pages that Western civilization is once again back in the situation in which Socrates found himself. Citing Pascal, d'Ors argues for the need to assert the power of thought to achieve an "ethics of the intelligence". We need to bear these words in mind in the exploration of the topics that follow.

8 Eugeni d'Ors, *Pablo Picasso*. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 2001, pp. 36-38.

9 Eugeni d'Ors, *Glosari 1916*. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1992, p. 3.

with the same criteria. Over time, the more theoretical, pragmatic and propagandistic glosses were marshalled into a system in *El secreto de la filosofía* [*Secret of Philosophy*] (1947) and *La ciencia de la cultura* [*The Science of Culture*] (1964). By contrast, the glosses that are expressions of thought-as-creation remained independent, such as the glosses that give shape to *La ben plantada* (1911). The former explain what the philosophical vocation entails, while the latter show the benefits of the philosophical viewpoint and of its efforts to create a language to sustain the demands of such a viewpoint. Some show how to build the architecture of thought, while others *are* the architecture of thought.

For d'Ors, this works like an orchestral symphony that must be able to capture simultaneity in language, because simultaneity also occurs in reality and, at the same time, in order to generate a non-dogmatic viewpoint. To this end, the philosopher creates a double distancing, or estrangement, in his work: the first is the writer's regarding what he writes and the second concerns the ideas in relation to the ideas themselves. That is, in relation to reality and in relation to what is said on the basis on reality.

Certainly, in order to grasp his project, the most interesting glosses are the ones that demonstrate the act of thought as a creative act, as a work of art. Hence the importance of *La ben plantada*, which reflects a philosopher's way of grasping reality as distinct from a scientist's approach. It is as though the scientist looks at reality at its most microscopic level in order to find all of its elements and laws, while the philosopher looks at reality from a certain distance to ascertain its meaning. At an exhibition of paintings, we would say that the scientists examine all the most specific aspects of each picture (i.e., its lines, materials, etc.), while the philosophers look from a distance and seek (without excluding the scientists' results) how the works can change the minds and visions of the human being in order to transform a person's actions and the world itself:

“Where is the reality of things: in their phenomenal appearance or in their abstract essence? The answer to this cardinal question divides the philosophical world into two camps. At present, we have accepted this division and, in accordance with it, have argued over the legitimacy of the Science of Culture. In private, however, we have been guarding another solution. A solution that is not eclectic, but rather synthetic, raising the truth of the phenomenon and the truth of the noumenon together into a higher concept, the double objectivity of which is at once affirmed. Noumenon and phenomenon are reconciled in the form, which is general, like the former, and specific, like the latter; which assumes universality and life without any internal contradiction. A schema made up of a line that radiates into several lines at a certain point, with some or all of these lines in turn radiating, at a certain point, into more new lines”.<sup>10</sup>

This is the explanation of what *La ben plantadas* hows as the child of creative thought, which deals with reality on an equal footing. Philosophy provides a way to understand reality and, at the same time, makes use of a language that does not seek followers or dogmas, only readers (interpreters) and dialogue. An activity of the intelligence. A language that constructs neither metaphors nor allegories of reality because it speaks of reality itself, locating in its way of speaking a synthesis of idealism and empiricism.<sup>11</sup> It is a symbolic language that creates an objectivity of geometries. “In the ‘symbol’, the sign is identified with the represented reality; in ‘allegory’, it is not. Figurative thought, as it proceeds by schemas, proceeds by symbols”.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, we cannot read philosophical texts like scientific texts nor read theoretical essays and treatises like philosophical novels (nor philosophical novels like literary novels). And little attention has been given to this fact when reading and rereading the work of d’Ors. Symbols –and speaking through symbols– is one of the primary features of philosophy. Nicol describes this in his definition of an idealist thinker:

“But the word is symbol. [...]. In effect, the symbol stands between the self and the real thing, between the self and the other self. But this mediation of the symbol does not threaten the reality of the thing at all, nor the reality of the two selves that communicate to one another through references to the thing. This symbolic way in which knowledge and expression operate constitutes man’s fundamental way of being. [...] Man is the being that knows differently from how other animals know”.<sup>13</sup>

Reality, being and the self are the main focus of interest in the knowledge to which the philosophical vocation is directed. A vocation aimed simultaneously at wisdom and life, because knowledge must grow into a “paideia” and a way of life. Intelligence is ethics and aesthetics. However, throughout the twentieth century, this underwent change. Philosophy came to be considered a humanistic (second-order) discipline, the sciences with direct and immediate applications (such as the nuclear bomb) triumphed, soon to be followed by the ascendance of the sciences transformed into technology and technology transformed into nodes of connections and simultaneous interactions through flat screens and virtuality.

---

11 See: Eugeni d’Ors, *Confesiones y recuerdos*. Valencia: Pre-textos, 2000, p. 57.

12 Eugeni d’Ors, “Filosofía del esquema”, *Atlántida*, I, 1. Madrid. Rialp, 1963, p. 26.

13 Eduard Nicol, *Las ideas y los días*. Mexico: Afinita, 2007, p. 363.

## On d'Ors and Dalí

The influence of d'Ors and his work changed over the course of the twentieth century as the context changed. In 1948, Dalí said: "I am finishing a book, *La real ben plantada* [*The Real Elegant Woman*], the story of Lúdia of Cadaqués, in response to d'Ors".<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, the work is not to be found today. Nonetheless, the title given by Dalí is quite explicit. He produced a work that was aimed directly at reality. What is reality for Dalí? What response did he wish to make to d'Ors? Why did he link reality with Lúdia of Cadaqués? Did d'Ors share the same aim with his character of the Ben Plantada? How do knowledge, thought and reality fit together?

First, it must be said that for Dalí, Lúdia of Cadaqués is the protagonist that enables him to place on the same level the realistic and the stark raving mad (reality and dream).<sup>15</sup> Dalí had his book in hand when he was defending the establishment of a "new classicism" in which art and the advances achieved by the sciences (especially in physics and in the work of Prigogine and non-equilibrium thermodynamics) opened the way for further progress.<sup>16</sup> A leap made possible after the "Romantic entropy" of Wagner, as Dalí put it, or, in the words of Alex Ross, after the turn of the twentieth century when European culture experienced the implosion of Wagnerism, which became a black hole of irony.<sup>17</sup>

Without going any further at the moment, is *La ben plantada* of d'Ors the start of something or the end of something? Is it the door shutting on Romantic entropy? How should we read d'Ors's book? Must we place it alongside other crucial works of the twentieth century that are, according to Roger Scruton, the wonderful farewells of a civilization tending, as the twentieth century went on, toward its own self-preservation?

If the comprehension of reality conveyed by d'Ors and by Noucentisme is not adequate (in that Dalí, for example, needed to remake it), how should we

---

14 Salvador Dalí, *La vida pública de Salvador Dalí*. Barcelona: Ara, 2002, p. 63.

15 For more information on Lúdia of Cadaqués, see: Cristina Massanés, *Lúdia de Cadaqués*. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 2001.

16 In relation to this fact, Dalí wrote in 1953: "Eugeni d'Ors, who had not returned to Cadaqués in fifty years, came to visit me surrounded by friends. D'Ors felt drawn to the myth of Lúdia of Cadaqués. It is highly likely that our two books on the same subject will be published at the same time. In any event, his is a vaguely aesthete and pseudo-Platonic work that will achieve little more than throwing into relief the realist and hypercubic underpinnings of my own 'Ben Plantada'". Salvador Dalí, *Diario de un genio*. Barcelona: Tusquets, 2009, p. 162.

understand it? Does *La ben plantada* have to be situated among the works that Scruton mentions in defining what was dying with the twentieth century?

“As I woke up, I had the thought that the twentieth century had been full of the most wonderful farewells and I thought of Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde*, Strauss’s *Four Last Songs*, Thomas Mann’s *Dr Faustus* and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. These works are all incredible farewells and I thought how wonderful it is to have known these things and to see how one is reconciled with death itself, but also with the death of a civilization. I woke with gratitude for the art that had given all of that. I do not believe that it could be put any differently”.<sup>18</sup>

First, we must situate *La ben plantada* as an expression of philosophical thought as creative thought. And the first question to pose when reading the work of d’Ors today is whether one can place it within its Catalan and European setting.

Second and prior to stepping into any other kind of controversy that puts anecdote and florid scholarship before the comprehension and meaning of what d’Ors has actually written, it is necessary to make very clear that *La ben plantada* is the most significant expression of the man’s thought. The book offers a clear demonstration of his viewpoint (which is patently reflected in its style). We need to leave aside (even though it is a fundamental fact for any understanding of the personality and style of d’Ors) that the author of *La ben plantada* was, in the words of Rodolf Llorens, a “living statue” [*un home estàtua*, in Catalan], or as Pere Bosch i Gimpera neatly characterized him, based on real events, a haughty dandy.

Third and conceptually of more interest given the hundred years that have passed since its publication, the work needs to be read as a consolidation of the author’s Platonism in the twentieth century. The “Mediterranean”, in d’Ors, is Plato. “Philosophy” is Plato. “Culture” is Plato. And *La ben plantada* is Plato.

For d’Ors, Plato is a philosopher unlike any other. We cannot think of him as the man who followed Socrates and preceded Aristotle. Although it is true that everyone has his value and contributes his grain of sand to the development of human thought, Plato is head and shoulders above them all. Plato is always relevant, everyday of the week and twice on Sunday, in the summer, autumn, winter and spring. Plato, writes Eugeni d’Ors in his *Novísimo glosario* [*Newest Glossary*], is inimitable in “the tremendous lucidity with which he elevates the standards of humanity’s naïve thinking to intellectual and discursive heights; of which the function is figurative and not abstract. Other philosophers may be

---

18 Julian Baggini and Jeremy Stangroom, *Lo que piensan los filósofos*. Barcelona: Paidós, 2011, p.156.

masters of reflection: he was, is and will be the master of creation". Hence *La ben plantada!* Teresa is not abstract; she is figurative. She is culture in block capitals. D'Ors himself put it clearly: "Figurative thought, that is, thinking by means of schemas, doubtless constitutes one of the supreme acquisitions of humanity; yet it must be said that humanity does not appear to have realized what this fact means: neither humanity nor even its philosophical mouthpieces".<sup>19</sup>

With this statement, d'Ors propounds a singular way of constituting philosophical thought in relation to other forms of knowledge and expression. And in so doing, he poses a question that is very current: if, as he himself said, not even the philosophers themselves have understood that philosophical thought is constructed through the mechanism of figuration, then what is its role in contemporary society? What is its impact on society? In other words, what interrelationship does it maintain with its context? By posing these questions, he puts on the table evidence not only of the absolute crisis of humanism and the idea of progress, but also of the death of philosophy. If *La ben plantada* conveys this widely misunderstood mode of expression, then is the Ben Plantada, the character of Teresa herself, the beginning or the brilliant culmination of a cultural period or ideal? Her appearance is sudden and devastating and her ascendance boldly augurs the future!

## On philosophy

D'Ors's work comes out of the triumph of Plato by way of the civilizing example of Rome (because it was Rome that taught us the effort required for culture to penetrate history).

For d'Ors, in reality there are three great temporal processes: geology, history and culture. Through technical effort, history can penetrate the geological process. Through Rome ("in all of its sweeping expanse"), culture can penetrate history. Creation and arbitrariness. The Ben Plantada is this synthesis of Plato and Rome, of the creation of thought and the work of civilization. She was neither Teresa Baladía (who surely captivated d'Ors) nor Lúdia of Cadaqués (who was captivated by d'Ors). Teresa is neither the bourgeois woman nor the fishwife and witch. Both women were important to d'Ors, but we must go beyond this. Certainly, the book is peppered with references to his family, to his break with Pijoan and so forth, and it has numerous biographical aspects, but we must not let these features distract us from the ultimate meaning of the book.

The philosophical viewpoint and rigorous analysis need to push farther. *La ben plantada* is the fundamental and foundational piece of d'Ors. As noted by the scholar Mercè Rius, the principle of figuration (which, as we have seen, comes from Plato and takes form in Teresa) is the pivot around which d'Ors's philosophy revolves (as does the importance that mysticism and the figure of the *Angel* acquires for him).

For d'Ors, the mode of human beings is Trinitarian. Human beings are made up of three interwoven parts: the body, the soul and the angel (which is the shared soul); the material and the spiritual in relation to their expression or individual and collective particularization. The relations and forms of organization among these three parts generate the process of life, the movement of being through time. Teresa is the archetype towards which this movement must tend: a form of being tending toward serenity and *seny*, a Catalan idea of good sense, moderation and self-restraint.

Thus, Teresa is the angel. An *Angel* that, together with the *Body* and the *Soul*, make up the constitutive skeleton of the human and his mode of being, which is Trinitarian. In d'Ors, as in the Greeks, the Trinity is the realm of movement and of dance, of thought and of life. Thanks to his three-part nature, the human being is able to produce movement and, with movement, thought. "Human reason takes a deep-seated pleasure from distributing each aspect of reality that it beholds into three ordered parts [...]. The ordering of these three parts proceeds such that the most exquisite and unattainable perfection is found in the centre, while the first part is a tart, richly flavoured preparation and the last part is an excessive blandness", writes Xènius in the book under examination.<sup>20</sup>

The movement of life toward serenity. The classic ideal embodied by the Ben Plantada. In his foreword, d'Ors says clearly: "The intention of the person who organized it was not to leave his reader in a state of daily increasing unease; but rather in a heightened serenity".<sup>21</sup> This is the expression of the new idea of education that Socrates and Plato put forward. Of "paideia" as the training of the human being, a training that was, as Sloterdijk explained, "a rite of initiation that is logical and ethical in nature for an elite of young men, rarely for women; under the guidance of an advanced teacher, the students had to overcome their purely family and tribal markers in order to achieve a national and imperial humanity of vast perspective and elevated thought. In this way, from the very beginning, philosophy is inevitably an initiation into something great, something which is greater, which is the greatest of all; it is a school of universal synthesis".<sup>22</sup>

---

20 Eugeni d'Ors, *La ben plantada*. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 2004, p. 39.

21 *Ibidem*, p. 5.

22 Peter Sloterdijk, *Temperamentsfilosòfics*. Girona: Edicions de la l·l, 2011, p. 22.

The aim of this education, of this philosophy, is what the Greeks called “sophrosyne”. In other words: *seny*. It is what the Romans labelled “humanitas”. Thus, “paideia” is the initiation into adult *seny*. Humanity aspires to produce what has been called the individual with a “great soul”. A human being fit for the city and for the empire. The path of imperialism through “humanitas” is the value of cosmopolitanism, of one who finds order in chaos, of one who is able to achieve serenity in a chaotic cosmos. In 1907, d’Ors was clear in his gloss on social justice when he wrote: “Patiently, heroically, we daily raise up people in freedom, in instruction, in national consciousness: we mould them in citizenship”.<sup>23</sup> In many other quotations, he reiterates this notion, particularly when he reaffirms that solidarity is the bedrock of the city, because the city is the supreme goal and solidarity is the supreme law: “Through solidarity, each has obligations to others, to all. The author writes alone in his study. Could he possibly imagine that he is free or independent? Free, independent! What madness! If he depends on each and every one of us! On the other lodgers in the house, on his immediate neighbours, on the neighbourhood, on the village, on his people, on his continent and on the six parts [*sic*] of the Earth and the Solar System and the universe ... without the universe, he would not exist; without every human being, he would not be a human being; without his fellow citizens, he would be no citizen ...”, writes d’Ors.<sup>24</sup>

This is the political premise that characterizes and juxtaposes imperialism and liberalism. If liberalism says that each individual and each people are masters of their own fate (“look out for yourself”), imperialism expresses a solidarity that binds each person and each people to one another (“and to the dead in history and to the generations yet to come”). This means that we individually and collectively share responsibility. Imperialism is “socialization, statism, the educational system, the city, the ideal of the growth of peoples, social justice, the fight for ethics and for culture”.<sup>25</sup>

D’Ors said that Plato did not do abstraction, but rather figuration (and that that is what makes Plato universally relevant). If abstraction moves from the particular to the universal by destroying what is specific and characteristic in the particular, figuration does not do so. Figuration links the roots and the sky. As a consequence, Teresa is not an abstraction: she is a child of the principle of figuration. It is no coincidence that in 1913, when d’Ors addresses “the eccentricities of culture”, he says loud and clear that “it is even better if a museum and a culture are singular in the sense that we find values and examples of

---

23 Eugeni d’Ors, *Glosari 1906-1907*. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1996, p. 414.

24 Eugeni d’Ors, *Glosari*. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1982, p. 27.

25 Eugeni d’Ors, *L’home que treballa i que juga*. Barcelona: Eumo, 1988, p. 68.

excellence that can be found nowhere else”.<sup>26</sup> For philosophical language is based on the principle of figuration.

In support of this statement, we need only review what d’Ors writes in his foreword to the 1935 edition of *La ben plantada* (in which he remarks on how the earlier editions of the book were received). He refers to his vision of the cypress as a metaphor for “paideia” and to the definition of *seny*. “A lopped cypress is not a cypress, and a corner of the world has no dignity except to the extent that it points and alludes to the serene blue universality of the Ecumen. Nor should we forget that Nando, the fisherman, he of the sanctity of daily work, is called thus, and not ‘Ferran’ or any other stylistic ‘purism’. *Seny* binds variety in unity and makes of unity a higher authority”, writes d’Ors unequivocally.<sup>27</sup> Shortly before his death, he voiced this thought even more strongly: in the final foreword that he was to write for the work, he said that he aimed neither for literature nor for real life. He did not want the details, as the novelist does. He wanted the *Angel*. He did not want discontinuity, but rather that which is eternal. He did not wish to be a scholar, but rather a philosopher. He did not seek out the details and the plot, but rather the secret. The serenity that enables a greater understanding of the movement of life. Each individual, he writes, must work to find what is angelic within himself (“the pure rhythm and supreme unity of life”) and if the Romantics have said that each must make a poem of his life, d’Ors holds that each life must be as elegant as the demonstration of a mathematical theorem.<sup>28</sup>

This value, which is local in the universal sense of d’Ors, he finds (and exemplifies) in the traditional Catalan song *La Dama d’Aragó* (see chapter eight of the first part of *La ben plantada*). It is no accident that in 1947, when a musical dramatization of the book was proposed in Madrid, the version included several traditional Catalan tunes arranged for voice and piano, nor that d’Ors himself was pleased a song with tambourine had been written in dedication to the Ben Plantada (1911). Indeed, “the movement of the Ben Plantada is governed by Music”.<sup>29</sup>

The universal value of the local is what Xènius seeks through the *Glosari* [*Glossary*]: the starting point of a new philosophy and a new model of civilization, which was called Noucentisme. Teresa (the Ben Plantada), as a child of the figurative principle, comes out of this ability to know how to uncover the univer-

---

26 Eugeni d’Ors, *L’home que treballa i que juga*. Barcelona: Eumo, 1988, p. 184.

27 Eugeni d’Ors, “Pròlegnou” in *La ben plantada*. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 2004, p. 108.

28 Eugeni d’Ors, *La ben plantada*. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 2004, pp. 91-92.

29 Eugeni d’Ors, *Ibid.*, p. 14.

sal in what is local, the category beyond the anecdote. Teresa is an outgrowth of the synthesis of this task, which the philosopher carried out every day through the *Glosari*. However, the synthesis was also entrusted by the philosopher to Xènius, who is the expression of the intellectual personality superimposed over the philosopher of flesh and blood.<sup>30</sup> Not for nothing is the symbol of Teresa a tree (divided into roots, trunk and crown) or her nation the sea (the Mediterranean Sea as the cradle of philosophy and the sea itself as the tree's wellspring of life). The sea as the origin and end of life, with the knowledge of cartography to make life more intense and more human.

By 1908, d'Ors was already clear that his vocation was philosophy, but this vocation could not depend on a man of flesh and blood. The human being is merely a moment of spirit that aspires to know reality, coming to know what is universal, eternal, and exceeds the human. Therefore, this knowledge – which is not of quotidian anecdotes, but rather of things important for the present and the future – must be put in the mouth of someone else who can convey them through time and space. In the mouth of a messenger (or angel, as the etymology of the word tells us) that is not bound up with the contingency of human life, but can converse across the generations. And this messenger is Xènius.

Xènius demonstrates what is enduring. Those aspects that need to be upheld as references. He is no longer the philosopher who steeped himself in ideas and transmits them to us, because that would be equivalent to creating schools and dogmas, and it is not what d'Ors wishes to achieve. It is not ideas that must be transmitted. Rather, we need to put in a superconscious constellation what is truly of value for the present and the future. We need to give an aura of timelessness to what matters. Xènius is the figure embodying intelligence, not the intelligence of d'Ors, but rather the intelligence of everyone who has collaborated in the undertaking of its development through the years. Thus, Xènius is the angel that emerges out of the work of separating the wheat from the chaff, the personality that unites the good and the best of all time in order to make way for the future by means of the dialogue established through him. D'Ors is depersonalized in Xènius, who is his angel and much more than an alter ego or a pseudonym.

Philosophy seeks what will enable us to solve the problems posed by life. When the philosopher detects these elements, he gathers them around a conceptual figure constructed to act as a nexus to unify individuals and generations. And this figure is Xènius. The philosopher contributes neither a system nor an instruction manual. He provides us with a body of facts and of achievements

---

30 The narrator in *La ben plantada* entrusts this task to Xènius. See: Eugeni d'Ors, *La ben plantada*. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 2004, p. 92.

that are a crucial endowment to enable us to think better. A cultural endowment, an outgrowth of the activity of the intelligence, which compels us to dialogue and distances us from dogma. Philosophy is the love of wisdom: "On the one hand, the problem is something that resists. On the other hand, it is something in which this power is summoned and exercised. In the former lies the difficulty, although it is surmountable. In the second lies a satisfaction, an incentive that never fails to recall the incentive of love".<sup>31</sup>

Teresa brings together and unifies the categories uncovered in reality in order to make them more universal. She reveals the necessary task of philosophy in its wish for the regeneration and transformation of society now that Romanticism is dead and Modernisme exhausted. This task was clearly defined by D'Ors himself before he began writing the *Glosari* [*Glossary*]: "When the advances of the intelligence, the diversification and immense specialization of knowledge and, with them, of the branches of human wisdom make increasingly necessary a comprehensive synthesis to which the contemporary intellectual movement is tending and which, integrated in general principles, is coming to distil the entire scientific effort of our times [...] we can see in this future synthesis a new encyclopaedia that will free us from its eighteenth-century predecessor. [...] Once again on her throne, more beautiful than ever and never more powerful, will sit the exiled queen, the august sovereign metaphysics".<sup>32</sup>

Now that a century has passed since its publication, this early book of d'Ors must be reread to find everything that we can learn from it. As he wrote in chapter eight of the first part: "By drawing near the Ben Plantada, one becomes better. By being governed by the Ben Plantada, there is a special gain in nobility. Around the Ben Plantada, all is order and concord. It must be eternity itself made beautiful appearance and joyful instant". However, do not forget what d'Ors says just before the final page of the book: that a nation has only one Ben Plantada among millions of silent, dedicated workers; that each day brings the need for toil. This is why it is necessary to read the book: to learn actively of the solidarity that unites us to those who have gone before and those who will come after.

Teresa is measure. She appears as an artistic creation that illuminates life and, in the end, disappears (with her ascendance). Teresa is the image that demonstrates the possibility of looking beyond the concrete; she makes visible the invisible. She is not an idol, but rather an icon that reflects reality. Therefore her symbol is a tree. A tree that illuminates our life because it is a tree that is "well-planted" [a play of words on Teresa's moniker, *ben plantada*, in Catalan].

---

31 Eugeni d'Ors, *El secreto de la filosofía*. Barcelona: Selecta, 1947, p. 72

32 Eugeni d'Ors, *Papers anteriors al glosari*. Barcelona. Quaderns Crema, 1994.

## On art, literature and philosophy

These ultimate reflections of d'Ors lead us into a new area. *La ben plantada* is literature that expresses a philosophy. In other words, it is: 1) an understanding of the world; 2) an ethical commitment, and 3) an aesthetic commitment. It explains the basis of d'Ors's understanding of the world at the same time that it is an act of creation that puts this understanding to the test. It is not an essay or a novel of ideas; it is thought that creates, the expression of the philosopher-artist, of creative thinking. This text is closest "to the normal module of the literary artist," writes d'Ors. "It has been the most celebrated among mine".<sup>33</sup>

Teresa is aesthetics and ethics. The Platonism of d'Ors leads him to create a protagonist who demonstrates the aristocratic calling of Noucentisme art. Art is a way to refine personality and awareness; it illuminates the way to live. Through artistic creation, we attain an experience of the world that is significantly enriched. The aesthetic experience puts us at a certain remove from the real world and from daily life in order to broaden our perspective, to force us to expand our imagination and to see what causes this distance, this estrangement, in us.

Schopenhauer said that it was necessary to avoid losing, through reading, complete sight of the real world.<sup>34</sup> We say this in consideration of the double estrangement that d'Ors creates between himself and reality through the Ben Plantada. First, there is the estrangement of the writer. Second, there is the estrangement of the text itself. The work was not written by Eugeni d'Ors, but by Xènius, and Xènius is not a pseudonym (although it is often understood as such), as his uses of Octavi de Romeu or the Guaita were. As the author himself said in 1906, Xènius is his secret, the secret to understanding him. Xènius is not a man of flesh and blood; he is not subject to time or space. Xènius is a soaring angel that soaks up the scents of the best authors so as to create his own perfume and infuse anyone who comes near him with it.<sup>35</sup> In our time, an excellent definition of what Xènius was, which fits perfectly with the definition given by d'Ors, has been provided by Josep Maria Terricabras, who remarked on d'Ors's glosses for the pages of the *La Veu de Catalunya*: "Throughout his life, but especially in the Catalan glosses – which are by far his best work – d'Ors is the very picture of somebody wandering the great city of the world, stopping at many spots, drawing

---

33 Eugeni d'Ors, *Confesiones y recuerdos*. Valencia: Pre-textos, 2000, p. 56.

34 See: Arthur Schopenhauer, *Pensamiento, palabras y música*. Madrid: Edaf, 1998.

35 Eugeni d'Ors, "De com el glosador es diu Xènius", *Glosari 1906-1907*. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1996.

our eye to many shop windows, inviting us to enter some of the shops or visit diverse edifices and monuments. He feels called to act as a guide and not only as an incidental and entertaining guide for tourists”.<sup>36</sup>

The second estrangement is of the text itself: *La ben plantada* is neither essay nor treatise nor tale. It is a philosophical novel. No other option was possible, if we bear in mind what d'Ors wrote in 1925: “*Life is a dream? Life is art*”.<sup>37</sup>

However, what is a philosophical novel? Is it a novel of ideas? No. For d'Ors, contemporary theatre and the contemporary novel had to be geared, and were geared, toward the intelligence (d'Ors mentions Jean Giraudoux and George Bernard Shaw), and that did not mean that they were works offering ideas, but rather the opposite. They were works whose notions fit the category of subtle ideas. And art had to saturate itself in this subtlety.<sup>38</sup> D'Ors juxtaposes the novels of Dickens (much more brilliant and moving) with the novels of Barrès (which provide more theoretical suggestions). The latter works are far nearer to philosophy than the former ones. The great problem is whether this type of creation (which is typified by “knowledge, shrewdness and refinement”) can be popular (gaining space in contemporary society).

Here we find ourselves before a new version of the dialectic between anecdote and category. Xènius is an aristocratic personality and therefore capable of understanding the tradition. By contrast, if the author were a person of flesh and blood, the work would no longer be directed at understanding, but rather at “serving novelty”. Surely we can say, in the words of d'Ors himself, that Xènius is like a Gozzi opposing a Goldoni. “When novelty triumphs once and for all, Goldoni is exalted, Gozzi forgotten”.<sup>39</sup> We recall that for d'Ors it is the philosopher who walks the path between anecdote and category. For that reason, says d'Ors, the novel that becomes philosophical (like theatre and painting) approaches music through its subtlety and because, as in the case of going to listen to a symphony, the approach requires great effort. They are sculpted ideas.

But why the double estrangement? Is not the estrangement already produced by artistic creation or philosophical thought enough? No. For d'Ors, it is not yet enough. The double estrangement is needed to carry out his project on two fronts: 1) “arbitrarism” and 2) imperialism. Neither can be embodied in

---

36 Josep M. Terricabras [ed.], *El pensament d'Eugeni d'Ors*. Girona: Documenta Universitaria, 2011, p. 11.

37 Eugeni d'Ors, *Calendario y lunario. La vida breve*. Valencia: Pre-textos, 2003, p. 19.

38 Eugeni d'Ors, *Teatro, títeres y toros. Exégesis lúdica con una prórroga deportiva*. Seville: Renacimiento, 2006, pp. 62-66.

39 Eugeni d'Ors, *Ibid.*, p. 33.

a single person. It is necessary to develop them through an “intellectual personality” or “angel” who cannot be identified with anybody in particular and yet, at the same time, with everyone. Xènius is this non-local personality, without flesh and blood. A European figure who reflects civility (which is the *mise en scène* of humanism) and can express and imbue us with “arbitrarism” (the free and creative will) in the direction of imperialism (the full universal solidarity that surpasses the first step of collective affirmation that is nationalism).

## On philosophy and war

The war of 1914 was a crucial moment to observe what would become of d’Ors’s project. As a war among Europeans, among brothers (d’Ors was to say), it cast doubt on the values of one model of civilization: humanism and liberty.<sup>40</sup> To grasp what the First World War meant for European culture, you had only to listen closely to the music and the plot of Alban Berg’s opera *Wozzeck*, based on Georg Büchner’s play *Woyzeck*, of 1836. Composed between 1914 and 1924, *Wozzeck* opened in 1925. With satisfaction, Berg himself noted that no listener would get stuck on the opera’s formal aspects: “Nobody is alive to anything but the large social implications of the work, which goes far beyond the individual fate of Wozzeck. This, I believe, is my success”.<sup>41</sup>

For Xènius, Europe is important from two perspectives: first, as a political ideal (of a political solidarity that leads us from the nation to the state and then from the state to the union of states) and, second, as an ideal of civilization (Catalonia must be Europeanized). Solidarity is the political foundation that takes us from nationalism to imperialism and the purpose of this political project is the city and civility. We find these ideals expressed with great clarity from the tenets of 1903 at the First Catalan University Congress to the *Lletres a Tina* [*Letters to Tina*] (1914).<sup>42</sup>

---

40 See: Joan Cuscó, “Europa en la filosofia d’Eugeni d’Ors. Continent o contingent?” *Europa: Col·loquis de Vic*, XV. Barcelona: Catalan Society of Philosophy / IEC, 2011.

41 Alban Berg, “Una nota sobre Wozzeck”, *Wozzeck*. Barcelona: Gran Teatre del Liceu, 2005, p. 92.

42 To grasp this turning point clearly, it is advisable to read the foreword that d’Ors wrote in the edition of his glosses to Tina, published under the title *Tina i la guerra gran* [*Tina and the Great War*] as part of the collection “Quaderns literaris” of the Llibreria Catalònia (volumes 76 and 77), Barcelona, 1935.

The year 1919 witnessed the beginning of a new stage in the work of d'Ors and in the concerns that guided his task as a thinker or intellectual. After losing the competition for a university chair in 1914, suffering a nearly fatal bout of flu in 1918, feeling the effects of the First World War on his ideals, being forced to stand down from his post at the Mancomunitat in 1920, and getting expelled from the philosophy seminar of the Institute for Catalan Studies (IEC) in 1921, d'Ors tried several times to forge ahead (teaching in Latin America, giving courses in Europe and ultimately triumphing in Madrid).

The work in which this turnabout is most fully reflected is *Grandezza y servidumbre de la inteligencia* [*Grandeur and Servitude of the Intelligence*]. From its first pages, d'Ors states that he felt out of touch because of the radical shift that concepts and practices had undergone: "I see modern society made a republic of toil, which has a common law in material production, with money for compensation".<sup>43</sup> Yet he said he would not forsake the intelligence: "Today, as before, we hold that *profession* and *love* are two revealing manifestations of the personality".<sup>44</sup> What is needed is to see whether the two things can be fit together.

On the contemporary world, he wrote: "Supreme freedom becomes supreme subjection" and it is necessary to reflect on whether this is also true in the case of the intelligence. He senses that wisdom and knowledge can find a place in contemporary society only with difficulty. They cannot get comfortable amid the "laziness and [...] bustle" of those living today.<sup>45</sup> And this is the paradox that must be solved. What should the philosopher do? Throw in the towel? No, because he cannot give up on himself. However, he must be mindful of the context in which he works.

D'Ors said that he once met a famous scholar when he was young and that he and all the other young Spaniards dedicated to culture and normality (the followers of Noucentisme) admired and defended this learned man because they were "thirsty for a greater Europeaness [...]. For our cities, we too wanted an imitation of the paragon, object or finding encountered on our fervent pilgrimages through places and sanctuaries of the universal scientific life".<sup>46</sup> In those years of youth, when one visited a learned European, one became aware of one's own shortcomings: the "visiting Spaniard is, by virtue of being Spanish, a newcomer

---

43 Eugeni d'Ors, *Grandezza y servidumbre de la inteligencia*. Madrid: Residencia de Estudiantes, 1919, p. 16

44 *Ibidem*, p. 19

45 *Ibidem*, p. 33

46 *Ibidem*, p. 23

to the scientific life”.<sup>47</sup> Speaking with “authentic scholars”, one realizes that there is a type of society in which “science, pure science, can be a dignified profession, not a cynical extravagance, but not an extraordinary event either [...], where scholars form part of the normal state of things”.<sup>48</sup>

Until the contemporary period, philosophy and the love of wisdom had been inexorable forces guiding the history of Europe. With the Sophists, wisdom became secular (and with them was born the history of culture and the possibility of the “strict intellectual”);<sup>49</sup> in the medieval period, the university took another stride down this path (with the “establishment of the professional of the intelligence”),<sup>50</sup> and that is the period in which the figure of Abelard stands out (who gave us a “new version of the intellectual type, the stark lesson of his privileged heights and of his difficult freedom”).<sup>51</sup> Thus, d’Ors continues, “the Sophists invented the man of science; Abelard invented the professor; the Renaissance came to seek something else”.<sup>52</sup> Later, the printing press arrived and journalism. By the nineteenth century, wisdom “already knew all of the instruments of intellectual freedom: it knew secular science, the university, book publishing and periodic publication. Now came time for the final examination. A professionalism of the intelligence would be put to the test”.<sup>53</sup>

Over the course of the nineteenth century, this was the battle. And what results did we achieve? If we analyse the products of “industrialized intelligence”, we have to say: “In the presence of its finest results, sampling its most exquisite fruits, before the mirage of a normal Europeaness, in the conquest of which we had put our dreams, we succeeded in deceiving ourselves. The upheaval in the world today disabuses us of our error [...]. Intelligence sought to organize itself in the nineteenth century according to the common law of professionalism, entering normally into a republic of toil that has production as its common law, with money for compensation [...]. This is an advance, an enrichment, a treasure; not in what it has produced as industry, but in what it has produced as enslavement, as another episode in the eternal, the irredeemable enslavement”.<sup>54</sup> True culture

---

47 *Ibidem*, p. 25.

48 *Ibidem*, pp. 25-26.

49 *Ibidem*, p. 38.

50 *Ibidem*, p. 39.

51 *Ibidem*, p. 40.

52 *Ibidem*, p. 41.

53 *Ibidem*, p. 45.

54 *Ibidem*, pp. 49-50.

was pushed to the fringes of “official culture”. The genuine intellectual is hidden and does not enter into commercial channels or prestigious circles. Neither communism nor capitalism has worked in favour of the intelligence. Toward the intelligence, politics always casts a suspicious eye, because one forgets the fact that “the great catastrophes of history have always followed periods in which the forces of the country have been directed at industrial and commercial production, giving exclusive attention to economic development . . . Be that as it may, however, the most horrifying fact is this. The intelligence, the free intelligence, the sheer force of the spirit, is not summoned to take a position in the great struggle of collective interests into which the world is drawn”.<sup>55</sup>

The lived experience of the nineteenth century involved a radical shift in Western culture. The intelligence came to play a significant role neither under communism nor under capitalism, and any ideal of justice for the society of the future disappeared from politics. The democratization of culture has not been possible and the cultural commercialization of the twentieth century does not inspire hope. This is the x-ray of the situation.

Out of this analysis, d'Ors made his idealistic (or poetic) leap: “Thus bereft, thus expelled, what remains for the intelligence? What remains, sirs, is a purpose that no profession will be able to take from it. What remains is the function of totality”.<sup>56</sup> He eschews the commercialism of servitude, but at what price? There is a model of civilization –the one that gave form to Europe– that is slipping away from us. So what must be done?

For Xènius, the response was simple: defend the “thirst for totality”. Europe and its culture have eschewed the “most vigorous palpitations of the spiritual life” of the human being. They have functionalized wisdom and culture: they have subjugated true wisdom and intelligence. It is no coincidence, then, that in this society: “Unfit pedagogues patiently write books of imitative prattle about children for children”.<sup>57</sup> Being (or wanting to be) so functional, knowledge no longer serves what it is supposed to serve. When we break it into pieces and speak of the “culture of youth” or the “culture of the workers”, we are falsifying true culture and this has an impact on our way of life. An absurd, dead, functionalist knowledge develops to extinguish concerns. As a consequence: “The intelligence cannot be a free industry that, when it is free, is no longer industry, and when it is industry, it does not deserve the name of intelligence”.<sup>58</sup> The

---

55 *Ibidem*, p. 54.

56 *Ibidem*, p. 56.

57 *Ibidem*, p. 60.

58 *Ibidem*, p. 69.

failure of the nineteenth century teaches us a lesson: “We know that we cannot emancipate ourselves from the ordinary; but we also know that the best of ourselves is not for sale”.<sup>59</sup>

The lecture given by d’Ors to the students’ residence in 1919 marks a turning point in his thought. If until that moment we find a defence of curiosity and of philosophy as an outgrowth of the love of life, there is now a leap forward. When the philosopher collides with reality, when the idea that he has put on reality no longer fits it, the Catalan thinker goes a step further. He raises his eyes toward the heavens, toward the mystical. At this point, he thinks of the act of death as a symbolic act that helps to understand his attitude and his task (being interred in the tomb “To Matilde” in the cemetery at Vilafranca del Penedès).<sup>60</sup> In addition, d’Ors radicalizes the postulates of some of the authors that mark his earliest philosophical essays of 1909. These are the authors that d’Ors approached in order to obtain grants to travel through Europe and to Europeanize Catalonia. We think of Ernst Mach (who saw no abyss between the physical and the mental worlds and defended the principle of economy of thought); the postulates that d’Ors called “conceptualist” of Pierre Duhem; and, above all, the vision of the psychologist James Mark Baldwin, who held that the object of philosophy must be beauty, not truth.<sup>61</sup>

More specifically, this turning point led d’Ors to reinforce his ethical and aesthetic attitude stemming from philosophy, turning his death into an enduring symbol. At the same time, it pushed him to undertake a synthesis and systematic ordering of the entire *Glosari* developed up to that moment, resulting in two books: *El secreto de la filosofía* [*Secret of Philosophy*] (1947) and *La ciencia de la cultura* [*The Science of Culture*] (1964).

This is the point when d’Ors came to see that the Ben Plantada is a necessary symbol, but that a counterweight was also needed (as expressed in the symbolic act of his wish to be interred at Vilafranca). He recounts this realization in *La veritable història de Lúdia de Cadaqués* [*The True Story of Lúdia of Cadaqués*].

---

59 *Ibidem*, pp. 69-70.

60 The decision dates back to 1917, became firm in 1932 and was formalized in 1940 when d’Ors returned to Catalonia. He was familiar with the cemetery in Vilafranca and the tomb of his ancestors and decided that that was where he wished to be buried. This symbolic act ties in well with *La ben plantada* and its vision of philosophy as an ethical and aesthetic commitment. See: Joan Cuscó [ed.], *La ciutat dels àngels*. Vilafranca del Penedès: VINSEUM, 2010.

61 For more information on the essays written by d’Ors in pursuit of any travel grants for Europe, see: Jaume Roure, “La etapa barcelonesa de Eugenio d’Ors”, *Actas del III Seminario de Historia de la Filosofía Española*, Salamanca: University of Salamanca, 1982.

Teresa and Lídia of Cadaqués are symbols of this duality in human life. In this book, which d'Ors was writing in the final days of his life, he reviews the importance of Lídia of Cadaqués and says:

“To the eyes of reason, this singular woman is not the Ben Plantada; but perhaps she is the complete woman. She raises the fruit-laden boughs of the tree toward the sky, because it had strong roots. She now goes deep into the dark empire of roots, because a miracle has wanted a splendour of sky and a radiance of justice to be with her. / Thus, what in Teresa traced an ascendance into the Roman sky above the cypresses of Tivoli, until she became a star, this is in Lídia a descent through the soil of the motherland, by way of bare knolls and dizzying gorges, into subterranean caverns; into the very depths of the earth to the dwelling place of the impassive or ignary ideas. Angels receive Teresa the Ben Plantada in song, while gnomes at their forges hail Lídia, the godmother. It is all equal to eternity. By what is Feminine, we are raised into the bosom of the earth's realities. To the empire of the Intelligence or the ogre of the Instincts. To the universal Republic of Ideas or the universal Republic of the Womb ...”<sup>62</sup>

## Angel, anxiety and time

In the final years of his life, Eugeni d'Ors had a great clarity about his life and work. He said that his life could be boiled down to three letters: “ang”. These are the first three letters in the Catalan words for “angel” and “anxiety” [*Àngel* and *Angoixa*]. The Angel is the task borne out of creative thought (of philosophy) and anxiety characterizes the life of the philosopher of flesh and blood. On one side of the scale is human life. On the other side is what, thanks to the exercise of the creative intellect, transcends the life of the individual. On one side is flesh and blood; on the other, ideas and concepts. On one side is the ephemeral; on the other, the eternal. On one side is Eugeni d'Ors; on the other, Xènius. On one side is the contingent and the anecdotal; on the other, the category.<sup>63</sup>

---

62 Eugeni d'Ors, *La veritable història de la Lídia de Cadaqués*. Barcelona: Proa, 2002, p. 168.

63 D'Ors summarizes this stance well in the following words: “The cave from which the sources of the personality emerge is much deeper than all that; its common wellspring has arteries that will flow on through various moral channels. This explains why Nietzsche, in a dictum that only those untested by life could think a paradox, said that “being ashamed of our vices is the first step toward being ashamed of our virtues” ... “Because what develops between the former and the latter is shame in our personality”. Going beyond

With the ideals of the nineteenth century abandoned and humanism in utter crisis, the first third of the twentieth century called for a search for other outlets for creative thinking and for philosophy (which also became the object of questioning within its own context). New avenues needed to be found for the future “heliomachy” or struggle toward the sun, which typifies the struggle of Noucentisme, alive in 1906 and reaching its point of no return by 1911, its moment of greatest splendour and yet, at the same time, its ultimate end-point. With the outbreak of the First World War, suddenly all “-isms” were thrown into doubt.<sup>64</sup>

D’Ors, too, was forced to rethink his philosophical project. If he had once said that it involved commencing the *Glosari* (to feed new ideas and fresh viewpoints into the popular imagination), now he turned to philosophy (to organize thought itself), a philosophy borne out of the oxygen that dialogue with others and with the good and the best of human culture can give to our perspectives, leading ultimately to “heliomachy” (the action of putting philosophy into practice), an attitude that is initially individual, but then, as Plato wrote in the *Theaetetus*, must finally become collective. In the path marked out by d’Ors, “heliomachy” is left deferred into the future.

In the context of the twentieth century, d’Ors came to realize that this path was no longer open to the philosopher and that, therefore, it was necessary to adjust. This led him to halt the project of the *Glosar* in order to create an atmosphere propitious for the future. The shifting context caused a swerve in d’Ors’s project that lent a new dimension to *La ben plantada*, which has been explored in this essay.

The aim of the *Glosaris* to create an individual superconscious (which is Xènius) that would serve as the context of a new civility by creating a collective superconscious that establishes a place to meet and hold dialogue. From the decade of the nineteen-twenties, all of d’Ors’s work is directed toward this ideal. Thus, his Spanish phase is a consolidation, refinement and systematization of his Catalan phase (which is his more creative phase). The gloss, d’Ors was to say, has the same role as the task of Socrates adapted for the contemporary world. And this role is to universalize that wisdom of civility, as in Plato.<sup>65</sup> *La ben plantada* is part and parcel of this superconscious, which is like the skin of a cell (and

---

Freud’s psychoanalysis, d’Ors returns to Nietzsche. See: “Filosofía del esquema”, *Atlántida*, I, 1 (1963), Madrid: Rialp, p. 31. [The article corresponded to lesson 11, sections 1, 2 and 3, of the book *La Ciencia de la Cultura*, which the publishing house Rialp brought out in the following year (1964).]

64 Eugeni d’Ors, *Confesiones y recuerdos*. Valencia: Pre-textos, 2000, pp. 117-119.

65 *Ibidem*, p. 58.

performs the same functions for life). In the words of Dalí, it is a dermatoskeleton created out of the strength of human thought, which was always aimed at fortifying life and ways of living: “Today, for the first time in his life, Salvador Dalí has felt this angelic euphoria: he has grown in stature. [...] The time has come for Gala and I to build a house ‘outside’. In the realm of the angels, everything is ‘outside’. They are not conceived other than for their ‘outside’ manifestations. / The dermatoskeleton of the soul of Dalí makes it debut today”, the artist wrote in 1953, deeming that he had now begun to transcend himself.

This is thought-as-creation. Philosophy as a force that fights for humanism and civility, something that is clear in the world of art, as d’Ors made explicit in his study of Picasso. Philosophy is thought that creates a superconscious, a continuity that overcomes the ephemeral time of the human being and the irreversibility and entropy of time in physical reality. This creation demonstrates what William James called “the eternal inner message of the arts” and, by relation with F. C. S. Schiller, d’Ors was also to say that philosophy seeks out the bridge between mystic consciousness and discursive consciousness. Both aspects, which are bound up with the creation of the Angel and the establishment of the “principle of figuration” in the philosopher’s own style of thinking are addressed in the *Introducción a la vida angelica* [*Introduction to the Angelic Life*] and *El secreto de la filosofía* [*Secret of Philosophy*].<sup>66</sup>

As d’Ors intended, the Angel opens the way to irony and dialogue. It is not dogma that spreads, but rather a multitude of points of connection in a transcendent network, points that sustain encounter and dialogue. A map. A network. Once more we return to Plato. It is a cyclical, non-contingent temporality which, in the manner of Plato, enables human participation in what escapes time: eternity and ideas. Once again, Plato.

This vision of the Angel takes us back to the earliest texts of d’Ors on culture. Culture, he wrote, is synthesis. A total, highly centred vision: “Life’s brief knowledge [*el saber curt*, in d’Ors’s coinage] is all harmonized and organized, all in movement and alive; not separate or cut up, like entries in the dictionary; but all bound together and flowing, as in the physiological circulation of blood, each drop connected to the one before and to the one after”.<sup>67</sup> Thus, the Angel

---

66 For more on these questions, see: Joan Cuscó, “Eugeni d’Ors i Francesc Pujols. Cara i creu del pensament filosòfic no acadèmic a Catalunya” and Mercè Rius: “Ors i el misticisme del segle xx”, in Josep M. Terricabras [ed.], *El pensament filosòfic d’Eugeni d’Ors*, Girona: Documenta Universitària, 2010. This subject matter is also addressed in Joan Cuscó, “Eugeni d’Ors i la filosofia com a música”, *Quaderns de filosofia i ciència*, 40, 2010, València: Societat de Filosofia del País Valencià / University of Valencia.

67 Eugeni d’Ors, “Sobre el concepte de ‘cultura’”, *Quaderns d’Estudi*, I, 3, Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona, 1915, p. 3.

of history arises out of all life's sparks of eternity. And each of these moments is what d'Ors sought to grasp in order to apprehend its own unique quality. All together, they are folds of time in which exist both Kafka's "infinitely extensible time" and Borges's "purely qualitative and internal time". As a consequence, this is a conceptualization closely connected to the thinking of Gershom Scholem, Walter Benjamin and Franz Rosenzweig. For them, time is no longer linear or continuous. Nor does it respond to causality. Time is "intermingled". In the Angel, the past, present and future coexist. With the First World War, the philosophers of the twentieth century were forced to radically rethink the idea of progress and historical time.<sup>68</sup>

Translation from Catalan by Barnaby Noone

---

68 See: Stéphane Mosès, *El ángel de la historia*. Valencia: University of Valencia / Càtedra, 1997. Massimo Cacciari, *El Ángel necesario*. Madrid: Visor, 1989.