

## ■ reviews

JOURNAL OF CATALAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY,  
Issues 7&8, 2014 | Print ISSN 2014-1572 / Online ISSN 2014-1564  
P. 167-170  
<http://revistes.iec.cat/index.php/JOCIH>

**J**osé Ferrater Mora, *Three Spanish Philosophers. Unamuno, Ortega and Ferrater Mora*, edited and with an Introduction by J. M. Terricabras, Albany, State University of New York Press, (SUNY series in Latin American and Iberian thought and culture), 2003. ISBN 0-7914-5713-3. 268 p.

Josep Monserrat Molas

Universitat de Barcelona  
jmonserrat@ub.edu

*Three Spanish Philosophers* introduces the English versions realized by Ferrater Mora of his works on Unamuno (*Unamuno: A Philosophy of Tragedy*, 1962), Ortega y Gasset (*Ortega y Gasset: An Outline of His Philosophy*, second edition, 1963) and the third chapter of his *Being and Death: An Outline of Integrationist Philosophy* (1965, entitled «Human Death»). Each text is accompanied by a brief editor's note, which informs the reader about the different versions of those works, by a biographical note of every philosopher and, finally, by a bibliography of their main works, sources and updated secondary bibliography about the author in question. This added material enriches the work and turns, undoubtedly, an already valuable and engaging book into a useful text for scholars. The merit is acknowledged in that respect to the editor, Josep M. Terricabras, who signs also the introduction (p. 1-9). In the introduction, the texts of the edition are presented in a clear and sufficient manner; more concise for the first two works, more extensive for the commentary on Ferrater Mora since, being an excerpted text from a longer work, and not a complete work as in the case of Unamuno and Ortega, it must be conveniently set in context. The result is a group of brief but clear pages on Ferrater Mora's thought: «integrationism».

As a whole, the volume can be seen as an introduction to the thought of three philosophers of different generations offering, in turn, a penetrating look at human existence. Physiologic anthropology becomes one of the lines, if not the main, which can be followed in a global reading of the work. According to Josep M. Terricabras, Ferrater Mora «provides us with two synthetic and brilliant versions of Unamuno's and Ortega's rich and complex thought; that is, he produces two introductory and thought-provoking versions of their thought, without in

the least reducing their substantial content. From his own work, he offers us a chapter which clearly reveals both his conceptual rigour in dealing with complex matters and his ability to express those matters in an extremely clear form» (p. 7).

It may be remembered that, when the two volumes of his *Obras Selectas* were published by Editorial Revista de Occidente on 1967, Ferrater Mora gathered in a section entitled «Tres maestros», his prior studies dedicated to Unamuno, Ortega and Eugenio d'Ors: *Unamuno: bosquejo de una filosofía*, *Ortega y Gasset: etapas de una filosofía* and the chapter about Ors first published in *El llibre del sentit* (1948). For the edition in *Obras Selectas*, Ferrater modified the texts, as he used to do, and inform the readers about the different versions and ed rewritings in different languages (Catalan, Spanish and English) due to the authoris publishing o dyssey. In a modification full of sense, the gathering of «masters» realized by Ferrater Mora in 1967 is changed by another gathering, the gathering of philosophers. *Three Spanish Philosophers* consists of three of Ferrater Mora's works: the English versions of renowned studies on Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset in addition to a significant fragment of his *Being and Death: An Outline of Integrationist Philosophy*. We think that the substitution of Ors for Ferrater Mora is due to the editor, Josep M. Terricabras, director of the Ferrater Mora Chair. This substitution upgrades the category undoubtedly: from masters to philosophers. In the introduction to this English edition, it is remarked that «Ors is not represented here» (p. 3). More important than that, for us, is the recognition of Xavier Zubiri, together with Unamuno, Ortega and Ferrater, as «the most important Spanish philosophers of the century».

The remains of the previous selection of Ferrater Mora in *Obras Selectas* emerge have and theve in the new book. «But in view of the philosophical character of Unamuno's work, and because a substantial part of it developed contemporaneously with the work of Ortega y Gasset and Eugenio d'Ors—who were born almost twenty years after Unamuno—we may even lump these three together in a special group connected with, but in no way dependent upon, the ideals promoted by the great majority of members of the Generation of 1898» (p. 20). «By 1914, Unamuno had become the undisputed mentor of many young Spaniards. This does not mean that he was often violently opposed. But this towering figure made itself felt in the arena of Spanish thought, and there vied for leadership with the other outstanding figures of his time. His chief competitors were Ortega y Gasset [...] and Eugenio d'Ors [...]. The writing of these two differed considerably from Unamuno's both in style and content. Ortega offered a continental manner that was more than a servile imitation of Europe, and d'Ors a twentieth-century viewpoint that was infinitely more appealing than an irrational exaltation of our Age» (pp. 28-29).

Ferrater Mora's interpretation of Unamuno is well known. In particular we would point out the characterization of Unamuno based on his relation to the «word» (cap. 5). «For Unamuno, the task of the philologist—the “true”

philologist— was not merely that of chasing words in order to pluck out their meaning, structure, or relationships; it was to enter into them in order to live—or die—with them. If Unamuno combated and despised the professional philologists, the “exhumers” of words or traditions, it was because he wished to be a philologist by vocation, that is a philosopher» (pp. 76-77). And we should recall that for Ferrater Mora himself, «the contradictory» is the pillar or the axis of the book as a note of what is real: «What Unamuno sometimes called “the contradictory”, and what is more properly labelled “the constant conflict of opposites”, is also real. The real exists in a state of combat—at war with an opposite and at war with itself. Here we have one of the pillars—not to say the axis— of this book» (pp. 97). There is no doubt that contrast with Ferrater Mora’s «integrationism» is stressed in these analyses of Unamuno. We highlight the following quotation, which also represents Unamuno, in contrast precisely with Ortega y Gasset and with d’Ors: «Unamuno was not a spectator, like Ortega y Gasset, nor a preceptor, like Eugenio d’Ors, but as Ernst Robert Curtius has written, an “exciter”: *excitator* and not *praeceptor* or *spectator Hispaniae*».

From the interpretation on Ortega y Gasset, it is remarkable the way its intellectual itinerary is presented. The key consists in considering that Ortega progressively expresses himself as his philosophy gets its own justification: «At any event, what philosophers can learn from Ortega is that ‘the first principle of a philosophy is the justification of itself.’ Ortega himself never lost sight of this necessity» (p. 189). Ferrater Mora would tend to make of «Ortega’s ontology» the focus of his intellectual development. «Although Ortega developed some of his ideas about reality and being very early in his philosophy career, he did not formulate them rigorously until 1925. He discussed these ideas again and again until they gained a central importance in his thought. We can even conclude that Ortega’s ideas on reality and being—which we shall abbreviate as ‘Ortega’s ontology’— have always been the guiding thread of his philosophical adumbrations. Thus, they can be considered as the most important unifying factor throughout all the phases of his intellectual development.

»Blending humility with pride Ortega did not consider his ontology as a particular theory which he had discovered by a lucky stroke. He rather described such an ontology as ‘the present state of philosophy’ or, to use his own words, as ‘philosophy at the present day level.’ [...] Now, integrating the present with the past is not tantamount to accepting all the past philosophical doctrines, and even less to blending them more or less eclectically. The present is integrated with the past only when the latter is assumed by the former. Now, to ‘assume’ the past is not to stand for it, but rather to stand by it» (pp. 180-181). It is not in vain that we quote this passage at length, since we seek to contrast Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset «ontologies» with Ferrater Mora’s «philosophy»: «integrationism».

The third chapter of Ferrater's *Being and Death* introduces an «anthropology» in its first five epigraphs (20–24), an anthropology involving the possibility of confronting a series of paradoxes presented in epigraph 25. Both the anthropology and the paradoxes are contrasted in the last five epigraphs of the chapter with the peculiar human kind of «mortality», a contrast which confirms and endorses the main results of the anthropology (26–30). The ontology can be summarily outlined in this way: «although man is also an inorganic reality (a cluster of inorganic systems) and, to be sure, a biological organism, his existence is not entirely explicable in terms of purely inorganic and organic substances. As a consequence, man's mode of cessation —his peculiar kind of “mortality”— should not be entirely explicable in terms of the modes of cessations of such substances» (p. 229–230). The application of his integrationist method allows Ferrater Mora to *integrate*, using the contributions of philosophy and literature, despite their difference —or, better, thanks to their differences—. In a coherent version, *tension* presented if it is intended to *assume* reality considering the poles which all explanations lead to, and which cause the paradoxes of considering men either as «mortal or immortal» being, death as that which happens to everyone the same, or that which is more strictly personal and own, or death as that which is present since our coming to life, or as that which marks, from the outside, its limit. We should agree with the editor of the book because this selection furnishes us with a great example for presenting what, his method and his philosophical point of view was for Ferrater Mora.

A brief marginal note to conclude. The variation of languages became, for Ferrater Mora, an advantageous possibility for the richness of thought. His translations were re-elaborations —since reeditions of his works were already re-elaborations, more likely were the translations made by the author himself to other languages. As he puts in the preface of the English translation of *El ser y la muerte. Bosquejo de una filosofía*: «It is not, however, a mere duplicate, in another tongue, of the original version. It differs from the latter in various important respects» (p. 211). Such determination showed one of his deeper philosophical convictions: the richness of the variety of what is real and the thought effort required for respecting it —his «integrationism» stems from here. So it is the variety of his name, too. In Catalan, Josep. In Spanish and English he called himself 'José Ferrater Mora', and it seems that he always signed with his second surname because of a promise made to his mother. In the United States, he called himself 'José María Ferrater', since this was the only chance of conserving his surname when it was abridged into 'J. M. Ferrater'. In an ancient Catalan edition, he was renamed in the cover with the name 'Joan'. On the spine of the book we are reviewing, it simply says 'Mora'.

This anecdote, more than enlighten us with the risks of diversity, must remind us variety involves a bigger metaphysical richness and a plurality we must respect.