**Ortega y Gasset, José (1883-1955)**

Spanish philosopher, historian, sociologist and politician, José Ortega y Gasset contributed significantly to the intellectual landscape of the first half of the twentieth century. Ortega’s works, such as *La rebelión de las masas* (1930; *The Revolt of the Masses*), make up the corpus of one of the most influential writers of his time. For him, modernity and democracy were the instigators of his writings that matured into a complex existentialism where reason, above all, is a function of life. Born into a Spanish literary family, Ortega was educated by the Jesuits in Madrid before leaving Spain to continue his studies. In Marburg, Germany, Ortega received a broad and informed education, discovering Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and neo-Kantianism (based on the revitalisation of Immanuel Kant’s [1724-180]) ideas). Ortega’s liberalism and philosophy shifted from perspectivism to radical realism. He founded in 1914 la *Liga de Educación Política* through which he laboured to reform Spanish education. From 1910 to 1936, he taught courses at the University of Madrid before fleeing Spain during the Civil War and lived for some time in Argentina. He returned to Europe in 1942 later and founded the Institute of Humanities in Madrid. In keeping with his family’s editorial practice, Ortega also founded several journals, most significantly, in 1923, *La Revista Occidente*, with which he shared modern Europe’s art, politics and history with Latin America. His editions, writings and translations influenced Latin American writers, changing their prose significantly. It was the publication of his own political and philosophical writing in 1930 that garnered him international recognition. In *Revolt of the Masses,* Ortega exposes the dangers of modernity by describing the ‘mass man’ or ‘spoiled child’ as the modern man ruled by vulgarity, materialism and commonplaceness. The ‘mass man’, contrasted with his preferred ‘select man’, is the product of a society made up of citizens with rights and without duties. Although cited as elitist and contradictory, Ortega’s view reflects his socio-economic reality, coupled with the shifting political landscape of Spain in the twentieth century, from monarchy to republicanism and dictatorship. As Saul Bellow explains: ‘It is Ortega’s view that we in the West live under a dictatorship of the commonplace’ (ix).

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**List of works**

Ortega y Gasset, J. (1930) *La rebelión de las masas*, trans. A. Kerrigan as *The Revolt of the Masses*, ed. K. Moore, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.

**References and further reading**

Bellow, S. (1985) ‘Introduction’ in K. Moore (ed) *The Revolt of the Masses*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.

Marias, J. (1957) ‘José Ortega y Gasset’, *Modern Age* 1 (1): 50-53.

Statham, E. R. Jr. (2004) ‘Ortega y Gasset’s “Revolt” and the Problem of Mass Rule’, *Modern Age* 46 (3): 219-226.

Stern, A. (1975) ‘Ortega Y Gasset and the Modern World’, *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 13 (2): 255-269.

**Paratextual material**

The Spanish-language journal *La Revista Occidente* can be accessed on line at: <<http://www.ortegaygasset.edu/fog/ver/52/revista-de-occidente>>.