

The Method of María Zambrano: an analysis and translated selection of essays centered  
on the concepts of the word, the person, compassion and love

by

Sarah J. Cyganiak

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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Juli A. Highfill, Chair  
Professor Alejandro Herrero-Olaizola  
Associate Professor Catherine Brown  
Associate Professor Cristina Moreiras-Menor

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To Liz and Jon Cyganiak

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## Abstract

The Method of María Zambrano: an analysis and translated selection of essays centered on the concepts of the word, the person, compassion and love

by

Sarah J. Cyganiak

Chair: Juli A. Highfill

This dissertation offers a critical introduction to translations of selected essays by María Zambrano. As of now, only one of her works has been translated into English. I organize the translations into four sections that exemplify four cornerstones to Zambrano's thought: the word, the person, compassion and love. In so doing, I also provide an introductory essay to each of these key concepts. The word, a fundamental concept, functions as an undertaking that allows the writer in solitude to justify the actual state of being of the writer and to communicate to others. Without the word, there is no potential for active thought. The person in Zambrano's work acts as the effective force that evaluates his philosophy of living in the political and ethical realms, thus becoming an ethical agent for change. Compassion centers on the historization of an emotion and knowing how to deal with the mystery of "the other." Love, for Zambrano, is a

potentializing force that projects itself out into the world, creating openings without limits, rather than turning it into love that is focused on the object. Both compassion and love function as positive energies through which the person connects with his daily surroundings in order to create a new person, the embodiment of an ethical pragmatism ready to make changes in the world. Without the combination of the word, the person, compassion and love, Zambrano demonstrates that the creative force of a new person, politically and ethically, cannot exist.

Among the works that I have translated are two articles, “Por qué se escribe” and “Hacia una saber sobre el alma.” These come from the collection, *Hacia un saber sobre el alma*. In addition, I have translated selections from the following texts: *Horizonte del liberalismo*, *Persona y democracia: la historia sacrificial*, *El hombre y lo divino*, *Cuba secreta y otros ensayos*, and *Claros del bosque*. The goal of this dissertation is to introduce to a wider audience selected works that demonstrate the key concepts of Zambrano’s philosophical thought, while offering insight and guidance into Zambrano’s method of thinking and working.

## Translator's Note

For me, translating María Zambrano's work has been a highly creative and personal activity. My role as a translator brings with it an inescapable personal responsibility, which manifests itself in the choices that are made with each word used. In translating these texts by María Zambrano, I originally took the approach of interlineal translation, "where the target text attempts to respect the details of second language grammar by having grammatical units corresponding point for point to every grammatical unit of the source text" (Haywood, Hervey, and Thompson 17). This proved to be an ineffective way to transform Zambrano's texts because the translations became too literal and did not capture the essence of her thought. On the other end of the spectrum, I considered but rejected free translation, "where there is only a global correspondance between textual units of the source text and those of the target text" (Haywood, Hervey and Thompson 18). This approach to translating left too much open for interpretation and abandoned much of the feel of her language. As a result, I chose a third, even middle, path that attempted to strike a balance between the extremes of these approaches.

The complexity and idiosyncrasy of Zambrano's style impose a tremendous burden on the translator. Such stylistic idiosyncrasies take many jarring twists and turns. Her prose abounds with sentence fragments, often making it difficult to determine the implicit subject in any given case. In addition, the length of her sentences frequently

make it necessary to either divide sentences, or restructure them entirely. Making Zambrano's texts more reader-friendly therefore requires taking liberties such as these. Indeed, the need to recraft many of Zambrano's sentences forced me to consider very specific translation choices about word phrases and even individual words. From hyperbaton, word choice and sentence fragments, the translation difficulties in Zambrano's texts were apparent; the only thing to do was to re-work and continue on as best as is possible.

It is important to note that to date, only one of Zambrano's texts has been translated from Spanish to English.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, one of the major reasons for this is the difficulty in translating María Zambrano. However, despite these difficulties, numerous translations have appeared in Italian and French.<sup>2</sup> Zambrano's writing

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<sup>1</sup> María Zambrano, *Delirium and Destiny: a Spaniard in Her Twenties* (New York: SUNY UP, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> These are the following texts that have been translated into Italian: María Zambrano, *La confessione como genero letterario* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 1997), María Zambrano, *Spagna: pensiero, poesia e una città* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1964), María Zambrano, *I sogni e il tempo* (Roma: De Luca, 1960), María Zambrano, *Luoghi della pittura* (Milano: Medusa, 2002), María Zambrano, *Il sogno creatore* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2002), María Zambrano, *La tomba di Antigone; Diotimia di Mantinea* (Milano: La tartaruga, 1995), María Zambrano, *Persona e democrazia: la storia sacrificale* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2000), María Zambrano, *Dante specchio umano* (Troina: Città aperta, 2007), María Zambrano, *Orizzonte del liberalismo* (Milano: Selene, 2002), María Zambrano, *Dell'aurora* (Genova: Marietti 1820, 2004), María Zambrano, *Seneca: con suoi testi scelti dall'autrice* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 1998), María Zambrano, *Per l'amore e per la libertà: scritti sulla filosofia e sull'educazione* (Genova: Marietti 1820, 2008), María Zambrano, *L'agonia dell'Europa* (Venezia: Marsilio Ed., 1999), María Zambrano, *Filosofia e poesia* (Bologna: Pendragon, 2002), María Zambrano, *I beati* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1992), María Zambrano, *Note di un metodo* (Napoli: Filema, 2003), María Zambrano, *L'uomo e il divino* (Roma: Edizioni Lavoro, 2001), María Zambrano, *Unamuno* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2006), María Zambrano, *Delirio e destino* (Milano: R. Cortina, 2000), María Zambrano, *All'ombra del dio sconosciuto: Antigone, Eloisa, Diotima* (Milano: Pratiche Editrice, 1997), María Zambrano, *Verso un sapere dell'anima* (Milano: R. Cortina, 2001), María Zambrano, *Chiari del bosco* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1991), María Zambrano, *Le parole del ritorno* (Troina: Città Aperta, 2003). These are the following texts that have been translated into French: María Zambrano, *De l'aurore* (Combas: Ed. de l'éclat, 1989), María Zambrano, *La confession, genre littéraire* (Grenoble: J. Millon, 2007), María Zambrano, *Les Clairières du bois* (Combas: Ed. de l'éclat, 1989), María Zambrano, *Philosophie et poésie* (Paris: J. Corti, 2003), María Zambrano, *Délire et destin: (les vingt ans d'une espagnole)* (Paris: Des Femmes, 1997), María Zambrano, *Les rêves et le temps* (Paris: J. Corti, 2003), María Zambrano, *Sentiers* (Paris: Des Femmes, 1992), María Zambrano, *L'homme et le divin* (Paris: J. Corti, 2006), María Zambrano, *Apophtegmes* (Paris: J. Corti, 2002), María Zambrano, *Notes pour une méthode* (Paris: Des Femmes, 2005), María Zambrano, *L'inspiration continue: essais pour les perplexes* (Grenoble: J. Millon, 2006), María Zambrano, *L'agonie de l'Europe* (Valencia: Editorial UPV, 2004), María Zambrano, *Hacia un saber sobre el alma* (Madrid: Alianza, 1993).

certainly merits introduction to the English-speaking world. As one of the most prominent thinkers and writers previous to the Spanish Civil War, her thoughts on writing, politics, and collective life offer unique and farreaching insights into a vitally important period of political turmoil. My aim, in providing the critical commentaries and translations that follow, is to demonstrate the continuing relevance of Zambrano's thought in our own period of turmoil and polarization.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

Two and a half months before her death, María Zambrano writes the following in the article “Los peligros de la paz:”

peace is before everything the absence of war, yet it is something more, much more, peace is a way of living, a way of inhabiting the planet, a way of being man; the preliminary condition for the realization of man in his plenitude, seeing that the human creature is a promise.

Entering into the ‘*state of peace*’ means to go beyond a threshold: the threshold between history, all of history had until now and a new history. It deals with, thus, a true ‘*revolution*’, [...] because besides being a peaceful revolution, its content would be precisely peace. (*Las palabras* 45)

The revolution that María Zambrano identifies in this article evokes an ethical or moral revolution inspired by love and compassion, a necessary movement to ensure the future existence of civilization. From the 1930 *Horizonte del liberalismo* to the final version of *Los sueños y el tiempo*, published posthumously in 1992, María Zambrano’s philosophy embraces various ideas and methods that aim at understanding and at promoting love in human relationships. The avenues of ideas that she explores include the political, the ethical, the vital, the spiritual, the mystical, the phenomenological, the anthropological,

the historical, the rational and the poetic.<sup>3</sup> The human condition, as Zambrano shows, comprises all the avenues of ideas through the various methods of thinking and living,

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<sup>3</sup> The critical corpus on María Zambrano's work is vast, but for notable booklength studies refer to the following: *Una filósofa inamorata* by Annarosa Buttarelli, *María Zambrano* by Juan Fernando Ortega Muñoz, *María Zambrano, crítica literaria* by Goretti Ramírez, *María Zambrano: el dios de su alma* by Agustín Andreu Rodrigo, *María Zambrano: entre la razón, la poesía y el exilio* by Concha Fernández Martorell, *María Zambrano: la ragione poética* by Armando Savignano, *María Zambrano: de la razón cívica a la razón poética* by various authors, *El ángel del límite y el confín intermedio: tres poemas y un esquema de María Zambrano* by Jesús Moreno Sanz, *María Zambrano (1904-1991)* by Rogelio Blanco Martínez and Juan Fernando Ortega Muñoz, *Más allá de la filosofía* by Ana Bundgård, *María Zambrano: nacer por sí misma* by Elena Laurenzi, *Introducción al pensamiento de María Zambrano* by Juan Fernando Ortega Muñoz, *La razón en la sombra: antología del pensamiento de María Zambrano* by Jesús Moreno Sanz, *La llama sobre el agua* by Ramón Pérez Carrió, *La huida de Perséfone: María Zambrano y el conflicto de la temporalidad* by José Ignacio Eguizábal, *Filosofía en América* by José Luis Abellán, *María Zambrano: la literatura como conocimiento y participación* by María Luisa Maillard, *El pensamiento de María Zambrano: papeles de Almagro* coordinated by Fernando Savater, *La creación por la metáfora: introducción a la razón-poética* by María Luisa Maillard, *La mirada y la melancolía: elementos para una poética de la fluidez* by Ruxandra Chisalita, *María Zambrano* by Juan Carlos Marset, [\*Pensamiento y palabra en recuerdo de María Zambrano \(1904-1991\): contribución de Segovia a su empresa intelectual\*](#) edited by José Mora and Juan Moreno Yuste, *Filosofía y literatura en María Zambrano* edited by Pedro Cerezo, *Homenaje a María Zambrano: estudios y correspondencias* edited by James Valender, *María Zambrano: la aurora del pensamiento* by Juan Fernando Ortega Muñoz, *María Zambrano: acercamiento a una poética de la aurora* by Mariana Bernárdez, *María Zambrano: la razón poética o la filosofía* by Teresa Rocha Barco, *Encuentro sin fin: con el camino del pensar de María Zambrano, y otros encuentros* by Jesús Moreno Sanz, *Tiempo y escritura en María Zambrano* by Isabel Balza, *El tiempo luz: homenaje a María Zambrano: actas del seminario de literatura celebrado en la Diputación de Córdoba de 17 al 18 de marzo de 2004* edited by Amalia Iglesias Serna, *Pasividad creadora: María Zambrano y otras formas de lógica poética* by María del Carmen Piñas Saura, *Las modernas de Madrid: las grandes intelectuales españolas de la vanguardia* by Shirley Mangini González, *El monte Lu en lluvia y niebla: María Zambrano y lo divino* by Chantal Maillard, *Fragmentos de la modernidad: filosofía de la historia e imperativo de la modernidad en José Ortega y Gasset y María Zambrano* by Jorge Velázquez Delgado, *María Zambrano: una pensadora de nuestro tiempo* by José Luis Abellán, *Estampas zambranianas* by María Luisa Maillard, *María Zambrano: desde la sombra llameante* by Clara Janés, *María Zambrano: historia, poesía y verdad* by Gregorio Gómez Cambres and S.E. Talamonte, *Entre el alba y la aurora: sobre la filosofía de María Zambrano* by Carmen Revilla Guzmán, *Lo sagrado en el pensamiento de María Zambrano* by Julieta Lizaola, *La tiniebla de la razón: la filosofía de María Zambrano* by Greta Rivara Kamaji, *María Zambrano: la dama peregrina* by Rogelio Martínez Blanco, *El camino de la razón poética* by Gregorio Gómez Cambres, *María Zambrano: pensadora de nuestro tiempo* by Pablo Armando González Ulloa Aguirre and Christian Eduardo Díaz Sosa, *Un compromiso apasionado: María Zambrano: una intelectual al servicio del pueblo (1928-1939)* by Ana Bungård, *María Zambrano o la metafísica recuperada* by Juan Fernando Ortega Muñoz, *Al encuentro del alba: María Zambrano* by María Cobos Navidad, *Fulgor de María Zambrano* by Adolfo Castañón, *María Zambrano: pensamiento y exilio* by Antolín Sánchez Cuervo, Agustín Sánchez Andrés and Gerardo Sánchez, *La aurora de la razón poética* by Gregorio Gómez Cambres, *En el espejo de la llama: una aproximación al pensamiento de María Zambrano* by María del Carmen Piñas Saura, *La palabra auroral: ensayo sobre María Zambrano* by Roberto Sánchez Benítez, *Los senderos olvidados de la filosofía: una aproximación al pensamiento de María Zambrano* by José Demetrio Jiménez Mariscal, *Persona y contexto socio-histórico en María Zambrano* by Juan José García, *María Zambrano: raíces de la cultura española* by Juan Fernando Ortega Muñoz, *La razón mediadora: filosofía y piedad en María Zambrano* by Mercedes Gómez-Blesa, *Vocación por la sombra: la razón confesada de María Zambrano* by Greta Rivara Kamaji, *La razón poética en María Zambrano* by Lourdes Corona, *La piedad, el saber de participación con la realidad: una aproximación al pensamiento de María*

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*Zambrano* by Cristina De la Cruz Ayuso, *Padecer y comprender: ensayos sobre María Zambrano* by Víctor Manuel Pineda, *Imagen y realidad en el pensamiento de María Zambrano* by A. Galindo Cabedo, *María Zambrano: el canto del laberinto* by María Gómez-Blesa and M.F. Santiago Bolaños, *Los senderos olvidados de la filosofía. Una aproximación al pensamiento de María Zambrano* by J.D. Jiménez, *Sobre la razón poética* by M.A. Labrada, *Una obra inacabada* by Rosa Mascarell, *Claves de la razón poética. María Zambrano: un pensamiento en el orden del tiempo* by Carmen Revilla, II Congreso Internacional sobre la Vida y Obra de María Zambrano: [actas]: Vélez-Málaga, 1994 by various authors, *María Zambrano: entre el alba y la aurora* by Fina García Marruz, *Actas: Congreso Internacional del Centenario de María Zambrano: crisis cultural y compromiso civil en María Zambrano* by various authors, *María Zambrano, la poesía de la razón* by Antonio Varo Baena, *Il pensiero di María Zambrano: atti del Convegno internazionale di studi "Il pensiero di María Zambrano" nel I centenario della nascita. Udine, 5-6 maggio 2004* by Laura Silvestri, *Actas: María Zambrano y la "edad de plata" de la cultura española* by various authors, *La perenne aurora del pensiero: nuove letture di María Zambrano* by Annarosa Buttarelli, *Saberes nacidos más allá o más acá de la filosofía* by Carmen Revilla, *María Zambrano: acercamiento a una poética de la aurora* by Mariana Bernárdez Zapata, *El tiempo luz: homenaje a María Zambrano: actas del seminario de literatura celebrado en la Diputación de Córdoba de 17 al 18 de marzo de 2004* by Amalia Iglesias Serna, *Aurora: papeles del "Seminario María Zambrano* by various authors. Articles that dive into deeper study of María Zambrano's work are the following: "María Zambrano. Camino a la esperanza" by Ramón Xirau, "Acotación temática en torno a la piedad" by Cristina de la Cruz, "Sobre el camino recibido, o la delicada conjunción entre método, vida y experiencia" by Jorge Larrosa, "La razón poética: mirada, melodía y metáfora" by Sergio Sevilla, "Razón no polémica en María Zambrano. Lugares elementales y palabras con cuerpo" by Jesús Moreno Sanz, "Los silencios de la palabra/ los sonidos del silencio" by Román Reyes, "Una lectura de la tradición española (El pensamiento de María Zambrano)" by Antonio Jiménez Millán, "Símbolos de María Zambrano" by Antonio Colinas, "De divina inspiratione (desde el pensamiento de María Zambrano)" by Antoni Marí, "Luz para la sangre. Geneología del pensamiento en la vida de María Zambrano" by Jesús Moreno Sanz, "Una aproximación a *El hombre y lo divino*" by Antonio Colinas, "La palabra escondida" by Carmen Revilla, "Algunos lugares de la poesía. La palabra pensante de María Zambrano" by Amalia Iglesias Serna, "María Zambrano, alondra de la filosofía" by José Luis Abellán, "Amor de engendrar en la belleza. Filosofía y conocimiento amoroso en María Zambrano" by Sonia Prieto, and "El camino de la palabra. Bibliografía de María Zambrano" by Sebastián Fenoy, "Circunstancia, reason, and metaphysics: context and unity in the thought of María Zambrano" by Shirley Mangini, "'Self"-consciousness in Rosa Chacel and María Zambrano" by Nancy Newton, "The last God: María Zambrano's life without texture" by Alberto Moreiras, "España y los españoles en la ensayística de María Zambrano" by Herlinda Charpentier Saitz, "María Zambrano" by Liliana Costa Staksrud, "María Zambrano y la Cuba secreta" by Gerardo Mosquera, "Pensamiento poético y filosofía: María Zambrano, el espacio de la reconciliación" by Lou Charnon-Deutsch, "María Zambrano en Orígenes" by Betriz Colombí, "De la intra-historia a la propia-historia: lidiando con la historia y la literatura en María Zambrano y Carmen Martín Gaité" by Anne-Marie Spanoghe, "María Zambrano" by Martha Robles, "Sentir y conocer: Delirio y destino de María Zambrano" by Elide Pittarello, "La centralidad del concepto de delirio en el pensamiento de María Zambrano" by Beatriz Caballero, "Razón poética, racionalismo y modernidad en la filosofía del exilio de María Zambrano" by Aguilera Portales and Rafael Enrique, "Del padecer y la trascendencia: La filosofía poética de María Zambrano" by Victor Bravo, "El tema del hombre en María Zambrano" by María José Calvo Sebastián, "Hacia una 'poética del sacrificio' en María Zambrano" by Juan C. Marse, "María Zambrano: Del punto oscuro al centro creador" by Jesús Moreno Sanz, "Conciencia poética e histórica en el pensamiento de María Zambrano" by Concha, Fernández Martorell, "La palabra poética en María Zambrano" by Clara Janés, "Claros del bosque, una filosofía de la noche del ser" by Héctor Ciocchini, "Aurora: papeles del 'Seminario María Zambrano'" by various authors, "Actas: crisis y metamorfosis de la razón en María Zambrano: Vélez-Málaga, 2004" by various authors, "La voz de María Zambrano en París o el mundo es un palado" by José Luis Abellán, "Los sueños de María Zambrano" by José Luis Aranguren, "Miradores de María Zambrano" by Adolfo Castañón, "¿María Zambrano entre nosotros?" by Adolfo Castañón, "María Zambrano: una presencia decisiva" by E.M. Cioran, "Sobre la iniciación. Conversación con María Zambrano" by Antonio Colinas, "La esencia de un mensaje" by Antonio Colinas, "Acerca de una muchacha llamada María" by Eliseo Diego, "El árbol de la vida: la sierpe" by Amalia Iglesias, "María Zambrano's Theory of Literature as

from creation and/or destruction. Thus, Zambrano's work develops in various stages of growth throughout her intellectual journey and can be divided in the following way:

- 1) Formation: 1904-1939 (pre-exile )
- 2) Expansion: 1939-1984 (exile)
- 3) Recollection and Conclusion: 1984-1991 (post-exile).

In the first period, her writing reflects a venturing out into the world, dewed with idealism and characterized by a fresh need for change that she, among other young Spanish intellectuals of her time, could sense in the ambience of the late 1920s and early 1930s in Madrid. In the early years in which Zambrano experiences innocence, she takes up the pen and begins writing, an act of liberation demonstrated by her 1933 article "Por qué se escribe:" "Through the word we make ourselves free, free from the moment, from the besieging and instantaneous circumstance" (*Hacia un saber sobre el alma* 35). From 1928 to 1931, the years marking the transition into the Second Republic, Zambrano manages to create a space for herself among Spanish intellectuals with the publications of a number of articles – starting in 1928 – in literary journals such as *La Libertad* and *El Liberal*, and the essay *Horizonte del liberalismo* in November of 1930. However, during the civil war years of 1936-1939, Zambrano shifts her focus from the universal to the local, ultimately resulting in the articles that constitute the book *Los intelectuales en el drama de España y escritos de la guerra civil*. In addition to this work, although not

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Knowledge and Contingency" by Roberta Johnson, "Ideas para una fenomenología de lo divino en María Zambrano," "María Zambrano y el Libro de Job" by Angelina Muñiz-Huberman, "Centenario de María Zambrano" by Angelina Muñiz-Huberman, "The Poet and the Thinker: María Zambrano and Feminist Criticism" by Clare E. Nimmo, "Filosofía y poesía: María Zambrano y la retórica de la reconciliación" by Francisco La Rubia Prado, "El sentido teológico en la filosofía de María Zambrano" by J.F. Ortega Muñoz, "Filosofía y poesía en María Zambrano" by J.F. Ortega Muñoz, "La voz de María" by Octavio Paz, "Memoria de una voz" by Octavio Paz, "María Zambrano" by Octavio Paz, "La voz de María Zambrano" by Fernando Savater, "Sueño y verdad del corazón" by José Miguel Ullán, "La profesora andaluza" by Cintio Vitier.

published until 1950, is *Hacia un saber sobre el alma*, a collection of articles written during the years of 1933-1944 – covering both the pre-exile and exile periods of her life – that explores universal themes. Concepts dealing with the soul and reason, as well as literary and historical figures – Don Juan and Saint Augustine – span these pages.

In exile, her thought expands into the history of Western ideas as well as concentrating more specifically on themes such as the existence of philosophy in Spain's history. In these years she meditates on alternative ways of philosophizing, such as through poetry, rather than through the usual structures of logical, systematic thought. This theme was explored by Zambrano both on universal and local levels. Again, Zambrano began in pre-civil war days meditating on the universal level rather on the local level. In the "Propósito" – written from Madrid in 1986 – of the third edition of *El pensamiento y poesía en la vida española* (1939), Zambrano admits how universal themes rather than local ones had grasped her attention in the pre-civil war days, implying that an intentional transition had occurred from her earliest writings to those of the civil war era:

I have to confess that, until July of 1936, in which Spain launches itself into the bonfire that still burns with hidden fire, I had not considered the matter of the trajectory of thought in Spain. Absorbed entirely in universal themes, it slipped my attention, eluding many times the growing strangeness that was producing in me about the extreme peculiarities of Spanish thought, that is to say, of the real and effective function of thought in Spanish life. (7)

Thus, the universal themes initiate her work in Spain, but then around the beginning stages of the Spanish Civil War and just after, the number of articles reflecting her preoccupations with the social and political injustices that had occurred in Spain during the civil war resulted, in which Zambrano's thinking and writing entrenches itself in the

processes and methods through which ideas in Spain had been revealed. This first attempt during the initial days and months in exile, *El pensamiento y poesía en la vida española*, is the published account of three conferences given in Mexico in 1939, supported by the *Casa de España*.

After this brief foray at the beginning of her period of expansion, she returns to the universal with *La filosofía y poesía* and with the essays that compose part of *Hacia un saber sobre el alma*, referring often to the role of Spanish thought in history and, starting in the early 1940s, its role in relation to Europe. In this decade Zambrano writes the following works: *La confesión: género literario*, *La agonía de Europa*, and *Unamuno*<sup>4</sup>. At the beginning of the 1950s, Zambrano writes *Delirio y destino: los veinte años de una española*, an autobiographical work that remained unpublished until 1989<sup>5</sup>. During the rest of the 1950s, her work expands to an even greater selection of themes such as the philosophy of man and his relation to the person and society, as well as the distinction between ethical and tragic history<sup>6</sup>.

The 1960s begin with *La España de Galdós*, leading to *España, sueño y verdad*, two works that focus on the human condition as revealed through the method and ideas of specific literary traditions in Spain – from *El Cid* to *Misericordia* of Galdós, while also including some reflections on Ortega y Gasset and Unamuno. At the same time, *El*

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<sup>4</sup> *Unamuno* is a collection of unedited essays from the early 1940s that had remained unpublished until 2003.

<sup>5</sup> *Delirium and Destiny* was written from Havana, Cuba and was destined for a literary contest in Switzerland. Zambrano was hoping to win the prize in order to cover medical costs that were incurred by her sister Araceli. She did not win the contest, and thus received no compensation for that work. For further information, see Roberta Johnson's article in the one translated work into English by Carol Maier, *Delirium and Destiny: a Spaniard in Her Twenties*, p. 215-235.

<sup>6</sup> These themes will be discussed further in the pieces I have translated for this study. *El hombre y lo divino (Man and the Divine)* and *La persona y democracia: la historia sacrificial (Persona and democracy: sacrificial history)*.

*sueño creador* is published, Zambrano's first noticeable exploration of dreams and time, a continuous project finding its ultimate resting place in *Los sueños y el tiempo* (1992). Rounding out the 1960s is the dialogue *La tumba de Antígona*, a revision of the ancient Greek tragedy *Antigone* of Sophocles, which stands as one of the few displays of Zambrano's purely literary talents as well as a concluding effort to the ethical/tragic history debate she develops early in *Persona y democracia: la historia sacrificial*.

The 1970s see *Claros del bosque*, the most definitive manifestation of Zambrano's poetic reason through style. At this point, the word and the method take center stage in acting out the musical and poetic flourishes of her language. Written fragments had been published previously, but they eventually played their greatest role in the 1977 unified work<sup>7</sup>. Although the last four works – *De la aurora*, *Notas de un método*, *Los bienaventurados* and *Los sueños y el tiempo* – were finalized and published after her return to Spain, their seeds had been planted by Zambrano in her last years in exile.

The third period marks Zambrano's return to Spain. At this time, with the remaining five years and two and a half months of Zambrano's life, a process of recollection, organization and distribution of her work occurs<sup>8</sup>. Composed of "a total of 57 journalistic articles of María Zambrano, published in the Spanish press during the period between 1985 y 1990," *Las palabras del regreso: artículos periodísticos (1985-1990)* includes material disseminated weekly in sources such as *ABC*, *El País* and *Diario 16* (9). In conjunction with these articles, the sketch of *De la aurora* was published in its

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the fifth part of *Claros del bosque* originally appears in 1944 in the Cuban literary journal *Orígenes* under the title "La metáfora del corazón (fragmento)" and then again in the 1950 collection, *Hacia un saber sobre el alma*.

<sup>8</sup> This reflects the time period of November 20, 1984 when she landed on Spanish soil for the first time since her exile until her death on February 6, 1991.

final version in 1986, although previously published fragments of it had been published in periodicals throughout Spain. Next, in 1989 Zambrano publishes the two works *Notas de un método* and *Algunos lugares de la pintura*. The first of this pair investigates knowledge through experience as a “manifestation of a knowledge that is an integration of the fragmentary knowledges” and “of making possible the experience of being man, the flow of the experience, a time open to possibility, untiring flow, like unity each time more intimate and successful of life and thought” (*Notas de un método* 11). The second of the pair compiles her many written reflections on painting, ultimately assembled in this 1991 edition. Zambrano comments on its assembly in the “Introduction:”

During many years and in different moments, these texts were being born, without a premeditated project of unity. The greater part of them has been published in a dispersed form, while others remained unedited until now. They are reunited now under the same sign of the love of painting, as celebration of the extraordinary fact of their existence, of which this book is only a showing, a look towards some of those privileged places. (*Algunos lugares de la pintura* 12)

The final look in Zambrano’s work gazes in another direction by treating the question of exile in *Los bienaventurados*, published in April, 1990. Other publications of this period – *Delirio y destino* (1989), *Los sueños y el tiempo* (1992), *La Cuba secreta y otros ensayos* (1996), and *Unamuno* (2003) – are representatives of either bits of previously published or unedited work that would officially become part of the Zambrano opus.

### Formation and Expansion

The time span of April 22, 1904 to January 28, 1939, marks the earliest years in which Zambrano experiences life in her land of birth – Spain. She had been nurtured by the spirit of a nation on the brink of breaking free from its self-constructed ties to

institutionalized religion and absolutism in the early part of the twentieth century. As a young philosophy student at the Universidad Central de Madrid, she began her intellectual career by publishing articles in journals such as *Nueva España*, *El liberal*, *La libertad*, *Manantial*, and *Revista de Occidente*. Concurrently, a revived Republican movement, supported by university students and leftist intellectuals, began growing in the late 1920s. In her autobiography composed in the early 1950s, Zambrano described the environment prior to the Second Republic as “[t]he parenthesis of the Restoration [that] had to close in order for Spain to open fully to the fresh air of a renewed history” and as a “time [that] was approaching with deep renewal, or rather rebirth” (*Delirium and Destiny* 61). This movement – which Zambrano considered “natural” – was behind the overthrow of the monarchy of Alfonso XIII on April 14, 1931, an act allowing for the establishment of the Second Republic, officially lasting until the July 18, 1936 military *golpe de estado* led by General Franco. A year earlier in November of 1930, Zambrano’s *Horizonte del liberalismo* was published – a softly spirited essay that foreshadowed the events Spain would experience six months later. This essay which explores the crisis of liberalism on an universal plane unintentionally foreshadowed the unfolding of events in Spain concurrent with Zambrano’s publication of the essay. Raymond Carr refers to the progressive political movement at the turn of the decade as one in which

[c]onservatives were alarmed that Republicanism represented not merely the desire for political renovation, but a social revolution, the moral prodrome of which was revealed in a press that discussed abortion and the evils of clericalism [...] It did represent a desire for renovation, for citizenship in a modern, European state.” (111)

Zambrano engages directly with this desire for both a “social and moral revolution” and a “citizenship in a modern, European state” on a philosophical level rather than on a

political level in the later projects such as *La agonía de Europa* (1945) and *Persona y democracia: la historia sacrificial* (1958). However, hints of later discoveries are detectable from *Horizonte del liberalismo*.

In the previously quoted paragraph, Carr outlines the themes from which Zambrano's revision of liberalism is conceived, which to her is not only a political ideology but also a need for an active moral or ethical reform. She writes the following in the section titled "Política Revolucionaria" in *Horizonte del liberalismo*:

And this puts us again in front of another theme, today in living flesh: it is the theme of liberalism, [...]. For many it is affirmed as unnecessary to speak of it, like an arm that counts already with sufficient history in order to occupy a place of honor in the familiar museum and to whom the glorious feats made the steel efficient. (229-30)

In Zambrano's understanding, the theory behind liberalism had remained just that – a museum's collection of archived ideas. Thus, as a response to this, she explores the theory itself and its failures in political practice, expressing hope for its growth by including a revision of the liberal economy and promoting love as a common and necessary value for effective participation in society.

Starting with the need for "the recognition of the legitimacy of instinct, of passion, of the irrational" in her vision of a new liberalism, she shows that a revised economy is fundamental. The liberal economy as it has manifested itself in history has failed to subscribe to these ideals that she deems essential in creating a true liberal society based on individual freedoms. She writes:

Precisely in order to conserve this liberal culture that is loved by us it is necessary to have a new economic structure, carried out by the most authentic liberals and by the most refined liberalism.

The economy, in the end, represents a dependence on man, a necessity in which one finds trying to support, something certainly not created by him [...]

Because today the liberalism of many is the capitalist liberalism, the bourgeois economic liberalism and not the human. (*Horizonte* 267-68)

Despite a potential for heading down a Marxist path, Zambrano instead decides to turn directly toward the road to ethics and the concept of values that drive the free individual and his or her actions in relation to society:

The individual will find himself free because of his dependence with respect to something superior from which he emerges partially. In the ethical sphere, he needs autonomy [...] Autonomy of action, as a result, in order to act faithful to his feeling. But this feeling must be born under the sign of the highest suprahuman values. (*Horizonte* 266)

This “acting faithful to one’s feeling” rather than acting through pure reason, maps out an itinerary for further exploration, leading to a criticism of the value structure of modern man in an attempt to understand both the structure and its effects on past and present human relationships. This criticism of Western culture, as existing in a state of crisis, stems from of a lack of love and compassion in performing social and personal acts.

The concepts of love and compassion that Zambrano sows in the 1930s bloom more fully two decades later in the 1955 published work, *El hombre y lo divino*. However, some of these initial seeds of the concepts of love and compassion are previously scattered among journals in the 1940s<sup>9</sup>. In dealing specifically with

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<sup>9</sup> The first, “Para una historia de la piedad,” was originally published in 1949 in the Cuban revista *Lyceum*. In it, Zambrano plants the question, “What are feelings, and how can they be historicized?” (*La Cuba secreta* 122) Here, Zambrano uses poetry and the novel as evidence for the historic forms that reveal feeling and the sentiments:

compassion, Zambrano qualifies it as “knowing how to deal with mystery” (*La Cuba secreta* 129). Nevertheless, her understanding leads to an inability to adequately define it. Based on interaction with the other, the active sentiment of compassion changes depending on the relationship and the type of value called into question as a result of the relationship, an idea reminiscent of Max Scheler. Hence, if Zambrano fails to provide an adequate definition of compassion, how then does the philosopher actually approach this concept? She initially draws near it by referring to compassion through subtraction or what it is not : “It is not love rightly said in any of its forms and meanings; it is neither charity, determined form of piety discovered by Christianity; it is not either compassion, most generic and diffuse passion. It comes to be the prehistory of all the positive feelings” (*La Cuba secreta* 125). Zambrano then zooms in on compassion – “to know how to deal with what is different, with what is radically other than us” – with Ortega y Gasset’s vital reason, the “discovery of which reality is previous to the idea” and that “has to be given in a feeling” (*La Cuba secreta* 128).

The other previously mentioned concept in *El hombre y lo divino* (1955) is love, a notion which she explored formerly in the 1952 article in *Ínsula* that is titled “Dos fragmentos sobre el amor.”<sup>10</sup> In this selection of material, Zambrano points out that love in contemporary society is absent in the public sphere and conceived of negatively by having to “justify and give reasons without end” and by “resigning itself finally to being confused by the multitude of sentiments, or the instincts, if it does not want that dark

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The novel and poetry have reflected best historical knowledge, the true passing, the truth of things that happen to man and his intimate sense. History in order to be complete, totally and truthfully human, must descend to the most secret places of the being, until that which indicates ‘the core’ or the seat of feelings.” (*La Cuba secreta* 123)

<sup>10</sup> This was also published in 1982 by Imprenta Dardo under the same title.

place of ‘the libido,’ or be treated like a secret sickness, from which it would have to free itself” (*Dos fragmentos* 15-16). Love, in contemporary society, is “buried alive, living, but without creative force” and asfixiated (*Dos fragmentos* 17). One reason for this “asfixia” finds fault in religion’s hold over humans’ daily lives. One of the first instances in which humans’ ties to their religious beliefs as the source of their “asfixia” were cut was when “love was born, like philosophic knowledge, in Greece, in a moment in which the gods, without stopping to act, permitted man to look for his being” (*Dos fragmentos* 23-24). This “looking for his being” in ancient Greece, embodied in Plato’s account of the figure of Socrates, was a result of understanding the human being’s capability to reason his own actions despite being ultimately ruled by nature and the universe. In the unique human dimension, love exists as the driving force which actualizes the person, providing the impetus or the potential for the future: “It opens the future; not the near future that is tomorrow that is assumed to be certain, repetition with variations of today and replica of yesterday. The future, that opening without limit, to another life that appears to us like the life of truth. The future that also attracts History” (*Dos fragmentos* 27). This “opening without limit” speaks to freedom for the individual. This freedom also presumes hope promoted by love and compassion through their effective communication with others.

Similarly, in Zambrano’s *La tumba de Antígona* (1967) as well as in her chapter three of *El sueño creador* (1965), love and compassion play a central role in metaphorically converting a personal tragic history into an ethical one. This project originally functions as the main argument for Zambrano’s 1958 work, *La persona y democracia: la historia sacrificial*. In it, she refers constantly to the human condition,

“living humanly” in which humankind “must recover in time, in history” and “must humanize its history, making it his, assuming it from the person” (*Persona y democracia* 100). Absolutism throughout historical time, as Zambrano understands, perpetuates its tragic history through its abuse of power in society. Zambrano advocates a need for conversion from tragic history to ethical history through the complete humanization of man, or when human beings fulfill their role on earth by finding “[their] natural place in the universe.”<sup>11</sup> Love and compassion, embodied by the relationship of the person to society and to “the other,” are the methods through which humankind may find its place in the world, as will be displayed in the figure of Zambrano’s Antigone.

In *La tumba de Antígona*, Antigone acts through love and compassion, the compelling sentiments which motivate her to sacrifice her own life in performing a rightful action of the unlawful burial of her brother, Polynices. Zambrano perceives this sacrifice as performed out of “compassion-love-reason,” characterizing Antigone as a “Persephone without a spouse that has obtained uniquely a season: a spring that cannot be repeated” (*Senderos* 204). She is “substance of human consciousness in a growing state” and a “figure of the aurora of consciousness” (*Senderos* 204-05). Antigone chooses out of her own self-cultivated freedom of consciousness to violate societal law by honoring her dead brother out of respect and love, the way in which “it opens the life of freedom” (Zambrano, *El sueño creador* 91). Consequently, Zambrano conceives of Antigone both as a being who “had to be pure consciousness and not only innocent. She had to know,” and as a “mediator also between nature and history, as if something divine of nature should be incarnated in human history” (*El sueño creador* 90). Zambrano’s Antigone,

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<sup>11</sup> This resonates in Scheler’s work, *Man’s Place in Nature*. Max Scheler was a German philosopher that had influenced some of Zambrano’s work.

unlike Sophocles,' does not commit suicide when sentenced to being buried alive but remains awake in the shadows as “a lamp that is switched on in the darkness” in which “life is illuminated only by those dreams as lamps that light from within, that guide the steps of man, steps that are always errant over the Earth” (*Senderos* 258).<sup>12</sup> However, looking back to the later part of Zambrano’s formation period, one can see that the light from the “lamp” of Antigone had not shone on Spain, for the anticipated new horizons of “opening without limit” appeared to have faded away into the darkness.

In 1934, Zambrano writes two essays, “Ante la *Introducción a la teoría de la ciencia* de Fichte” and “Hacia un saber sobre el alma,” that form part of the collection *Hacia un saber sobre el alma*. In the former, Zambrano first explores the concept of philosophy as a way of life, examining the figure and role of the teacher, using Socrates as an example. Second, she observes how the individual’s choice of philosophy dictated his character or personage. For example, Zambrano writes about the Christian philosophy that left man “living in nature and changed his anguish of things for the anguish of nothingness. It had been realized that his being, his person had nothing to do with the nature that surrounded him, that it only was the place of his fall” (*Hacia un saber* 200). Third, she expands upon Fichte’s concept of the free man by turning to the person as “receptacle of reason” and not the “mere permanence, nor the acting of the person, but rather the actualizing of reason” (*Hacia un saber* 202). Another way of viewing the concept of the free man in actualizing his reason can be seen through various methods such as “the idea of the wisdom of Heraclitus, that of the serenity of the stoics, the spiritual life of the Christian, the ‘*amor dei intellectualis*’ of Spinoza,’ the good will of

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<sup>12</sup> Zambrano also refers to the Stoic figure Seneca as a “mediator” in the 1994 Siruela edition of her introduction to *Séneca*, originally published in 1944 under the title *El pensamiento vivo de Séneca*.

Kant” (*Hacia un saber* 201). The type of “receptacle” or the method that the philosophy of Zambrano assumes, at this point of her career in 1934, is only beginning to take shape.

In the later essay, “Hacia un saber sobre el alma,” she briefly traces the path that the soul had taken in modern culture. Here she makes intimations of Descartes’ *Treatise on the Passions* and Spinoza’s *Ethics* as well as the similar use of the concept of “the heart” by Pascal and Scheler. The material of this article functions as one of the earliest attempts at diving into the concept of interiorization which Zambrano used to investigate the state of the individual’s soul. She refers to ancient Greek rituals of employing, in conjunction, the gods, oracles and the orgy in order to learn about the purging of the self. For example, Zambrano writes that the orgy was “a reconciliation of the soul that suffers upon beginning to feel himself with nature,” “a call to the cosmic powers that make man when the core of his life is hurting,” and “a return to the original fountains of vitality in order to clean the shadows of his interior” (*Hacia un saber* 31). Even in her early material, the natural and corporeal language that Zambrano uses – horizon, aurora, shadows, insides, riverbed and heart – appears. The historical path of ideas that accompany her along these pages signals her initial perception of the experience of the being as united through physical sense and mental reason. Zambrano’s project shows the harmonic union of the two leading to a more fully potentialized being, a project linked to the certain aspects of Max Scheler’s philosophy such as the concept of *ordo amoris*. Despite the varying methods that have explored “being” throughout history, this article of Zambrano claims the need for continuity through “discovering the soul” and “searching for its expression, leaving apart for the moment what the intellect has said about the soul”

as well as a need to “discover those reasons of the heart that the heart itself has found” (*Hacia un saber* 34).

In the months before the civil war, Zambrano continues to wrestle with the ideas that would result in an unfinished doctoral thesis titled *La salvación del individuo*, in which she uses Spinoza’s *Ethics* to explore the individual and his relationship to God and nature.<sup>13</sup> Her emphasis on the person in later works, such as in *Persona y democracia: la historia sacrificial*, could possibly be attributed in part by this attempt at the salvation of the individual within society. On a philosophical level, her research into salvation of the individual began to fade away as soon as the events of the civil war were unfolding in the moments prior to July 18, 1936, an instant ripe for Zambrano’s shift in focus from universal themes to the local ones of her homeland by participating in the social and intellectual debate.

*Los intelectuales en el drama de España y escritos de la guerra civil* is the representative work of this time period. This work is a collection of articles written by Zambrano that had been published in journals of Spain, Chile, Mexico and Argentina with dates ranging from the spring of 1936 to December of 1939. Such dates closely mirror the time period in which Zambrano finds herself moving from Madrid in October of 1936 to Santiago, Chile, returning to Valencia on June 19, 1937, and then walking across the Franco-Spanish border and into exile on January 28, 1939. Zambrano recalls this instant of entering into exile: “We had to cross the border of France one by one, [...]

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<sup>13</sup> Here is a little sample of the dissertation which was first published in the 1936 February-March edition of the *Cuadernos de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras* : “All of *The Ethics* is an effort to reassume the person in the world. But if this eagerness for the reabsorption of the human person in the world exists, it is because it parts from a separation. Spinoza is not blind to this separation, but he interprets it as a divergence to save” (*Los intelectuales* 69).

And the man who preceded me was carrying a lamb on his back, a lamb whose breath reached me and for an instant, of those indelible ones, of those that are always worthy, for all of an eternity, looked at me. I looked at it [...] and the lamb was I” (*Las palabras del regreso* 16). The efforts and sacrifices that Zambrano had made in supporting the Republican cause appear throughout these written articles as well as throughout the future work written in exile.

In the article “El español y su tradición,” Zambrano briefly reflects through her “looking with perspective, not of space, but rather of time and of intellectual objectivity” what had been happening then and throughout the history of Spain. Her concept of the liberal versus the traditionalist again takes center stage, pointing to the latter as the one who made “a past of nightmares, that weighed over each Spaniard crushing him, making him useless, making him live in perpetual terror” (*Los intelectuales* 140). This dichotomy between these “two Spains” that Zambrano finds apparent in Spanish history created animosity among fellow citizens. It also discouraged a life of freedom, a confrontation that worked itself out in the worst form through the civil war. The impediment to true living is what led to the need to “free Spain from the nightmare of its past, from the evil ghost of its history” (*Los intelectuales* 140).

In conjunction with this idea, Zambrano writes that the concept of individualism in Spain had resulted from the nation’s inability to unify on a social level, creating an environment for the Spaniard that “feels himself in the desert and finds refuge in himself, in his worth in order to face up to death while searching for it, running towards it in order to prove his human condition, of men capable of dying as men, that is, morally” (*Los intelectuales* 140-41). The interiorization of the individual was, at times, expressed

through confession. Zambrano points out in *La confesión: género literario* that “confession is not only a method from which life frees itself from its paradoxes and comes to coincide with itself” (38). Confession “deals with finding the point of contact between life and truth” (*La confesión* 31-32). It can be understood then how interiorization of the individual resulted in written confessions or novelesque accounts of life within a society in crisis. In Spain, with the persecutory environment that was perpetuated by the Inquisition, this interiorization of ideas functioned as a substitution for a participatory, externally unified system of ideas. Instead, as Zambrano points out, circumstances that had led to the restrictions placed on individuals in society forced the ideas to enter the Spanish bloodstream through ways that circumvented official outlets – such official outlets being the government of the State and the Church – for the expression of ideas. The Holy Inquisition, for centuries, had been one of the controlling forces that maintained circumstances of restriction. According to the historian José Luis Abellán:

This bureaucratic apparatus of control of consciences that at first was applied to Jews and those becoming Jewish, was extended after to cover practically all the masses of the population. Its sphere of influence was directed then not only at the heterodox from the religious point of view – moorish, protestant, erasmist, enlightened one, mystic, visionary –, but rather at whomever transgressed the strictest patterns of a society stiff with fear: the thinkers, the astrologers, the ones who imported new ideas, the readers of ‘suspicious’ books, the masons, the bygamists, the blasphemers, [...] All of them – and much more– could become creditors of the persecutions of the Holy Office. (38)

After discussing how the State and the Church held such control over the thinkers of the day, one can see how, through Zambrano’s article and later works regarding this theme, the ideas in their development throughout time made their way through the novel and the

essay rather than through a direct, systematic philosophy, a philosophy that would be in competition with an institution espousing dogmatism in the name of the God.<sup>14</sup>

Zambrano's tussle with Spain's historical demons in order to grasp an understanding of the tragic repetition that had perpetuated itself in Spanish society even during her youthful days leads her to this article as well as to the question of national identity: "It is not fitting for the Spaniard to go raising castles of abstractions, but its anguish for being each one, is immense and runs wherever it wants be watched. All the literature of '98 and what follows it does not have any other sense" (*Los intelectuales* 142). Spain's historical debate over "¿Qué es España?" or "What is Spain?" would continue to generate the battles between brothers and sisters so that "the Spaniard dies in order to live, in order to recuperate its history" (*Los intelectuales* 142).

Another noteworthy article of the same collection is a review of Antonio Machado's book titled *La guerra*. In this book review, in addition to praising Machado's "fatherly words,"<sup>15</sup> Zambrano states that "the history of Spain is poetic by essence, not because the poets have made it so, but rather because its deep event is a continuous poetic transmutation and perhaps because of all history, that of Spain and that of whichever other place, may be ultimately termed poetry, creation, total realization"<sup>16</sup> (*Los intelectuales* 171). In "*La guerra* de Antonio Machado," Zambrano links the people with the word as a necessary relationship especially in times of war and national distress: "The word of the poet has always been necessary to a people in order to recognize itself and

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<sup>14</sup> This resonates with the previously mentioned 1949 article "Para una historia de la piedad."

<sup>15</sup> Here she refers to Antonio Machado's poetry in a February 18, 1989 *Diario 16* article found in *Las palabras del regreso*.

<sup>16</sup> This assertion that historical creation is synonymous with poetic creation in Spain is the substance that constitutes the three conferences given in 1939 that were supported by the Casa de España in Mexico and then published in *El pensamiento y poesía en la vida española* during her first year of exile.

carry with integral confidence its difficult destiny, when the word of the poet, in effect, names that destiny” (*Los intelectuales* 173). The drive behind the literary was the facilitation of communication in society. More specifically, the poet’s role in connecting the people with the word was represented by of a group of artists in the early 1930s of Spain who had turned their attention to the word as their vehicle for social and political communication. In the last chapter of his critical study of poetry in Spain from 1918-1936, Geist refers to the communicative function of poetry in Spain at this time:

Under the growing social and political pressures of the Republic, the admission of extraaesthetics of art and the concept of poetry as communication are transformed almost inevitably in a sense of mission. The *possibility* of communicating through poetry is converted for certain a number of writers in *obligation* of communicating as man and as artist with humanity. The poets put their art to service for extrapoetic and social ends. (203)

Both figures, Zambrano and Machado, fulfill their social role in their representative methods of combining reason and poetry. This article by Zambrano functions as a double layering of social artists and thinkers in promoting writing as a necessary social act in their current day as well as on the historical scene in Spain. Zambrano considers both poetry and philosophy in its union to be based on the love for knowledge as well as through admiration and love of the world around her. Her concept of poetic reason, “this reason of reintegrating love of the rich substance of the world” – at this stage of her philosophical thought – stems from the “deep root of love” (*Los intelectuales* 177). The “deep root of love” is the driving force behind what has been designated as her notion of poetic reason. It is where the heart and reason coincide. Poetic reason is where poetry and reason complete each other and require one another. Poetry would come to be the

supreme thought that captivates the intimate reality of each thing in a fluid reality, one that moves. In this “substance” of poetic reason, many methodologies merge.

In *El pensamiento y poesía en la vida española*, Zambrano continues to reflect on poetic reason as well as the social importance of the poetic word. This theme that preoccupies Zambrano at the initial stages of exile intersects with and builds upon what she had been developing in the few years previous to her exile. Continuing down her path of inquiry created in reference to Spain’s tragic history, Zambrano shows the need for an understanding of the forms of reason that had made Spanish history: “In order to understand its history, it is necessary to have before some design or scheme of Spanish life in its root. One has to attempt at seeing what has really happened to the Spanish man: what are the acts of this drama or what is the plot of Spanish history” (*El pensamiento y poesía* 19). Historical reason and poetic reason converge along Zambrano’s path to this understanding. Spain’s experience of the Counterreformation rather than the Reformation in other areas of Europe is one of the reasons for Zambrano signaling out the nation’s lack of a philosophical system as well as the “great malaise that happened in Spanish life on all accounts, including that of thought, when the Golden Age of the West reconciled itself: the Modern Age” (*El pensamiento y poesía* 24). The method through which ideas were disseminated historically, as Zambrano writes, “has not been by the path of philosophy, but rather through the novel, that which pulls from the *Quixote* and reaches in our modern novelists, from Galdós to Gómez de la Serna, a wide development” (*El pensamiento y poesía* 46). Ideas were worked through artists rather than philosophers, with the exception of Ortega y Gasset and Unamuno. This understanding of the form that ideas took, or the method of thoughtful revelation, runs

along the same lines of understanding that comes from her utilization of poetic reason. A history of Spanish thought, incorporating Zambrano's comprehension of poetic reason, develops throughout time as shown in her *El pensamiento y poesía en la vida española*.

Love functions as the dynamic force within many of her works in which she utilizes different poetic and theoretical material. In *El pensamiento y la poesía en la vida española*, she traces the development of ideas in Spain while in *Filosofía y poesía* she revisits universal themes such as the debate between poetry and philosophy.<sup>17</sup> She refers to several of Plato's works (*The Symposium, The Republic, Phaedrus*), to the Christian mystics, to the *Divine Comedy*, to the ancient Greeks, to the nineteenth century Romantics, to Kierkegaard, Heidegger, to Baudelaire and Valery, to Aristotle, to Spinoza, Leibniz and Rimbaud. Many poetic and philosophical figures that, in some form or fashion, strike a chord in the melodic reasoning of Zambrano. Her references to these figures, among others, stem from the notion of love in their works, whether in theme or in method.

Philosophy and poetry, both sprouting from love, exist in two different ways. One seeks completion out of love (the philosopher) while the other hands itself over to it completely (the poet). In *Filosofía y poesía*, Zambrano qualifies poetry as "Weeping before all: before pain, before pleasure, before love more than anything. Because in love resides the true matter. Love is a thing of the flesh; it is what desires and agonizes in love, that which through it wants to affirm itself before death" (61). On the other hand, philosophy is "the being mainly extatic before things and the becoming violent at once in order to free itself" (*Filosofía y poesía* 16). Similarly, in *El hombre y lo divino*,

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<sup>17</sup> She writes this from Morelia, Mexico during her teaching appointment in 1939.

Zambrano comments that “philosophy continues being a form of love in this demanding of the metamorphosis that converts alienation into identity” (269). Poetry and philosophy, nurtured out of love, provide one of the initial and fundamental layers of Zambrano’s philosophy.

Almost forty years after the publication of *Filosofía y poesía*, Zambrano, in the 1977 work of *Claros del bosque*, develops a method for integrating her reason poetically. This work acts as an integrative piece demonstrating the metaphorical capabilities and musicality of her written language as her method for combining reason and the heart, or the original feeling. In referring to the concept of method in this essay, Zambrano writes, “All method leaps as an ‘Incipit vita nova’ that hangs onto us with its inalienable joy. One hears the *alleluia* the Cartesian discourse [...] All method is an ‘Incipit vita nova’ that expects to have its own style. The right thing about the method is the continuity, in such a manner that it does not know how to think in a discontinuous method” (*Claros del bosque* 14). In referring to the heart, she writes that “the interior of the fleshy heart is the riverbed of blood, where the blood is divided and is reunited with itself. And thus one finds his reason” (*Claros del bosque* 64). The heart is the center upon which all life depends, prophet to which the interior voice listens, and a vessel of pain that continuously suffers. Thus, poetic reason in *Claros del bosque*, the last major work published within the period of expansion, expresses Zambrano’s personal style.

### Recollection and Conclusion

After having the chance to re-familiarize herself with Spain upon her return from exile in fall of 1984, Zambrano collects, organizes and reflects upon her life. In the brief

remainder of her life, many of these reflections are made in reference to her years in exile. The strongest work that presents such ideas, *Los bienaventurados*, exhibits Zambrano's philosophical and personal understanding of both the concept and her experience of exile. Zambrano describes exile as "pilgrimage between the scattered parts of the core of a tragic history. Multiple junctions, darkness and something more serious: the lost identity that reclaims rescue" (*Los bienaventurados* 32). Zambrano did not desire such exile, but she had accepted it. In the August 28, 1989 article, "Amo mi exilio" published in *ABC*, Zambrano states:

There are certain journeys that only upon arrival one begins to know. For me, from that look of the return, the exile that has touched me to live is essential. I do not conceive of my life without the exile that I have lived. Exile has been like my country, or like a dimension of an unknown country, but once it is known, it is inherent.

I believe that exile is an essential dimension of human life, but it burns my lips, because I would not want there to be exiles, but rather at the same time human beings or cosmic ones that did not know exile. It is a contradiction that I am going to make; I love my exile, but that is because I did not search for it, because I did not get pursuing it. (*Las palabras del regreso* 13-14)

During her exile, this "essential dimension of human life," Zambrano navigates through an ocean of ideas in order to discover her place in the world.

Zambrano's method for her life lived in exile connects itself to the possibility for embracing a personal and tragic history by converting it into an ethical one. Her early writings announce the need for a moral revolution, one that is inspired by the concepts of love and compassion in the personal and social cultivation of ethical history. Zambrano advocates the notion of creative hope through a method of truth by listening to the heart, "the center where understanding and sensibility communicate" (*Los bienaventurados*

111). The heart, beating to its natural rhythm, is the core agent for the growth and the realization of the person in the “transformation of the fatal and blind destiny” and “full of feeling” (*Las bienaventurados* 109). In Zambrano’s philosophy, the spirit of hope is the potentializing energy in the creation of life – for the person and society – that is dreamed from the awakened state of freedom and which ultimately leads to the state of peace.

In conclusion to this introduction, the texts that have been translated and that will be analyzed in this dissertation include some of the above-mentioned texts and not all. The purpose of the introduction is to give the reader an insight into the time period during which Zambrano constructed many of her texts, as well as it provides a tasting of what she wrote throughout many of her works. These texts that I have chosen to translate and analyze include selections from *Claros del bosque* (*Clearings in the Forest*), *El hombre y lo divino* (*Man and the Divine*), *Hacia un saber sobre el alma* (*Towards a Knowledge of the Soul*), *Horizonte del liberalismo* (*Horizon of Liberalism*), *Persona y democracia: la historia sacrificial*, (*Person and Democracy: the Sacrificial History*), and *La Cuba secreta y otros ensayos* (*Secret Cuba and other essays*). In these texts, as in this introduction, I have identified four terms that make up a solid core of her thinking, and they are the concepts of *love*, *compassion*, *the person* and *the word*. The terms and concepts in some texts are more apparent than others, but this constellation of thought of these terms can be connected through the relational means of exchange of action and perspective. They are her method throughout the chosen excerpts of her works. This method speaks to the way in which one approaches anything, whether life or work. Zambrano, through her many texts, approaches her material in many ways, making it impossible and undesirable, in my estimation, to categorize her manner of

philosophizing. The characteristic upon which the work of Zambrano fundamentally hinges is exactly this unsystematic approach to reasoning and writing, to thinking and to doing; thus, I will argue that the rationale for her way of working is – enigmatic yet clearly revealing, eternal yet resistant to permanence – the unsystematic approach provides its own framework for her work, and, as in implicit consequence, for her life.

## Chapter 2 The word

María Zambrano wrote a lot. “La palabra,” or “the word” became her method for letting go of the accumulated thoughts that swirled around in her head. These thoughts were collected over time and molded in many places and poured out onto many pages. The written word was her instrument for understanding and for change, while the spoken word was an opportunity to participate in a conversation at the spur of the moment. The word in both cases speaks to moments of discovery from within the person, one being more measured and worked with while the other more spontaneous and part of the present moment. The three essays that I have selected to translate deal with the concept of the word, some more apparently than others, and how it worked its way into the philosophy of Zambrano. The essays are “Por qué se escribe,” or “Why One Writes,” “Hacia un saber sobre el alma,” or “Towards a Knowledge of the Soul,” and “Palabras,” or “Words.” From this point forward, I will address these works by their translated titles so as to begin the process of ingraining Zambrano’s words into the English language.

“Towards a Knowledge of the Soul” and “Why One Writes” were both written in the early 1930s and originally published in the *Revista de Occidente*.<sup>18</sup> What is interesting to note is the set of circumstances that surrounded Zambrano when she wrote

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<sup>18</sup> It was not until later in 1950 that they were taken up again and grouped into one publication, both under the title as above, “Towards a Knowledge of the Soul.”

and first published the two articles. It was 1934, and Zambrano was aligned with a growing force that epitomized the Republican Left, with political parties such as the PSOE (Partido Social Obrero Español), and the PC (Partido Comunista). Zambrano spent her year writing articles such as “Límite de la nada,” the two mentioned previously, and “Ante la introducción a la *Teoría de la ciencia* de Fichte.” In this same year, her teacher, Don José Ortega y Gasset, one day told her to come to his office. The moment that she showed up, he sent her away, reprimanding her that she had lost objectivity on her work (Moreno Sanz 681). This lost objectivity that Ortega y Gasset refers to is her understanding of the logic of feeling, something which culminates into her “knowledge of the soul.”<sup>19</sup> This break with her mentor/teacher signaled a beginning of departing from his thought process and taking his vital reason further. The result: “Towards a Knowledge of the Soul,” a beginning of a new way of thinking.

In “Towards a Knowledge of the Soul,” Zambrano, in her poetic style, which is linked to the employment of natural images, uses her words and her thought to develop, question, and in some cases destroy, an argument for the soul. The actual reference to the word, the topic of this essay, is not explicit nor is it the direct topic of the article, but it is through the word that the discussion takes place. At the beginning of the article, Zambrano embarks upon a path of posing the question about what the truth of the age may be, and how truth reveals itself. What she does with this is engage the reader, with a very personal language, by a jaunt into the history of ideas. The duality between reason and passion plays itself out, with truth pursuing them both. Thrown into the mix is an acute awareness of time. Zambrano writes in several instances that, “Everything passes”

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<sup>19</sup> This break with her mentor was not only due to the article that she presented to him but also because of her political stance at the time.

(*Hacia un saber* 22). Her notion of impermanence is universal. No limits or boundaries exist with her notion of time when it comes to the soul. In time, the truth flows and is discovered just like the imagery that Zambrano employs, that of the river and the riverbed, playing with the notion of Truth. This notion of truth that exists as the riverbed, is attributed to the happenings of life, or the river, as they pass through Truth. By being the river and living in it, we pass through life feeling truth surrounding us. All of this sets up Zambrano's discussion of reason and revelation by the truth we live.

At this point a new line of thought enters Zambrano's essay, "Towards a Knowledge of the Soul." She incorporates the idea of an inner being. It is through the knowledge of the soul or the order of the heart, a concept that she learns through Max Scheler, that we find our truth and understanding. In the essay she writes, "Max Scheler energetically demands an order of the heart, an order of the soul, which rationalism, more than reason, does not know" (*Hacia un saber* 24). Here she begins to make the point that modern society, which to her was late 1800s and early 1900s, has a problem with rationalism. The state of the world, in her way of thinking, is only a reflection of a crisis in the philosophies of the time. Rationalism has done enough damage, and the time for a penetration into the world of emotion has come, according to Zambrano. Through Scheler's philosophy, which is based upon a phenomenological method, we see how a more intuitive sense guides the person. As noted in one work on Scheler, "For Scheler phenomenology is much more than a phenomenology of logic; phenomenology is life itself and must involve a renewal of the human heart" (Nota 32). To give a more specific taste of Scheler himself, I have quoted the following from an essay titled "On the Reversal of Values:"

The new attitude in the sphere of feeling can be provisionally described, admittedly somewhat vaguely, as a surrendering of oneself to that which in the things appears to our intuition, as the movement of a firm trust in the solid reality of everything that is simply and evidently 'given,' as the courage to let oneself go in intuition and in a loving motion to the world in its capacity of being intuited. This philosophy extends an open hand to the world and lets the things be seen, and it looks around itself with eyes kept boldly open. This is not the closed-eye, critical attitude which Descartes, who begins with universal doubt, used to approach the things. This is not like the eyes of Kant, from which beams a mental ray of light as though from 'another' world, so distant and bent on domination as it falls on things and penetrates them. The person who philosophizes here does not suffer from the *Angst* which brings forth the modern calculator and the will to be able to figure everything out quantitatively, nor does he possess the proud independence of the 'thinking reed,' the emotional apriori of all theories, which is the origin for Descartes and Kant. Rather, this philosophizing person is absorbed right down to the roots of his spirit in the stream of being, which is naturally his element, the pure stream of being which – even disregarding all material content – affects him positively. Not the will to 'domination' or to 'organization' or to 'universal determination' or establishing what is, but the movement of sympathy, of living and letting live, here animates every thought. It is much more a gesture of welcome to the ever growing flood in which, for a comprehending view filled with surrender, the contents of the world repeatedly withdraw from any human rational grasp and overflow the bounds of the concept. The true world is surely no poorer than the world that shows itself to our natural perception. It is richer and more many-sided. (cited in Nota, *Max Scheler* 32-3)

This long quote reflects a lot of what is at the core of the philosophy of María Zambrano. In her way of thinking, Western philosophy has been loathe to assign validity to the heart and soul in defining truth and in the creating of an order which cannot be tabulated or deciphered by scientific methods. With regards to her language, a similarity exists with Scheler in the use of certain imagery. Scheler, in the previous quotation, refers to the "stream of being" and the "flood," language and images mirroring Zambrano's own frequent use of the "river" and "riverbed." Nature in her work holds a strong place when she attempts to show her way of thinking through the images and words that she employs.

As the essay goes on, she challenges the use of the scientific method of psychology and questions its results. She considers the soul a challenge: "On one hand,

man's reason sheds light on nature; on the other hand, reason found the transcendental character of man, his being and freedom. Yet, between nature and "I" of idealism, that bit of the cosmos in man, which has been called soul, remained" (*Hacia un saber* 25). Here, she uses the word in her explanation of how the soul has a place in Romanticism and in nature. The Romantics considered the soul as a part of nature and that in it, man could see the reflection of his soul. To her the soul is not something that can be figured out with mathematical formulas. In fact, much of her talk about the soul draws a parallel with that of American Ralph Waldo Emerson. In one of his selected essays, he writes:

The Supreme Critic on the errors of the past and the present, and the only prophet of that which must be, is that great nature in which we rest as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other; that common heart of which all sincere conversation is the worship, to which all right action is submission; that overpowering reality which confutes our tricks and talents, and constrains every one to pass for what he is, and to speak from his character and not from his tongue, and which evermore tends to pass into our thought and hand and become wisdom and virtue and power and beauty. We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal One." (206-07)

The concept of "the wise silence" that Emerson brings up in his essay on "The Over-Soul," is what Zambrano attempts to show. For her, it is more the question of the abyss or the abandoned soul that she is concerned with during this part of the essay. She wonders if the soul has lost its place in philosophy.

She returns to the concept of "ordo amoris" that she believes both Spinoza and Scheler went about discovering for themselves. Each had his different method and instruments, but they were getting at the heart of the issue of the heart as having its own reasons for things and for a given way of life. When referring to the order of the heart, Scheler was aiming at expressing the way in which love enters into the being of the

person and how love eventually manifests itself to the exterior. In addition she mentions that philosophers, novelists and poets have also shed light on the nature of the soul. The Greek tradition had oracles that asked the important questions such as Who am I? and What is my destiny? Here is where they found the truth to the soul. Zambrano continues to describe the manner of the soul's path to purification. Through the Dionysian cult, the soul would cleanse itself: "It is a cosmic bath, an immersion of the soul in the original fountains of the impetus to live, a reconciliation of the soul with life" (*Hacia una saber* 31). Through its cleansing, through its reconciliation, the soul becomes one with the cosmos, a step toward gaining more knowledge of the soul. Here again the soul is linked to a romantic nature.

In the summation of Zambrano's article "Towards a Knowledge of the Soul," we see her creating a trinity of Man, Nature and God, showing how intimately they are woven together. The soul, whether it be through catharsis or reconciliation, calls for a new perspective. That perspective is something that can be discovered through loving as in the order of the heart, an idea that is not only suggested in Zambrano's work, but is presented by other philosophers of the ages. The order of the heart and the soul are intertwined with one another. Where one stops, the other picks up in grappling with such serious, yet fundamental matters that touch both the heart and the soul. A knowledge of the soul, through the word, is Zambrano's quest in much of her writing.

While the essay discussed thus far deals with the soul and relates to other philosophers and their work, the next two essays in this section specifically refer to the word and the act of writing in order to show readers what Zambrano is attempting to reveal through her work. The essay of María Zambrano, "Por qué se escribe," begins

with the word "escribir." "Escribir" is María Zambrano. In other words, her use of "escribir" to initiate her personal discourse on the role of writing fits. In the initial, simple declarative phrase of the essay, "To write is to defend the solitude within which one is; it is an action that only arises from an effective isolation, yet from a communicable isolation, in which, precisely because of the remoteness of all concrete things, a discovery of relations among them becomes possible," the concept of writing, an action, comes up against a situational context: it is that of solitude (*Hacia un saber* 35). Writing, for Zambrano, is the undertaking that allows the person within the solitude to justify and support the actual state of being that, often, is an ambient requirement of the writer. This solitude is temporary, as shown with her use of "se está." One may be in solitude out of circumstance, duty or choice, perhaps, but if a vocation of a person leads her to reside in solitude for a while, this is that kind of solitude that Zambrano refers to in the first line of the essay. Writing is that opportunity to choose to defend a temporal state of being alone.

In the line, "it is an action that only arises from an effective isolation," writing, or the word, once again is equated to action (*Hacia un saber* 35). Before it was an action described as defense, while here where she defends her solitude, she refers back to its plain name, an action. Before, she states that solitude is a condition in which a writer resides, and later it is referred to as being an "effective isolation." Once again the reference to a condition occurs. In this part of the phrase, her qualifier "effective" brings one back to a concept of production perhaps, or that of an achieved result in some form or fashion. Whatever that result may be depends upon the intention of the writer. What was previously deemed "effective isolation" also carries the characterization of

"communicable." In the use of this word, there is no doubt that having the ability to communicate, to transmit some kind of message, is fundamental to the writer and to the writer's use of her isolated experience.

In the part of the sentence, "in which, precisely because of the remoteness of all concrete things," the use of the word "concrete" refers to the idea that everything has particular, distinct qualities, and it is for this reason that a distance between things exists (*Hacia un saber* 35). Everything has its personality, its characteristics, or rather, a different make-up. From the different make-up of each thing, at some point an intersection from one thing to the next must exist. This first paragraph to "Why One Writes" implies that writing is an action that allows for any permutation and combination of thought and idea to merge through some point of intersection, a merger that results from a sort of empty space which has a continuous relationship with the writer. From that empty space the writer produces concepts to dwell in mentally, or concepts that, although arising from nothingness, are formed with words, the only vindication of a person's temporal state of being within solitude. One question to ask, perhaps, would be why must the person "defend" her solitude? Some form or forms of response to this question follow.

In the second paragraph of the essay "Why One Writes," Zambrano expresses through her language once again that writing is used as a method for the defense of solitude, a tool to be used in order to give a good reason for the being's time alone. The language expresses a relationship of necessity, a sort of enslaving or an insistence. Strength stands out here in the phrase, "But it is a solitude that needs to be defended," a confident statement that displays its separateness rightfully emphasized by its nature as

an independent clause, yet one with a bit of a punch at the start (*Hacia un saber* 35). In addition to the previously mentioned phrase, the one that follows, “The writer defends her solitude, showing what she finds in it and only in it,” places emphasis on a relationship of how multiple coats of meaning spread across and into one another within the sentence in order for solitude to make its case (*Hacia un saber* 35). Yet, it is not solitude that attempts to make a case.

Rather, solitude exists as a protected position for which the writer is responsible. “Her,” the possessive pronoun pointing toward solitude, assigns this particular state of being to that of the particular writer. Solitude gains a sense of belonging, whether it wants it or not. The writer undertakes this shielding mode toward her time within the condition of solitude by unearthing and replanting the seeds that she discovers throughout the harvesting of ideas that are gathered into words that compose her writing. The process of writing allows for the discovery of the materialization of ideas, her ideas that reveal themselves to the writer within the specific solitude.

Zambrano poses a question in which verbal and written communication methods are raised: “Having speech, why write?” (*Hacia un saber* 35) Zambrano poses this question, in her style, in order to give her the material to develop her path of thinking. Here the sentence begins with a conjunction, “But, what is immediate, what arises from our spontaneity is something for which we are not wholly responsible, because it does not arise from the whole totality of our person,” adding a feeling that something had not been finished previous to this statement (*Hacia un saber* 35). The unfinished feeling which initiates the next idea moves into a temporal notion which refers to the instantaneous, what comes forth within the moment, a moment that is not given a birthplace, an

unrootedness resulting from this inability to pin down this "spontaneity." Here "spontaneity" suggests a space in which a temporality somehow emerges.<sup>20</sup> An innocent plea of non-accountability steps in through relation to an unnamed entity that comes out of the imagined condition called "spontaneity," showing a link in which responsibility is shared and a reason follows, one that frees the writer from whatever she feels she may have become responsible for through speech. The "whole totality" creates a sense of universality that wishes to incorporate every aspect within the person, a constitution of a whole from fragmentary parts. Yet, what this section is exactly saying is that the spoken word does not come from this "whole totality" but rather from only a part of the person and thus fails to point the finger.

Responding to the moment is what results through speech. Speaking lacks preparedness and thoughtfulness. It is not a planned act. The environment in which speech occurs takes on that feeling of immediacy, which adds gravity to the person, a gravity that attempts to squeeze out words without thought, utterances devoid of responsibility and, perhaps in certain instances, substance. An externality adds this gravity mentioned before, as if a compulsion to speak does not come from a controlled initiative from the self. The force that Zambrano fails to name in this essay does indeed deal with another spatial relationship which is similar to an undefined space, such as "spontaneity," and is then likened to a space which usually encloses one, hinders movement, or at least is rigidly bordered by the conditions, or circumstances, that actively seek the person. This force becomes a "trap." Zambrano employs language of

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<sup>20</sup> One question that may be raised at this point is how can temporality emerge from a space that does not really exist?

the hunt, a language that suggests violence, coyness and secrecy of position, which through the indeterminate embodiment of "circumstances" creates this context of heaviness in the use of the spoken word. And release. A lifting of the heaviness through the word happens in order to find an exit to a certain set of conditions. In summation, the pressure of the moment builds, presses down on the person, causing her to feel ensnared within the present, and it is through speech that the mild release, the little freedom becomes a momentary reality.

Liberation from the circumstances of the present only results through employment of the word. From imprisonment to freedom – where is the in-between with Zambrano? Does it exist? Are there degrees of freedom? The present takes on a notion which points to, once again, a concept of warfare and violence. "Besieged" suggests that the situation itself attacks and creates an environment built out of a burning need for freedom from the present: "Through the word, we become free, free from the moment, from the besieged and immediate circumstance" (*Hacia un saber* 35). What makes this idea noteworthy is that usually there is this need to be within the present moment, yet Zambrano suggests that the moment can be so binding and can enslave the person to a no-time, a time that does not exist yet which always exists.

Emphasizing the continuous nature of the defeat within language, Zambrano carries on in her use of it by entering into, in my opinion, two levels of wordage, one that speaks specifically to her way of utilizing the written word and one that deals with that natural defeat inevitable to language. Characterization of this kind of defeat leads back to a central point found in Zambrano's philosophy, which is that of life's meanings which come forth from intimacy and from the humanity of the person. Personal, too. And on

many levels. The generality of the thinking here, not pinpointing it to the individual but rather to humanity as a whole, plays with the notion that language obliges the human being to use the device that emancipates her, highlighting the impossibility of full communication with words. This applies to human beings with the capacity for speech and for writing. The inevitability of life's ebbs and flows is the defeat, the knowledge that unless death enters the picture, there is no exit: "From that defeat, a defeat that is intimate and human, not of one specific man but rather of the human being, is born the exigency to write. One writes in order to re-conquer the defeat suffered whenever we have spoken at length" (*Hacia un saber* 36). Writing is one of the methods in which the human being momentarily yet unsuccessfully attempts to free the self from the cell of life. "Exigency" creates not only a situation of demand and necessity but also that of urgency, and this same urgency that was a part of speech is also a part of writing but in a more measured space of time. "Born" is another strong image that runs rampant throughout Zambrano's work. Creation as a natural process of the human being shares space here with the act of writing. Death in language bears life in language. The manipulation and play of the written word is one example of re-living a death. Zambrano gives a reason for writing, simple and plain. Not only does writing involve its own replaying of death and rebirth through language, but, in returning to its competition with speech, it also adds relief, a momentary one, yet with her warlike language, through her written reconquest.

Continuing with the set-apart-style and the use of battle language, Zambrano's contradictory statements are in constant struggle themselves within the same space. The absoluteness of the word "only" shows how victory and defeat reside within that similar space: "Victory can only happen there where defeat has been suffered, in the very same

words,” allowed to share sameness in their respective states of being, or conditions, which speak to difference. It is having experienced defeat through this process of suffering, Zambrano points out, that either defeat precedes victory, or a cyclical, repetitive nature occurs (*Hacia un saber* 36). She then marks the space where this happens in the words, the same words that are used one way or another:

These same words now will have, in writing a distinct function; they will not be at the service of the oppressive moment; no longer will they serve to justify our presence before the attack of what is momentary, but rather, departing from the center of our being, in withdrawal, they will go defending us before the totality of moments, before the totality of circumstances, before life in its entirety. (*Hacia un saber* 36)

What happens is a change in function and employment methods: it is the taking of the same thing or idea and seeing it in another way. Perspective through words. A division of labor results in the changing roles of words in various situations.

Words, for Zambrano, give of themselves differently when spoken versus when written, and it is at this point that she qualifies language within the present, the moment, as "oppressive." This view implies that the present can have an effect of dominance, it can be cruel, and perhaps it is this overwhelming feeling within an instant in time that, for some, slices the spoken word into sheaths of unrecognizable pieces. Zambrano states what words fail to do, a negative declaration that allows for an opening into what can be seen as what words will do. However, first she reiterates what words will not do, the moment again acts as an aggressor, in the words of Zambrano. Words, in speech, assault at times. Readyng the reader for what words will do, Zambrano begins by positioning the words at the center of the human being, creating an image of retreat from the center, or a spreading out, perhaps, which take up the charge within time against partial time, within

the condition that surrounds and encompasses time, a wholeness for which to strive, one that speaks to the creative process throughout life.

The withholding enterprise that Zambrano writes about in reference to writing creates a notion of restraint involved with words: “There is in writing a withholding of words, whereas in speech there is a releasing of them, an undoing of them, that can go undoing themselves from us” (*Hacia un saber* 36). However, when considering the idea of restraint, one could come up with a negativity attached to it because of the flipside being freedom and self-indulgence, which in society today favors the present moment. Instead of restraint or withholding words being seen as negative, it may be a temporary holding pattern of a space of time within time itself. In my opinion, Zambrano wants to say that words can be tossed out in the instant, thus trying to avoid accountability and responsibility, while the "withholding" that may go along with writing, allows for the person to reside for a moment in meditation before acting upon the time of solitude that passes along with the time of conviviality. On the contrary, the language related to speech is visualized as release and undoing, a letting go into the nothingness. This nothingness is what also surrounds us as another condition of existence, and words come from us and vanish into that state upon being uttered. With the term "this withholding of words" there is a sense of holding back that goes along with writing. It contrasts with Zambrano's previous talk about the loose ways of speech, a sort of release that comes along with speaking within the moment. Writing holds back, according to Zambrano.

An emergence of the self results with the written word rather than with speech. The privacy that may or may not be part of the solitude of the writer, whether in physical space or in mental space, allows for a budding identity or, rather, an embodiment of

thought that may have taken a bit more mulling over than the instantaneous, spoken moment. At this point, the written word can develop a style all of its own. As can be seen in much of her work, especially that of the later expressions, Zambrano enters the world of rhythm, the musical world. This stylistic charge is created by the writer, the artist who molds the words with her mind and metaphors. The use of "human" also sets off a boundary within which language exists, the human boundary.

In the phrase, "And this, regardless of whether the writer is concerned with the words and with clear consciousness chooses and places them in a rational, well-known order," Zambrano works on the idea of play with language (*Hacia un saber* 36). To me, this is a question of desire. Creative play with words is what Zambrano, just shy of thirty at the time of writing this essay, is doing. Power comes through time with the words and the manner in which the words create their tapestry, a power driven by the desire that drives human creation. In this case, it is the mental play of a writer who creates such a tapestry of words. She writes, "the writer is concerned with the words and with clear consciousness chooses and places them in a rational, well-known order" (*Hacia un saber* 36). This sentence speaks to the philosopher, the entity of clarity with language, the being that strives to undo the words into an understandable meaning. The poet may do the opposite, whether out of unconscious drive that may, at times, be misunderstood as irresponsibility or capriciousness. The writer and the poet, though travelling through similar modes of language do at times counterpose one another. The writer aims at the rational order of the word whereas the poet may look to the irrational to display his understanding of the idea. The poet-philosopher is a master of both. The poet may

understand the philosopher's viewpoint but chooses not to follow the usual, rational, well-known order that aids philosophy in understanding and searching for truth.

As a contrary notion, it is the liberation that acts as a release from a necessary creative impulse, which is this "suffered defeat." Writing is an act that provides this kind of breaking free from the obvious physical imprisonment of the mind. The words are the discontinuous extensions of the mind and the play that goes on within it. This restraint or withholding is what I see in her entrance into the stage of desire as the motor behind the act of withholding words. Desire is at the root of writing, from the initial stages when one picks up the pen to the intermittent play throughout the rest of time with writing. This "process of reconciliation" is what results when the tango of withholding and release happens. This is when the words "fall" from the writer who can control herself, measuring out the responsibility along with the driving desire to spill words.

In the essay's phrase, "All human victories must be reconciliation," once again Zambrano writes in absolutes, a style which points to everything and nothing at the same time (*Hacia un saber* 37). What this means is that her notion of the universal lies itself in the nothingness and the everything. The other area of concern in this is that of what she means by "human victories." The "failure" of the being signals that existential anguish that is bound up in the inevitable inability to exit the self. The "human victories" are perhaps the moments in which a momentary self-understanding occurs, facilitated in many ways, here in this essay, through writing. A coming back together, an encounter of a relationship on the same level of the self is what occurs, according to Zambrano. When she speaks of being "lost" in the line, "All human victories must be reconciliations, reunions of a lost friendship," the meaning, once again, goes deeper than the surface

(*Hacia un saber* 37). It can be that kind that fell out of existence for a certain period of time, and it can also carry the meaning of that of being deep in thought or misplaced. In other words, there is a temporal displacement of being, one that is not necessarily speaking to a nothingness, but one that has achieved a sort of faithful waiting and adjusting to the movement of events that happen within a set condition of space and time.

As one can see through the reading of her material, there is a certain roundness and continuity that achieves itself in a way that is invisible to the reader at the time in which the eyes glaze over the page. A homecoming to the texts of Zambrano naturally allow for an understanding, an "ah ha!" which brings the reader full circle, yet not in a circular way, but rather along a winding path in which the forest clouds the approaching meaning. This comment speaks to her concept that she develops and offers in her work *Claros del bosque* (*Clearings in the Forest*).

Glory, in the case of Zambrano, takes on the connotation of what is beautiful and not necessarily that which is bound up in pride. Words can inspire joy, and this happens in this case when words majestically come together in meaning and in form. What she may be saying is that the words in the past have carried a meaning that has done violence to that moment or that temporal plane of being. She may also be saying that these words hold a certain power and, through the previous withholding of them, so did the potential for the words to carry meaning beyond the realm of the one who withheld words. This restraining in this case cuts off a connection that may have been made and may have been useful and fulfilling.

The goal, at this point for the writer, is that of communication, and the previous comment speaks to this. It is communication that holds the power, and the way to do this

is through the method of words. As simple as it may sound, it is the basis of communication. The inclusive tasks of what a writer does are driven by some need to perform the action. The writer's duty carries with it, mentioned again, a force of communication, which can put on the mask of humanity by taking it to the place in which humanity is given shape through the words of the writer. Zambrano writes, “[o]f the human being with what is inhuman,” showing her style in which she has a tug of war between terms, posing one side of what she wants to say and then showing the opposite side (*Hacia un saber* 37). This style suggests inclusiveness and a contemplative consideration when thinking and writing.

Saying the same thing over and over is a point used in rhetoric that, at times, can be effective. The tendency for Zambrano to do this is abundant. Repetition is part of her nature as a writer, but at some point, when all else fails, and one cannot stomach the same thing that she may have written forty times over, she arrives at her point. This is her method for her writing, demonstrating a necessary stage that she goes through in her thinking for it to then become a result of the writing. “To save words from their vanity, from their vacuity, setting them, forging them in a lasting manner, is what the one who really writes is after, without even knowing it,” this adds that dramatic flair with words that goes back to Plato and "saving appearances" in words (*Hacia un saber* 37). It is the old argument of poetry versus philosophy. To me, Zambrano's philosophical method is poetic, and in different instances the one gets lost in the other.

Having entered into the discourse of speech versus writing, Zambrano goes within the layers of form to describe something that adds a shade to writing, or, even more specific, that of rhythm. A sort of improvisational tone in writing, one that is thorough.

Really, it may not be best to say that this style of writing is thoughtful improvisation; yet, what Zambrano is suggesting is that a more natural way of addressing the word on the page is, at times, desirable and the most useful way for some writers. A speaking while writing, a sort of fluid dancing that ends up gliding onto the sheet, is surely at the core of Zambrano's writing. There is a point to her musicality in language, which speaks to the natural tendency that her words move across the page, a tendency that actually may make a more formal reader a bit uncomfortable. With “[a]nd the doing a thing ‘as if’ it were something else, subtracts it and undermines all of its meaning, and questions its necessity,” Zambrano refers to the old argument of language's inability to capture things or their essences, and expresses her doubts that such a concept exists (*Hacia un saber* 37). The “as if” acts as that layer or mask that covers the impossible root of existence, an undertaking that invites investigation to the calling for the existence of that “as if.” Why not just get to the point in language? Yet, that is Zambrano's point here in the speech-style within writing and other styles of writing: you cannot get to the point.

Zambrano, after affirming, “Writing comes to be the contrary of speaking,” sets up the opposition of the two forms of communication (*Hacia un saber* 37). Writing takes on that more justifiable form for her, one that goes toward the idea of freedom from the moment. This reflection on writing speaks to the idea that it is an act that can allow for, through time and thoughtful proceeding. The flight of speech that may result from the flight of the moment, writing, for Zambrano, performs a function of stability. What does she mean when she writes, “one only finds liberation when we arrive at something permanent?” (*Hacia un saber* 37) It is a general statement that fails to point out any specifics, and it is this nebulous way of writing that, at times, can cause confusion as to

what the meaning behind her words is. “To save the words from their momentary existence,” here is the concept of the writer in defense of words, referring to their temporality (*Hacia un saber* 38). Clearly, what lasts is privileged in Zambrano's thinking in this essay, “Why One Writes.” The momentary is questioned and regarded with suspicion and sees that the responsibility of the writer lies in creating a more solid meaning out of words rather than a momentary flight of fancy.

When referring to the use of words, she writes that this group, "does not collect us," a statement that lacks comfort through the freedom that may be achieved through the spoken word. The freedom does not necessarily console one through with newly attained state of freedom. How does a word create? This is something that Zambrano does not really explain at this point of the essay, rather she leaves the mystery through language a mystery. She points to the other side of things in which overuse of words results in a disintegration of unity and meaning, a breaking up. The use of warlike language appears again, a common metaphorical pathway that Zambrano follows. To where does it lead? To everywhere and to nowhere. She explains how the word in the moment, when spoken, may liberate and may result in victory, or may have achieved clarity. How does this happen? It happens through an assaulting language that does not lead to an answer or a reply. The process of speech highlights the highs and lows that maintain the cycle of language that Zambrano suggests as being strangely liberating and binding at the same time. The spoken word, although possibly meant to be a deliverance from the circumstance at hand, can also be viewed as a tying the self to it.

Zambrano talks about a “secret” that exists in the process of writing. She writes:

She wants to tell the secret; what cannot be said with the voice for being too much the truth; the great truths are not usually said through speaking:

the truth of what passes in the secret depth of time, in the silence of lives, and which cannot be said. 'There are things that cannot be said,' this is certain. Yet, what cannot be said is what has to be written. To discover the secret and to communicate are the two motives that move the writer. (*Hacia un saber* 38)

This idea of the secret is apparent throughout most of her work. The secret that comes with understanding poetic reason, or, rather, her poetic reason consumes Zambrano's writing. She speaks again of truth or truths that are only revealed through writing. Poetry, the one that is spoken in the spontaneity of the moment, unearths the secret where poetry, written, records it. Zambrano writes, "In its solitude the secret is discovered by the writer, not entirely, but rather in a progressive becoming" (*Hacia un saber* 38). The writer is the person who puts the secret down in stone, allowing the secret to develop and take on its own meaning for the reader. It is when the writer leaves her solitude that she communicates the secret. From there, it is not necessarily the writer who understands the secret, but it is for the audience to help decipher the meaning: "The secret shows itself to the writer, but it does not stop being a secret for her first, before it does for anyone else, and perhaps for her only, since the fate of all who initially stumble upon a truth is to find it in order to show it to the rest, such that they, her audience, be the ones who decipher its meaning" (*Hacia un saber* 40). This is exactly the epitome of María Zambrano's work, to decipher its meaning, the secret of her meaning.

Thus, it is many times up to the public to decipher the secret, hidden meaning of the writer: "There are secrets that must be published, and they are those that visit the writer, taking advantage of her solitude, her effective isolation that makes her thirsty" (*Hacia un saber* 42). What is she thirsty for? The truth. After having written the secret, or perhaps the truth, the truth must then be put on display, which requires a public, an

audience or a “spiritual community of the writer with the audience” (*Hacia un saber* 43). This communication, then, is what Zambrano calls the “glory that is the manifestation of the hidden truth until the present, which will expand those instants, thus, transfiguring lives” (*Hacia un saber* 43). The “glory” of discovering the hidden truth is unveiled, and those involved understand the truth. This “glory” which involves both the writer and the audience is something that occurs not necessarily after the work is written but before, as Zambrano explains here:

The community of the writer and audience that, against what is generally believed, is not formed after the public has read the published work, but rather before, in the act itself of the writer writing her work. It is then, upon the secret becoming self-evident, when this community of the writer with her audience is created. The audience exists before the work may or may not have been read, it exists from the beginning of the work, it coexists with it and with the writer herself. (*Hacia un saber* 43)

Thus, here she shows how the word, though coming from the writer, has its forum in which to discover the secret or the truth that is initially hidden.

In sum, the word for Zambrano in the essay “Why One Writes” looks for redemption as well as an avenue down which it can liberate itself from the pressure of the moment that occurs in speech. Words and meanings in this essay take on a circular path in which they attempt to defend the communicable tasks of the written word. A solid case is made for such a defense of the writer in isolation. The writer must have his or her time in isolation in order to breed the words that are laid down upon the page. Without it, we have no thoughts or ideas with which to work. The secret, whatever that may be of the writer, cannot be written or communicated. For Zambrano, this is fundamental. The secret that she herself tries to communicate is one that looks for meaning in the one who reads or hears the words. Clarity is not Zambrano’s strength in her work, yet it is through

the mysterious method that she strings together words that eventually help bring a reader to a clearing in the forest.

The third translated essay in this chapter comes from the 1977 text *Clearings in the Forest*. The title of the section, which is chapter six of the work, is “Words.” Nothing better to sum it up, words. This text composed of words is one in which her poetic reason shines brightly. Many times the actual understanding of her message is clouded by her heavily dominated images throughout the work. At times the sentences flow, and at other times, some sentences stand alone, only to allow the reader to soak in what would be called her poetic reason. Granted, I believe much of her work slightly leans in favor of the poetic rather than the reason. Not only is the essay an extreme challenge to translate, but it also often stands as a piece extremely difficult to make any sense out of; nevertheless, it has been considered one of her most distinguished works of her career, probably because of its strong bent on being poetic reason.

In *Clearings in the Forest*, Zambrano continues her search for the multiple meaning of the word and, at the same time, the only meaning of the word, its hidden roots that expose a deep mystery. This mystery begins in a section titled “Before Words Were Uttered” and continues on throughout the essay. In the beginning Zambrano talks about the word as something that was not known to man. The word first developed:

Before such use of the word could appear in which the word itself could be colonized, there would have been only words without being a language in its own right. The human being has been permitted fatally to colonize himself, his being and his assets. And were it not for this having been the true argument for his living on the land, the word would not have been given nor entrusted to him. (*Claros del bosque* 81)

Thus, as one can see that man, after having been given the word, began to take responsibility for the word, to develop a language, a plurality of languages with which he

held dominion over beasts. This alludes to the story of creation in which man, after having fallen from the grace of God, began to use what he developed, words. They became words of communion not just communication. Words began to multiply, as Zambrano states here, “but rather there would be various words, a swarm of that would go resting themselves next to each other in the beehive of silence, or in a single nest, not far from the silence of man and from his reach” (*Claros del bosque* 82). It is from this communion of words that Zambrano alludes to poetry as one use of words. The words with which the poetry is formed are “truthful” and “venturous,” “without syntax” and “an unity without synthesis.” These words that Zambrano speaks of do not follow a usual pattern, a case to make for her poetic reason.

Words “go sprouting forth from the shock of the innocent, of the wonder; from the love and from its borderings, forms of love themselves. And it is love that they are always lacking” (*Claros del bosque* 83). This idea of words being born out of wonder, forms of love, signify poetry and poetic reason. When words and thought are united, one has “makers of order and of truth” (*Claros del bosque* 83). This idea of the order of truth is not that apparent in Zambrano’s works, especially *Clearings in the Forest*. Rather, it is not truth that is sought after in the work, but rather something that cannot be said, a sort of “clearing” or coming to of understanding. Words do this at times, but the words must come to the one through inspiration and not through actually seeking them out. That is why it may be such a challenge to understand this section of *Clearings in the Forest* and other sections as well: truth exists only within the being, something that words cannot necessarily help achieve.

Continuing on in this section, Zambrano writes: “Some words, a fluttering of meaning, a babble even, or a word that stays suspended like a code to decipher; a single word that was being guarded there and which has given itself over to the one who comes distracted, that single word” (*Claros del bosque* 85). First of all, this is not a sentence. It does not exhibit a complete thought. This is one of many examples that fails to deliver a complete idea. What does one do with this? Looking at it closely, she talks about words as “a fluttering meaning, a babble even.” This can be interpreted as either change that goes on in meaning or perhaps mere incomprehensibility. Words are that. They do not always carry a fully described set of meaning. They are words, words themselves. Are they incomprehensible? Yes, at times they are, but at other times they are there to reside in the reservoir of poetry within the self: “A word of truth that on its own cannot be entirely understood nor forgotten. A word to be consumed without being worn away” (*Claros del bosque* 85). Both of these ideas are not complete. What does this word of truth have to say? All we know is that it cannot be understood or forgotten. The question is then, what word is she speaking of? Perhaps, what the reader needs is a clearing in the forest to decipher this truth, or, rather, that the truth just comes to the reader.

Zambrano speaks of the lost word in another section of the text: “Not only language but rather all words, as unique as they may appear to us, as alone that they may be and as unexpected as their appearance may be, allude to a lost word, what is felt and is immediately known at times in anguish, and in a type of breaking dawn that announces it, palpitating in moments” (*Claros del bosque* 87). Here one can sense the anguish that exists in the losing of a word, or, rather the lost word. Why has this word or any word been lost? In this section Zambrano is alluding to the metaphorical time in the forest, in

which the word is there, but somehow it has lost its path to the clearing. This causes anguish, one of the first times that Zambrano expresses this in the text. The anguish of the truth, the anguish of the lost word is “felt beating in the depth of respiration itself, of the heart that watches over it, gift of that which hope does not manage to imagine” (*Claros del bosque* 87). When reading this latest quote, one envisions a heart watching over something. It exists as a guard, or an entity that takes care and protects. This is an example of the choices in language that Zambrano makes that do not really truly match up in their metaphorical make up. Despite that, one can infer in her meaning that the heart is the core of life and can fulfill the role of being vigilant of the word, lost or found.

From words that are lost, Zambrano moves into “The Words That Are Kept” section of the text. She refers to a sort of presentness that comes along with the word. The word that is kept “cannot convert itself into something past and for which cannot be counted on for the future, that which has been united with being” (*Claros del bosque* 89). The word, then, is one of acting in the now of understanding. It cannot be part of the past nor can it be part of the future. Its function is for today or for the moment. She continues by using nature as part of the relationship with the word. Nature itself protects that word as she demonstrates in the following few lines: “And in the firmament, only some constellations or bright stars seem to keep watch over some word and stand guard over it, with it, the inconceivable immensity of the interstellar spaces, the voids and cavities of the universe, watchtowers of the Word” (*Claros del bosque* 89). Why does nature feel so strongly about protecting the word? How is it that nature even feels? Zambrano takes the liberties to give an inanimate object feelings. In a way, Zambrano is trying to personify nature in her attempt to discuss the word. From nature she moves to human

beings “who keep that which is their word...because it has come to them like a lamp that ignites itself or is always ignited without combustion” (*Claros del bosque* 89). The human being enters into its own relationship with the word and at times a relationship of delirium: “The word that remains inviolate in delirium...enters into delirium without end” (*Claros del bosque* 89-90). That is exactly what some of this text does; it enters one into delirium, losing words, keeping words and eventually transcending them.

As Zambrano writes, “ ‘What has been written, is written.’ But not all of it permanently. Writings are erased by themselves, or by the work of circumstances. The climate, the atmosphere itself, some little dust that falls from the heavens erases what is written: titles, inscriptions and sayings fall” (*Claros del bosque* 91). Here Zambrano talks about the impermanence of writing. She suggests that what may have been etched in stone can be destroyed itself because of circumstances. Perhaps what she is alluding to here is the idea of history. History, the events that occur in it, are permanent, yet what is written in history can disappear, the words can be erased. She makes comment on the fact that what makes history is that which is oral and “passed around by word of mouth...the clichés of those centuries” (*Claros del bosque* 91). Words many times are repeated, whether oral or written and mark a limit of time, “an enclosure comes to form around all of them which very few people transcend” (*Claros del bosque* 91). This enclosure that exists is what puts a limit around what can be deemed as history. It is discontinuous as well: “the discontinuity of the inspiration corresponds to the discontinuity of written history, or that it is given as it is, already written for always under the saying: ‘What has been written, is written’” (*Claros del bosque* 91). Yet, what is written is what makes history, according to Zambrano: “There is no history without the

word, without the written word, without the word that is sung or chanted – how was a word going to be spoken without intonation or song?” (*Claros del bosque* 92) Zambrano, in a way, contradicts herself, for at one point she is saying that the written word can be erased, and then she goes on to say that the word makes history. Is she also insinuating that history can be erased? Or, perhaps, that history does not exist? In fact, her writing doubts or questions history as it is written. She talks about stones. One must ask the question, what stones is she talking about in the following passage:

Because these stones are not written apparently, no one knows definitively, or if they are written by air, by the dawn, or by the stars, they are related to the words that in the middle of history appear and are erased, and they leave and return for as well written as they are; the words without condemnation of the revelation, to which by the breath of man awaken with life and meaning. The words of truth and in truth do not stay, they are ignited and extinguished, they are made of dust, and later they appear intact; revelation poetry, metaphysics, or they simply, words. (*Claros del bosque* 92)

What can be understood is that the words are appearing to be temporary in addition to being once again a part of nature. Words are like dust as people turn to dust, a slight leaning to a Christian saying, “From ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” Her discourse on history in this section of the text might be the closest to having a clear meaning. History has its place, but it may be erased because the written word has been erased; yet, it can be reignited with time.

From words igniting, and words being erased, we arrive at the word as being hidden. Zambrano uses nature again to describe the word as being hidden as some deep mystery that is a “pulsation of life” that will appear soon. Many times Zambrano writes about the mystery of the word. She refers to this in the essay “Why One Writes,” alluding to the word as secret. What secret is she talking about? Is it ever revealed? As

shown in the earlier essay, it is revealed through words as the writer pours them out onto the page. What is behind this need for this secrecy, this mystery related to the word? That is the beauty of Zambrano. She only reveals it as she goes, or leaves it up to the reader to decipher the meaning. She writes:

And even as if the word had never existed and could only be known by that indefinable void, by that extension that it leaves behind...All that extension, will it be the result of abandonment? And, hence, one feels the word immediately lost and hidden, root and germ, dark presence without a door in which to enter into consciousness. The aporia, or paradox, of the word, its impossibility in finding conditions for its life, a place where it can be housed, a time and that subtle fire and that dying while living. (*Claros del bosque* 93)

The word here has not found a home; in fact, it fears abandonment. The word is hidden and without place. It needs a place to thrive and to die while living. In a way, Zambrano is giving the word a human characteristic: “finding conditions for its life, a place where it can be housed” (*Claros del bosque* 93). She could be talking about finding the right word to use when writing, she could be talking about how one word can be the most effective when discovered by the writer, she could be just writing without a purpose, writing in a poetic manner that only she, or perhaps not even she, understands the meaning. That is part of the Zambrano process.

The word in this section titled “The Announcement” talks about the conception of the word and how it is done humanly. Again, Zambrano is personifying the word, anthropomorphizing, something that is difficult to understand in the mind of the reader. She continues to work with nature to develop her images:

It would be worthwhile if not language, the language that is a dance that notifies and is something more than in the bees; it would be worth the opaque song of the owl that warns the stage and the roe deer that the hunter seeks [...] And of what does the dance of the bees notify us of the bees, those who stand apart from the swarm as they search for a new place to house it? Do they already announce the word? (*Claros del bosque* 94)

What is she referring to here? She is using the bees, which is part of nature, to help announce the arrival of the word. This dancing of the bees is another example of Zambrano in her poetic reason. How does one make sense of bees dancing around and announcing the arrival of the word? Through using one's poetic reason is one possible answer. This announcement that Zambrano speaks of in this section is unclear. What can be inferred is that she is announcing the word, a sort of indication that language exists. In the end, she says, "A reiterated announcement that the conceived word is at the point of being born" (*Claros del bosque* 95). This sentence suggests the repetition of the announcement, one that calls for a rebirth of the word, perhaps alluding to the idea of poetry being reborn in the word, a new word.

The next section that she writes is titled "The Concert" who she dedicates to Andrés Segovia. In this section she speaks of music as some sort of pure form that must be listened to without words at first: "[m]usic which teaches without words the right way of listening [...] it can be a form of silence, that which sustains the word in its medium and on its right level. Because music is, from the beginning, what is heard, what must be heard, and without it, the word itself [...] Thanks to music the word does not deceive" (*Claros del bosque* 97). Zambrano is highly in favor of music. Music can do no wrong, and it is from music that the word is lifted and understood. By her perspective, all music lasts an instant, but this instant is one of eternity. From here she does not speak about the word but rather makes a slight journey into the idea of music. She speaks of "pain" being there but also in the guitar. The concept of the word has completely escaped from this section of the text, with the exception of the beginning stage in which she is saying that

the word is not necessary at first when listening to music. This is a good example in which Zambrano goes off on a tangent on another subject, only causing more confusion for the reader. Perhaps this is part of the intention of the essay, but we will never know.

The next section “Only the Word” finishes off chapter six of *The Clearings in the Forest*. In it Zambrano expresses the idea of the word in connection to the barrier of sound and silence: “Seeing that for however long and irrepressibly that it has been spoken, the barrier between the silence and sound never ceased to exist, rising up on end until leading the one who speaks to the border of paroxysm” (*Claros del bosque* 99). The word existed between the two, yet it never had an actual distance that separated them. What it leads the reader to is speech, which “takes the character of cosmic waterfall, a volcanic eruption” (*Claros del bosque* 99). This leads to the idea of word unifying, “of the feeling that embraces and reunites the senses, a vivifying blow, an impalpable fire and light of understanding” (*Claros del bosque* 99). The words are alive here, making their way through nature and through language. In fact, the word is a part of nature once again. The single word is also a part of the two breaths, “the one of life and the one of being” (*Claros del bosque* 100). The concept of breathing as incorporated into the word concludes the essay. It speaks of life and how breathing unites the being. Also, “Everything transcends the breath of being, and thus its word, the one, unknown and wonderful, miraculously identified word, raises in its unique impetus all the words together and unifies them, destroying them irremediably” (*Claros del bosque* 101). Only the word exists, and once breath has been given to it, the word takes flight out into the world or back into the void. These are concepts of María Zambrano that are at times a

challenge to capture, yet despite that have a certain poetic quality to them that does not necessarily call for an understanding but rather a general sensing and feeling.

In conclusion, the three articles translated for this section all have something in common: they deal with, rather, they are the words of María Zambrano. With her words she is constantly seeking the truth, on a philosophical level as well as on a pure language level. This language that she employs is one filled with images of natures, from riverbeds and bees to cosmic baths and breaking dawns. Through this language Zambrano looks to express her poetic reason, a way of writing and thinking that her contemporaries were not always fans of, such as her teacher Don José Ortega y Gasset; nevertheless, she struck off on her own path, one that led her to many places and to many avenues of thought in her own style of language. One important point to remember is that the words that she wrote did not always achieve clarity, yet that was probably what Zambrano was not looking to do. A glimpse of the mystery, as well as understanding, through words and through life, were what arrived at the person. From her essays in 1933, “Why One Writes” and “Towards a Knowledge of the Soul” to her 1977 work *Clearings in the Forest*, Zambrano pours out words onto a page in order to make the reader think about the truth in his soul, a journey towards a knowledge that is daunting, poetic and necessary.

## Translation of “Towards a knowledge of the soul”<sup>21</sup>

Each age justifies itself before history by the encounter of a truth that achieves clarity in it. What will be our truth? Our manifestation? Truths have their precursors that have paid, in some obscure prison, the crime of having seen from afar.

But the precursors are recognized only from the plain truth from which they went forward; only from the possession of this truth does one understand the feeling of its enigmatic words. Only in elucidated truth do we recognize a truth that is semi-veiled.

The revelation of what we feel to be witnessing in the times that are passing is that of man in his life, a revelation that comes out of Philosophy, with which Philosophy itself is revealed to us. Since Philosophy, which employs its rational instruments in shedding light on Science, “Science of the sciences,” turned into, without wasting its inheritance, that chill of pure marvel which entails that which is Philosophy, thought in its greatest purity, launch itself with the impetus of passion, not to devour itself, as passion alone does, but rather to stop in time, before the hunted game flees and brings us back intact.

Passion only frightens away truth, something that is susceptible and agile in escaping from passion’s paws. Reason alone does not manage to surprise the hunted game, but passion and reason united, reason firing itself with passionate impetus in order to stop at the right point, can gather the naked truth without harm.

Then, as Plato would say when speaking of Pythagoras, Philosophy is “the way of life.” Truth is the nourishment of life which, nevertheless, does not devour it but rather

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<sup>21</sup> María Zambrano, *Hacia un saber sobre el alma*, 1a.ed. (Madrid: Alianza, 2000) 21-34.

holds it up high and leaves it, in the end, fixed over time such that “time passes and the word of God remains.”

And thus, having consciousness that in these times in which we live<sup>22</sup> a truth is brought to light, one that comforts us and helps us endure the anguish that we feel with the passing with it. “Everything passes” would be the great quietist consolation if we ourselves were not passing equally, if with the time that passes, our own life also were not also passing. Grabbing hold of the truth, to our truth, associating ourselves with its revelation, since we have it sheltered in our interior, and since we’ve adapted our lives to it, implanting it in it our being, we feel that our time does not pass, at least not in vain. Something of its passing remains, like in the flowing of the water in the river, water that passes and remains. “Everything passes:” the water if the riverbed runs, but the riverbed and the river itself remain. However, it is necessary that there be a riverbed, and the riverbed of life is truth.

And the riverbed is as necessary as the river, for without it there would be no river but rather a swamp. Upon escaping, the waters would have an instant of the illusion of having achieved freedom, of having recovered the integrity of its power. Yet the power would go tiring itself out against the absence of limits, even without more obstacles than the limitless extension, the fury of the channeled water that would descend defeated over the limitless plane. The riverbed does to the river like the fury of the water’s current that passes by it. And it is good that life rushes by us running, the flight of what simply remains physical falling into the heart of time, the anguish of passing transforms itself into the joy of the traveler.

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<sup>22</sup> Here Zambrano refers to the late 1920s and early 1930s in Spain.

To discover for us this riverbed is what Philosophy does when it is faithful to itself, and it is, then, the path, the riverbed of life.

However, this path consists of first only a few steps, some footprints, and only when a line already traced distinguishes the path from the inanimate extension that surrounds it, can we see it. And this is what happens to us today; we begin to feel our life as it passes by, stretched out and free, through the riverbed of a truth that reveals itself to us, and from it we begin to understand other thoughts for which perhaps we would have found impervious, or on the other hand, imprisoned by astonishment, impossible to translate into ideas. There are two ways to react before the thoughts that are bits or part of another more radical way of thinking yet unknown; one is to remain insensitive before the truth they point out; another is to realize, by a sensibility born from the necessity that we have for that truth, that it is there and to be unable, however, to find it. It is the knowledge that causes thirst, making us cleave to the rock under which water flows without being able to lift it so that the water may rise to the surface.

Instead, when we live in contact with a final, revealing thought, we have, above all, a horizon where to feel ourselves settled and also a technical instrument to locate and to place problems and thoughts in an orderly fashion; the path orders the countryside and allows it to move toward a direction.

Such do we feel before the revelation that Reason offers us from its new meaning: the path, riverbed of life.

On this path we feel that a knowledge of the soul, an order of our interior, is necessary. Towards it tend the posthumous writings of Max Scheler, *Ordo Amoris* and *Death and Survival*. His approach draws from Pascal and Spinoza on one hand, and

Nietzsche on the other. From Pascal, the Pascal of the repeated and well-used phrase to the point of saying the opposite: “There are reasons of the heart that reason does not know.” From Spinoza, we have “Intellectual Love of God,” and from Nietzsche, who asked for an afterlife for man. And as the axis of everything, the Christian idea of man as a being who dies and loves, who dies with death and is saved with love.

Max Scheler energetically demands an order of the heart, an order of the soul, which rationalism, more than reason, does not know.

Modern culture was flung upon human beings, caring only for his thinking: from the discovery of man as a “thinking entity” to sciences that were not Philosophy. Descartes still wrote a *Treatise on the Passions*, and somewhat later, Spinoza wrote *Ethics* where psychology is even metaphysics. It is Metaphysics because the study and naturalist classification of the passions were directed towards a superior knowledge about man and his life; in order to find with them as an instrument, a happy life, a life in eternity.<sup>23</sup>

And at once the process is accelerated, rushed. Already Leibniz and the English, Hume and Locke, write of nothing but Human Understanding. Kant will make his Philosophy about Reason and of the ethical person. Even in them emerges man, and perhaps it will be said that from them he begins to be man, but in another sense from the one that occupies us now.

But this thing that is called “Psyche,” what is called the soul, what has it done? Scientific Psychology took charge of studying it. And to the soul Psychology applied its scientific methods. What have we known from these results?

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<sup>23</sup> Zambrano inserts a quote direct from Spinoza’s *Ethics*. Here is an English translation: “And about the soul we will only talk of those things that can take us by the hand to the knowledge of a happy life.”

In reality, the soul was left as a challenge. On one hand, man's Reason shed light on nature; on the other hand, reason established the transcendental character of man, his being and his freedom. Yet, between nature and the "I" of idealism, that bit of the cosmos in man, which has been called soul, remained.

What do we know of it? Nature, the cosmic forces surround man who has known how to dominate them and how to enter into some of their secrets. "Things are the limits of man," said Nietzsche. And from those limits man came to know. However, there was a double knowing: on one hand, a knowledge of reason that dominates, and from the other, a knowledge, a poetic speech of the cosmos, of nature as indomitable. And it is curious to see how in the period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in which an audacious reason advances over nature, over "the phenomena of nature," dominating them, man personally lives in the romantic conscience of what is irresistible about nature. Nature for the romantic is immense, unending, infinite, and he sees it in its maximum moments of splendid fury: in the storm, in the ray, in the "steep mountain," in "the bottomless sea," in "the unending abyss," in "the deep abyss of the earth and the heavens." The Romantic man who with his reason goes on subjecting the forces of nature like he never had done so before, speaks poetically of nature with terror, almost with horror.

But nature was, for this Romantic man, only a mirror where he could see his soul reflected; his soul, of which reason applied to science nothing was said; his soul, in charge of the knowledge of its new science called Psychology "became independent from Metaphysics."

The soul was looking for itself in poetry, in poetic expression<sup>24</sup>. Through furious nature, it was looking for itself. “The bottomless abysses,” “the infinite caves,” “the deafening storms,” were their own abysses, their own storms, a pall casted over them by the abandonment of the light of reason.

And so, Max Scheler can say when he proposes a knowledge of the heart: “What the symbolic expression ‘heart’ designates is not (as those of you, philistines on one hand and romantics on the other, imagine) the seat of confused states, of dark and indeterminate fits or intense forces that push man from one side to the other.”

Romantic man, whose reason he submitted to the universe to capture lightening and to separate water, found himself at the same time under the enchantment of the immensity of the seas or of the fulminant aspect of the electric spark, as under a divine power. It was his own incomprehensible soul, abandoned by the light of reason, which was directed by an irresistible force of compensation towards that nature inasmuch as it remains incomprehensible to man. The natural phenomena can be reduced to mathematical formulas by man, but from these formulas there escapes something unnamable and irreducible which leaves man amazed before the mystery of its presence, before what is impressive about its beauty.

And Romantic man had, on his part, something as important as his soul, abandoned and left fallow, after almost two centuries of reason. Hence, two ways of reasoning about the cosmos came to that dangerous and enchanting confluence: nature as ultimately irreducible to mathematical formulas and the human soul as ultimately immune to the lights of reason. The storms, the shipwrecks, the choppy waves, the

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<sup>24</sup> Zambrano provides a footnote with a quote from Mendelssohn: “Mendelssohn said, in 1765, that if prose satisfies with reason, poetry wants something else.”

terrible abysses were natural and human at the same time; they were nature and soul; they were cosmic... Thus, we see the strange character of Romantic art, that mysterious link between man and nature. Looking at the drawings of Gustavo Doré who illustrated the *Divine Comedy*, we are always left with an uncertainty: what abysses are those? Are they cosmic realities or is it the reality of the poor soul of the condemned? They are two things: it is the same reality, that of the dark abyss, the fissure between two mountains, and the abyss of desperation in which resides the condemned soul. Nature and soul, zones of the universe which have united in Romantic art.

Yet, will it always remain like this? Will these abysses of the heart remain without light? Will the abandoned soul with its passions remain at the margin of the paths of reason? Will there be no place for it in that “path of life” which is Philosophy? Will its current have to continue, overflowing, in danger of becoming waterlogged? Will it not be able to flow quietly and freely through the riverbed that opens the truth to life? There are, yes, reasons of the heart; there is an order of the heart that reason still does not know.

Once it attempted to know them. From different points of view man has endeavored to lift the veils that cover the hidden order of his soul. From Greco-Eastern religions, from Catholicism (Protestantism, almost always puritan, had to feel a certain repulsion for this scrutinizing of human core), from one philosopher who tried to leave his soul carved like a brilliant gem, the passions imprisoned in geometric crystals of theorems, notes and postulates, and those posthumous papers that we read today in our

language<sup>25</sup> of that other Jewish thinker who, like Spinoza, wandered about from religion to religion, a wander among beliefs, like other brothers of his race, wander among countries. These two distinguished thinkers, through three centuries and despite their differences, by a common errant religious destiny, have wished to establish *ordo amoris*, or the order of love. They have spoken in different ways, because their instruments and methods, that is to say, their way of approaching things, are different. Yet facing the interrogation, which cannot be postponed, which today we sense is being formulated about those reasons of the heart that reason itself does not yet know, it is offered to us, standing out by being absorbed with these deep things of the soul, which they have wanted to illuminate with reason.

But our gaze covers the cycle of culture that is familiar to us, looking for some knowledge about the graceful, flattered and abandoned “psyche,” and the first thing that we see is its fragmentary character and how lacking in substance of what has been said (except perhaps Aristotle and Spinoza) about such a serious and dangerous matter. Or, on the contrary, a lofty architecture, a rigidity that comes from having come to that knowledge from some ethical or religious *a priori* (of course, these last ones were much more fertile and flexible). Or an excess of architecture, of suppositions, or a lack of firmness and of ultimate clarity in what is apprehended. The butterfly, in some cases dies, in others it escapes. Rarely is one endowed with that mental agility which can adequately approach the soul, by making a proper net in order to trap the fleeting reality of the “psyche.”

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<sup>25</sup> Footnote provided by Zambrano: *Muerte y Supervivencia, Ordo Amoris* – by Max Scheler –. Revista de Occidente, Madrid, 1934.

And it is that the soul not being the only reality of man, the knowledge about it needs to be encased within another wider and radical knowledge, like the nave of a building needs to be supported by the mechanics of the entire building.

But this wider knowledge, within which the flowering of the delicate knowledge about the matters of the soul may be permitted, it could not be any kind of knowledge, or any kind of Philosophy. An idea of the integral man was necessary as well as an idea of integral reason. So long as man was nothing more than a being of reason, and this reason was mathematics, for example, how was this knowledge of the soul going to be possible? From this point of view,<sup>26</sup> Spinoza's *Treatise on the Soul* was only possible in so far as it considered the soul is the adequate idea of the body and nothing more.

It was necessary to encounter this new revelation of Reason whose aurora we perceive as Reason through the entire life of man. Within it we discern that, yes, this so deeply needed knowledge is going to be possible. The riverbed that this truth opens up to life is going to permit and almost require that the flowing of the "psyche" run through it. Such is our hope.

How much knowledge resulting from a life of struggle with the passions will have remained in silence for lack of rational horizons in which we might locate them, for lack of adequate coordinates with which we might refer to them! Without this horizon of a radical knowledge, a knowledge of the passions—about love and hate— would remain without support, floating in a terrible air of confession or, what is worse, of confidence. A marked shamelessness was needed and a special delight in speaking of the self in order to gather one's own experience, of love, for example. What architecture should we give

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<sup>26</sup> Zambrano provides a footnote which I have translated into English: "From the point of view of man as a thinking being and of reason as mathematical reason."

it? We have *On Love* by Stendahl, an audacious attempt in fullblown Romanticism to not leave this matter of love floating in what is “vague and ineffable.” And, thus without thinking, we have stumbled across other men who did not remain with their backs turned to the life of the soul, with their reason silenced.

Philosophers, novelists, and poets have illuminated something about the reasons of the heart, about the core of the soul. And the Religions, the Eastern Greek ones, and the Catholic Church, fortunately, knew not to disdain completely what is usable from the knowledge from the East.

In Greece we find oracles who speak to us of the soul, or at least that they allude to it. What are oracles in Greek life? If Philosophy begins with the questioned posed by Thales: what are things?, the oracle will come to fill the necessity with other questions: Who am I? What is my destiny? What must I do before such and such a situation? And we see even Socrates consulting the Oracle of Delphi, and we hear him listening to his interior “daimon.” The Greeks would go on consulting the God who lived in the sanctuary, that brief temple that did not separate the deity from the landscape that surrounded it; he would ask God and would hand himself over to an orgy of purification.

In the orphic rites and in the cult of Dionysus, the soul, in order to know its self, would immerse itself in nature, as in Romanticism, but in a very different manner. If Romanticism humanizes nature and searches for what is pliant in it, – the figure in the cult of Dionysus –, the soul searches for what is musical in nature, for its clarifying impulse. It is a cosmic bath, an immersion of the soul in the original Fountains of the impetus to live, a reconciliation of the soul with life. “The situations of maximum bodily exaltation bring with it a delicious annihilation in the cosmic unity.” (Ortega y Gasset:

*Vitality, Spirit Soul.*) The orgy is a reconciliation of the soul that suffers as it begins to feel itself within nature; it is a call to the cosmic powers that man makes when he hurts deep in the core of his life. It is a return to the original Fountains of vitality in order to clean himself of the shadows of his interior, of something that begins to feel as his own, chamber of silence and of solitude.

Because all of solitude has been felt, in the beginning, as a sin, as something about which one feels regrets. Each distance that man conquers with respect to the rest of the universe creates for him a solitude that, in the beginning, instills fear as well as regret. And from the recently conquered solitude, he withdraws in order to embrace what he has just left.

Thus the Greek soul when it would begin to feel separate from the cosmos, arrives at the Eleusinian mysteries and in the Dionysian cult, searching for a reconciliation, with the hope of freeing itself from its pains; also with the joy of someone who reencounters his origins. Orgy, purification, abandonment for a moment from the pain of the rising solitude.

The romantic, on the contrary, does not attempt to submerge himself in what is Dionysian in nature, but rather he is connected with what is pliant in it. He searches for the impetus, yes, but in the figure pierced by it. The romantic links his soul with nature in order to fill it with nature, in order to leave it soaked like in those moonlit nights, which are so enjoyable to describe.

But the oracle signified something else in its tendency towards the orphic “catharsis” and orgy. It was rather an anxiety of the soul for the rational, a hope to exit from doubt more than to free oneself from pain, in order to resolve the indecision of the

individual before the matters of life: an eagerness to know oneself in order to know what to do. Precursors of the Socratic “Know thyself.” Socrates, in a certain way, became the oracle of every citizen of Athens who did not have any fear of thinking, that is to say, of becoming his own oracle.

They, the great Greek philosophers, did not abandon the task of shedding light on the mysterious entity of the soul. Neither Plato nor Aristotle who provided the foundation for all of the Christian-Medieval knowledge.

But leaving aside what reason has said about the soul when it has shed its light on it, and even to better attend to these reasons, it would be necessary to beforehand, a bit more clearly, just how man has felt his soul, and in what relationship, with respect to himself and to the world, to those poles of the world that we could call God and Nature.

If man does not consist of his soul – and today<sup>27</sup> we see it clearly – , how has this trace of cosmos living in him felt? If we think of that which we call “I,” we see it surrounded by concentric layers each time more distant and strange; first within the self, later in what no longer is the self. In them we find the soul. In what place does it live? What is its function?

Between the *I* and the outside of nature stands what we call the soul. We have already observed briefly in what different way the soul has searched for itself through nature in the religions of Greece and in Romantic art. But it has been also said: “God is in the depth of the soul.”

As in the planetary system in which we live, these three bodies, God, Nature and Man, go weaving their orbits into drama. There are also eclipses, and then, a shadow

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<sup>27</sup> When referring to “today,” Zambrano is writing this article around 1933.

falls over one of the bodies. What role does man's soul have in this drama, in these distances, in these eclipses?

Purity and transparency of the soul have been preached insistently. Will this deep, human yearning for "catharsis," this perennial desire to possess a clear and transparent soul, indicate some deep necessity? Transparent is what we say in praise of a crystal, for example, of a thing that is the medium through which to let another thing pass. And depth is not a contrary condition, a quality that we likewise allocate to a superior soul. A clear and deep soul... for what ultimate function of his life does man need to have it? What does the soul have to let pass through its transparency, what deep roots does it have to house in its profundity?

In different moments in History, the soul has been entwined preferably with a zone of the universe and has been related to the other things that are not soul in man. It would be attractive to go on discovering the soul under those forms in which it has only gone seeking for its expression, leaving aside for the moment what the intellect has said about the soul that falls below it. To discover those reasons of the heart, that the heart itself has found, taking advantage of its solitude and abandonment.

Translation of “Why one writes”<sup>28</sup>

To write is to defend the solitude within which one is; it is an action that only arises from an effective isolation, yet from a communicable isolation, in which, precisely because of the remoteness of all concrete things, a discovery of relations among them becomes possible.

But it is a solitude that needs to be defended, which is the same as the need for justification. The writer defends her solitude, showing what she finds in it and only in it.

Having speech, why write? But, what is immediate, what arises from our spontaneity is something for which we are not wholly responsible, because it does not arise from the whole totality of our person; it is a reaction, always urgent and pressing. We speak because something urges us to do so, and this urgency comes from outside, from a trap in which circumstances try to catch us, and the word frees us from it. Through the word, we become free, free from the moment, from the besieged and immediate circumstance. However, the word does not collect us, or, therefore, does it create us and, on the contrary, the abundant use of it always produces a disintegration; through the word we conquer the moment, and then we are conquered by it, by the succession of moments that go conveying our attack without allowing us to respond. It is a continuous victory that, in the end, turns into defeat.

From that defeat, a defeat that is intimate and human, not of one specific man but rather of the human being, is born the exigency to write. One writes in order to reconquer the defeat suffered whenever we have spoken at length.

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<sup>28</sup> María Zambrano, *Hacia un saber sobre el alma*, 1a ed. (Madrid: Alianza, 2000) 35-44.

Victory can only happen there where defeat has been suffered, in the very same words. These same words now will have, in writing, a distinct function; they will not be at the service of the oppressive moment; no longer will they serve to justify our presence before the attack of what is momentary, but rather, departing from the center of our being, in withdrawal, they will go defending us before the totality of moments, before the totality of circumstances, before life in its entirety.

There is in writing a withholding of words, whereas in speech there is a releasing of them, an undoing of them, that can go undoing themselves from us. Upon writing, words are withheld, they become their own, subject to rhythm, marked by the human dominion of she who handles them like that. And this, regardless of whether the writer is concerned with the words and with clear consciousness chooses and places them in a rational, well-known order. Far from it, it is enough to be a writer, to write because of this intimate necessity of freeing oneself from words, of conquering the defeat suffered in its totality so that this withholding of words may take place. This will to withhold is already found at the beginning, at the root of the act of writing itself, and permanently goes along with it. The words go falling like that, precise, in a process of reconciliation of the man who releases them by withholding them, of he who says them in moderate generosity.

All human victories must be reconciliations, reunions of a lost friendship, reaffirmations after a disaster in which man has been the victim; victories in which humiliation of the opponent would not exist, because they would then no longer be victories; this, then, is glory for man.

In such a way, the writer aims for glory, the glory of a reconciliation with words, previous tyrants of their potential for communication. The victory of a power to communicate. Because not only does the writer exercise a right required by its gripping necessity but also a power, a potential for communication that increases its humanity, that carries the humanity of man to recently uncovered limits of what it means to be human, of the human with what is inhuman, to those whom the writer turns to, conquering in her glorious encounter of reconciliation with those words that so often betray. To save words from their vanity, from their vacuity, hardening them, forging them in a lasting manner, is what one who really writes is after, without even knowing it.

Because there is writing that is like speaking; one writes "as if one were speaking"; and already this "as if" to make us distrust, since the reason for being something must be a reason for being this and only this. And doing a thing "as if" it were something else, subtracts from it and undermines all of its meaning and questions its necessity.

Writing comes to be the contrary of speaking; one speaks out of immediate, momentary necessity and, upon speaking, makes us prisoners of what we have uttered, while in writing one finds liberation and durability (one only finds liberation when we arrive at something permanent). To save words from their momentary existence, from their transitory being, and to direct them into our reconciliation toward what is durable, is the duty of the writer.

Yet words do say something. What is it that the writer wants to say, and for what purpose does she want to say it? For what and for whom?

She wants to tell the secret; what cannot be said with the voice for being too much the truth; the great truths are not usually said through speaking: the truth of what passes in the secret depth of time, in the silence of lives, and which cannot be said. "There are things that cannot be said," this is certain. Yet, what cannot be said is what has to be written.

To discover the secret and to communicate it are the two motives that move the writer.

The secret is revealed to the writer as she writes it and not if she speaks it. Speech only tells secrets in ecstasy, outside of time, in poetry. Poetry is the spoken secret that needs to be written in order to be fixed but not in order to be produced. The poet with her voice speaks poetry; the poet always gives voice to, sings, or cries her secret. The poet speaks, withholding in the telling, her voice measuring and creating in the saying, the words. She is rescued from them without making them silent, without reducing them to the single visible world, without erasing them from sound. Poetry uncovers the secret with its voice. However, the writer records it; she immediately fixes it without voice, and it is because its solitude is another one than that of the poet. In its solitude the secret is discovered by the writer, not entirely, but rather in a progressive becoming. She goes discovering the secret in the air and needs to go setting its route in order to finish, at last by embracing the totality of its figure... And this, although it possesses a sketch previous to the latest realization. The sketch itself already says that it has been necessary to go on fixing it into a figure, to go composing it stroke by stroke<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> I choose to use "stroke" here instead of "trace" or "mark." The reason behind this is that, in the end, Zambrano and her writings were examples and advocates for art. The concept of writing with Zambrano is only one dimension of her way of thinking. I believe it was her art, and "stroke" carries along with it a

The eagerness to reveal, the irrepressible eagerness to communicate what is revealed; the double horsefly that pursues man, making a writer of him. What double thirst is this? What incomplete being is this one who produces within her this thirst that only writing satiates? Only writing? No, only through writing. Then, what the writer pursues, is it what is written or something that is achieved through what is written?

The writer emerges from her solitude to communicate the secret. Then, it no longer is the same secret known by her that fulfills her, given that she needs to communicate it. Will this be communication? If it is, the act of writing is only the means, and what is written, the forged instrument. But what is forged in sight of something characterizes the instrument, and this something is that which lends its nobility and splendor. The sword is noble for being made for combat, and its nobility grows if the laborer forges it with delicacy, without this beauty of form undermining its primary meaning; the being formed for the struggle.

What is written is equally an instrument for this uncontainable yearning to communicate, to “publish” the secret that has been found, and what it possesses of formal beauty cannot take away from it its first meaning; that of producing an effect, making someone find out about something.

A book, while it is not being read, is only a being in potential, as much in potential as a bomb that has not exploded. And, every book must have something of a bomb, of an event that upon happening threatens and, although it may only be with its trembling, puts into evidence falseness.

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connotation of what a painter does, or someone who draws, or the movement of a calligrapher, or perhaps a musician with a guitar, a composer with her music, or a conductor with his orchestra.

Like someone who launches a bomb, the writer throws out of herself, from her world and, therefore, from her controllable environment, the secret that has been discovered. She<sup>30</sup> does not know the effect that she is going to cause, that which is going to follow from her revelation, nor with her will can she dominate it. Hence, it is an act of faith, like planting a bomb or setting fire to a city; it is an act of faith, like the embarking upon something whose trajectory is not directed by us.

Writing is a pure act of faith, and more, because the revealed secret does not stop being such for the one who communicates it through writing it. The secret shows itself to the writer, but it does not become explicable to her; that is to say, it does not stop being a secret for her first, before it does for anyone else, and perhaps for her only, since the fate of all who initially stumble upon a truth is to find it in order to show it to the rest, such that they, her audience, be the ones who decipher its meaning.

Writing is an act of faith, and like all faiths, of fidelity. Writing asks for fidelity before any other thing. To be faithful to that which asks to be taken out of the silence. A bad transcription, an interference by the passions of the human being who is a writer will destroy the fidelity that is due to it. In such a way, there is the nontransparent writer who puts her passions between the transcribed truth and those to whom she is going to communicate it.

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<sup>30</sup> The subject is "the writer." But, of course, in Spanish or Italian, it is not necessary to state a female or male, as I have chosen to do with my use of "She." I could have chosen that of "The writer", but Zambrano would have put that in, and it would have then been clear. Perhaps, and of course this is just a speculation of mine, she often leaves the gender of the writer unclear, and from what I have read and through my own experience through the encounters with Zambrano's texts, she does do this purposefully for she was a woman, yet she did not write to exclude yet to include. Zambrano walks carefully and tactfully in her works when on the path of employing specific subject pronouns. Here I could give some examples. My investigation, though, is one not directly related to gender issues in her writing. For something like that, please see Elena Laurenzi' work that has been translated from her native Italian to the Spanish, *Nacer por sí misma*.

The writer does not have to reveal herself although it may be from herself where she gets what she writes. To take something out of herself is completely the opposite of revealing herself. And if the taking the faithful image out of herself with a steady pulse, the faithful image gives transparency to the truth of what is written, placing the passions themselves, before the truth with vacuous unconsciousness, tarnishes it and darkens it.

A fidelity that, in order to be achieved, demands a total purification of the passions, which must be quieted in order to make room for the truth. The truth is in need of a great void, of a silence where it can settle in without any other presence intermingling with truth's presence, distorting it. She who writes, while she does it, needs to silence her passions and, above all, her vanity. Vanity is a swelling of something that has not achieved its being and swells in order to cover up its interior void. The vain writer will say everything that must be quieted for the lack of entity, all that which for not truly being should not be put on display, and by saying it, will silence it, or will distort it through its vain interference.

Fidelity creates in she who preserves it, the solidity, the integrity of its existence itself. Fidelity excludes vanity, which supports itself on what it is not, on what is truth. And this truth is what orders the passions; without pulling them up from the roots, it makes them serve, it puts them in their place, in the only place from whence they support the edifice of the moral person that is formed with them, by the work of a fidelity to what is true.

Thus, the being of the writer is formed in this fidelity with what transcribes the secret that she publishes, being the faithful mirror of her figure without allowing vanity to project its shadow, disfiguring it.

Because if the writer reveals the secret, it is not a result of her will nor of her appetite for appearing just as she is (that is to say, just as she does not achieve in being) before the audience. It's that secrets exist that demand by themselves to be revealed, or made public.

What is made public is for something, so that someone, one or many, upon knowing it, may live knowing it, so that they live in another manner after having known it; to free someone from the prison of lies, or from the clouds of tedium which is the vital lie. But one cannot perhaps arrive at this result when it is wanted by itself, philanthropically. It frees that which, independently from what seeks it or not, has power over it, and on the other hand, without this power of seeking it proves worthless. There is a powerless love that is called philanthropy, "Without charity the faith that moves mountains serves no purpose," says Saint Paul, but also: "Charity is for the love of God."

Without faith, charity descends to the powerless desire to free our fellow men from a prison in whose exit we cannot believe in.

Freedom is given only to one who is free: "The truth will set you free." The truth, obtained through the purifying fidelity of the writer.

There are secrets that must be published, and they are those that visit the writer, taking advantage of her solitude, her effective isolation that makes her thirsty. A thirsty and solitary being needs the secret in order to rest upon it, asking it to give the being its presence progressively, that may go on defining themselves by the word, in permanent outlines.

Solitary in oneself and in men and also in the things, since only in solitude does one feel thirst for truth that overwhelms human life. Thirst also for the victorious rescue

over words that have escaped us by betraying us. Thirst to conquer by the word the empty instants that have gone by, the incessant failure of letting us go through time.

In this sedentary solitude the truth, even hidden, appears, and it is truth itself that requires being put on display. One has progressively gone on seeing, it does not know it if she does not write it, and she writes it so that the rest may know it. Strictly speaking, if it is shown to her, it is not inasmuch as a specific individual but rather as an individual of the same kind of those who should know it; it is shown to her, taking advantage of her solitude and anxiety, her silencing of the gibberish of the passions. But it is not to her to whom it is rightly shown, for if the writer knows in accordance with how she writes, she writes in order to communicate to the rest the secret that she found, to those to whom this communication is shown, this spiritual community of the writer with her audience.

This communication of what is hidden, which for everyone is made accessible through the writer, is the glory, the glory that is the manifestation of the hidden truth until the present, which will expand those the instants, thus, transfiguring lives. It is the glory that the writer awaits even without having to say it and which realizes, when heard in its thirsty solitude with faith, she knows to transcribe faithfully the unveiled secret. The glory of what the newly elected subject after the active martyrdom of pursuing, capturing and retaining the words in order to adjust them to the truth. Through this heroic search, glory falls upon the head of the writer and everything is reflected over her. Yet, the glory, strictly speaking, is shown for everyone in the spiritual community of the writer with her audience and goes well beyond it.

The community of the writer and audience that, against what is generally believed, is not formed after the public has read the published work, but rather before, in

the act itself of the writer writing her work. It is then, upon the secret becoming self-evident, when this community of the writer with her audience is created. The audience exists before the work may or may not have been read, it exists from the beginning of the work, it coexists with it and with the writer herself. Those works that come to have an audience are, in reality, those that already had it from the beginning. In such a way, the writer does not need to question existence of that audience, given that it exists with her from the time she began to write. And that is her glory, that she always comes to respond to one who has not searched for it nor has desired it, although certainly she may present it and hope to transmute that glory the multiplicity of time, gone, lost, for only an instant, compact and eternal.

## Translation of “Words”<sup>31</sup>

### Before Words Were Uttered

Before known times, before the mountain ranges were formed in historic times, a time of plenitude, which would not give history its place, had to last. And if life was not going to surrender to history, the word would neither give to language, to the rivers of language that by force were already diverse and even diverging. Before the human race was to begin its expansion over the lands in order to later go in search of a promised land, remembrance and reconstitution always precarious of the place of lost plenitude, lands searched for, revealed as promised ones which came to be breeders of history, beginnings of the chain of a new history. Before. Before, when projected words were not uttered from the cavity from which they are launched into space, filled or empty from outside; on the exterior. And, thus, the one who uttered, the one who followed, uttering his words, makes them entirely his, his or no one else's, only his, understanding or given as understood that those who receive them will remain subjected with nothing more. Seeing that the exterior is the place of cultivated land, of the amorphous human, material ready to be conformed, configured, and which is asked to follow in such a manner, land under the only will of those who also utter materialized words, also a materialization of a power.

Before such use of the word appeared in which the word itself was colonized, there would have been only words without being a language in its own right. The human

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<sup>31</sup> María Zambrano, *Claros del bosque*, 3a ed. (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1990) 81-101.

being permitted fatally to colonize himself, his being and his assets. And having this been the true argument for his living on the land, the word would not have been given nor entrusted to him. Language does not need it, as today it is well known in so many ways. And hence, there will exist a plurality of languages within the same language, of the language which is a descendent of the first word with which was dealt to man the gift of grace and of truth, the true word without opacity and without shadow, given and received in the same instant, consumed without wearing away; a spark that is re-ignited each time. Word, words that are not destined, like the doves of thereafter, for the sacrifice of the communication, crossing through voids and thresholds, borders, words without the weight of any communication nor of notification. Words of communion.

These words would circulate without encountering any obstacle, as an oversight. And as everything that is human, although it may be in plenitude, must be plural, for there would not be any word, but rather there would be various words, a swarm of that would go resting themselves next to each other in the beehive of silence, or in a single nest, not far from the silence of man and from his reach.

And later, now, some of these words were arriving and still arrive from the swarm of the initial word, never as they were nor as they are. Each one, without diminishing its being, is also the rest, and none of them is properly another, they are not separated by alteration. And each one is all of them, every word. And they cannot be declined. And what is completely certain is that they cannot ever descend to the ablative case because in the plenitude or not even in that of our time, the circumstances do not exist. Circumstances are erased in the slightest, pallid presence of plenitude.

Truthful words appear frequently through transparency, one only under everything of speech; they are drawn at times in the voids of a text, from which the illusion of the use of the ellipsis and of what is less erroneously underlined. And in the venturesome passages of poetry and of thought, they appear unmistakably between those of use, being equally usual. But they jump translucently, the promise of an order without syntax, of an unity without synthesis, abolishing everything that relates, breaking the concatenation at times. Suspended, makers of plenitude, although they may be in a sigh.

But they are known because they are lacking overall. They seem to go sprouting forth from the shock of the innocent, of the wonder; from the love and from its borderings, forms of love themselves. And it is love that they are always lacking. And for that they stand out unmistakably when something is found in love; it is unique, then, single. And for that word of unique solitude of love and of grace.

If they are invoked, they arrive in a swarm, dark. And it is worth more to let them take off before they penetrate the throat, and some in the chest. It is worth more to remain without word, as it also happens to the innocent when they accuse them.

When it deals with thought, they, the words that are the makers of order and of truth, can be here, almost in sight, like a flock or a herd of gentile sheep, docile, mute. And one must then become silent as they are, breathing something from their breath, if they left it upon leaving.

And to return the thought to those places where they, these reasons of truth, entered in order to remain in "order and connection" without hardly saying a word, erasing the usual saying, rescuing truth from the crowd of reasons.

## The Word of the Forest

From the clearing, or from the covering of a series of clearings that go on certain occasions and closing on others, words, some furtive, some indelible, some furtive are brought, ungraspable, and which at any moment reappear like a nucleus that asks to develop, however delicately; to be completed, rather, is what they seem to ask and to what they are carried. Some words, a fluttering of meaning, a babble even, or a word that stays suspended like a code to decipher; a single word that was being guarded there and which has given itself over to the one who comes distracted, that single word. A word of truth that on its own cannot be entirely understood nor forgotten. A word to be consumed without being worn away. And if it departs upward it doesn't lose its sight, and if it flees toward the confines of the horizon, it does not vanish nor does it deny itself. And if it descends until it hides itself completely within the soil, it continues there pulsing, as a seed does. Although that is fixed, quiet, or still it does not stay, as if it were to stay, it would stay mute. It is not the word that is agitated by what it says, it speaks with its flapping and everything that has a wing, or wings, goes away, although not for always, for it can return in the same way or in another, without ceasing to be identical. What comes to happen according to the mood of the situation whomever receives according to his necessity and his possibility of attending to it: if it is in the situation of power to only perceive it, or if in disposition to sustain it, and if, more happily, it has the power to accept it plainly, and to leave it like that, within itself, and that there, in its way, in that of the word, it may go becoming indefinitely, crossing durations without number, sheltered in the silence, lifeless. And from the word, it leaves from its silent palpitation, there

departs the unexpected music for which we recognize it; lament at times, calling, the initial music of what is unspeakable that, here, can never be given in word. But certainly with it, the initial music that fades when the word appears or reappears, and which stays in the air, like its silence, molding its silence, supporting it above an abyss.

### The Lost Word

Not only language but rather all words, as unique as they may appear to us, as alone that they may be and as unexpected as their appearance may be, allude to a lost word, what is felt and is immediately known at times in anguish, and in a type of breaking dawn that announces it, palpitating in moments. And it also is felt beating in the depth of respiration itself, of the heart that watches over it, gift of that which hope does not manage to imagine. And in the throat itself, closing with its presence the passing of the word that was going to leave. That door that the dawn closes when it opens. The love that never comes, that weakens at the edge of the aurora, the ungraspable that departs from those who are going to die or who are already dying, and which fight, torment of agony, to leave it here and to spill it, and already it is not possible for it. The word that goes away with violent death, and which we feel precedes death as a guide, the guide of those who, in the end, can die.

Lost, the unique word, secret of divine–human love. And will the word not be signaled by those privileged words barely audible like the murmur of the dove: *You all will say that I am lost, – That, wandering in love – , I lost myself and was won.*

## The Words That Are Kept

The word that a human being keeps as if of his same substance, although if he were to learn of it or form it some day. What is not said because saying it would also unsay it upon considering it new or upon enunciating it, as if it were able to pass on; the word that cannot convert itself into something past and for which cannot be counted on for the future, that which has been united with being.

And it is sensed beforehand, and even seen it, as prophesized in some creatures who are not human, in some animals who seem to carry with them a word that, upon dying, are on the edge of giving over to understanding. And also in the unequalled quietude of the beasts who look at the sun as if they were their guardians, images that art has perpetuated in the avenue of the temple of Delos, for example.

And in the firmament, only some constellations or bright stars seem to keep watch over some word and stand guard over it, with it, the inconceivable immensity of the interstellar spaces, the voids and cavities of the universe, watchtowers of the Word.

Yet in the human beings who keep that which is their word, it is not seen, it passes by inadvertantly, as it is accustomed to being also for them, at least as word, because it has come to attend to them like a lamp that ignites itself or is always ignited without combustion.

Perhaps it is the secret that clarifies certain human presences while they live and which becomes detached from some legendary figures (legendary although they may belong to the base of history) and that some, certain poets, constructors of art and

thought, have also retained in their work, which thus appears endowed with an unending and much clearer life than they, those others who do not contain it.

The word that remains unviolated in delirium, as overwhelming as it may be, of he who having it, enters into delirium without end.

The word that is not petrified in fright, and from which speech thaws. And which continues orienting the being of he who has entered into in the night of his mind.

This word is used to not losing a name. A name that could be said one day, but which upon keeping it unrepeatable and has gone on gathering notes of the unique name. Either it can be a 'yes' or 'no', already given or forgotten, but which subsists, even guiding the being who watches over it without knowing; a word that transcends every event.

## What is Written

“What has been written, is written.” But not all of it permanently. Writings are erased by themselves, or by the work of circumstances. The climate, the atmosphere itself, some little dust that falls from the heavens erases what is written: titles, inscriptions and sayings fall.

While a historical cycle lasts, there are words that remain in a determined visibility and which are passed around by word of mouth; they are the clichés of those centuries. Their sayings, therefore, are condemnations as a rule. And there are also words written and which, written as they are, repeat themselves, pacifying and wise, and which mark the limit, an enclosure comes to form around all of them which very few

people transcend. Hence the inspiration that comes does not stop, the inspiration that transcends the enclosure only rarely drags with it, or after it, those who have visited leaving them, absolutely perplexed in the greatest cases, deep in thought generally, and preparing themselves with eagerness to return to seeing everything just as if the visit of inspiration had not arrived registering themselves consciously as habitants of the enclosure until rising up vigilant, just in case.

Because the guardians of the enclosure are those of continuity, of the continuity of the enclosure, it is understood well, they do not know where to turn to, if it is that they realize, or feel, at least, that the discontinuity of the inspiration corresponds to the discontinuity of written history, or that it is given as it is, already written for always under the saying: “What has been written, is written,” and it does not fit nor is there reason to erase it, if it is not with some inkblot yet still more condemning. Will it be, perhaps, the discontinuity of history which calls to inspiration what is repeated tirelessly, and not always without fright? It is what is written that makes history, according to what we are told. And thus, for example, the stones, even in a circle marvelously erected and remembered, are not history. There is no history without the word, without the written word, without the word that is sung or chanted— how was a word going to be spoken without intonation or song? There must be another thing then that we would have to know or would have to point out, without any reference to history in order to indicate along with it our invincible ignorance, our exclusion. And the perplexity in which whatever vestige of its existence plunges us into, and its simple existence itself, which can be equivalent to, on occasions, to its presence. And that stone which is so equal to the others, could it not be it, be the one who sings? Because in the stones there must be

the lost song. And could it not be that those, these stones, each one or all of them are something similar to letters? Ghosts, beings in summation which remain perhaps condemned, perhaps only mute as they await the hour of taking figure and voice. Because these stones are not written upon appearing, no one knows definitively, or if they are written by the air, by the dawn, or by the stars, they are related to the words that in the middle of written history appear and are erased, and they leave and return for as well written as they are; the words without condemnation of the revelation, to which by the breath of man awaken with life and meaning. The words of truth and in truth do not stay, they are ignited and extinguished, they are made dust, and later they appear intact; revelation, poetry, metaphysics, or they simply, words. "Letters of light, mysteries ignited," Francisco de Quevedo sings of the stars.

"Letters of light, mysteries ignited," prophesies as everything revealed that is given or that was given to see, for an instant, and no more may it have been.

### The Announcement

As in the seed, the word is hidden. Like a root which when it germinates raises the land slightly, revealing it as crust. The hidden root, and even the lost seed, make sensible that which covers them like a crust that must be traversed. And there is thus in these fields a pulsation of life, a wave that informs and a certain threat of which something or someone is at the point of coming.

It will not be possible to understand that something like that may happen with the word but that which may have suffered in an unspeakable manner, for having been left

behind by it, without it being necessary that such a situation amounts to total deprivation. It is the interior word, rarely pronounced, which is not born with the destiny of being fortunate and remains like that, far away, remote, as if it were never to return. And even as if the word had never existed and could only be known by that indefinable void, by that extension that it leaves behind. Because it is the possibility of extension that is revealed. All of that extension, will it be the result of an abandonment? And, hence, one feels the word immediately lost and hidden, root and germ, dark presence without a door in which to enter into consciousness. The aporia, or paradox, of the word, its impossibility in finding conditions for its life, a place where it can be housed, a time and that subtle fire and that dying while living. And in this stage it is he, the patient subject, the one who feels himself to be an obstacle, a crust, a resistance. A place closed to the word, unsuited for opening up to it, if not sinking yet more, drowning itself without absorption. The self-absorbed person, as Ortega has already shown so well, has a place within him, intangible, we say, inviolable. Were it the case that such a subject does not feel self-absorbed, it will be a simple and vulnerable defense, a simple opposition equivalent to a mask; masking himself would be enough, then, and even while crouching down.

Yet when the subject is sinking more and more into its patient condition, he continues feeling and seeing like a place closed off from the word; nothing helps him any longer. Nothing.

Yet in the nothingness that is obtained by a pure withdrawing so that what is valued most may appear, there emerges, the beginning unnoticed, something inseparable,

beyond all figuration. And now this only, the unexpected that is noticed naturally is the first gift of exile. That which comes as a response to an unformulated question.

This germination in the field of the word continues slow and inexorable this in what is naturally its own field, in what is seen treated in such a way, also submitted to risk, if it were revealed. When it deals with the announcement, a revelation always happens like this in whomever endures it. Neither saying *yes* or *no* is permitted. Nothing. But not the nothingness that then less than ever can become nothing. And the silence in which he lives submitted is like a higher life, and the desert of the word is a fullness more tightly closed and at the point of opening itself even more than that of populating oneself, of exploding for not being able to still contain the word that is ready to be born; the conceived word.

That the word must be conceived humanly is the only thing that accounts for what may be and even exist, or come to exist, the word. It would be worthwhile if not language, the language that is a dance that notifies and is something more than in the bees; it would be worth the opaque song of the owl that warns the stag and the roe deer that the hunter seeks. But, this notification that marks the difference between species of animals, what does it already tell us about denotative language, the indicative, a notice of something determined and nothing more? And of what does the dance of the bees notify us of the bees, those who stand apart from the swarm as they search for a new place to house it? Does their dance and song say something beyond what they indicate? Do they already announce the word? And the word properly is only that which is conceived, housed, that which inflicts deprivation, that which can go away and hide itself, that which never provides certainty of remaining, that which takes flight.

And there is also flight in the dance and the song. And the deprivation of language, of the only language, is already deprivation of the flight, of that something that escapes and cannot return, and if it returns is an announcement. A reiterated announcement that the conceived word is at the point of being born.

## The Concert

For the master

Andrés Segovia

Would the guitar have been heard if its playing did not from the first instant open the right way of listening to it? It was its first indiscernible virtue at the moment. Those worried about pedagogy perhaps caught on that it is Music which teaches without words the right way of listening. And that when one deals with the word alone, it happens equally like this, that it is music, that it can be a form of silence, that which sustains the word in its medium and on its right level, neither higher nor lower, but always preferably a bit lower. Because music is, from the beginning, what is heard, what must be heard, and without it, the word itself, it diminishes by densifying, on the path of becoming stone, or it ascends becoming volatile, deceiving. Thanks to music the word does not deceive; deprived of music, even being the word of truth, and more if it is so, the word contradicts itself. Music is the gift of what does not betray, “good intentions” do not exist in it, and a single judgment in the voice that speaks reveals the fallacy, or denounces the non-fulfillment of the truth. Music fulfills, fulfills itself, and listening to it fulfills us.

Whatever brings it,— what is it, who is it? A remote being, a pure actuality of always. And it becomes unthinkable that sometimes it goes away, that sometimes it has never been. It will return.

The one who makes the music of this instant will always return. That music which approximates the origin, the beginning, will return when it reveals, at the same time, the instant of now. All of it lasts an instant. All music lasts an instant. An instant of eternity, like dying, like being born, like loving.

Yet for being the music of the guitar, what truly was that solitary beating, that wave of being and of life? Will it not be, perhaps, the musical instrument and nothing else, whole and single, unique?

The only instrument of all music. A single note would suffice. Unmistakable. It united opposites, the being and the non-being of feeling itself. It was lament and it was not lament. Celebration without a trace of triumph. Does music unite opposites, or is it encouraging them to do so beforehand? Or is its fulfillment a pure action of returning us its instant to the origin of time, in that instant now when time has made so much of its journey, now as then, after so much time? And hence to give us the law of direct feeling, freeing us from the nostalgia that the facile ones of living believe to be the gift of music, and above all its voluptuousness. Pain can be there, and more so in the guitar, which perhaps may be among all the instruments the chosen one for the pain. But pain does not ask to be established, condensed; pain asks to stop inflicting itself without being noticed, after having germinated, germinating, like an innumerable swarm of ants. The pain in the guitar avoids the suffering under the auspices of the Angel who often adjusts the feeling and orients it step by step toward what is unreachable, upwards. Music keeps the secret

of the righteousness of feeling, the numbers of the infinitesimal calculation of suffering, which achieves, at least among the Western instruments, its maximum fulfillment in the guitar, so intimate, that it plays from within, in the depths of the heart of the world. And through it, those who slip by going in a hurry make it into a weeping woman, and the torn up one, those that take advantage of it. And she tells them: "leave me alone," without them understanding it. Because it is also a matter of which she has given herself alone to someone who, without haste, may spend all of his life, without touching her, barely brushing her, removing her secret according to number, that which hides the more it is revealed. The night of suffering then clears, the swarm of suffering is united. The sound is alone. The Angel has torn out the thorns and surrenders to feeling himself withdrawing.

### Only the Word

There is a word, only one, of no one knows for certain whether it has at some time gone beyond the barrier that separates the silence from sound. Seeing that for however long and irrepressibly that it has been spoken, the barrier between the silence and the sound never ceased to exist, rising up on end until leading the one who speaks to the border of paroxysm. The incontinence of speech must have its origin in this impassable barrier. And the overflowing of speech then takes the character of cosmic phenomenon; a waterfall, a volcanic eruption. And the word is in itself unity, a miraculous conjunction of physis, of the feeling that embraces and reunites the senses, a vivifying blow, an

impalpable fire and light of understanding, it falls, it is dragged, unhappier than the stone that will end up turning at some time upon finding the minimal refuge of its weight.

The hidden word, alone and watched over in the silence, can emerge sustaining without making understandable a long discourse, a poem and even a philosophic text, anonymously, orienting the feeling; it transforms the logical connections in cadence: opening spaces of unfillable and revealing silences. Because what is revealing in speech comes from the word held intact that is neither announced, nor enunciated to itself, invisible like crystal, as a result of clarity, of inexistence. Breeder of musicality and of abysses of silence, the word that is not concept because it is that which enables conception, the source of conceiving that is properly beyond what is called thinking. So that it, this word, is thought that is sustained in itself, a reflection in the end on what is simply human about the language of fire that opened up to those upon whom the feeling and knowledge of all languages settled. It is not visible. It opens the eyes of understanding in order to see or discern something. And it is not presented to itself because, in so doing, it would end with the relativity of language and with its time. And perhaps this may occur one day.

Without moving, it moves; and its aspects are incalculable, it would give of itself this uneven word for multiple lives; unlimited and geometric, tracer of limits, of the necessary separations between verbs and between the different manifestations of time, it open furrows in time, whether parallel or not. And still it retains the divergence between them, seeing that in the relativity of life, divergence is a guarantee of unity when it is sustained by the word, depository of the one meaning, of the unique meaning.

And one day, the single word, comes to impose on certain cases, on certain phases of the being of man, the deprivation of language, leaving it reduced to what is indispensable so that the individual, to whom this occurs, continues forming part of society. And at times, perhaps when the subject in question insists on speaking so, he remains without any word, submerged in total silence, without being able to speak not even with himself. But the word can leave him without that distinction between oneself and others, deposited in a life of silent communication, freed from expression and from notification. He establishes the presence of the only word, a type of interior breath, a breath of the being, of this hidden being in what is human, which needs to breathe in its own way, which cannot be the way of life with nothing more. Life and being must breathe at least in the human kingdom, creating a presentment that it may be like this in all the reigns of being and of life, whether specifically or generally.

Initially the two breaths, the one of life and the one of being, are thought to be separated. The breath of life is under the threat of a stopping that does not make itself felt except in certain moments for an immediately physiological cause, and with great frequency for a lack of breath in the hidden being in man. And then the attention turns upside down onto someone who suffers it, outwardly, toward that which he believes to be the only breath that possesses and sustains it. And the difficulty of breathing vitally is condensed and risks making itself total under the attention that, far from untying the knot, tightens it. And it is rare that the lack of breath in the being does not fall back on the breath of life, as it is rare or impossible that any ailment of being stops affecting life. The opposite, on the other hand, follows another law.

So that hidden being, upon breathing, can sustain on high the life in whom it is given, without any preconceived attention nor any stimulus from outside that may intervene. In order to sustain and even save the voids, the innumerable durations, the obstacles of all order, one must leave being to itself. So that it shelters the word itself as its most direct, incalculable manifestation. Since being, and even more for being hidden in what is human, it is in principle incalculable, ungraspable, surrounded by a void that can only be crossed from within.

And in the end, in some human beings, the union of the two breaths is fulfilled. Humans, we say, because only in them can we perceive it with certainty. The breathing of being toward the inside, if it is considered from that surface that life inexorably offers. Because life is in principle superficial, and it only stops being so if it in its breathing, the breath of being is united, such that being, hidden under life, is deposited over the prime waters of Life, which our living hardly grazes. Given that we are deposited in history, plied by necessity and surprised by death. Everything transcends the breath of being, and thus its word, the one, unknown and wonderful, miraculously identified word, raises in its unique impetus all the words together and unifies them, destroying them irremediably. Because in the human being what transcends, brings down and annuls; becoming nothing. And this action appears doubly. The becoming nothing that proceeds from being, gift of the union, and that other supreme threat that proceeds not from the ceasing of vital breath, but rather from the extinguishing of the breath of being, which lies more hidden under greater impetus, an which breathes, then giving a single word. Only its word before opening the silence that transcends it.

### Chapter 3 The person

The opus of María Zambrano (1904-1991) stands like a solid piece of architecture that had been building upon itself while the life of the writer unfolded. This project includes such works as *La agonía de Europa*, *Sueños y el tiempo*, *El hombre y lo divino*, *Horizonte del liberalismo*, *Persona y democracia* among others. Zambrano's method of writing speaks to a specific being-in-the-world that she relates to through the language that she uses, one that is linked to the nature of her surroundings. From "Madrid's implacably blue sky in 1929" and the "noche oscura" of Europe to the "aurora" of Havana, Zambrano inhabits the language that she writes. *Claros del bosque* (*Clearings in the Forest*), the 1977 work that has been awarded the Cervantes Prize in 1988, perhaps most strikingly and evidently represents the strength of her abilities to express her thinking through a personal writing style. This was demonstrated in the last chapter through the work's chapter six titled "Words." In this section, I will introduce translations on two texts, *Horizon of Liberalism* and *Person and Democracy*. Thus, as she reveals this lifelong project both to the audience and to herself, one work after another, a compounded layer of language unravels, revealing the center of her thinking.

This core, the naked heart of her ideas, follows a rhythm of understanding based in emotionality, or a poetic reason.

The poetic reason that she employs deals with myth, symbol, or metaphor, and with it, Zambrano develops an approach to historical reason, a concept that had been explored earlier and in different ways through the philosophies of figures such as José Ortega y Gasset and Friedrich Nietzsche. For example, in 1882 Nietzsche writes in “Something for the industrious:”

Anyone who now wishes to make a study of moral matters opens up for himself an immense field for work. All kinds of individual passions have to be thought through and pursued through different ages, peoples, and great and small individuals; all their reason and all their evaluations and perspectives on things have to be brought into the light. So far, all that has given color to existence still lacks a history. Where could you find a history of love, of avarice, of envy, of conscience, of pious respect for tradition, or of cruelty? [...]

Whatever men have so far viewed as the conditions of their existence – and all the reason, passion, and superstition involved in such a view – has this been researched exhaustively? [...]

If all these jobs were done, the most insidious question of all would emerge into the foreground: whether science can furnish goals of action after it has proved that it can take such goals away and annihilate them. (*The Gay Science* 82-83)

On a similar note but in a different style through a collection of lectures given in Lisbon in 1944, Ortega y Gasset says:

[...] Countless ways of being have been adopted by man without his subscribing permanently to any of them. Each of these ways of being represents a fundamental experience undertaken by man, an experience that once assumed turns out to have limitations. These limitations help him see other ways of being not yet tried. In other words, he becomes one thing *because* before he was something else. Man, who is *nothing*, continually *recreates* himself through the dialectical series of his experiences. This is why, correctly understood, the science of the past is also the only possible science of the future – in the particular sense in which such a science is possible. In short, *man has no nature but, instead, a history.*

Thus far our reason has not been historical, nor has our history been rational. (*Historical Reason* 223)

The path that Zambrano's lifelong project follows takes on a more palatable optimism as revealed through her language and ideas: "One needs to make history of the lacking of hope and the desperations, of the falls and of the vertigos; the history of the core of history" (*Persona y democracia* 88). On one plane, this need for understanding the "core" of history is first determined by attempting to gain knowledge of the person and of the experiences through which he or she may live. On a second plane, this involves a parallel effort in understanding society and the relationship of one culture to another in the world. In several of her works, Zambrano deals with the concepts of the personal and the social. Among these, two that stand out in this respect are *Horizonte del liberalismo* or in English *Horizon of Liberalism* and *Persona y democracia*, or *Person and Democracy*. In the first, she approaches the individual to the collective in a specifically and simply political way, while in the second she develops her relation of the personal to the social by tracing the processes of history instead of the events that made it or the reasons behind them. Words such as "tragedy," "sacrifice," "love," and "reconciliation" populate her prose, providing for an understanding of an emotionality or irrationality of history but also for a method or a way the person might create and share in a society composed of difference.

In 1930, María Zambrano's first published book came out and was titled *Nuevo liberalismo*, which in 1996, came out in a revised edition under the title of *Horizonte del liberalismo*. In the time span between the two publishings, the world suffered many radical changes, which influenced Zambrano's investigations. She experienced

revolutions, dictatorships, democracy, life and death. Spain was her homeland, yet France, Cuba, Italy, Puerto Rico, and Switzerland were the spaces that at one point or another lent the land upon which Zambrano could write and experience the word as she wrote it, spending over half of her life in exile. In a journalistic article of 1989, “Amo mi exilio,” she writes, “Exile has been like my country, or like a dimension of an unknown country, but that once it is known, is inherent” (*Palabras del regreso* 14). Although her experience in exile plays a dominant role in shaping both her thinking and her writing, Zambrano’s first intellectual awakening came in response to the yearnings of her homeland, Spain, giving birth to the long essay *Horizonte del liberalismo*. Later on, in works such as *Filosofía y poesía* (1939) and *El pensamiento y poesía en la vida española* (1939), Zambrano also engages in the debate between philosophy and poetry, beginning with pondering the archetypical question: “¿qué son las cosas?” – a question that manifested her desire to achieve a reconciliation between poetry and philosophy. In *Horizon of Liberalism*, Zambrano attempts to answer questions such as, “What is politics? From what root does it emanate? What role does politics have in the different ways they exist in confronting life?” (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 201).

From the beginning, this work shows a strong style endowed with enthusiasm that dominates the page. In order to understand the meat of her thought, one must understand the tradition and circumstances in which she is nurtured. Born in 1904, she grows up in a Spain that is short of national consciousness. The loss of its colonies, Cuba, the Phillipines and Puetro Rico, in the 1898 Spanish-American war proved to be a “disaster,” ending an imperialist era to which Spain had clung onto in desperation out of its own pride. In addition to the international debacle, Carr points out that the “‘shapelessness’ of

Spanish society was a reflection of a particular stage of economic development: the coexistence of separate societies developing at different rates was a characteristic of early industrial development in Europe” (31). In the artistic and intellectual arena, the group that made up the Generation of 1898 – Azorín, Valle-Inclán, Unamuno, Benavente, Baroja, Bueno, Maéztu – asked the question “¿Qué es España?” This question undoubtedly could not be answered in any decidedly unanimous fashion due to Spain’s loss of its stance as an imperialist power and its lack of a shared vision as a state. Catalans, Basques, Galicians made up the periphery of the state and were in conflict between themselves as well as with the centralized Castilian force. Also, around the late nineteenth century a group of socialist educators, influenced by the German philosophy of Krausism, which had been imported by Julián Sanz del Río, was determined to create a space for education based on direct experience and free from the religious influence of the Catholic Church under which the Spanish educational system existed. This group, its most founding member being Francisco Giner de los Ríos, created the Institución Libre de Enseñanza. María Zambrano’s father, Blas Zambrano, is known to have had contact with these thinkers, who must have influenced María in her own education as a child (*Delirium and Destiny* 257). Thus, as a result of this, María, since her birth, was surrounded by progressive ideas, that departed from the constraints ingrained in the Spanish educational system. In addition to this radically diverse exposure, the relationship that María felt toward her father was, as retrospectively seen through her words, fundamental in her way of life. In the one translated work of hers, *Delirium and Destiny: a Spaniard in her Twenties*, she writes:

And he would pick her up, lift her high into the air, and she would find herself beside his head [...] And on those journeys from the ground to

such a height, she must also have learned distance, and learned what it was like to be above, to see the ground from above – to look from on high at her father’s head, at things, branches, walls that were moving, changing, and so forth – to be attentive to things that change, or see change and to see even while we ourselves are in motion, which is the first lesson in really knowing how to look, of the looking that is life. (12-13)

Having this “view from above” was María’s first experience with being able to develop a sensibility to see things as they move in time as a whole instead of just in parts. As Pierre Hadot writes in *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, “the view from above changes our value judgments on things,” thus enabling the observer to meditate (207). It is this mental process that must have influenced her in developing her ideas for her earliest work, *Horizon of Liberalism*, an essay that identifies and questions the roots of liberalism, while sketching a vision of the potential for liberal ideas to merge with the concept of “person” and “love,” thus sharing common ground in order to create a more stable base from which to live in freedom.

With her training in philosophy that she undergoes at the University of Madrid starting in 1921 and continuing on into the early 1930s (under the tutelage of José Ortega y Gasset, Julián Besteiro, J.M. Morente, and Xavier Zubiri), in addition to the political environment of Spain being on the verge of the Second Republic (declared in April, 1931), Zambrano wrestles with the questions of political liberalism and its missing elements in the contemporary society. From the beginning of *Horizon of Liberalism*, Zambrano studies and criticizes the roots of liberalism without being disruptive to its nature, but adds another layer of critical thought to the doctrine. In her opinion, those missing elements are “Love to man. Love to values,” which she eventually reveals by the end. However, before addressing these elements, she necessarily first traces a path of the

preliminary thoughts in order to provide information for the missing links within the imperfect political system. This then leads to the study of what sense love should play a stronger role in liberalism.

“What role does politics have in the distinct ways that exist in confronting life?” This question covers many areas into which Zambrano will investigate. According to her, “Politics always becomes how one thinks in directing life” (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 203). The essay takes a dive into the material and unearths the trajectory of what has happened in the past: a shifting of position of political power of one ideological faction to the other. This shifting created a sort of “see-saw” effect that Spain lays witness to in its history. This leads more specifically into her understanding of the intersection of politics with life.

Conservative politics, in her view, will always battle against time and the changes that occur through time because of their nature: “The conservative is the one who mineralizes history; the one that above all has the anxiety of profiles, of architectures that last always” (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 213). Further along in her essay, she reveals her understanding of conservative politics as resulting from either laziness or selfishness:

One can be conservative, in the most frequent case, because of laziness, a horror of spiritual commotions, a vital insufficiency, in sum, already caused by a temperament – our Oriental background – caused by that apathy, that most indignant trait of a miserable being, poorly fed, always tied to the necessity of the moment, without horizon of redemption [...]

One can be conservative because of the selfishness of those who in current society enjoy the greater share. This is easy to understand; it is the natural posture of one who has the benefit. Only a contrary moral conviction can resist it; but, when it does not exist, inertia triumphs. (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 213-14)

A conservative stance, whether out of laziness or selfishness, in the long run, does not benefit others or, in today's concerns, society. Its rigidity lacks the ability to adapt to the demands of history. The rigidity that Zambrano speaks to in this part of the essay is not only political but also religious, and thus, she often signals out the Catholic Church, alluding to the influence and control that it held on Spanish society for centuries: "It is dogmatism that consists in believing that all is revealed; an idea that, finally – and disgracefully – triumphed in the dynamic of the church, paralyzing it, fossilizing it, making it infertile for creating new movements, inept in responding to the advances of History" (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 216). Such control and rigidity did not lend itself to an environment of voluntary reconciliation but rather to a manufactured and forced one. The persistence of a "mentalidad inquisitorial" (inquisitorial mentality), as Abellán asserts in his work *El exilio como constante y como categoría*, infected the core of Spanish society for centuries and, as a result, dictated its way of life, despite the swaying of power from one political faction to the next. This inquisitorial consciousness that he speaks of was compounded by the constitutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that failed to separate Church and State. The exceptions were the 1873 constitution of the First Republic, the 1931 constitution of the Second Republic, and finally Spain's current constitution:

'The exercise of all worships is free in Spain.' (Art.34), adding in the following: 'The Church remains separate from the State' (Art. 35). It will be that after they will wait for the 1931 Constitution in which we find an article so emphatic as this: 'The Spanish state has no official religion' (Art. 3). (Abellán 23)

Undoubtedly, this type of controlling mentality would not be ready to allow the development of a successful liberalism in government.

In *Horizon of Liberalism*, Zambrano develops her argument related to the drives behind revolutionary politics, politics that depend on the dynamic nature of time and the events that guide history. She points out three revolutionary temperaments: *individualist*, *rebel*, and *advocate for justice*. Zambrano's reasoning behind the development of these three types of revolutionary dispositions relates to her overall goal of understanding not only the flaws of a conservative agenda but also those of a liberal one. Through this kind of argument, Zambrano displays her ability to consider both sides of an argument. She shows how opposing bases of ideologies work against each other. With the opposing ideologies, she desires to seek understanding and reconciliation as solutions to such questions related to politics. These three temperaments lead themselves down different paths. The *individualist* is a result of "a subjective rebelling; excessive individualism that, carried to the limit, arrives at anarchy, or nihilism – that nihilism that so much swept the end of the century" (*Horizonte de liberalismo* 223). It is a matter of "the individual feeling himself alone, alone and the center of the world, perhaps its resentful victim, and to want to rebel and destroy all that was adverse to him" (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 223). Thus, the liberal individualist who espouses this kind of mentality, or a political agenda with a destructive approach, fails to engage in the progressiveness that resides at the core of the ideology itself, therefore neglecting its dynamism and sliding into conservatism.

The figure of the rebel as a representative of a liberal and revolutionary thinking in Zambrano's essay points to a style of spontaneity and impetuosity based in the moment that finds himself "incapable to construct" (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 223). On the one hand, this speaks to a rebellion that, because of its lack of grounding in a political agenda, results in an uncontrollable lashing out of emotions that include acts of violence. On the

other hand, despite his advocacy for justice, the individual may lack any real movement or action that coincides with the revolutionary thinking “because of cowardness, laziness or a lack of enthusiasm.”

They are the famous types – also very Spanish, of the café or of the office – of inactive intellectuals. [...] People without life, passion, hothouse politicians [...]

To the fact that a majority of our dear liberals have pertained to this type, we owe our situation in the first third of the twentieth century, which theoretically, is believed by some to have gone beyond liberalism, given the complete lack of a true and deep liberal revolution. (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 224)

Her mention of Spanish society in the early twentieth century is one of her more direct attacks at the intellectual and his inability or lack of desire to do anything with the knowledge and understanding that he has acquired.<sup>32</sup> The importance of her discussion of what it means to be politically conservative and liberal points to the final section in which she gives her own reasons for the inadequacies that she sees in society in the early twentieth century. Although the essay continues to sketch her understanding of political philosophy, it still remains to be shown how this early thinking – which often uses the concepts of “tragedy,” “sacrifice,” “love,” and “reconciliation” – weaves the fabric of her lifelong project.

Continuing on in *Horizon of Liberalism*, Zambrano develops how the idea of vital optimism – “maximum faith in life” – is fundamental in the philosophy of liberalism. Faith itself is almost contrary to the concept of reason; yet Zambrano uses it in a way to show how “intuition,” a subset of faith, along with reason, can be used as the “weapon of politics” (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 226). It is at this point that she takes off with her

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<sup>32</sup> Much of this topic on a historical level can be found in the collection of essays compiled in *Los intelectuales en el drama de España y escritos de la guerra civil*.

“will of reform” as the cornerstone of liberal politics, keeping in mind the goal of bettering life for others tomorrow. Thus, the concept of “sacrifice” enters into her discourse:

And never is life that which is sacrificed – in all human movement it is necessary to sacrifice something; if change happens, this sacrifice of today is so that another is born tomorrow; if a life is asked for, never is it in name of an idea nor of a reason but rather of a life of much higher value; of more refined quality.

And in this way sacrifice itself acquires a positive character, and also pain, which, upon being overcome, potentializes, produces a greater intensity and spiritual richness. (*Horizonte del liberalism* 226-27)

Here she is reminiscent of Nietzsche and the concept of the affirmation of life and distrust of reason (as she herself indicates); yet what separates her from the German thinker is that Zambrano revisits Christianity as a philosophy rather than dwelling on the realities of Christianity as a practice from medieval times to the early twentieth century. She identifies and continues to speak of a “maximum faith in change, in innovation; a supreme optimism in the infinite flow of the creative grace with which one day the omnipotent God created the world [...] the miracle repeats itself in each instant and the world is created again” (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 227). The Christian philosophy that thrives on creation is something that she defends and further along in all of her works in some form or fashion, implicitly or explicitly. She ultimately delivers a concept which instills hope in the reasoning capabilities of human beings and their ability to create a better existence for themselves in society and, ultimately, in the world. A momentary sacrifice is needed in order to recreate such a thriving environment. The liberalism of which she writes is an ethical liberalism, an idea that speaks to action backed by thinking that moves along with the times; yet the progress that has resulted from investing in

science and industry starting in the nineteenth century, in her opinion, has not created a more progressive person. The lack of profundity in the “person” that she recognizes in the early twentieth century is what history itself has been able to reveal little by little. The individual does not know a great deal about fulfilling his role in the world – to act humanly – and, if he cannot act in such a way, how is a society made up of humans supposed to create a political environment based on such principles? In her opinion, the people of society who yearn for the infinite good must also create a society with politics that share the same aspirations. “To aspire for eternity” does not mean getting stuck in one way or in one system of politics but to recognize the situation in which society is in and then adjust accordingly in order to create a better state of things for the future.

In her dissection of liberalism, Zambrano’s next stage leads to discovering the contradictions that have resulted from its imperfections. She recognizes that in order to have formed the idea of something such as liberalism, one must have the time and space to dream up such theories: “in the very fact of its existence it already contains the doubt, the problem, the power to be and, therefore, not to be. The intranquility and the effort: thinking. The equilibrium of man’s existence ought to find him thinking, constructing eagerly, and not in free surrender, as does the animal in its privileged instinct” (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 231). However, political thinking and philosophizing, at their early stage, are an aristocratic endeavor. Zambrano asserts that even liberalism, although advocating liberty, has enslaved those who could not afford to think about such concepts:

And then the drama surged, the conflict, by then irresolvable.  
Aristocracy or democracy; heroism or necessity; freedom or slavery [...]

And it happened [...] that the only solution was through violence,  
mutilating and sacrificing. And here human unity was sacrificed.  
‘Liberty, equality, brotherhood’ [...] But since the beginning the last two  
were sacrificed for the first [...]

Humanity was divided in order to not lose the conquest (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 234)

This enslavement of principles through violence is what discredited temporarily the idealism behind liberalism, yet, it did not mean the defeat of it, according to Zambrano. Her efforts in this essay and in *Person and Democracy* are attempts to reconcile these ideals with a society that is not based on slavery. With this struggle to find the tragedy that lurks within liberalism, she develops the idea that history should be the guide. Hence, the question is how has history behaved? And how have the humans who inhabited that history behaved? It is by studying the patterns and recurrences of time, with reasoning faculties, that the philosopher can understand how mankind can create a better future for itself. Drawing from the Stoic tradition and alluding to Nietzsche's "eternal recurrence," Zambrano writes: "But History is not the night of festival – useless disorder in the void – but rather the serious theory of happenings and events that happen and remain, because they are intertwined with others in a harmonic procession that moves towards an ending, which will be a return" (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 237-38).

Returning to Zambrano's point of liberalism, it became the ground from which one could rationally emancipate oneself from the bonds of divinity, as in ancient Greek civilization. Although the Greeks made sacrifices to the gods, the gods played their own games against each other and according to their own rules. Gods did not meddle specifically in the affairs of human beings. Gods were linked to nature: think of Demeter, goddess of the seasons, or Poseidon, god of the sea. These gods, according to the Greeks, were mythical figures associated with nature. Greek citizens understood that their interactions were on human terms and with reason. With the dawning of

Christianity, man became bonded to God by action and thought. The concepts of “salvation” and “eternal life” were what mattered then. It is with the Enlightenment beginning in the seventeenth century that man’s reason regained independence from religion.

As a result of understanding man’s independence from religion, morality came into question. Zambrano states, “[s]omething, however, was created, something cold, rational, exempt of all passion and appetite; something definitely ascetic. And it was morality: liberal moral, human morality, the strained morality of duty” (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 240). Zambrano goes further in pointing out what is lacking from the new moral order: the heart:

The human morality of liberalism eludes the true man, his effective problems of feeling. It eliminates man in his true and humble humanity, leaving from him a pure schematic form.

The morality of ‘elite,’ from all the conflicts of living every day remain at the margin, all the yearnings that move our heart in each hour and that last yearning of individual destiny, of salvation of the individual mortal. So individualist, so human is liberalism, it created an ethical product alien to all human and individual vibration! (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 241)

This “human vibration” can be seen throughout her entire work, and perhaps it can be attributed to her being strongly influenced by the philosophy of Max Scheler. Scheler’s “ordo amoris” is one’s “inner moral tenor [Gemüt]” (*Selected Philosophical Essays* 98).

Beyond this simple Latin phrase, he elaborates its “descriptive value”:

For it is the means whereby we can discover, behind the initially confusing facts a man’s morally relevant actions, behind his expressions, his wishes, customs, needs, and spiritual achievements, the simplest structure of the most fundamental goals of the goal-directed core of the person, the basic ethical formula, so to speak, by which he exists and lives morally. Thus, everything we recognize as morally important to man (or to group) must be reduced, however many steps it may take, to the

particular structure of his acts of loving and hating and his capacities for love and hate; it must be reduced, in other words, to the *ordo amoris* which governs these acts and expresses all of man's stirrings and emotions. (*Selected Philosophical Essays* 99-100)

Both Zambrano and Scheler, are thus delving deeper into the constitution of the moral and ethical being which reveal themselves through acts of hate and acts of love. As Zambrano will continue to show in *Horizon of Liberalism* and later in *Person and Democracy*, the concept of one's "inner moral tenor" is a potential space in which society and the individual can reconcile in order to create a new system that encompasses both the rationality of thought and the irrationality of feelings. In order to avoid the tragedy of history repeating itself on a personal and societal level, her thought aims to guide the construction of an expanded ethical practice, not one solely filled with empty words and ideas, but one that can be implemented in society, starting with each person and his sacrificing passions that may lead to an irrational and contra-ethical action:

What we have to sacrifice of our being on the altars of the liberal ethic is, for the moment, all appetite, all yearning, all loving [...] the instincts, the emotions, the passions. One has to leave only the will, decreeing inflexible norms. Empty and formal norms; transparent vessels from which the liquor of hope was emptied and in which it is prohibited – under penalty – to pour another.

Instinct dead, our poor man already asfixiated, poor man of the flesh, it turns out that we have committed suicide in this life – as in religion. (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 243)

What Zambrano aims at in this latest quote is the idea that the appetite for a new ethic must first be sacrificed to the setting of the norms. It is up to the will to maintain these norms because if not, they will die along with the spirit of the ethical. One can see how Zambrano's ideas themselves were only at this point beginning to reveal their own meanings before she was able to develop them in later works. These meanings are

deciphered between what she writes in relation to the literary tradition in Spain and through the history of ideas.

Continuing in *Horizon of Liberalism*, Zambrano suggests that the cold architecture of rational thought excluded spirituality and emotionality from the process of human mentation:

[T]he error of rationalist liberalism, its infecundity, rests on having cut the ropes tying man, not only to the superhuman but also to the infrahuman, to the subconscious.

It inspired in him the maximum confidence in his efforts and left him navigating alone and without a guide in his poor walnut shell. It gave birth to him and separated him from the placenta in which he was placed within the universe. It broke his unity, his cosmic and vital solidarity, that only instinct or love provides. (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 244-45)

In a richly poetic style, Zambrano points her finger at excessive rationalism, which may have created, in its historical evolution, a strong liberal economy, but which has failed to balance it with the creation of a strong liberal “person,” having impoverished mankind of spiritual values and deep understanding of its position in the universe. The philosopher insists on integrating the human more fully into his world, both social and natural. Still at an embryonic stage, however, these ideas are further developed in her later works.

In the last third of the essay *Horizon of Liberalism*, Zambrano unravels her final train of thought, scrutinizing issues of the relationship of the individual with religion – and the institutions of worship – and liberalism itself. She signals out a potential weakness in the dogmatism embodied by the institutionalization of faith. However, dogma itself is not the problem, but rather how a particular dogma is perceived by and affects its followers in a time-related context. Furthermore, Zambrano is concerned with the relationship of dogma with the society that shelters it, which is inevitably constituted

by followers and non-followers, in Deleuzian terms, whether the actions that are carried out in the name of the dogma “decompose” or “compose” relations (Deleuze 35). This understanding of the effects of these absolute concepts plays a strong role in Zambrano’s understanding of how politics and religion have contributed in shaping history. The philosopher states: “Every spiritual and even physical movement has a dogma; its quality and sign is what best can define it for us; it is its nakedness” (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 247). A religious dogma that wraps itself up in the politics of the state, such as occurred in Spain with Catholicism for over four centuries, may reach a position of acting absolutely while remaining extremely sloth-like in response to change of any kind. Thus, the powerless members of the state suffer, while their growth as individuals is retarded and sacrificed, their will crushed by the immobility dictated by the dogma. However, as Zambrano points out further along, the moment in which a religion liberalizes, it humanizes:

Only in the places where the same religion became liberal, it was humanized, admitting the diversity and autonomy of the individual; only there did the moral and political liberalism take root [...]

And in such a manner the most solid and fecund liberalism – on its two faces of freedom for those above and slavery for those below – was English liberalism connected with Protestant religious liberalism. (*Horizonte del liberalismo* 249)

This liberalization of the Protestant religion, that was a by-product of the Reformation of the sixteenth century and had made its way to England, still does not solve the issue of the individual and religion that Zambrano wishes to discuss in this work. The other aspect that she mentions is the fact that, although the individual perhaps has achieved another layer of independence from religion, he still has not achieved independence from his nature, which is that of being human.

Being human in Zambrano's terms implies a dynamism within the "person" that is driven not only by rationality or religion but also by love both within the self and the social. Love generates the rebirth of society, but in Zambrano's thought it also triggers the individual's becoming, the process of his intimate evolution within it:

Thus, being human is to be fixed; he weighs, weighs upon something. Love declines, if not a disappearing from gravity, that when it does not exist is the sustenance of the moral, the condition of those who live morally, only morally [...] To live ready to take flight, ready for whatever departure. It is the unimaginable future, the unreachable future of that promise of true life that love insinuates in one who feels it [...] That fire without end that encourages the secret of all life." (*Dos fragmentos sobre el amor* 32-33)

Thus, love acts as a condition of a boosting efficacy, one that allows the person to fulfill his or her destiny despite the constraints of fate or circumstances. As Scheler discusses, "love is merely an X in emotional life which leads to generally useful acts, or the 'disposition' for such emotions. It has positive value only insofar as it has the possible value of *effectiveness*" (*Ressentiment* 94). This attitude toward love and the person, is the foundation upon which Zambrano continues to affirm her vision for the future, especially in her ideas related to liberalism.

Her ideas in the final part of *Horizon of Liberalism* suggest that liberalism, in principle, is based on love for man and for living freely in a world in the desired way. However, she advocates a revision or perhaps a re-evaluation of the basis of liberal economy. Zambrano continues to push the concept of love as the fundamental underlying support for such institutions: "its immense love of man, of all men and not of a class [...] love of the suprahuman values that man embodies in culture; spiritual aristocracy, free intellectuality, which is the essence of cultured living" (*Horizonte del*

*liberalismo* 268-69). Zambrano projects a vision of a society that is based on the interaction of each personal relationship cultivated out of love as the firmest ground from which to be-in-the-world with others despite differences. History itself, its tragedies and triumphs, is the material with which the philosopher begins her investigation into humans' relations with themselves and with society. As we have seen, Zambrano's writing takes a look at the place of rationalism in history without neglecting the irrational features that shaped the latter. According to her, irrationality is found in the shadows of history, in the beliefs of the spiritual qualities in religious life as well as in the life of intuition and "the original feeling." Thus, rather than pondering solely the events of history, she concentrates intensely on the shadows that they cast. Moreover, she meditates on the sets of circumstances that facilitate the happening of such events. By understanding how the shades and hues play with one another amid the light and shadows of life, Zambrano attempts to sketch out an area of reconciliation for society and for the human being. The absolutist, isolationist stance of the free man unlinked to nature and to others can no longer exist even in his own deception. The bonds of the human being to the State, to fellow beings and to nature are negotiable only when the human follows his or her conditions of being-in-the-world, a human condition cultivated and thriving upon love and love for others.

With *Person and Democracy* Zambrano contrasts the individual with the collective. For this purpose of this study, I have translated the first third of this book, so the focus will be there and not necessarily the whole text. From the beginning, in her prologue, Zambrano talks about how the world, back in the 1950s, was open to the path of democracy while then questioning the actual meaning of democracy. This path was

one that was not clearly understood by Zambrano. Even in 1987 when she wrote the prologue, Zambrano was not quite sure what democracy stood for in the day. It appeared to be “entwined with the idea of progress that, in a clear and obvious way, showed itself today as something one does not have to fight for...” (*Persona y democracia* 11). This idea of not fighting for democracy went hand in hand with an idea that led to history as sacrifice. She develops this idea of sacrifice further along in the text, for she herself was in search of “a religion without a sacrificial regime” (*Persona y democracia* 12). In addition, Zambrano spoke of the Western civilization as going through a crisis, one that she immediately calls orphanhood. To her sacrifice is no longer apparent: “history has become a different place where whichever kind of event can take place with the same validity and the same rights as an absolute God who does not allow for the slightest discussion” (*Persona y democracia* 12). The sacrifice that was once discussed turns itself into a ray of hope with the intention that Western civilization is born again. Zambrano’s constant use of the image of being reborn again, of the daily rebirth of the person, is the way to salvation and redemption for man. Her hope, as she shows in her prologue, is this hope of new life recreating man and allowing for an ideal state of living. The first third of the text, however, instead of discussing her hope for a civilization reborn deals with the trials and tribulations that have gone along with history and with the person.

History takes the leading role in this next section of *Person and Democracy*. The suffering that has occurred in history is not of a single place or time; suffering is what happens to us all. As Zambrano says it, we are all “protagonists” of such suffering. The suffering, once again, has not been individual but rather collective. The multitudes, which have remained at the margin, have stood the test of time by suffering passively:

“The great wars, the massive condemnations, the shame of our time, have brought or have intensified the process of participation in the history of the entire multitudes...” (*Persona y democracia* 19). From this passivity men have been dragged around by forces out of their control, at times attributed to the “gods” or to “destiny,” and men have suffered. It has become their reality, a reality to suffer. When referring to reality, Zambrano states, “It could be said that for man only certain realities are visible; moreover, reality is only visible in so much as, after having suffered it for a long time and in dreams, in a type of nightmare” (*Persona y democracia* 20). From this nightmare, man, or the masses, have decided to rebel. With rebelling come risks, ones that can annihilate man, allowing him and civilization to suffer the historical circumstances even further. What man can do in order to not suffer this is to cross “a threshold never before crossed in collective life, in truly being capable of creating a humanized society such that history does not behave like an ancient deity that demands inexhaustible sacrifice” (*Persona y democracia* 20-21). The suffering that comes from being submerged in a nightmare of history can only be limited by man’s awakening from the nightmare, which Zambrano deems as “monster.” This monster then converts into a sphinx. Here we have Zambrano employing her mythological figures in her work, a technique that is found throughout many pieces of her opus (as a result of frequent linking of her work to the ancient Greeks). From her use of the Sphinx and monsters, she turns to the void, another notion frequently employed in her work. She states that in the void “[I]t is the instant of perplexity that precedes consciousness and obliges it to be born. And that of confusion. Since nothing is so disturbing as encountering oneself with oneself” (*Persona y democracia* 21). Her idea is that out of the void a new being is born, one that is free from

the monsters, the nightmares of life. The monster that man sees is that of himself; the image that comes back to him is who he sees in the mirror, including all of society and the destruction that man has caused to it and to himself. From here man asks himself what he has done to arrive at such a state of being. The condemned man and the stranger are both a part of this, where one has suffered while the other cries out wanting to be. According to Zambrano, the stranger is the future.

Zambrano looks to the future as the place for salvation as long as the future does not act as a repetition of the past. The rebirth of society requires something new: “Something a bit unedited but necessary must emerge; something new, but which detaches itself from everything that has been: true history, which only from consciousness – by means of perplexity and confusion – can be born” (*Persona y democracia* 22). This something new is that which results from a rebirth of society, a highly stressed necessity for man and history. This rebirth must include a strong historical consciousness along with it. This consciousness is one that is filled with perplexity, questioning and doubting. This filled consciousness is also one that is clearer in the sense that it recognizes that the conflicts of the day have turned into problems: “Today’s conflicts present themselves as problems: this is the great new development” (*Persona y democracia* 23). These problems have become part of history, and to accept the problems and history is not a moral question, it has become part of the human condition.

Zambrano continues with the thought that man is connected in many ways. We feel the events that go on in another country halfway across the globe. Yet, one country would play the dominant note, according to the author. On one hand, she points to

Europe as a place of unity. On the other hand, she speaks of the American continent as an undifferentiated unity at first, and then later a unity that made up North America. Hispanic America, as she calls it, is an example of the dismembering of unities: “A common background of unity each country gave up upon achieving its independence. Today these two halves of that continent form part of the so-called Western world. On its own part, the Soviet Union and some Asian countries form the Eastern world” (*Persona y democracia* 24). The effect of unity and the lack thereof has called forth the understanding that never before has a historical situation been so simple yet so complicated. She calls the whole world a system, and one in which each country or several at a time are able to solve the problems that exist in each country. Perhaps these problems or events that occur in different countries affect two different people at the same time, something that “integrates their personal destiny” (*Persona y democracia* 25). This destiny leaves room for consciousness and thus, a desire for understanding. The consciousness level rises, and all involved feel life happening around them, and it is at this point that “It is not destiny but rather community – living together – that which we feel enveloping us: we know that we live together with all those who live here and even with those who lived in the past. The entire planet is our home” (*Persona y democracia* 25). This idea of living together speaks to a sort of unity of man in history, not only unity in countries as mentioned previously, but unity of man in time and in history. This unity, though clearly not achieved in historical reality, demonstrates one goal of Zambrano’s thought. Living together goes beyond the co-existing with neighbors; to her living together means “feeling and knowing that our life, even in its personal trajectory is open to that of others [...] it means knowing how to live in a way in which each happening has

its repercussion, [...] ; this means that knowing that life is also in all of her layers a system. That we form part of a system called humanity” (*Persona y democracia* 25-26). Indeed, humanity is one of the strongest concerns of Zambrano; whether it be through her political agenda or through her poetic reason, that is what she stresses, love for humanity.

The unity of humanity that Zambrano strives for starts with the person, and it is the person who feels enclosed in his own world and yet feels the desire to open up to the rest of the world. Zambrano considers personhood as a sort of “fortress in whose interior we are enclosed” (*Persona y democracia* 26). Here she returns to her concern in “Why One Writes” that the person finds himself in solitude, and because of this yearns for an opening to a friend, to the people he loves or to the community. Similarly, the writer in the previously mentioned article feels that same yearning as he sits in solitude writing for an audience that he knows exists, but that he cannot always sense at the moment of writing. This yearning is great, one in which the person would like to “open oneself up and even empty oneself into something; it is what is called love, whether it be for the person, for a country, for art, for thinking” (*Persona y democracia* 26). This love the person lets him know that a certain somebody or a community exists in the world that will participate in communication with him, allowing him to put up with the madness of civilization as a whole.

What becomes essential to understand is that what surrounds the soul and body of man is that of time: “Through the medium of time, and within it, we communicate with ourselves. It is natural for the human being to travel through time” (*Persona y democracia* 26). Zambrano emphasizes that we all live in a zone of time in which we live time with others. In this time men are able to communicate with each other. Time

acts as a sort of continuity, an inheritance and a consequence, and in its passing it transforms. This is where history comes into play. History is time, yet it is time that has passed. The time converts itself into the past. From the past one must understand that the future is just as important, for the future “ ‘that which is about to arrive.’ If we feel ourselves coming from the past, more exactly, ‘to be coming,’ we feel the future arriving, happening unexpectedly to us, in inevitable form. Although we are never certain of knowing our tomorrow, we feel it advancing towards us” (*Persona y democracia* 27). The passing of time, toward the past and toward the future, is what underlies much of Zambrano’s thought. Man suffers history, and with this he suffers time.

Time that is felt in the future is what allows man to live; however, this time also creates a pressure and with it, time may crush man, causing a type of paralysis. Zambrano summarizes this notion of time as the space in which man lives humanly. Her hope is that “some day we might be able to measure those temporal relationships and establish a kind of limiting equation beyond which human life becomes humanly impossible. It ceases as life, or rather it dehumanizes” (*Persona y democracia* 28). This would deprive life of its human qualities, traits such as intelligence and compassion. Is this what Zambrano hopes for? No. She looks to find the “right relationship with our fellow human being, in personal life, in familial life and in historical life” (*Persona y democracia* 28). Her hopes can be found in many dimensions of life, of them in the person, in the word, in compassion, and in love. These different dimensions of life call forth for different spheres of time. The person lives in one sphere with the family while he lives in another sphere with society. That, the living together in society, is what

concerns Zambrano most and which concerns *Person and Democracy* the most, for she writes:

It is the time of social living together that most interests us here. It is historical time without a doubt, or rather the support of historical time such that we then feel history through that time of living together with our society, with that history within which we reside and within which we move; that history whose changes decide our life. (*Persona y democracia* 28)

Time and history are what drives this text; time of man and history of man. Each individual person lives time and has a history, but it is the society, the whole that must matter the most in living civilly. It begins, however, with the person, his word, and his acts of love and compassion.

Time is marked by a rhythm, one that is seen in the religious festivals among other happenings. This rhythm, according to Zambrano, is the foundation of society. In the earliest forms of civilization, the individual “did not enjoy his own time; that which we have called ‘the time of solitude,’ then, did not exist. This time of solitude is what corresponds to the human being who knows himself and who feels himself as an individual” (*Persona y democracia* 29). Once again solitude appears in a work by Zambrano. Previously mentioned was the time of solitude that the writer must inhabit in order to communicate his secret. Are these different forms of solitude that Zambrano refers to in her two texts? Perhaps. In the text “Why One Writes,” she deals with the person on an individual level while here in *Person and Democracy*, she writes of the person but also in relation to man and society. Continuing on, it is not time on one level that man lives; he lives on a multiple level of times, each having a different rhythm. The multiplicity of times lead each individual to a period of solitude, in which the period of

intimacy with himself is intense. This intensity is what leads him to thought, a moment in which he enjoys the condition of solitude to produce such thought. Zambrano points out that this leisure of being alone in time is a class issue, the privilege of a few. This has been seen in the Western world as well as in the Ancient world where “there were many men who lived a time of their own, with the resulting solitude, with the necessity of thinking attached to the perplexity that the society of the individual has as a gift” (*Persona y democracia* 31). This led man in the Ancient world to feel the necessity of thinking and knowing. Schools of thought such as Stoicism and Epicureanism made their presence known. She equates these moments to ones of crisis: “That moment, the most critical of that crisis which, like all, marks an expansion of individual consciousness is when the conviction of the unity of the human race emerges, when man presents himself with all the evidence of man as he is” (*Persona y democracia* 31). At that moment historical consciousness became historical responsibility.

This historical responsibility has been lived on many planes, on the individual level, on the familial level, and on the societal level. On the individual level, she points to Marcus Aurelius as an example of a ruler and commander who lived on all three planes of existence. These planes, especially the one in which he lived his solitude, allowed him to think alone, in which he found himself in a moment to examine his conscience, “in a continuous soliloquy, as do all those who have the right to speak aloud their intimate doubts. He who has to command and act has to think alone with himself and to interrogate himself alone” (*Persona y democracia* 32). From that solitude, a man such as Marcus Aurelius, a man of power, must eventually speak those thoughts aloud and to confess, not only to himself, but publicly “what it means to be a person, act as a person

when one leads” (*Persona y democracia* 32). Once again, this question of the person in her texts exists, a question that continues to be explored throughout her words.

Feeling time deals with the relationship with the past. Time is at moments fluid, material, and sometimes compact. Both the past and the future oppress. Because of this oppression, the present is hollowed out, in Zambrano’s view. In the past there have been periods “that have lasted centuries in which a people has lived weighed down by the past, dragging time like a cloak, on glorious occasions, that it cannot maintain” (*Persona y democracia* 33). This occurs when the past advances to the future in order to unite the past with the future. Time is then equated with breathing:

Knowing how to breathe is the first condition of knowing how to move, to walk, to cross space. Athletes have always had to know it. And there is a relationship between knowing how to move physically and knowing how to move in history. With good reason in Greece, the Olympic Games had a national and sacred character and at the same time, the character of a rite of citizenship. (*Persona y democracia* 34)

This idea of movement in history, quite poetic in its own right, draws again upon the question of the multitudes and suggests that watching how they move in time and in history can discover the social situation of a country. She refers to the Nazi-like parades and the goose-step and how that leaves an impression in the mind like the photographs “we dare not develop” (*Persona y democracia* 34). This example of the Hitler regime demonstrates one way of judging political regimes. The way people walk in society determines the state of health of a society and the degree of humanization that it lives. Whether the society is in crisis or not, it speaks to a historical moment, one in which past fights the future.

Within history different minorities take part in the society’s history: minorities that move forward and minorities that move toward the past. The minority of the future

“moves forward, opening the future: in thought, technology, in science, in politics, in art, in sum: in whatever type of creative activity” (*Persona y democracia* 35). Those who look to the past choose from it “the most advantageous situation, which would fit better with our preferences, eliminating from it the negative aspects that it would have in concrete reality” (*Persona y democracia* 35) She considers this a sort of “fictional play” acted out by those persons endowed with imagination but unable to suffer the weight of life. That past-oriented minority is one that after abandoning the people turns into a sort of resentment in living wrapped up with a “rigid morality,” one that is made up of “persistent contempt, of the refusal to see, to think, to perceive; to live in an integral way. Yet, nothing can exempt the human being from embracing his time, his historical circumstance, no matter how repugnant it may be to him” (*Persona y democracia* 36). It is at this point that we see the need to search for an ethical history, one in which the person can live through compassion and love.

Zambrano continues by making references to two texts, *The Decline of the West* by Spengler and *The Rebellion of the Masses* by Ortega y Gasset. She questions whether society is interested in the whole truth or just the half-truths that resulted from the dawning of these books. She contends that society is living a crisis, a crisis in which beliefs, effective ideas and ways of living die. What is being lost is security, while time goes by in a “slow, measured rhythm” (*Persona y democracia* 38). Time can be seen in a sort of dilated fashion in which “[o]ne sees the events arrive, and one can even have the sensation of moving toward them: life is going forward with imperceptible force” (*Persona y democracia* 38). Her moving back and forth between the past and the future characterizes much of this text. Time has not set a direction. The crisis seems to take

place in both time periods. In fact, this crisis is one that is not defined; it has no real shape, no path. Time does not necessarily pass until perhaps the worst arrives, leaving one frightened and empty on an undetermined path. The one thing that is guaranteed is death. All paths eventually lead to death. According to Zambrano, upon facing death “we are not ‘prepared’ or ‘mature’ for it” (*Persona y democracia* 39). Death is at our doorstep, yet we are not prepared. Man must look to the center of himself, to the soul where both love and death reside. If not he will dwell on death and spread it to others. Zambrano alludes to nature in this moment by writing, “It is as if the trees in the autumn were to believe that all of nature dies instead of allowing the dried leaves to fall and to be collected within, in the hopes that sap will flow in the following spring” (*Persona y democracia* 40). What can be guaranteed is change; death and change. And hope. Hope can be linked to death; without it there is nothing. Death then is linked to the Western culture, especially in Europe. However, Zambrano twists it towards the positive by saying that perhaps this death is the dawn of a new era. They are part of the same crisis, yet dawn is valued higher than death, which is again linked to the concept of hope among the person and society.

In the next section of *Person and Democracy*, titled “Manifestation of what is human,” we see Zambrano turn to her notion of man as a thesis, as a constantly revealing being throughout time and history. Man, in this process of being a thesis, must own his time: “It is as if upon declaring the human condition as a thesis and a project, man would have entered into an environment that was more his time, into a time that was closer to his own. In a time that, in a certain way, is his creation” (*Persona y democracia* 41). As much as the human is a sort of dawning, so is history. Man announces himself in a sort

of a coming-out party within history. This coming-out is one that respects God and the gods, allowing man to ask God “about the reasons for his destiny and for his condition” (*Persona y democracia* 42). This questioning of God is similar to that which occurs in the Book of Job. From the Old Testament, Zambrano moves to the Egyptian Book of Dead, which describes the journey of a mummy, and how he is tested by weighing the heart of his mother and all the words and works of her life, invoking her so that she does not testify against him. From Egypt we travel to India, China and Greece to the wise men of these respective areas. What is important about these voyages is that Zambrano is revealing man not as only a being but a way, a path.<sup>33</sup> The creative evolution of man, his path, is something that manifests itself in this dawning of Western civilization. Man being a pathway is something that opens itself to discovery, “the most human action because it is at the same time action and knowledge: decision and a certain faith that regulates hope in a form that converts it into will. It is, therefore, a moral action above all” (*Persona y democracia* 43). Faith is what drives man to open himself up to history instead of closing down when events take a downward turn.

In addition to faith, there is thought and action that take over in man. This thought and action act like “a bolt of lightening, a situation becomes visible, the situation of somebody who by going about in the wrong way, also goes wandering. The coming and going without any result, always moving within the same territory, again and again,

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<sup>33</sup> Although she does not quote Bergson directly, some of her thoughts resonate with her way of thinking in this area. Zambrano did read Bergson and was slightly influenced by his work. Here is a quote on his notion of creative evolution that ties in with Zambrano’s ideas. This results in a sort of creative evolution. As Bergson states:

When we put back our being into our will, and our will itself into the impulsion it prolongs, we understand, we feel, that reality is a perpetual growth, a creation pursued without end. Our will already performs this miracle. Every human work in which there is invention, every voluntary act in which there is freedom, every movement of an organism that manifests spontaneity, brings something new into the world. (*Creative Evolution* 239)

stumbling upon the same obstacles” (*Persona y democracia* 43-44). The negative circumstances temporarily fluster man and hinder his path until eventually the path does open “when the horizon clears. The creative horizon of space-time” (*Persona y democracia* 44). The wandering man sees the path as this creative space-time. He finds himself after the long and winding road of obstacles that obstruct his vision forward in history. That which allows him to see clearly the path is his will, the will to go forward in space and in time. This path that man travels is one that cannot be travelled by another. He must do it himself. In a way, man acts as a resilient being, one that overcomes the obstacles and pushes onward through the darkness of life. Within such path, man is born into a culture and “finds himself in a different world, one already ordered or on the way to ordering itself, and what is even more marvelous: with a certain idea of what it is to be human. With a pattern called ‘humankind’ that measures it” (*Persona y democracia* 45). From this discovery of humankind, man finds himself in a sort of historical rhythm.

Zambrano embarks again upon the notion of time and history for man. History itself is a path just as it is in the personal life of man. While on the path man confronts situations in which he will not be able to stay in one place; he will not be able to settle. Nothing in history, even the Roman Empire, will remain permanent in history. What appears to have permanence, such as the Roman Empire did for centuries, ultimately finds an end. It is the ebb and flow of civilization, as Zambrano shows here: “Along the image of the straight line, the path in moments of plenitude, there occur one after another rhythms of vertical falls, of ascensions, and the fastest backward movements [...] Thus, the structure of historical time is ripe for study, like that of human life” (*Persona y*

*democracia* 46). This study of historical time is one in which hope takes a front seat, a seat that man has had to guide in his ascents and descents. Zambrano calls this challenge “[t]he history of a hope in search of its plot” (*Persona y democracia* 46). The plot that man searches for includes eclipses, falls, and the eventual resurrection.

The human being announces his arrival as the dawn announces the arrival of the day. Man awakens from a dream, one in which he carries other dreams. In fact, Zambrano states that the human being “is born as a product of a long dream in which he follows an immeasurable plan. A dream, for a human being, precedes action perhaps because only in dreams does he capture first the finality beyond what surrounds him, beyond what appears to him. He advances by feeling his way, actively dreaming, daydreaming” (*Persona y democracia* 47). Man dreams actively and suffers actively these dreams. It is a part of the process of being human in the Western world. The dreaming of man has led to the many visions of utopia that have been expressed in the Western world. The expressions of these utopic visions are ones in which there is a desire to humanize the places in which man lives. This environment in which man lives goes beyond being earth, for it is society in general. From society, Zambrano once again moves towards history as the environment in which man suffers and lives his dreams. The suffering of his dreams leads man to yearning, to wanting, to love, yet man must maintain his way of realizing himself day by day, which leads him to his finality: “To know the truth would be to know the end of what is hoped for and desired, and to situate it so that it illuminates that path ahead: such that makes the path descend from the goal” (*Persona y democracia* 48). Achieving this goal requires man to know himself. He must know his passions, for the passions underlie everything.

From fulfilling the goal that man puts before himself, Zambrano goes back to the question of time as it exists for the human being. At first everything is entangled, and the future and the past are bound up with each other. It is the ordering function of human consciousness that attempts to make time accessible. The past and the future are a sort of labyrinth, “the elemental form in which within our soul the past nests, along with hope—the figurations in which the past is remembered, or rather, actualized, and in which the future is symbolized. In reality, however, in this elemental form of the life of the soul, the human one, the past is neither remembered nor actualized but rather it remains there” (*Persona y democracia* 49). It is through this labyrinth that man must make his way out in order to experience the dawning of life. In life one finds victories and defeats, and these are necessary to experience when going through life. For Zambrano, “Only the victories that save the past are permanent, for they purify and free it. And, thus, in this permanent dawning of the human being, in his history, the light comes also from the past, from the same night of the times” (*Persona y democracia* 50). As we can see, Zambrano is employing once more images of nature as a metaphorical connection to the life of man and to what he experiences. Time continues to play a role in this section of *Person and Democracy*. The role of the future is one that propels man toward his development as a being and toward his development of his vocation and the challenge of himself, one of pure being, one of fulfilling his dreams, one in which man achieves humanization. Here she refers back to the Sphinx and ancient Greece when Oedipus gave his answer of the human being. This signified man taking his first step toward asserting his existence as man. Throughout history man has taken several steps of similar significance. History itself is “not a simple passing of events, but rather, it has its own plot because it is drama”

(*Persona y democracia* 51). It is at this point that the past's tragic history is now on the road to converting to an ethical history.

In the last portion of the first section of *Person and Democracy*, Zambrano deals with history as tragedy, yet history that yearns to become ethical. She writes that “[h]istory seemed to have formed a pool to flow with the tranquil rhythm of human breathing, as if it had become synchronized, at last, with human beings. But not with all human beings, until now” (*Persona y democracia* 54). Those who do not breathe are the masses, and at times they begin to drown. They are the ones who tend to not know, for in this time of living, knowing was necessary but not necessarily sufficient. The knowledge is a tragic knowledge, one that does not necessarily have an author. With this tragic knowing, Zambrano points out that there is a difference between individual human life and historical time:

If history is understood while making and enduring it lucidly, the time that this implies is exceedingly long compared to the life of the individual, and to the life of the generation that has to retire, that disappears when it reaches the point of training – if it be the case that it has not been destroyed before by one of the catastrophes among those that are so plentiful in our Western history. (*Persona y democracia* 54-55)

This history of human life is renewed through the generations, showing that history, as in time, unravels in a discontinuous fashion. It is the new generation that breeds hope as well as possible desperation. The new generation, despite being the possible bearers of hope, is confronted with the potential catastrophes that may befall them. Is the younger generation prepared for such catastrophes? Most likely not, for the older generations disappear, leaving the younger ones in the midst of strange and foreign situations. However, Western man has tragic roots that run deep in history. Man has believed in

himself and has wanted to believe in himself. He has done so in an absolute manner, which Zambrano thinks must be “cleared up or dissolved so that our history, inevitably dramatic as history is, ceases to be tragic” (*Persona y democracia* 55). The goal is for nothing in excess.

In this thing we call tragic history, there has always been a victim and an idol. The goal for society is to lose the victimized and idolized status in order to “love, to believe and to obey without idolatry; [so] that society may cease to govern itself by the laws of sacrifice or, rather, by a sacrifice without law” (*Persona y democracia* 56). Zambrano discusses the idol and how it feeds off the adoration of a society. Once the adoration from the society ceases, the idol falls from his place of honor. The idol naturally lives in a state of deception. When the idol does fall, he may become the victim and vice versa. For a moment the idol who has become the victim “reestablishes, for a moment, equality. The level is made equal, and the victim partakes in the idol upon seeing him brought down to the victim’s condition [...]” (*Persona y democracia* 57). The idol and the victim participate in their respective human conditions. Man eventually has to accept his human condition, one in which he lives as victim and as idol.

This is the tragic history, one in which man must wear masks in order to suffer the inevitable condition, which ultimately leads us all to death. According to Zambrano, man is on the limit of this tragic history. History itself must “stop being representation, figuration made by masks, in order to enter into the human phase, into the phase of history made only by necessity, without idol and without victim, according to the rhythm of breathing” (*Persona y democracia* 59). Man is capable of killing because the State commands, but he does not necessarily do so in his private life. It is up to the person to

determine if he will partake in such a tragic history, continuing to participate in the deaths that are caused by war, or if he is willing to turn away from such brutality and help breed an ethical history:

But, although slowly and with effort, this revelation of the human person has been making way for what constitutes not only the highest value but also the finality of history itself. For on that fortunate day on which all human beings may have come to live plainly as persons; in a society that may be their receptacle, their adequate medium, human beings will have found their home, their 'natural place' in the universe. (*Persona y democracia* 60)

As one can see, ultimately it is up to the person to live his condition in as human a way as possible, a way that will allow him to squash the idol and the victim and act upon his modes of compassion and love in order to convert tragic history into ethical history, whether it is through daily acts of kindness or through the implementation of a whole new political structure. This is what Zambrano strives to demonstrate in these texts that I have translated in relation to this chapter, *Horizon of Liberalism* and *Person and Democracy*.

## Translation of *Horizon of Liberalism*<sup>34</sup>

### Dedication

To my father. Because he taught me to look.

I believe it to be inappropriate to adduce quotes in the course of these pages, for they are not the work of investigation, for which a special preparation might have been necessary.

It deals with – the reader will be warned – a very spontaneous thinking, born facing the anguish of the great problems that insistently call to my sensibility from which my attention has not been able, nor will be able to free itself for a long time.

For the same reason, I have omitted the usual bibliographic list.

### Themes

Subterraneously, beneath the thoughts that are exposed here some questions tremble, perhaps the only reality of all this. It is possible that some questions may be of such an elusive condition, that, upon trying to catch them, they escape from us to a river down in the subconsciousness. We will show, however, the questions that take shape in clear and precise terms.

What is politics? From what root does it emanate?

What does politics mean in relation to life: does it follow it or stop it, affirm it or deny it? (Conservative politics and revolutionary politics).

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<sup>34</sup> María Zambrano, *Horizonte del liberalismo*, ed. Jesús Moreno Sanz (Madrid: Morata, 1996)

What role does politics have in the distinct modes that exist in confronting life?

Politics and the religious conception of life.

Politics and the humanist conception of life (Liberalism).

What value can politics have in present-day moments? Can it resolve some problems that have been planted, such as the economic problem and culture? Is it possible to have a politics that saves both?

## Politics

There is a political attitude toward life that is simply the intervening in it with an eagerness or will to reform. Politics emerges whenever one thinks about how to live. Spranger says: politics are the will to power. But no. Power can be the root through which political activity inserts itself in some individuals; but politics in itself, if it longs for power, it is for reform.

This explains why politics has had many points of contact with religion and why it has been confused with ethics. So much so, that there exist conceptions of life in which religion, ethics and politics become confused, because one, being very strong in its roots, may attract the others, absorbing them, incorporating them into its substance, nourishing itself from them.

Religion, ethics, and politics all have, without a doubt, this common origin: of being non-conformist – of protesting before what is – and yearning for what should be. It is, then, a problem between two terms: an individual who acts and a life that is offered as reformable material.

But if religion, ethics and politics have a common root, one must look for the differences that is, in the meantime, their respective fields of action. Then, while religion and ethics can direct themselves to the isolated individual, and they could exist in a single man in the world, politics requires the existence of society for its very possibility. Without a doubt other differences exist; but for our purpose now, this is enough.

There is a material – present-day life – an ideal form that attempts to make itself real, and an individual... a man. (Man is that creature who is between two worlds, a mediator, sent between them.)

Therefore, perhaps politics may be the activity that is most strictly human, and its analysis reveals to us the greatest dramas, conflicts and glories for man.

Politics is always reform, creation, revolution: therefore it struggles – it is a conjunction – between the individual and life.

Hence, from the predominance or direction of one of these factors – life also reforms the individual – diverse conceptions of politics are born that will not only be of politics – since nothing spiritual exists isolated – but rather of the totality of life.

All politics ideally supposes a historical consciousness; it is its birth, and it is directed to a future and creates it. And like human activity, it has a possible trajectory that is not necessary, because in what is human there exists the glory and the tragedy of possibility, of indetermination. And were it not so, there would be no politics; nor would there be history.

History is nothing but a dialogue, rather dramatic, of course, between man and the Universe. Thanks to man there is dialogue and duality. He is always *the other* in nature.

Nature remains loyal to the creative impulse; in its happenings there is a character of necessity, and in its quiet being resides the maximum virtue of obedience, the submissive deliverance of the latent plans. But not man. He emerges from nature, he speaks, he would upset the order that is found, he is the cosmic heterodox.

Therefore, even when he lives in agreement with nature, obedient to it, he acquires a character of conscious gratuitousness. He is up to a certain point a nature that is sought-after and, thus, humanized and artificial at times. He has said yes to the vital requests.

Everything that man lives is examined, weighed, measured; it is a tiring task and filled with eagerness. Man can be everything, to situate his life in accordance with distinct centers of gravity, with a distinct axis.

His response to the vital requests is, in reality, simple as are all responses: only affirmation or condemnation. However, what lends tonality and color to an age, more than the response itself, is that which is responsive to that which is affirmed or denied, that element of the universe to whom attention is paid and with whom one converses.

(It would be curious to find out in what universe each being of which we have knowledge dwells. Every being lives in terms of a world, an enveloping limit of all his activities and the support of his being, and that being, in turn, supports the world. And this mutual supporting, this equilibrium of existences, is what creates the universe and unity.)

Man has already lived in the course of his history – therefore rightly so – in terms of distinct worlds and horizons, under the condition of not ignoring others – those who were not living – and even combating them. Each time that he would leave behind the

horizon in his evolution, he would want to destroy it, sink it, due to his longing to free himself from it forever; at times the fear made him march backwards, disregarding the present, in order to convince himself that he would not carry it with him.

And these spiritual worlds, these conversations that man sustains with one element, standing out from the rest, constitute what we call conceptions of life; which, like all spheres, each one has its sense of itself.

A politics corresponds to each one.

All politics departs necessarily – although it may not know it – from a supposed conception of man, from an idea that he has of himself, of his situation facing the world. He has an opinion that is not necessary to show in formulas. More than a theorem, it is a root, which from its substance may color all of the activities that are nurtured by it.

It appears as evident the fact that politics, like the will to reform that it is, finds itself always linked in its spiritual essence to a proposition of absolute meaning, to a dogma that offers it direction and aim.

Thus in these moments in which a new conception of life develops, will it not be an ineludible task, to see into its schematic clarity the most essential forms of politics – its categories – and the possible root from which they emanate? And not for the pleasure of making history but rather for the urgent necessity of finding ourselves, at this epoch that is initiated, that comes to light amidst so much contradiction.

In the cultural state that we have reached, it is no longer possible to be naïve. Before constructing and in order to construct, one has to look at what we have found and later reject some heritages and accept and overcome others.

After the positivist shipwreck, after the disintegration that was produced by a mediocre scientism, we return to having a universe, a true history and not an amorphous, notarial narration – specks of dust detached from a gem – that was offered to us as truth. We believe again in the possibility of History. What only is lacking is to discover it little by little, with loving eyes, in its pure architectural essence.

In the present hour the workers of time proceed urgently in their two directions: towards the past so that they reveal it to us without undoing it, and towards the future in order to bring to light the dismantling of the present. The creators of men work urgently, and the architects urgently seek to structure the atomized past.

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Politics and Life: what already is and what yearns to be, in palpitations of impatience. Among them both, man is intertwined – with his multiple problems – and with his universe.

They are the great metaphysical subjects of being and of life, of the individual and the world, of life – in its irrational root – and reason.

In this dialogue between man and the universe, which is history, subordination fits. According to the element that predominates, according to the central character of the drama, the other elements will act: among them, politics.

We have the paradox that because politics is the nuncio of history there are occasions in which it is everything. This occurs when politics departs from life itself, from a life that is not even real but that is found in embryo – the exchange of one style of living for another.

Then, politics becomes something unitary, totalizing, similar to religion, and comprises all human problems.

Like religion, it asks for everything and offers everything. Like religion, it is profound, morally revolutionary and admittedly intransigent.

It is the case of Russian Communism in today's world. Parting from a theory of history, it creates an economy, a moral, an art, in other words, a culture. It is a politics inspired in life, in which life predominates and even overwhelms the individual. It is the wanting to found a new life, yes, but a life conceived by a human mind, a rational life, one that is rationalized. Far from being handed over to spontaneity, to what is natural, is the eagerness of dominion over nature. Even in this it coincides with religion. There is a horror of the unforeseen. One pursues all possible spontaneity – heterodoxy – up to the detail, up to obsession. Russian Communism loves life so much that, in erotic craving, it wants to take possession of life and halt it.

We have faith in a politics that loves life so much that it finds itself with enough elasticity to run after it, not to capture it, but, certainly, so that the union lasts. It is what we hope for, what will be authentically the instrument of our age... if it so happens that "our age" is going to be a reality.

Such is politics when it pulls away from life. Yet when the individual provides the tonic we have, we have had liberal religion and liberal politics; in other words, restricted to its own limits – liberalism is, above all, the careful limitation of powers – channels always open to the possibility of a future.

However, at once the question emerges. Are politics and religion possibly situated outside of liberalism, in their more enthralling and extremist versions? If we

look at our Spanish past – the present is so faded, so pale that it would tell us nothing – then the answer is affirmative.

Yes, fanatic individualisms are possible up to the point at which, considering our racial reality, it costs us effort to understand the contrary.

It is that every position carried to the limit approaches its opposite. Our extreme individualism has led each one of us to recognize nothing else but an individual: as one of us, rejecting all diversity.

This problem of tolerance in religion and politics is, in reality, only that of love; it is knowing that “the other” exists; it is to love what is the opposite, what is human. But we, our race, upon handing ourselves over completely to religiosity, with the hubris she desires (is not pride another Hispanic characteristic?) to be like gods makes us naturally fanatic.

The same passions depend upon the position in which one is placed in life. Only God can be fanatical without being monstrous because he carries within him the pure essences of things, and what is outside of him, does not exist. Yet what is human, always partial, limited, must love his opposite, which is his complement.

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We believe we have already touched upon the first point of focus, in the light of which we are going to study politics. It is static politics and dynamic politics: a politics that once and for all – perhaps by excessive faith in itself and in the persistence of things – decrees the laws of the society that must govern; and that other politics which by believing more in life than in itself, hopes for everything in life, in other words: Conservative Politics and Revolutionary Politics.

## Conservative Politics and Revolutionary Politics

It is curious that politics exists even in the cases in which it denies itself. It happens in such a way in its static conceptions – rationalist or religious – in which the principles of the world and society are believed to be discovered for always.

Then, politics betrays its dynamic essence and dedicates itself only to conserving, to defending what exists versus what is about to arrive, because what is new is considered degradation. There is only one acceptable order – the present one – and any other would be transgression, disorder.

It is what constitutes the core of all conservative politics, that it can take on revolutionary appearance, when its dogmatic order has not been established. This is the case in so-called revolutionary movements of “restoration” and, what is more serious, this is also the case in some grandiose revolutions that seek to destroy what is current in order to found a new social form but of identical rigidity. It is the most terrible rigidity because it finds itself justified, exalted, and it considers itself not already *a* world but rather the best – the only world.

On the other hand, revolutionary politics is always about to arrive. It is what would correspond to our current conception of life, even in avenues of emergency, even at the point of giving birth.

A politics that is not dogmatic about either reason or supreason will be revolutionary; and it will believe more in life, more in the virtue of the times than in the

aprioristic application of some formula, expressed with demands for perpetuity. It is a politics that is considered renewable by the immense wealth of reality, never exhausted.

Above all, politics that depends on time will be revolutionary. A singular contempt for time has been the patrimony of past ages – Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Politics even aspired to eternity. All of life itself yearned to dam up the current of time, which is the source of all purity and all fecundity. All systems of thought – save for a singular exception – was atemporal; it raised its ideological castle over the naked, bony foundations of the ideal, of the supratemporal, scorning the humble earthly mud, where the ferment of time makes life germinate.

We yearn now for a politics that recognizes this humble and powerful factor of time, and we have a feeling that it is about to arrive.

We will feel sorry for our beloved conservatives. But however much order is protected, it will never give complete satisfaction to their dream of nirvana-like calmness.

For however ordered and fixed a political structure may be, it will always be a transitory form. Every political form, in so much as they are created by man and not born from nature, carries within themselves, – as inherent, – their temporary status. Everything human passes, flows and dies.

The conservative lives the illusion of converting politics into physics, human history into natural history, and furthermore, into astronomy.

The conservative fossilizes history; above all he has a yearning for profiles, for architectures that will last forever. One can arrive at this position from various roots: whether by temperament or individual pathos; or by another, objective quality, which are

ideal positions that drive or can drive to a politics of conservative essence. Let us sketch them out.

One can be conservative, in the most frequent case, due to *laziness*, due to a horror of the spiritual commotions, due to a vital insufficiency; in sum, it is caused by a temperament – our Oriental background – by passivity; that deformed progeny of a miserable life, by scarce alimentation, always bound to the necessity of the moment, without a horizon of redemption; it is the miserable life of a Castilian peasant, of the day laborer of the splendid Andalusian countryside, his blood of watered-down gazpacho, his mind diluted in the sensual contemplation of the landscape.

On the one hand, we have the sterile sloth of the well-off – the idle chatter of the casinos!; on the other hand, we have the impoverishment in which hunger has already lost its aggressive reaction – the desolation of a head and an unemployed, uninhabited stomach.

One can be conservative due to the *selfishness* of those in present-day society enjoy the better portion. This is easy to understand; it is the natural posture of the one who benefits. Only a contrary moral conviction can carry it along; but, when it does not exist, inertia overcomes.

#### Objective Positions (Rationalism and Cognoscitive Optimism)

Like all attitudes founded on ideals, politics is of a more noble origin, but it is also much more dangerous. It supposes a great faith in reason and also in the world; in a

world rationally shaped – therefore reason is a good instrument for knowing it . An objective position also supposes a great anxiety of securing life – all that flows – in intelligible forms that once reached are unique. Pure reason is pure monotony.

Deductively, from some steadfast principles, laws are derived for those who must be ruled by a moral life – like in Plato. This moral structure is at the same time deriving from laws, down to regulations and social structure. And it must last forever, given that the fundamentals of life in its entirety are known; hence, change would be degradation. (Truly, on this basis the most terrible species of dictators establish themselves. Let us give thanks to God that ours have not read Plato.)

Within this attitude, adding (or subtracting) the revelation, can be classified thought – or rather one of the thoughts – of the medieval Catholic Church.

It is dogmatism that consists in believing that all is revealed; it is an idea that, finally – and disgracefully – triumphed in the dynamic of the church, paralyzing it, fossilizing it, making it infertile for creating new movements, inept at joining the advances of History.

Dogmatism is to consider the world and life as created forever – to make God himself conservative – and to consider everything revealed at once, and everything known that is knowable – it is conservatism of faith, of supra-reason.

And it is so in the scientific field: everything is investigated and said by the great, wise men of antiquity – Plato, Aristotle. Nothing, then, remains to be known or verified, and it will only be possible to compile and put into order: a logical work, never a creative work. It will arrange in strict order the diverse elements of knowledge, forming a

magnificent building crowned by faith. Cognoscitive conservatism: nothing can be invented.

As a consequence, we have historical conservatism and historical statism: nothing new is possible; in whatever form it would be disorder, sin, degradation. Hence, naturally, there is an absolute paralysis of the principles that govern political life. They would only be to conserve, a function that in truth only has meaning to a rebel, to a destroyer.

The current orthodoxy, which is militant, can only achieve full meaning against one heterodoxy. Hence, the heretics were the most fecund beings for the life of the Church, since they offered it the occasion for acting and moving, something that, by intimate necessity, was already prohibited to it. The church could no longer evolve nor create, given that everything was done, discovered and created. If no one opposed, if no force confronted it, trying to change it or to destroy it, what would it have to do? A mere affirmation of itself in the emptiness?

(This paradox of orthodoxy – of all orthodoxy – is curious: the first thing that is necessary for it to exist is a heterodoxy.)

Cognoscitive conservatism, historic conservatism. Now, what theoretical foundation, rational or reasonable, was any new politics going to have?

(And to still think that this word “new” conserves a certain revolutionary prestige and a certain flavor of prohibition! And it is only, only because of this. He who says “new” with an air of challenge is the one who has his sights set on the Middle Ages.)

*Mysticism* – it can produce an underestimation of matters that are purely earthly. It is a laziness that originated in a certain scorn towards exterior life; it is a religiosity and

an excess of an interior life, which does not want to see its peace disturbed by fervor for the outside. This dreamy mysticism is rather remote, of course, from the combative and active Roman Catholicism.

This could have been one of the roots of statism of all the Western nations – conservatism of a religious origin (of which it has been able to have an impact in Spain.)

*Pessimism.* Every vital and moral theory of a pessimistic tinge denies for itself any attempt at political change. Given that all life is pain, the best thing will be the absence of all politics, which always assumes movement and change.

For the moment we do not see or know of more doctrinal positions that in essence carry with them a conservative politics.

### Revolutionary Politics

A revolutionary politics will be in essence any politics that admits the necessity of perennial change, the transitoriness of political forms, their accidental nature, in sum, facing what is uniquely permanent – the necessity of a structure.

In the human aspect, everything changes. History is flow, death, rebirth, and transformation; it is the magnificent meaning that the 19<sup>th</sup> century applied even to quiet natural history; species also change.

Thus, as the conservative wants to fossilize human history, the revolutionary mind has come to a desire for all that is opposite: to give life, a flow even to what is geological and cosmic.

Although that were only so, something essential would have bequeathed to us this splendid and strange 19<sup>th</sup> century – splendid for being fertile, strange for being emphatic. This does not mean that we should accept that idea as something inevitable, but rather as something susceptible to being purified or examined by analysis, and that later it will come to be absorbed by our culture.

This great idea of evolution, which the great past century – as small, in middle of its passionate whirlwinds! – hastened to apply it to everything, to explain it all with childish joy.

It will not all arrive today, and less here, where it has made us feel its attraction, not as an explicative hypothesis of the natural world, but rather as a theory of a living human root, felt by its historic and dynamic character. With evolution – and without dissolving with its turns the metaphysical basis of all individual existence – change is recognized, the impermanence of forms, like its law.

This legitimacy of change in any case is characteristic – we believe – of authentic, revolutionary thought.

There are various philosophical and religious conceptions – some, within the primitive Catholic Church – that convey this thought: the affirmation of life, of a constant rebirthing of the world within itself. It is fitting to derive a revolutionary political thought from the conceptions.

[We find ourselves again facing the question of politics, which like ethics, is (if not a consequence), a branch or plant, perhaps, which supposes a floor or a support, that cannot, in the latest terms, be more than metaphysics, or its substitutes in the unfortunate epochs in which it has been denied.]

Revolutionary temperaments exist, and in them, like in theory, it is fitting to be so in the novelty of the moment, although, as we have already seen, revolutionary essence does not originate in novelty.

The novelty of a proposition does not matter; neither does the nonconformity of some beings facing a social or political state, in order to acknowledge their revolutionary feeling.

It is possible to come to destroy an order and establish another, with the consequent revolutionary radiance, in the name of a conservative tendency. It has been customary to define the conservative and revolutionary character by the unedited innovation of the latter and by the absence of the innovation of the former; and that has brought a series of serious and painful confusions, which it is necessary to dispel for good.

Let us not deceive ourselves neither by the theories of revolutionary mimesis nor by the characters of reformist uproar – at times opportune in the moment – which given that they hardly attain their immediate objective; they do not bring forward another, as if the world had arrived at perfection.

A politics of revolutionary essence does not necessarily mean a revolution, with its suddenness of catastrophe, with the cruelty of its audacious proceedings... and with its consequent retrogression. Rather, we could say that it excludes revolution, in as much as it presupposes it in a continuous way, by each day, by each hour.

The revolution is a method that can serve as much to open the way to revolutionary politics, as to another politics which has a more hermetic, conservative

essence. So many examples come to the mind of the reader that it is unnecessary to insist on this.

A revolution depends – this has already been said – not on a doctrine but on a social situation. It is a physical phenomenon, almost geological; forces that for a long time have been contained, dormant, are put into movement and explode, undoing the crust that kept them confined. The image is well-known but exact: a volcano, with the same origin, the underground retention – sub-social – of forces that could and should have served for something else.

Some social doctrine exists, of course, that proposes revolution as a unique and effective instrument. We do not disagree. Yet, it is very certain that without a social situation similar to the one we have indicated, we would not be able to achieve its designs, however strong the theoretical necessity may be.

After the ruin of all revolution, what have been until now the fertile consequences? The frequency of the revolutions tells us that until now there was no one who could create a balance of tensions capable of naturally resolving the problems that each time brings with it.

There were operations, surgical interventions of momentary efficacy, but that did not manage to modify the root of the imbalance. There was the fluidity of a moment, which after the fire went out, crystallized in a new form, perhaps in a distinct figure and color, but with an internal homology; an oppressive dam, an oppressed underside; a dynamic surface and a dead bottom, like a river of fluent appearance which in its depths is nothing but a pool of obscure and dead waters; and so it remains until the imbalance arrives at the necessary limit in which eruption is necessary.

But let us return to our revolutionary temperaments. Within them is possible to distinguish some temperaments by the very essence of their character and others to whom a small rebelliousness or a decentering on occasion impels them to want to stir things up.

One can see in them diverse species:

*Individualist.* – This species is formed by those whose action is incited by a subjective rebelling; this is an excessive individualism which, carried to its limit, becomes anarchy, or nihilism – that nihilism that was so in fashion at the end of the century. It is a state of disintegration equivalent in the social field to physical and mechanical atomism. It is to feel the individual utterly alone, as the center of the world, and perhaps its resentful victim, wishing to rebel and destroy all that is adverse to him.

*Rebel.* – The rebel is another of the types that we continue to describe and is constituted by those who rebel against fate – whether of an individual or a class – and hope to make it better. As such, it is formed by some of the militants in the most backward sectors of the proletarian parties.

These two revolutionary species are of the moment. They find themselves incapable of constructing something; they are the first to be enclosed in the hermeticism of their individuality; they are individualists by mutilation, by the incapacity to leave the self and to love. They are individualists limited by their horizons and their, the last ones, who when, hardly reaching their particular goal, cease their efforts.

*Advocates for justice.* – These are temperaments in whom the vibration for justice always manages to touch our emotions. That vibration can co-exist with objective, conservative tendencies. It can very well be conservative in its ideas and revolutionary in

fact or by temperament. This is the case of the few liberal and progressive Spaniards who have acted passionately and efficiently.

It is also possible to be revolutionary based on intimate and conservative conviction in everyday reality, or because of cowardice, laziness or a lack of enthusiasm. We have the famous types of inactive intellectuals – also very Spanish, those of the cafe or of the office – like that character that Miguel de Unamuno introduces in *Niebla*. Everything was a matter of theory. These are people without life, without passion, hothouse politicians.

Because the majority of our beloved liberals have belonged to this type, we now find ourselves, in the first third of the twentieth century, when some believe, theoretically, that we have overcome liberalism, to be effectively lacking a true and deep liberal revolution. And today it is up to us, we who perhaps have been born under the sign of liberalism's supersession, who must believe in it, which leaves us in a confusing situation; for what we bring to this labor is inadequate to what is necessary to realize it. This situation results in the serious danger that our generation may be lost in the political.

Or it turns out to be very difficult to keep a secret from History, to break the rules and disobey. One has to see if we Spaniards, who have such faculties for that acrobatic sport, will manage to achieve this with grace.

*Objective positions that can lead towards a revolutionary political vision.-* There are, as in conservative politics, objective positions that can lead to a revolutionary politics just as we have defined it. This does not mean that in fact it has been like this, but rather that it is possible doctrinally.

The first thing that appears to us is what we call *vital optimism*. It was always thought that optimism was essential to the conservative and bitterness to the revolutionary. What is certain is rather the contrary. Of course, the authentic revolutionary bases his attitude – whether he expresses it or not – in faith in life, in its confidence in it, in its superior valuation. This has two directions: cognoscitive and moral.

Life is above reason, because life cannot be fully encompassed, and it moves reason as its instrument. For the idealist, life is merely the anxiety to be; things are shadows of ideas. For he who values life above all, the relationship is inverted; ideas are the inert shadows that will never be able to provide the authenticity of things, and life will never be able to know itself in its totality because it is not a copy of any intelligible structure; rather, it is unique, obscure and irrational in its roots. Reason is its instrument, and ideas its signs, which are worthless on their own but worthwhile for what they signify, for the hidden realities to which they allude.

As one can see, this vital optimism – this maximum faith in life – carries with it a cognoscitive pessimism, a distrust of reason; unattainable knowledge is the daydream that drains the immense sea of reality with its pitcher of intelligence.

This carries a danger: skepticism. But if faith that is placed in life its authentic lineage, it will slip away in a leap of joyful swiftness, and if it no longer believes itself infallible and unique to reason, it appears, instead, a more powerful and flexible companion, one that is faster and more certain: intuition.

Intuition is precisely the weapon of the political – of all politicians – and more so of revolutionary politician. With intuition it will be known how to account for palpitation

of time, as well as the demands and changes that each hour brings with it; intuition can know of different problems, with micrometric exactitude, with accelerated speed.

Thus, we have the situation that while the the dogmatic conservative uses reason as a means of knowing and of subjecting reality to the idea, the revolutionary, who believes above all in life, places intuition before reason, the reality that is always renovated in the face of immobile ideas.

All of this occurs in intellectual order. In the moral order there also exists an evaluative judgment, a moral optimism that believes life in itself is good. This is the opposite of asceticism, which believes it necessary that life be channeled and reformed.

Here, the “will to reform,” which is politics, depends entirely on life itself, on life that is about to be created, and never on the individual. Politics is the principal character, the protagonist, and the outstanding individual is its emissary, its representative which owes all its nobility only to what it represents.

Life is never what is sacrificed – in all human movement it is necessary to sacrifice something; if life changes, it changes today so that it is born tomorrow; if a life is asked for, it is never in the name of an idea nor of a reason but rather of a life of much higher value, of more purified quality.

Thus, sacrifice itself acquires a positive character and also the pain which, upon being surpassed, potentiates; it then produces a greater intensity and spiritual richness, like the magnitude of the obstacle that enhances the beauty of the leap and the power of the acrobat.

In sum: it is the affirmation of life, the distrust of reason, the moral value of all that is expansion of life; it is a constant overcoming, which uses pain in the benefit of

positive values; it is the heroism of the individual as the embodied form of the vital values... Nietzsche, in short, or something from him.

Within the Catholic Church and in its philosophical dawn, there is an attractive and productive current of the most innovative thought, of the most alive thought that the human mind has been able to produce. However, today it is not well-known, perhaps because it was not this thought, in short, that marked the profile of this sacred institution.

This thought supposes a maximum faith in change, in innovation; it is a supreme optimism in the infinite flow of the creative grace with which one day the omnipotent God would create the world. Creation was not always a momentary and conclusive work, made to last forever; the miracle repeats itself in each instant, and the world is created anew.

Neither is revelation a walled-in enclosure, but rather it is an avenue of distant perspective, where continuation is possible, where supernatural truth can be enriched by a gracious gift that one day offered us its initiation.

If a continuous flow of creation is possible (and it is not that the world changes its content in each instant, but this continuous action lends a character of dynamism to the restlessness of being); and if the fountainhead of revelation is not exhausted, one can think of a history full of surprises and of miraculous innovations. One can think that if this doctrine had prevailed, it would have completely changed the dogmatic and hermetic character of medieval society.

Naturally, no politics was derived from this doctrine; but we point it out as a type of conception of the world that is essentially dynamic, a conception that would had been

able to derive a dynamic conception of History and, naturally, of politics, had it then existed.

Ultimately, we see in the progressiveness of the 19<sup>th</sup> century another type of doctrine that comes to consider change and evolution as the essence of what is human. It is the constant overcoming, the record of such lively human roots. It is the continuous “beyond” that is demanded of all production and of every act. It is the heroism of a progress that does not rest, of an eagerness without measure; it is the removal of limits, of the gates that surrounded and signaled the only goal.

Of a lively rationalist origin, this idea of progress filled the good man of the past century with a crass joy. Because of it he had the naïve joy of having demolished the barriers, of having evaded jail, and he thought that history was beginning. Humanity felt, once again, like a child, furthermore: like a newborn. Much sooner it ended in sterility, as what happens to every plant that breaks communication with the ground that kept and sustained it.

(The record is an entirely human thing and its meaning in sports indicates the humanization of the natural, of the game and of natural pleasures.)

The progressive as a political type, the one with the most heroic profile of all during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had the great virtue of enthusiasm, of filling the environment with a lively gust of renewal. Yet, he was also inefficient and suffered from charlatanism. This idea of progress had its maximum effectiveness in science with an eye to technical and industrial advances. The progressive achieved all his splendor in the development of what we call civilization versus culture; to him Humanity is indebted for having reached a greater dominium over Nature and having refined the conditions of

material life. However, with respect to deeper changes or to effective political or moral advances, the progressive gives us little reason for remembering him.

Therefore today, with the desires for material advances saturated, relatively, problems of a more delicate and complex structure urgently present themselves once more. The idea of progress, which for a time seemed to fill the mental horizon of our grandparents, now is considered as insufficient.

Of liberal origin, this idea of progress equipped itself with liberal ideology in all its virtues and defects. It was democratization, the utilization of the great liberal movement, its practical application, which, like every application, is in part misrepresentation.

This puts before us another topic, today in living flesh: it is the topic of liberalism, which the European events of the last fifteen years have again brought to the fore. For many liberalism is considered unnecessary to talk about, for it is a weapon that can already count on a sufficient record in order to occupy a place of honor in the family museum, for whom its glorious feats made the sword ineffective.

Yet what is certain is that here are two revolutions that affirm with a sharp and bloody gesture that the old and noble weapon still has battles to win and great feats to realize. Therefore, it will be necessary to examine its resistance, its flexibility, and its efficacy. If we find, which may be easy, the corrosion of time and the damage from the blows, we will have to think of a new forge that can make it capable of new combats.

They will tell us, perhaps, that this would be archaeology. Yet, it does not matter. We advance without prejudices, only longing to glimpse a route where the problems can

freely walk towards their solutions. If one were to find a new horizon, a new weapon that is light and effective, our hurrah! would be the first to greet it.

## Liberalism

In our cold rationalist journey, in the desolate analysis to which we have submitted the processes of our lives, we already arrived at the deep abysses, where the air is dense and the progress distressing. These are the primary problems, those that cannot make reference to others, nor be contained beforehand, because they are, on the contrary, those problems that assume and lay the foundations for all others.

Thus, there is this problem of the cosmic and vital situating of individual man, his relationship with the world.

There is a problem of roots, of the immersion in life. We have arrived at this problem hastened by our implacable analysis via vivisection.

It is the terrible contradiction that lends a dramatic status to the life of man, a status that is unique in the universe. In the very fact of his existence he already experiences doubt, the problem, the power to be and, therefore, not to be, inner torment and effort: thought. He has to find the equilibrium of his existence while thinking, constructing eagerly, and not in free surrender, as the animal does based on its privileged instinct.

To think, to invent the very foundations of life, to not want anything given, found in miraculous spontaneity! Such was the rationalist intent. To sustain himself – man, that poor stalk that thinks; on his shoulders rests the world.

Today we come closer again to a life of peace: of a feeling, of peace that is stronger and less laborious, more porous and elastic. It is the placenta of man with the world; and at the same time it is bondage, it is the cable of energy and grace. It is mooring and guide, anchor and star, chain and luminous scale, for whence the light of the world lowers us into our dream.

It allots us a secure area in our lives – previous to the problem and its possibility – a hermetic zone of doubt and analysis, which is opaque to the inquiry of the thinker; an irrational zone – at times the super-rational – that makes doubt, analysis, and thought possible. Because in order to doubt fruitfully and creatively, one has to have faith. In order to move, one has to have a point of departure; in order to walk and advance, one needs a compass.

That secure zone, that firm land, is what allows the individual to come and go, and, certain in his foundation, the individual can choose – to have freedom, in sum.

Thus, we see in the root itself the problem of freedom – which is that of the individual and the world – where we find contradiction and paradox.

In its origin, freedom, in order to acquire reality, is already limited, and it denies itself.

Some concepts exist that assume other concepts, and without one the other does not have meaning. (And perhaps they all do not?) Perhaps it occurs in the same way with all of human life – always in unstable balance – and nothing would have meaning in its solitude but rather in the conjunction – harmony – of opposites.

This is the drama already in the initial stages of liberalism. In order to have freedom, one cannot have it, one has to be attached to something fixed.

Hence, it occurs also in culture, in science, and in art. It can only be produced at the beginning of certain assumptions that are not usually known. In history, each epoch has its own, assumptions which only distance, by contrast, allows us to perceive; and, in consequence, politics.

This is what was unknown to rationalist liberalism, in its desire to establish life anew. Various impulses were carried along with it, wanting to give to what is human all its intense value, with an eagerness of supreme purity – despite the fact that roots that are sunk in the earth are impure. Liberalism came to achieve it, in effect; it restaged life; but, it was cold and pure like a diamond; it placed life in the air; it was the supreme beauty and the supreme uselessness. (The free, idle, the aristocrat... but without land and without foundation. The excessive purity had killed him.)

Although something else may have seemed so once, liberalism in its origin is essentially aristocratic: an aristocracy of man, of every man, and not of a class.

It is, before all, a super-valuation of the individual, standing out as a finality, without reference nor application towards a higher end. Then *humanity*, that unique supra-individual organization that admits liberal man, is the sum of individuals in equality, and not in superposition; it is the material consequence and not the formal unity, prior and independent from the members.

Therefore, because winged grace, idleness, and beauty, then equality needs to be sustained by the economic and social order in effort.

Liberalism is a challenge, a challenge to necessity; it is a challenge to all the gravitating forces that push man towards the lower zones of the universe. Liberalism is the endeavor that man places above all slavery, in being only man; in other words, he is

the referee, owner of himself and of life, and, nevertheless, by sheer effort. This effort is enjoyed in itself and finds its end in itself; it is heroic effort of the most pure and naked heroism.

Being of such aristocratic essence, liberalism was premature. It had gone too far away in the privileged avant garde – while the immense rear guard remained attached to the earth. Then the drama emerged, the conflict, which was by then irresolvable. It came down to these terms: aristocracy or democracy, heroism or necessity, freedom or slavery.

And what resulted is what happens in the case of all insurmountable contradictions; they only find a solution through violence, by mutilating, by sacrificing. Here human unity was sacrificed. “Liberty, equality and brotherhood,” pleads the venerable motto in its latest incarnation. Yet, since the beginning the last two were sacrificed for the first. It was unavoidable.

Humanity was divided in order to not lose the conquest. Some would pursue the conquest, the record; others would pay them the tribute to necessity. Some, with heroic zeal; others, with arduous effort without horizons.

Again we have the contradiction. Liberalism establishes itself upon slavery and only upon it can it reach its perfection.

Therefore, liberalism was perfect in classic antiquity because it was supported – like fragile foam – on the rock of men who had left it there. It is the terrible paradox: liberalism establishes itself upon slavery in its social expression; just as freedom, the independence of the individual is founded upon a previous obedience in the metaphysical sphere.

Slavery was declared legal in antiquity; slavery was disguised “Christianly” in modern, liberal societies (England, the United States), but it was not less authentic in its terrible reality.

What will be the exit from this labyrinth? There are those who seek to escape from it in the winged metamorphosis of culture. Yet, this solution is equally aristocratic, even though it tries to do so inclusively for all. (There is nothing as false as those attempted cultural vulgarizations.) Culture is, precisely, the result of that attitude toward life; it is a fruit of freedom and of leisure.

Yet, one has to continue. To resolve the problem like this is to leave it unpublished, exchanging it for another. It is to present a different jewelry box that contains an identical jewel; it is a different incarnation, with an equally problematic interior.

There are also those who try to resolve it with the philosophy of the ostrich, refusing to see freedom and its human roots. Thus they say that man is the slave of society, of his own nature.

Let us recognize the first solution, some social theories say, and let us ascribe to that, diminishing our horizons; only in this manner will there be equilibrium, and the only possible structure will take place. Only society exists.

Let us recognize the second solution, the religions say, and let us exhaust life in it.

Hence, by denying one of the terms, the solution soon appears. Is it not true? If the conflict is set out between the Universe and man in the metaphysical sphere, then let us deny the Universe as the subjectivist, idealist theories do; or let us deny man, the individual.

If the conflict is situated in the political domain – exchanging metaphysical terms for social terms – such that the conflict is between the individual and society? Then let us deny society (as does anarchism) or the individual (as does blind communism) and tranquility will soon settle in our mind.

If we want to declare that which is Caesar's as Caesar's and salvage from his tentacles what is not his, then a microscopic exam will be necessary, perhaps introducing too much static for the pragmatic politician, the idolator of action. But would it not be better to pause, to look quiet and serenely at the landscape? Might we not be permitted to see a more rapid course ahead?

\* \* \*

The great theme of liberalism! The torrent that overflows with wealth from the narrow riverbed through which it is obligated to advance.

Let us try, however, to capture it, to trace its profiles, its most characteristic traits, in this time in which History might offer us perspective and an emblem for our present time: passion.

In fact, today in Spain we are not ready to define liberalism with contemplative eyes, even when it is at risk in its inviolable essence, or when it is the matter of life or death.

Yet, we will give it a try at least. Defining liberalism is a test that even in the most lively moment of the fight, we still can attempt to pause the action and look at it with calm limpidity.

Our highest imperative, the demand of truth, our essential virtue, our intellectual clarity demands this of us.

To see, to look! That great desire! We will not know to fight although life may leave us, if we have not first cleared the way for seeing.

\* \* \*

It has been often said that in a short period of time liberalism has declined, that its hour has passed. But in History, in an educated life, or simply in life, nothing is lost without having been expressed in its moment of maturity. Everything gives its lifeblood to History – that great absorber.

What remains of liberalism for us? What will fall like extinguished ash from its great bonfire? The rocket flies at night, illuminates the party for a moment, and later falls without a trace, the symbol of infertile beauty.

Yet, History is not the night of festival – useless disorder in the void – but rather serious theory of happenings and events that pass and endure because they are intertwined with others in a harmonic procession that continues towards an end, which will be a return. An arrival that will be a return.

What will be the place of our contradictory liberalism in the solemn theories of the centuries? Will we be capable of investigating it?<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> From this point on in the text, Zambrano goes further to investigate the following themes: Liberalism and Ethics, Liberalism and Religion, and Liberalism and the Social Problem.

Translation of part one of *Person and Democracy*<sup>36</sup>

María Zambrano

Person and Democracy: Sacrificial History

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<sup>36</sup> María Zambrano, *Persona y democracia: la historia sacrificial*, 1a ed. (Madrid: Siruela, 1996) 7-67.

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## Prologue

This book appeared for the first time on the island of Puerto Rico in the year 1958 and in circumstances that were rather different, so it seems, to those that present themselves in today's world. The world appeared then to be open to the path of democracy, but what was understood back then in the Western World as democracy? What is understood today, the meaning already imposed upon the word democracy?

Democracy then appeared entwined with the idea of progress that, in a clear and obvious way, showed itself today as something one does not have to fight for; but for the person who writes this, nor in that moment and still less now, is it clear and transparent the real, effective meaning of that term that philologically appears so clear. Then, because we have just attended the triumph, the victory, of the named democracies without stopping to glimpse (sacrilege it would have been to do so) that the meaning of history as sacrifice was once more revealed precisely because of the democracy, in a bright and clear manner. Today, on the other hand, this revelation does not appear; it is more obvious than ever that democracy may be the only path that may continue so-called Western culture, and this revelation discovers more today than before the sacrificial structure of human history. The person who writes this has gone from the beginning of her life, even before in a conscious way, on a search for a religion without a sacrificial regime. The sacrifice had already been carried out. Today we see that it has not thrown the fruits of the fulfilled sacrifice but rather of a chalice that very few are ready to accept.

"The crisis of the West" hardly has a place. There is no crisis; what there is more than ever is orphanhood. Dark gods have taken the place of luminous clarity, that which presented itself by offering to history, to the world, as the fulfillment, the term of the

sacrificial history. Today, one can no longer see the sacrifice: history for us has become an indifferent place where whichever kind of event can take place with the same validity and the same rights as an absolute God who does not allow for the slightest discussion. Everything is saved, and at the same time, we see that everything is destroyed or on the eve of destroying itself. This is my feeling. To show it would require superimposing an interlaced meditation and, especially, the reappearance of lost memory. That thing, that monster would not be able to fulfill the sacrifice again, while today we see that yes, that it is so, that it cannot happen again because today it extends itself like a plain where neither nostalgia nor hope can appear. Something has gone forever, and now it is a question of being born again, such that Western man can be born again into a pure, revealing light that dissipates like in a glorious morning, without name, what has been lost. One has to hope, yes, or rather, one does not have to lose hope that this can happen on such a tiny planet, in a space that measures itself by light years, where the *fiat lux* repeats itself, a faith that traverses one of the darkest nights of the world we know, that which goes beyond, such that the creative spirit might appear improbably in its own way and because it just does. It is the only thing that the person who writes this can honestly enunciate. And, so, how is it that the publication of this book comes about? Very simply, I will say: like a testimony, one more, of that which has been able to be the history, of that which could have been history, a sign of pain because it has not happened that it melts away the glory of being alive among the creative action of life, such as it is, on this small planet.

So that a glorious triumph of Life in this small place exists once again.

María Zambrano

Madrid, July 1987

Perplexity before history: Historical consciousness. Time.

Having that which has been named "historical consciousness" is the characteristic of man in our time. Man has always been a historic being. But until now, only a few were making history, and the rest only suffered it. Now, for different causes, we make history among all; we all suffer it, and we all have come to be its protagonists.

It is not the first time in our tradition of our Western peoples that the multitude enters history. It has erupted in all periods of imperialism, periods that have also been of incorporation, not only of different peoples into a unitary power, but rather masses of men into the condition of citizen. The great wars, the massive condemnations, shame in our time, have brought or have intensified this process of participation in the history of entire multitudes that remained at the margin, passively.

Yet, man can be in history in various ways: passively or actively. This only is plainly realized when the responsibility is accepted or when it is lived morally. In a passive way, all men have been brought and carried and even dragged by strange forces, some of which are called "Destiny," and at times "gods" – without even touching upon the question of the existence of God. And there is nothing that degrades and humiliates the human being more than being moved, without knowing why, outside of oneself. Such has happened with history.

Thus, the first way to find oneself in a reality humanly is simply to endure and suffer it. And in this situation one is, many times, a toy of reality. But when the suffering of a reality, whatever this may be, arrives at the extreme of what is endurable, then it shows itself and recovers the plenitude of its reality. It could be said that for man

only certain realities are visible; moreover, reality is only visible in so much that, after having suffered it for a long time and in dreams, in a type of nightmare. To see reality as reality is always an awakening to it. And it happens in an instant.

The reality that is history has been long, heavily suffered by the majority of men and especially by those who make up the multitude, "the masses," since the only consolation has been unattainable to them: to decide, to think, to act responsibly or, at least, to attend with certain grade of consciousness to the process that was devouring them. From this nightmare that has lasted since the night of times, they have wanted to shake themselves into rebelling. But to rebel, as much as in one's personal life as in historical life, can be to annihilate oneself, to sink in an irremediable form, so that history recommences again at an even lower point than that which the rebellion produced itself. Such has been the risk that has been run in these years that are passing in our "Western Culture." The only way that such sinking does not produce itself is to make historical consciousness extensive, equally that a riverbed is opened to a society worthy of this consciousness and of the human person from which it springs forth. This is to say, in crossing a threshold never before crossed in collective life, in truly being capable of creating a humanized society such that history does not behave like an ancient deity that demands inexhaustible sacrifice.

By means of historical consciousness one will be able to achieve more slowly that which hope and necessity demand.

Thus, it deals with everything that is contrary to a "Revolution," an instantaneous process of which Western man has dreamt while wishing to free himself from the historical nightmare, because he has confused the instant of awakening with the

realization. And, awakening from a nightmare happens in an instant, as we all know through experience. Reality then, true reality, appears, uncovered by the nightmare in which the monster lurks, the mask of neglected reality. The monster, the nightmare, have come to be history for us in these latest times; and more so, because a few had already awoken. And there is within the instant a moment, or sub-instant, in which the monster converts into the Sphinx. The milinearium Sphinx that rises in the desert, because still that time in which we are conscious and we think that the successive time in which we exercise liberty, has not begun to elapse. That this time will never elapse so long as we do not manage to glimpse the reality that sits awaiting and groans within the Sphinx. And it is always the same: man.

And this instant, the first one upon awakening, is the most burdened with danger, given that one passes from feeling the weight of the monster, of the nightmare, to feeling the void. It is the instant of perplexity and confusion that precede consciousness and obliges it to be born. Since nothing is so disturbing disturbs as encountering oneself with oneself. What do I do before that image that suddenly throws me the mirror and which, so badly, reconciles itself with that image I have created of myself? Although it be only due to its precision, it frightens. And it frightens because it is outside; because it looks at me and what I have goes inside of me, and I look at it.

And what is there to do with my own being when it leaves me upon encountering it? Because of the mere fact that it leaves me upon the encounter, it lays claim to me like a beggar, like a condemned being, at least like a forgotten being. And, also, like a stranger who is unknown. And the first thing that surges in my spirit is a complaint directed to myself: what I have done to myself that I walk by here, outside, that I have

remained here, fixed and paralyzed? I think that it is only a matter of the past and then the feeling of guilt is inevitable and can be overwhelming. But it so happens that in the figure of man hidden in the Sphinx, there is, yes, a condemned man; there is also a stranger: the condemned one is he who suffered for such a long while; the unknown man is he who cries out in order to be; he is the future. Past and future unite in this enigma. It could not happen in any other way, given that man always finds himself like this: coming from a past toward a future. And of all the condemnations and errors of the past, only the future offers a salvation, if that future is not a repetition, a reiteration of the past, if in so doing it may truly be the future. Something a bit unedited but necessary must emerge; something new, but which detaches itself from everything that has been: true history, which only from consciousness – by means of perplexity and confusion – can be born. We will come to it carrying out all of the components from that instant of "awakening from the nightmare," confusion, perplexity, the void facing the desert through a thought that advances in time and that takes it into account, that is to say: the opposite of a Revolution.

But, according to what it seems, we can hope that the terrible happenings from which we Westerners have just emerged have not done anything else but intensify the historical consciousness that, from afar, was announcing itself as it was coming.

With all of the extraordinary discoveries of physics and of all the sciences, with the prodigious advancements in technology, what is decisive about our epoch is, without a doubt, historical consciousness, from which man attends this irremediable distance of "his" being, which is history.

That makes perplexity reach an extreme. Consciousness is already in itself perplexity, questioning, doubting. If one accepts something like a fatality of destiny or of the gods, even more, if one has not felt the necessity of thinking about them as an explanation of what happens to us, we simply bear it without rebelling; one lives then sliding over the events that concern us most, that do not even present themselves fully well to us; they do not even have a face, a figure before our eyes. It thus does not leave a place for perplexity.

We see that what happens originally in these days is that we are attending to history, to its process, with greater lucidity than in other times; that we have greater and much clearer consciousness of the conflicts that have such become problems. Today's conflicts present themselves as problems: this is the great new development.

This is not to say that each epoch of history has not had its morality in force. Nor that in those so-called historical events a certain morality did not rule, or that they have sometimes lacked the eyes of a censor of public customs, or a judgment more or less critical before the misfortunes. All of that has been the case; but man was not pretending to "direct his history;" one did not make an issue of it by sensing that in history something decisive about one's being played out. To accept history was not a moral question: nor was it a question even of accepting it. And its meaning was not scrutinized its meaning as if it concerned a drama in which the human condition is the protagonist. And this is precisely what happens today in all those that, each day in greater numbers, go on feeling themselves penetrated by historical consciousness.

Another characteristic of historical consciousness is the taking into account, and even the attempt to approach all of the events that are registered in whichever part of the

planet: in which man today lives universal history in an horizontal way; also, we could say, in which we feel the events that happen in the places farthest away from the country where we live linked to one another like parts of the same drama. Besides, in each epoch, one country would play the dominant note. Europe has always had a certain unity that has gone on accentuating itself in a growing form until justifying the definition that Ortega and Gasset will give of her by saying, "Europe is an equilibrium;" a notion that implicitly suggests that if it stops being an equilibrium in order to be the opposite, it does not exist. And that it can only stop being an equilibrium in order to be an unity.

The American continent, on the other hand, was born historically under the sign of unity; first, an undifferentiated unity; much later a unity constituted in what makes up North America. Of a unity of conception and of analogy that is dismembered into different countries in Hispanic America. Or rather, Hispanic America is— in its current situation— the dismembering of one or more great unities. A common background of unity each country gave up upon achieving its independence. Today these two halves of that continent form part of the so-called Western world. On its own part, the Soviet Union and some Asian countries form the Eastern world. Independent from the luck that ties the relationship between both and, in consequence, the luck of the entire world, it behooves us to observe that never has the world been given an historical situation so complicated and, at the same time, so simple. That is to say, so systematic. All the world today is either a system, whatever the structure of this system, or a type of unity necessary to count on the totality in order to solve the problems that present themselves in each country. Upon the assumption that which has happened in reality once in this way, is not known. Like in the life of a person, it can happen that something that is

occurring in a country never inhabited by the person, between two persons whom he does not know, may be an event that integrates their personal destiny; much later it will be known. For the moment, finding out about it leaves the person indifferent; he or she does not feel affected by such an event, far away and occurring between two lives, unknown to one another.

When something like this happens, we call the conjunction of these manifestations and the invisible guide that presides over them Destiny. But, if we know it beforehand or if we have in mind that it does not matter what event occurred in whichever place on the planet, and it even does not matter what moment of the past has influence on our lives, then destiny leaves room for consciousness and for an eagerness of comprehension. Consciousness expands, and we no longer live under the weight of destiny, under its blanket, feeling that what is unknown awaits us. We live in a state of alert, feeling part of all that happens, although it may be like miniscule actors in the plot of history and even in the plot of life of all humans. It is not destiny but rather simply community – living together – that which we feel enveloping us: we know that we live together with all those who live here and even with those who lived in the past. The entire planet is our home.

Living together means feeling and knowing that our life, even in its personal trajectory is open to that of others, whether it may be those close to us or not; it means to know how to live in a way in which each happening has its repercussion, not for being intelligible is it less certain; this means that to know that life is also in all of her layers a system. That we form part of a system called humanity, all of a sudden.

It is the essential condition of the human person that we feel so closed. We are accustomed to having the immediate image of our personhood as a fortress in whose interior we are enclosed; we feel ourselves to be an isolated “self,” hermetic, from which, at times, we would want to escape or to open ourselves up to someone – to the friend, to the person whom we love, or to the community. The person lives in solitude and, for that very reason, the greater the intensity of one’s personal life, the greater the yearning to open oneself up and even to empty oneself into something; it is what is called love, whether it be for a person, for a country, for art, for thinking. The anguish for communication is essential to personal solitude and even something more to which we would not be able to give a name. Yet, this enclosed place that appears to constitute the person we can think alive; there, in the ultimate depth of our solitude resides like a point, something simple, but integral with the rest, and from that same place never do we feel entirely alone. We know that other “somebodies” like us exist, other “ones” like us. The loss of this consciousness of being analogically, of being a unity in an environment where others exist, puts up with madness.

Then, that point to which we refer to our being, there, where we seek refuge, our invulnerable “I,” is an environment where one moves, surrounded by the soul and enveloped in the body – instrument and wall. It is a medium that is time. Time – the environment of all of life.

Time envelops us, it puts us in communication with all methods and, at the same time, separates us. Through the medium of time, and in it, we communicate with ourselves. It is natural for the human being to travel through time.

Each human being inhabits a zone of time in which he properly lives together with the others who live within it. We live together in time, within it. And, it so happens that we live more closely with those who live more distant from us in space, and who live in the same time, and with others much closer who truly live in another time; with them we can understand each other, and even without entering into direct relation, we can act in accord, coinciding in certain thoughts. However, time is continuity, inheritance, consequence. It passes without passing entirely; it passes, transforming itself. Time does not have a simple structure, of only one dimension, we could say. It passes, and it remains. Upon passing, it becomes past; it does not disappear. If it were to disappear totally, we would not have history. But, if the future were not in action, if the future were simply a still not-being, neither would we have history. The future primarily presents itself to us as “that which is about to arrive.” If we feel ourselves coming from the past, more exactly, “to be coming,” we feel the future arriving, happening unexpectedly to us, in inevitable form. Although we are never certain of knowing our tomorrow, we feel it advancing towards us. And only in the certainty or in the fear of death, will we stop ourselves from feeling it in this way. But then we feel death arrive, occupying the gap of the future. Then, we do not ever feel ourselves before the vacuum of time. Perhaps only in certain extreme forms of desperation or total alienation.

That way in which we feel the future, allows us to live, to be alive; we would not be able to live without this pressure of the future that encounters us.

And neither do we feel able to live when the pressure of the future is excessive, because of the immanence of events that go beyond us. Then, we fall into a stupor or we feel ourselves crushed, or terrified, or simply inert. A type of paralysis can arrive caused

by a future too full or too unforeseeable. Because living humanly is, above all, a certain measurement in this concrete time of ours, in that of each one – in our society – in common time. It is fitting to imagine a bit freely that some day we might be able to measure those temporal relationships and establish a kind of limiting equation beyond which human life becomes humanly impossible. It ceases as life, or rather it dehumanizes.

The measure of time exists analogically such that we find the right relationship with our fellow human being, in personal life, in familial life and in historical life. Thus, in each one of these spheres we live in a different time. Living together – which is inescapable – is verified in a certain way or form of time. The time we live together as a family is not the same time as that time in which we live together and that affects us in history. And, it is not the same time in which the way of living together in what we call friendship grows, that which we call love, that the untransferable close friend, of our solitude, where, for moments, we are in communication with all times; with all the forms of living together. It is the time of social living together that most interests us here. It is historical time without a doubt, or rather the support of historical time such that we then feel history through that time of living together with our society, with that history within which we reside and within which we move; that history whose changes decide our life.

Time of history. The humanization of time.

We live in time in a different way in each one of the fundamental forms of living together. Hence, public activities and even the ways of life in the normal way of living of any society, whether it be a primitive community or in the highest civilized society, whether it be discontinuous.

In the primary ways of life of the most elemental communities, time follows a rhythm marked by religious festivals. Thus, religion embraces all aspects of human life, and there is nothing in it that corresponds to that which we call “profane.” Always, the entire life of the people is regulated as it continues being in the religious communities of today; when life is consecrated – in the two extremes of primitive religions and of Christian religions – maximum point of religious humanization – the first thing that is regulated is time.

And all of civilization begins with a certain rhythm marked by the treatment of nature, by the conditions of climate, by the manner of survival.

A certain rhythm, then, is the foundation of civilization, of a society. The surprising thing, about which we do not know if all the consequences have been understood, is that man in these primary forms of civilization has not had his own time, the individual has not enjoyed his own time; that which we have called “time of solitude,” then, did not exist. This time of solitude is what corresponds to the human being who knows himself and who feels himself an individual. And in all the epochs of our Western history, the first thing that has made the extreme individualist, the one who has wanted to retire from society, or the one who lives in society in rebellion, is to make

use of his time. He who retires from the world for one motive or another, against who retires from it, retires to his own time.

We cannot develop here entirely, nor enunciate not even its complexity, all the structure of the multiple times that a man today lives without realizing it. Each one with a different rhythm and which is more serious with a different articulation in each one, between past, present and future.

But it is indispensable that this be emphasized in order to comprehend all that is going to follow as a type of point of departure in this intent to offer a guide through today's historical situation.

Today, each individual lives a time of solitude; of intimacy more or less pure and intense with himself. This began by being a privilege of certain classes, of who enjoyed leisure, according to what Aristotle says, upon pointing out the favorable conditions for the cultivation of a “disinterested knowledge,” of science, of philosophy.

Thus, this thinking is linked, already from its origin, to this time of solitude of the individual, to this legitimate withdrawal, such that thinking afterwards serves all; it serves universally. And it is something the individual has realized by separating oneself, gaining distance, moving oneself away from all that surrounds one in order to find, in solitude, a precious instant that is thought.

There has always been the human individual, but he has not existed nor has he lived, nor acted in such a way until he has enjoyed a time of his own, a time that is his own.

And this is an evident advance. Making use of one's own time began by being the privilege of a few, outside of professional duties, of the work proper to a class, as a

way of life that allows it. Western culture has gone on progressing towards individualism, in this sense with its inevitable relapses and backward trends, with the risks of the confusion and perplexity of so many solitudes without exit, the price of undoubted gains. What was privilege and much later luxury, has gone on extending itself. At the end of the Ancient World there were many men that lived a time of their own, with the resulting solitude, with the necessity of thinking attached to the perplexity that the society of the individual has as a gift.

It was in the moment in which great groups of people uprooted from religion, skeptics before the uses and the inherited customs, not submerged in their class, nor in their country, felt the necessity of thinking and of knowing. It was the moment in which philosophy descends and becomes accessible in such forms as Stoicism and Epicureanism.

That moment, the most critical of that crisis which, like all, marks an expansion of individual consciousness is when the conviction of the unity of the human race emerges, when man presents himself with all the evidence of man as he is. It is the emperor Marcus Aurelius who, in this way, says it and expresses it at the height of power and in at the apex of the solitude of man, who is not yet Christian.

There appeared, then, a more acute and subtle form of consciousness accompanied by anguish; man had on him then the immense burden of universal power. Because consciousness is accompanied always by responsibility; there is no consciousness without it. Historical consciousness is historical responsibility.

In that moment three temporal planes of human life appear in the consciousness of one man; yet, one other was missing, which, only for a few for those who had dared to embrace the Christian faith, had revealed itself.

It was the way of living together as a family, the way of living together with the society to which one belonged, the way of living together with all men as citizens, as individuals. As family, society and, now, as universal history. Marcus Aurelius progressed from one plane of living together to another, from one to another time. Below those planes was his solitude as an individual who suffered perplexity and anguish, who had to meditate by himself, to speak by himself with himself, in a continuous soliloquy, as do all those who have the right to speak aloud their intimate doubts. He who has to command and act has to think alone with himself and to interrogate himself alone, to examine his conscience alone because doing so aloud before all would take away that security, which man, invested by a power higher than a human one, or located by tradition in a mode of power that is not shared, exercises.

But, to the degree that men who go on feeling themselves as individuals, and who go on having the time to think, the one who exercises power goes on having the possibility, and even the need, to doubt and to speak aloud. It is from there that all despots fear thought and freedom because recognizing that instance obliges them to confess to themselves, not only alone but rather aloud, what it means to be a person, to act as a person when one leads. Yet, to lead, is it not something that will have to disappear, something that we wish would disappear? That is not the threshold before which Western political regimes find themselves.

The relationship with the past. Going towards the future.

Although in every moment of history, as much personal as collective, we are coming from the past and going towards the future, this can happen in many different ways. Thus, in some ways of life the past prevails to the point of covering the future with a type of shadow that appears to block it. The past goes by and is lived under this weight; time goes by externally and is only felt as monotony and almost as material. Time, which is so fluid, becomes material, compact. Who has not felt, in certain hours, this strange condensation of time?

Nothing happens, or rather, it is nothingness that happens. The past oppresses letting us feel its integral weight, and we can discern nothing in it, we can actualize nothing from its compact unity, as if every misfortunate or adventurous event would have been annulled in that immobile sphere.

The future also oppresses by not showing itself, and between the past and the future, the present remains hollowed out. It is hardly possible to live and neither can the desire to die appear because of a lack of impetus and of hope; it is simply the impossibility of living, of continuing to live. They are extreme situations that rarely appear, fortunately, in personal life, and they even appear less in collective life. Historic moments will have been few in which an entire people, or part of it will have felt this way. We signal it precisely as the limit situation that can measure others that approach it.

Then there are periods that have lasted centuries in which a people has lived weighed down by the past, dragging time like a cloak, on glorious occasions, that it cannot maintain. It is necessary to maintain our past, but this only happens when the past

advances towards the future, when one lives in sight of it without leaving ourselves to take on its vertigo, when in a dynamic equilibrium, we succeed in uniting the past with the future in a living present, like a broad and deep pulsation. Time, then, being our vital medium par excellence, we ought to know it and feel it breathing like air. Knowing how to breathe is the first condition of knowing how to move, to walk, to cross space.

Athletes have always had to know it. And there is a relationship between knowing how to move physically and knowing how to move in history. With good reason in Greece, the Olympic Games had a national and sacred character and at the same time, the character of a rite of citizenship.

In the way in which multitudes move, an informed observer would be able to discover the social situation of a country; by the rhythm or the lack of rhythm, by the way of moving their feet, of leaving space or of crowding.

And it is the bewilderment that precedes the great catastrophes, bewilderment in a minor tone mixed with weariness, and it is the strange, mechanical rhythm, that of the “goose-step” of Hitler-like parades and ... it is likely that each one reveals in his memory those impressions that are registered in it and which we do not always look at, like negatives of a photograph that we do not dare to develop.

There is a rhythm, a way of moving that is the *tempo*, we could say, of finality. In it there is neither participation nor an unnecessary pause. And, a political regime can be judged by the rhythm that the people impose upon all. More declarations would not be needed but rather a film that would reproduce the way in which the people walk in the street, film taken at the exit of factories, of offices, of diversions, of sporting competitions, of spectacles, of religious and civic festivals in order to know the state of

health of a people; the degree of humanization of the history that it is living. Who knows if from some planet they see us in this way, and they know more about our civilization than we do? A crisis is the historical moment, long or short, always intricate and confused, in which past and future fight one another. It is the moment of History in which the minority synchronizes less with the multitudes. And even the minorities among themselves.

Not every minority situates itself in the same way. In the face of the insecurity of times of crisis, which is actually what characterizes them, there exists a creative minority that moves forward, opening the future: in thought, in technology, in science, in politics, in art, in sum: in whatever type of creative activity. These activities can be visible or not, according to the type of activity and the moment. However, there is another class of minorities formed by those who withdraw horrified before the confusion, and they look for refuge in the past, attaching themselves to it, to a past, best understood as imaginary, given that no past is entirely known to us. And besides, something happens which such people do not realize: namely, upon situating ourselves in a past epoch, we choose from it the most advantageous situation, which would fit better with our preferences, eliminating from it the negative aspects that it would have in concrete reality. In other words it deals with a situation entirely unreal, or given that had they truly lived in that epoch, which we consider incomparably better than that of today, we do not know what would have been our status at birth, our condition and, even if equal to our condition, we cannot possibly know the fate we might have had to bear. It is the historical “fictional play” that seizes or empowers some persons endowed with imagination and little endowed with suffering the

real weight of life. It is the spirited root of reaction, the cause of sterility and of that sickness that manifests itself in a constant scorn towards all that is present.

This last kind of minority truly abandons the people and lives in an inert manner which can turn into plain resentment, into an incapacity to discover the beauty in life, into a form of desertion that can become amorality, wrapped up, at times, curiously, in a rigid morality.

A moral made up of persistent contempt, of the refusal to see, to think, to perceive; to live in an integral way. Then nothing can exempt the human being from embracing his time, his historical circumstance, no matter how repugnant it may be to him.

It is this question that we pursue from the beginning of these pages and which constitutes the center of the meditation poured into this book – the pursuit of an ethical history or of a history lived in an ethical manner.

## Chapter 2

### The Western Dawn

In the middle of the respite between the two World Wars, there appeared a book titled *The Decline of the West*; its author, Spengler, had discovered that cultures die because they live. That book reached an enormous audience. It was devoured more than read, and that is what happens with certain books: it was quoted and accepted more than it was even read. Thus, there is a certain intellectual penetration that overwhelms effective understanding. A title, at times, is enough, and it becomes a slogan, a cliché,

acquiring the character of a recently discovered dogma, and enters into circulation like a coin accessible to all; it is not necessary to enter into possession of an idea that, like a coin that upon use, passes from hand to hand and can be found in every pocket, even among the most destitute.

It must be a special fascination that arises from such works. The fascination of the half-truth; of truth in halves; of a spark of truth wrapped in something that shines. Something ambiguous, in sum. And thus, we cannot know if the influence they exercise adheres to the truth or is a deformation.

The Decline of the West exercised its fascination over the greater part of those who read it because of its richness of content, of the illusion that the cursory reading provided, as if it were a matter of botanical species. It reached a great number of Cultures, signaling the analogy of its structure and its process, a series of stations that mark the curve of its ascension and of its descent towards death. The thesis of this book forms part of that belief in the death of Western Culture that under diverse forms has extended itself and, therefore, we refer to the book. It could be argued that this same sense proves that, historically, we Westerners go toward death; that a feeling of mortal indifference was being harbored for a long time among minorities in order to go on descending to the intellectual middle class, while the so-called “masses” were advancing onto the historical scene. That for moments the surge of the mass rises a level, flooding the forms of life and styles with that devouring potential that the mass has.

It is true; they discover this fact in *The Rebellion of the Masses*. Yet, what is the truth, the truth of what is happening? Ortega himself analyzed much later the phenomenon of Crisis, and the literature about it ceased to grow.

That we are living a crisis does not seem to be debatable. And in a crisis something dies. Beliefs, effective ideas, ways of living that seemed untouchable. Social groups and even professions that lose out, minorities that lose the faith in themselves because they are no longer going to continue existing as minorities or they are going to have to exist in another way. And the first thing that they feel that they are losing is security and the ample time that corresponds to it. When we live on immovable base, within a frame that we believe to be fixed, time is ample and spacious; the days go by in a slow, measured rhythm, and we believe ourselves able to dispose of all of them. One lives in a type of dilated present. One sees arrival of events, and one can even have the sensation of moving toward them: life is a going forward with imperceptible force in an enjoyable way.

While in crisis, there is no path, or one does not see it. The path does not appear open, for it has blurred the horizon – one of the most serious events in a human life and which accompanies the greatest misfortunes. No event can be situated. There is no viewing point that is, at the same time, a point of reference. And, then events come to encounter us, “they throw us off track.” Time seems not to pass, and from the marshy calm, by a shaking, and in an instant and by a leap, the worst suddenly arrives. One remains empty and, at the same time, terrified.

The description of a life in crisis is very broad, it would be much broader, but we deliberately have only an aspect of it in relation to what concerns us; with that feeling of death or that belief in death, as well as the letting oneself be caught by it, outstretched among the Western minorities of these last three decades.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Here she would be referring to the mid 1920s-mid 1950s of the twentieth century.

Thus, upon facing death we are not “prepared” or “mature” for it, the situation is this: to feel it encounter us, like something insoluble. It is like a body without form that obstructs the horizon; with something fixed and which closes off the path. From there, comes that exasperation that grows in everyday life when someone closes the path to us, the way to a door, a situation that, in one’s maturity and without our realizing it, alludes to that death that arrives upon our encounter when we have not matured.

Thus, the emotions, feelings, or impressions have their source and their center where they receive their meaning. It is only that we are not used to knowing, and those centers are very few in the human soul; love is one of them, death the other. There are more, that need not be enumerated now. And thousands of insignificant impressions and events provoke an intense impression because they allude to a vital center. Because they are, in reality, symbols. Our daily life is populated with them. And the influence is also exercised in reversed meaning. In recent years, people have believed in death, in the death of the Western culture and in nothing else but death, because undoubtedly, something dies in each crisis. And those who are affected by this death, instead of going beyond it, they spread it to all the rest. It is as if the trees in the autumn were to believe that all of nature dies instead of allowing the dried leaves to fall and to be collected within, in the hopes that sap will flow in the following spring.

Yet, because man is not simply a product of nature, he cannot do this if he does not know it, if he does not think it.

And even looking at the panorama of social life, one notices disappearances and observable changes only in epochs of crisis; thus history is change. Yet, because the

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changes and historical transformations happen at a rhythm much slower than that of the life of an individual, they are not acknowledged except in crisis. The most terrible of these changes is that one which cannot be situated, thus, all perspective has been lost, and one cannot see them in terms of inexorable stages or like in the age of the Enlightenment and even in all of the nineteenth century, with its faith in progress, like steps through which historical progress stretches itself at the same time that it ascends.

It is equally true that, in those decades to which we refer, periods of hope, and we could even say of plenitude of hope, have existed, yet in a more tragic way: linked to death.

It could be believed, then, that our culture is dying, especially in its Western and most ancient nucleus: Europe.

Yet it could be completely the opposite: a dawn. Let us try to prove this hypothesis.

The two together: death and dawn intertwined are a crisis. Yet, dawn is of greater value than death in human history; the dawning of the human condition that announces itself again, appears once more after every defeat.

Thus, it could be said that all of history is a type of aurora repeated yet never achieved, to be left free for the future.

Manifestation of what is human

If one thinks that man appeared with all of his humanity already actualized, history would be inexplicable. The existence of different cultures with their life and

death would be inexplicable. It would be inexplicable that they have not been able to establish themselves in a form of an adequate social, political and religious life, in which only light variations would happen unexpectedly. History would not have meaning if it were not for the progressive revelation of the human. If man were not a hidden being that has to live by revealing himself. And he himself has had his day for discovering it; and beginning with when man discovers his humanity, what is natural and exclusive about his situation in the world and even that which supports him as a thesis, historical time accelerates. Humanism has transformed historical rhythm. Only when we turn our attention to that time before Greece do we see how the development of cultures, their life and their death, lends themselves to a much slower duration; it is hardly believable that since the beginning of philosophy in Thales of Mileto, only twenty-six centuries elapsed and twenty since the coming of Christ to the world. It is as if upon declaring the human condition as a thesis and a project, man would have entered into an environment that was more his, into a time that was closer to his own. In a time that, in a certain way, is his creation. However, we have to distinguish between the appearance of what is properly human and Western humanism.

It is not easy to express what we understand as “human.” Thus, rightly so we speak of history as a dawning, as a process in which man announces himself and is announced. And not in a uniform way when it begins to be known. And it has gone on being known in many ways, of which the most essential are two:

Respect for one’s gods or for one’s God. When whatever constellation of the divine that has hung over one’s head, one has been able to dare to ask about one’s fate. And what is more: to ask God about the reasons for his destiny and for his condition; this

that we know occurred for the first time and in the exceptional form in a drama of which the Ancient Testament offers us the story of the Book of Job. It is the poor, abated man from where it is possible that screams from the depth of his anguish asking God to come with reasons.

On the other hand, we have in Egypt the Book of the Dead, in which the trip or the itinerary of the perfect mommy after death is transcribed. He has to cross ten doors, ten thresholds guarded by a tribunal before which he has to enumerate the actions of his life, and only if these actions have been just, is he pure and can pass. Curiously, the first test consists of weighing on a scale the heart of his mother and all the works and words of her life. The mummy invokes his mother's heart so that he does not testify against her, because to do so, all would be lost.

Then, there is a moment in which the aurora of what is human seems to extend itself outward and occupy an immense horizon: it is the sixth century before Christ. Budda in India, Lao-Tse in China, the Seven Wise Men, and among them Thales of Miletus in Greece and Pythagoras— a bond of unity between Egypt and India. And it is not exactly a God that appears but rather a way. Even in the expression, Buddha calls his doctrine the “Third Way,” Lao-tse founds Taoism, and tao means way. And with Thales of Miletus positing the question about the “being of things,” consequently, the way, or the path, of scientific-philosophical thinking, opens in Greece and in the West. These paths, as different as they may be, have in common that of being the open paths for man in the dark and dense forest created by the gods, through the things of nature in confusion, and even in the darkness of man's mind. It is as if it had been put in motion.

And opening a path is the most human action of all; that which is proper to man, something just like that, like exercising one's being while at the same time to expressing; thus, man himself is the path.

Max Scheler used to say: "Man is an alley without an exit from nature, he is an exit." But more precisely he seems to be the exit, the only possible one, if it is that he parts himself from nature in order to explain reality. Something that reveals a specific situation, proper to a certain period in the ensemble of explanations that man has given of himself.

To discover a pathway, to open it, to trace it, is the most human action because it is at the same time action and knowledge: decision and a certain faith that regulates hope in a form that converts it into will. It is, therefore, a moral action above all.

Whatever this way may be, it is always a thought, thought that is born from the balance between confidence and distrust. An action, then, in which a long past of negative experiences is gathered into an instant of illumination. In this instantaneous clarity that is like a bolt of lightning, a situation becomes visible, the situation of somebody who by going about in the wrong way, also goes wandering. The coming and going without any result, always moving within the same territory, again and again, stumbling upon the same obstacles. In such a way, many centuries can go by and have gone by until one day this experience is actualized. Someone says, "It is not possible to go on like this." It is the first step: the perception of what is negative, of the impossibility of the situation. Yet, not only through this moment will the action that opens the path emerge. The path opens when the horizon clears. The creative horizon of space-time. He who goes wandering does not have it and, therefore, has no direction. And the

horizon, for its part, is not discovered itself except through the action of a something, a type of living spotlight that, through its remoteness and its inaccessibility, attracts and makes a type of vacuum: the world in which we find ourselves, lost in fullness. Full of the things of gods, according to Aristotle, like what was occurring in the period of Thales of Miletus. Filled with Gods as was India in the period in which Buddha had his "illumination."

Filled with precepts, filled with ideas, inclusive of a more advanced period like when Descartes found it when he discovered his method in doubt.

And that remote reality, that living spotlight, is beyond the end of all life, yet it attracts the will and fascinates the spirit; it is like a magnet that points to the direction toward which the path opens.

Afterwards there comes the specific action that delimits and discriminates; that defines, in sum. A minimum of definition is necessary so that action is possible. Thus, action is nothing more than wandering about while moving. There is an action only when a finality exists. Yet, only after having signaled a distant end do the immediate finalities appear. That distant light is clarity that falls upon immediate circumstances and sorts them out, allowing them to take on meaning.

And what is proper to those paths that open through human action is that traveling the paths does not exempt any one of men rather it demands it. No one can do it for the other; and, however...

It so happens that these paths are those that a culture creates, that culture consists exactly in them. And, hence, each human being born into a culture finds him in a different world, one already ordered or on the way to ordering itself, and what is even

more marvelous: with a certain idea of what it is to be human. With a pattern called “humankind” that measures it.

Then, come epochs of plenitude in which the most perfect human creations occur in a surprising degree and in short duration. The historical rhythm, at the same time, accelerates and slows and comes to give the image of a wide present. It seems to be so to those who live it: they think that they have arrived at the goal, and now nothing will be able to come along to contradict and collapse this needy situation. History is perceived then as a wide path on a straight line, just as it happens in the personal life of those who have reached a certain position and have settled into it.

However, history shows us that it is not possible for the human being to settle down in any place. And just as the human being has settled into one of these positions that seem definitive, something starts to undermine it. In our tradition, however, the Roman Empire has persisted. The vast influence of Roma, the influence of this civilization has perhaps ended? If we are successful in separating ourselves just so much from our present in order to look from a point x toward the future, it will surprise us to glimpse that we Westerners still live under the Roman structure in certain aspects of life; that it sustains us, and, perhaps...it oppresses us a bit.

Yet, this does not prevent changes in the interior of these temporal unities of these cultures from happening in different ways. Rome, whose validity we discover today with life, was eclipsed during the first epoch of the so-called Middle Age and has been shaken in certain moments, as well as having been enriched by the triumph of the Protestant Reformation and with the triumph of the Modern Age. Nothing in history nor in life simply remains and endures but rather transforms itself into ways that, at times, seem to

signify extinction, even death. Along the image of the straight line, the path in moments of plenitude, there occur one after another rhythms of vertical falls, of ascensions, and the fastest backward movements. Without counting on the terrors that periodically invade the human being in a culture, they were motivated at times by a date as were those living at the turn of the first millenium and in contrast with the unbridled optimism of certain instants. Thus, the structure of historical time is ripe for study, like that of human life, as much in its intimate genesis as in the most superficial forms that it exhibits.

All of this, hardly indicating its study, is an enterprise to propose separately – it already draws a type of labyrinth: the labyrinth of human hope. Thus, everything that is said in these pages up to this point points toward one direction; it indicates that history, all of it, could be titled: “The history of a hope in search of its plot.”

And that would be justified for so long as history exists if in the depths of human life hope were not encouraged as well as inexhaustible and eager, inexorably breathing like life itself, we would not have history nor would mankind have been proposed as being human. He has had to propose it to himself, and we have to continue proposing it to him. Hope is not a simple inspiration, for it has its eclipses, its falls, its exaltations, its momentary flooding, and its resurrection.

### The Human Dawn

But it would not be possible that man dawns only in the West, there where he first appeared, like an aurora, like a wound, but where light filters like the blood of Creation.

The Dawn is the most tragic hour of the day, for it is the moment in which clarity appears like a wound that opens in the darkness, where everything rests. It is an awakening and promise that can result in being unfulfilled. While twilight carries with it the day already past and filled with the melancholy of what already was, but also with its certainty and its achievement. And man is never complete, for his promise exceeds in all achievements and continues in constant battle as if the dawn, instead of advancing, extended itself, widened, and its wound opened more deeply in order to make way for this being who has not finished being born.

And as the light of dawn announces and prophesizes the light that will come from it, which will be the dawn itself attained, the human being announces himself from the first moment in which he appears. He carries with him a long chain of crystalized dreams, some in living creatures, others still without realities. The human being is born as a product of a long dream in which follows along an immeasurable plan.

A dream, for a human being, precedes action perhaps because only in dreams does he capture first the finality beyond what surrounds him, beyond what appears to him. He advances by feeling his way, actively dreaming, daydreaming.

To suffer actively, to dream actively, to awaken once and once again like the day which awakens every morning, is the destiny of human being wherever he may live. It would be to fall into the grotesque, then, to say that this is a characteristic of Western humanity.

Man announces himself before becoming, he prophesizes himself. He prophesizes himself because he is immature: will he be that way always, or will a day come in which he achieves the goal, that is, to be aqta, on this, his first stage. The

Utopias that repeatedly have traversed Western history are expressions of this daydream, and what they express is a type of vow to be and to humanize – in a just or in a deviant form-- the place in which he lives, his medium. His environment is not only the earth, but rather he is another environment which he cannot evade: society. And, that inexorable task: history. They are depositories of the will, at times exasperated and even desperate for hope to be carried out. And, at times, as happens in dreams, they deny that which itself allowed them be born, or they mask, like in dreams, that which we truly want.

The gravest error which the human condition is subject to is not to be wrong about the things that surround him, but rather to be wrong about himself: to distort that which he hopes for or wants, to conceal it or to confuse it.

And the more deeply and is passionately one is able to yearn, to want, and to love, the greater he risk of error. Thus, as he must go on realizing himself in time, through time, and would not do so if he did not anticipate it, if he did not daydream it, he faces the task of following day by day, step by step, the path that leads him to his finality as seen in a lightening flash, craved for, more than seen: hoped for, more than known. To know the truth would be to know the end of what is hoped for and desired, and to situate it so that it illuminates that path ahead: such that makes the path descend from the goal.

To know ourselves would enable us to see the most intimate and essential movements and, for that very reason, while unconscious of our being, to surprise ourselves in those movements: to be able to describe them and to direct them. The knowledge of the so-called “passions,” without a doubt, form part of it. Beneath the passions, other more fundamental passions are hidden and, underneath all of them, the

passion of being. The long passion that demands of human being to be, to declare itself, to enunciate to itself, and to realize itself from so far away as if it were not his: as if it were the extension of a God that was created for this purpose, to reach being and to achieve like him.

The primary thing in human life is to live time in a healthy manner. The primary thing, also, in the sense of what is spontaneous and permanent in that which all of life happens and forms the first stratum upon which consciousness works in its own way: dissociating, analyzing, separating to put into order, in other words: to make this initial and compact time passable. The ordering function of the human consciousness is to make accessible this initial time in which everything is entangled: the most distant future towards which it leans, and the past that still has not consumed itself, just like what happens to us in dreams in which the past and future are intertwined in a form similar to a labyrinth. It is the elemental form in which within our soul the past nests, along with hope – the figurations in which the past is remembered, or rather, actualized, and in which the future is symbolized. In reality, however, in this elemental form of the life of the soul, the human one, the past is neither remembered nor actualized but rather it remains there. In this sense, nothing happens; everything that one day was, remains.

As a result it is so difficult for what one desires – the goal to achieve – to present itself clearly drawn. For that to occur we have to isolate it from the past. But it is not easy because nothing of what is truly desired can be achieved if it contradicts or submerges the past; it is the same in the personal life as in historical life, that nothing can be achieved if the past is submerged. And there are victories, historical triumphs that bring with them the sinking of the past. Only the victories that save the past are

permanent, for they purify and free it. And, thus, in this permanent dawning of the human being, in his history, the light comes also from the past, from the same night of the times.

The human being always anticipates himself if he looks at himself from the present; if he looks at himself from the future, he drags it along with him and even sees himself depend upon the past, upon an absolute past. Because, in reality, the fundamental time of the human being, that from which he departs and which makes him explainable, is only the future.

And this going toward the future converted into a vow has been characteristic of Western man. The throwing himself in a decided and irreparable form toward that future: his vocation. But as the movement of history, from that permanent dawning, is not the least bit simple nor continuous – for nothing in life is so – he finds himself before a threshold that he must pass through by force if he does not want to commit suicide.

According to the English historian Toynbee, civilizations are born and affirm themselves in a process in which the human being responds, in a type of challenge to the difficulties that oppose him in the environment in which he lives. Today, Western man and man in general – since today, more than ever, the world forms a system – faces the challenge of himself; of that vow of being, of fulfilling the promise that was announced; also of the achievements, of the achieved humanization. He finds himself in a place from where it is impossible to go back or to remain. This challenge is the most decisive of all, since it comes to him wrapped up in the social environment. The Sphinx that today he faces on the crossroads of change is social; she who was devouring in the ravine of Thebes until Oedipus gave her the answer, symbolizes the challenge of the ancient

culture in which the West was born. The answer was: the human being. It was the moment in which man tripped over himself as a supreme and unitary response; the moment of consciousness embodied by Socrates who assumed it and paid for it as is well known. Yet it was only the first step, which man had to take by himself. Much later he would appear in the plenitude of Christian revelation in infinity, in its liberty and in its divine affiliation through God-Man.

And consequently, from the two revelations, one realized in human form by Greece and the other one in the divine form by Christ, Western humanism was enlarging itself into a bloody and dark dawn, with the most intense light incessantly, by light that both blinds and dazzles. At each period of splendor of this light, the triumph of the human, a fall into the darkness has followed, as if we had been blinded, repeating the event with Oedipus who, blinded perhaps by his victory, came to fall into the crime from which he was fleeing. Because up to now in all of the thresholds that the human being has crossed through in his career, a crime was lying in wait for him. And up to now the crime has always been committed; we have not freed ourselves from it, and only after it has knowledge emerged. Even the human being who has seen can commit the crime from which he flees, as Oedipus did, because he has not finished seeing. Hence now, having seen that we are before the threshold of an age that the advances of science will not let us pass beyond if the enigma of the social is not resolved.

History is not a simple passing of events, but rather, it has its own plot because it is drama; given that its passing may not occur only as simple continuity, that there exist thresholds, limit-situations, in which conflict cannot remain, and the most threatening conflict of all is what comes from a society that is not yet sufficiently humanized, not fit

so that the human being can pursue continue his unreachable dawn. It has been seen, without a doubt, and the crime, the crimes, have already been committed. It is, thus, the hour of knowledge.

This implies the conversion of tragic history into an ethical history here in the Western World. What is the tragic origin of our history, and why has it been tragic, and, consequently, what is the threshold that we must go beyond? This is the first inescapable question.

### History as Tragedy

Thus, before the awakened consciousness history reveals itself as tragedy, even more the Western tragedy.

It is characteristic of tragedy that the protagonist acts without knowing, that instead of knowing first and acting later, with clarity, before the discovered circumstances, he is seen as compelled to work first, because the knowledge that he needs he obtains through “suffering,” as Squilio has said. There is an intellectual knowledge that one obtains impassively. But history does not wait; the social, political and economic circumstances that oblige us to act, that oblige those who are principal executors of history, those who are in power, or those that alone or collectively demand, they do not wait. In normal epochs, in those in which the consequences of an already planned reform develop, in those that live from beliefs that give stability – relative, always – to the life of the peoples: in those in which some recognized principles reign, and up to a certain point proven in their validity, history presents the aspect of a relative

transparency; the events can be foreseen, and one has the impression that nothing unforeseen can come; the man of the State has something of the mathematician in him, one who develops an equation that deduces consequences, for all danger seems plotted. For example, from the second half of the 17th century to the second third of the 18th century in Europe, the epoch of Enlightenment, when to human beings of thought and to those who were exercising command, the structure of society and political life seemed to them transparent. Another era of this type is when liberalism seemed to be achieved, from the end of the 19th century until the arrival of the first World War. And more remotely, in the period of the Roman Empire called Pax Augusta. History seemed to have formed a pool to flow with the tranquil rhythm of human breathing, as if it had become synchronized, at last, with human beings.

But not with all human beings, until now. Under those clarities are masses, groups of people who do not breathe and others who beyond this magical circle traced by this civilization, drown. And the fortunate history ends with the irruption of those people, of those masses who had endured history without acting within it, without being their own protagonists. Knowing, thus, by virtue of who was acting, reveals itself as illusory, or very narrow and limited. Never until now has there been an epoch in civilization that we know of in which knowing was thought to be sufficient, in which the circle of clarity in which thought was moving, Coinciding with reality.

When the catastrophe arrives, then, only then is it known; it thus is a tragic knowledge that arrives to those who have been able to suffer lucidly.

There is another aspect in which history appears as tragedy; a tragedy without an author. We have just finished pointing it out, and it is the difference between the time of

individual human life and historical time. If history is understood while making and supporting it lucidly, the time that this implies is exceedingly long compared to the life of the individual, and to the life of a generation that has to retire, that disappears when it reaches the point of training – if it the case that it has not been destroyed before by one of the catastrophes among those that are so plentiful in our Western history.

Thus, human life renews itself through generations; according to what Ortega has shown, it is the generations that mark the rhythm. This implies that history is directed in a discontinuous mode.

Only in these epochs or moments signaled beforehand does a generation continue into the next such that there is no gap. In the epochs in which a violent change or a crisis, or both are produced, like now, the generations are consumed and are, in addition, the bearers of new hopes and new desperations. There is no continuity. And, for not having it, it so happens that the remains of generations already passed eternalize themselves in power and that later their inevitable demise produces the effect of a catastrophe, because there is no other generation that is prepared, and those that arrive, separate as they are from those who still command, cannot succeed them. These much younger generations have not received the inheritance of the immediately previous generation now disappeared, for they live in somewhat of a strange, or rather, foreign situation. They find themselves before a reality that they have not approached by measured steps.

But, in truth, the tragic roots of Western history run much deeper. It seems to be simply that Western man, beginning with Rome, has encoded his being in history, as well as he has believed in it; not only has he done so just like it has occurred to all human beings who have existed and will exist, but rather that he has wanted to do it. And he has

wanted to do it in the most absolute manner. It is this absolute that must be cleared up or dissolved so that our history, inevitably dramatic as history is, ceases to be tragic; thus, tragedy disappears when it has known how to trace a limit around the impetus, around the enthusiasm, around the will. “Nothing in excess,” the oracle of Delphi would have said, where not by chance were they going to consult the people of the Athenian democracy. To all of us Westerners, even more to those of Europe, it must be said: nothing in excess, not even the zeal of making history.

### History as Tragedy

#### The Idol and the Victim

The tragic constitution of history as it has existed up to now arises from the fact that in each society, including in the family, even in the peculiar society formed by two persons who love each other, there exists always, by law that only on certain human levels does not reign – an idol and a victim. This is equivalent to saying that the threshold of history before which the human being has backed away from, time and time again, without managing to cross it, may be this: that where we group ourselves together – and we cannot live without grouping ourselves together – do an idol and a victim may cease to exist; that society in all its forms may lose its idolized constitution; that we may come to love, to believe and to obey without idolatry; that society may cease to govern itself by the laws of sacrifice or, rather, by a sacrifice without law.

The idol is something that demands to be adored or receive adoration, in other words, absolute surrender; it is without measure, while it endures. The idol is what feeds

off that adoration or surrender without measure, and once it is lacking, the idol falls. It is an image deflected from what is divine, an usurpation. Each person who is converted into an idol, even to his own regret, lives in a state of fraud. It proves strange that until now only in some clearings of history has this tyranny lived freely.

Perhaps human beings flee from freedom as much as they search for it? There is no Renaissance palace or any medieval castle that has not had a prison beneath its rooms. However, the contrast is even greater in certain epochs, especially those illuminated by Humanism and intoxicated by the joy of living. Separated by a narrow canal and united by a bridge is the prison of Venice of the Palace of the Doge; the splendor of the lights and even the sound of voices and laughter would arrive at the cell of the condemned; the same prison is a palace; only its interior is a dungeon. The carriages of the French nobility passed through filthy alleyways in order to arrive at the splendid palace; they were not two cities, one of splendor and the other one of misery, but rather only one. And those sunken in misery felt themselves fascinated by the splendor and adored the idol, the Sun King, because the victim accepts his condition for a time. Revolution is impossible then, the idol comes to be the victim. And he is made to die like an idol, in the sight of all; every absolutist regime has felt the necessity or has had to yield to the demand of the victims who would ask for the sacrifice of an idol, as in Spain in the times of Philip IV and Don Rodrigo de Calderón. Centuries before, Don Alvaro de Luna performed this sad service. They saved the Monarchy.

The sacrificed idol, made victim, reestablishes, for a moment, equality. The level is made equal, and the victim partakes in the idol upon seeing him brought down to the victim's condition, in a way that is considered more cruel because it is sudden. The idol

dies in an instant while the victim dies day by day. And the idol knows a moment of supreme peace upon seeing himself sacrificed; he also participates in the condition of victim, he feels to have paid for the idolatry upon that which he lived so loftily, he feels restored to the human condition.

Thus, everything has happened in our history as if the human condition had to be conquered – that which has been done with enthusiasm in some moments, by resentment in others, and always because the human condition, living humanly, is not avoidable.

It is as if man had done everything that was possible to not live humanly, and only by force, under necessity and in the ultimate extreme, did he have to accept being human. And, thus, he needs to convert the idol into victim and to feel himself a victim, placed on high, as in the condition of idol.

It is in the French revolution where, with perfect clarity – of theatrical representation –, there appears this mechanism, which until now, to a greater or lesser degree, has governed society, every society or human group. And the question formulates itself time and time again: does this social mechanism correspond with a Christian civilization?

In the central mystery of Christianity, the history of Christ-God and victim coincide...they are the same; it is God who becomes victim. The acceptance of such mystery should have freed us from the worship of the idol and from his shadow; from the need for a condemned one to exist always.

There is no historical character who does not see himself obliged to wear a mask. Recently, scarcely past, is in our eyes, the vision of the last ones, of those whom we hope will be the last.

And there are no masks, no masked character that does not unleash a delirium of persecution. The number of victims who correspond to a certain regime could be foreseen, only by looking at the mask that represents it. The greater the power of representation, the greater the number of victims. And it is not necessary that the victims be made by cruel decree or by persecutory delirium. Napoleon did not suffer from this cruelty; however, he carried desolation in his step: it was not his design; his finality, truly historical, was anticipated – the unity of Europe. But he fell by being a historical character, in putting on a mask; he accepted the condition of idol.

Tragic history by means of characters who are masks that must accept the mask in order to act in it like the actors in poetic tragedy do. The spectacle of the world in these recent times allows us to see, through the single vision of masks that do not need to be named, the extremely tragic texture of our age. We are, without a doubt, on the threshold, the limit beyond which tragedy cannot maintain itself. History must stop being representation, figuration made by masks, in order to enter into a human phase, into the phase of history made only by necessity, without idol and without victim, according to the rhythm of breathing.

In primitive cultures, historical actions are danced and imitated. Dionysus is also the god of history. History has been tragic representation, for only under a mask can crime be executed. It is the ritual crime that history justifies. Man, who does not kill in his private life, is capable of doing it because of the State, because of a war, because of a revolution, without feeling nor believing himself to be criminal. It is, without a doubt, an unexplained mystery, but it puts us on the trail of solving it, the surprise this character of history has made up to now, except in rare moments – types of clearings in this perennial

storm – like a representation in which some drunken play a semi-divine role. A type of hybris possesses those who take part in history, feeling themselves chosen, elevated to a rank superior to the human one, from which they need not be accountable to anyone or, in the end, to God, in an especially unique intimacy, as certain protagonists of European absolutism have believed, forgetting the limitation of being a human person, scorning the supreme greatness of the man who does not rest in any function except in being entirely a person, and in this way they have played at being a person to the letter of the character that they were given to play.

Thus, the difference lies in that the character, for however historical he may be, we play him; as for the person, we are him.

But, although slowly and with effort, this revelation of the human person has been making way for what constitutes not only the highest value but also the finality of history itself. For that fortunate day in that all human beings have come to live plainly as persons; in a society that may be his receptacle, his adequate medium, human beings will have found their home, their “natural place” in the universe.

## Chapter 4 Compassion

In 1949 when surrounded by the Cuban literary group Orígenes, María Zambrano set out to write “Para una historia de la piedad,” or “Towards a history of compassion.” This was one of her works that she composed from the island of Cuba, what she has called her country of destiny<sup>38</sup>. In addition to this work on compassion, Zambrano created a sketch of it in her book *El hombre y lo divino* or *Man and the Divine*. This work was initiated also on the island of Cuba and then was eventually finished during some of her years in Rome. The first work mentioned was written in 1949 while the second work to be discussed in this essay was eventually published in 1955. In these texts, Zambrano looked to pinpoint a bit of history behind the term compassion as well as her own understanding of its importance in some of her general work which discusses the “original feeling” behind the life of an individual. One of those feelings is compassion.

“What are feelings and how can they be historicized?” (*La Cuba secreta* 123)

This is one of the questions early on that Zambrano poses. Before going into a response related to that, Zambrano discusses history itself, something that she does in other texts such as *Person and Democracy*. Man has created or developed history. In fact, there is a

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<sup>38</sup> She makes this reference to herself in her autobiographical work translated into English by Dr. Carol Maier, *Delirium and Destiny: a Spaniard in her Twenties*.

whole field of historiography that is dedicated to such an undertaking. History or histories have not all been conceived in the same manner. Zambrano makes the argument that before history existed, poetry did:

Certain poems constitute them like the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey* and other poems, the most ancient and all the civilizations where the first stories and visions of human events [...] history is the telling of great and extraordinary actions; to be in history means to have entered into a certain immortality that separates the heroes from the rest of the mortals. (*La Cuba secreta* 122)

This conception of history in terms of great feats is only part of the overall picture of history. On the other side of the coin are the events that are not deemed heroic. Daily life is what drives this other understanding of history. These events, these daily happenings, are what form the plot of life. The avenue down which much of history has gone has shown up in the novel. Zambrano writes, “The novel corresponds to what nowadays has been called the study of ‘the forms of life’” (*La Cuba secreta* 123). These “forms of life” deal with the extraordinary and the typical of life, involving the economic, the political and the social relationships that take part in life. Part of Zambrano’s understanding of history really pinpoints such forms as the novel and poetry, calling them true reservoirs of the history of life. These genres “have reflected better than the historical consciousness, the true passing, the truth of things that happen to man and his intimate sense” (*La Cuba secreta* 123). The history that is discovered in such texts as the novel or poetry reflect the core of the human being, the location of the feelings. At this core of feelings is compassion, the material of this essay and Zambrano’s essay. Once again it is at this point that Zambrano asks the question previously asked at the beginning of this chapter, “What are feelings and how can they be historicized?” (*La Cuba secreta* 123)

The idea of defining feelings is a very difficult task. Some have said that the feelings constitute the life of the soul and that it is impossible to pinpoint them. All of man's experiences are felt in some way. It is through feelings, according to Zambrano, that we witness the truth: "Feeling then, constitutes us more than any other psychic function [...] [T]he supreme sign of truthfulness, of living truth has always been feeling; the last source of legitimacy of how much man says, does or thinks" (*La Cuba secreta* 123). The history of feeling is the truest history of man. What is ironic about this is that feeling is untouchable and something that escapes us. It is because of this that poetry and the novel are the greatest channels for feelings. One point Zambrano stresses is that these feelings are not to be analyzed but rather to be expressed: "Expression forms part of the life of the feelings that, upon being expressed, far from turning pale, they acquire a certain diamond-like entity that makes them transparent and invulnerable at the same time" (*La Cuba secreta* 124). Because of this the life of the soul no longer gravitates to the rationalist idea. Feeling is something that resides deep down, hiding in places that at times are highly inaccessible. It is in this place that one of the deepest feelings is felt, and it is that of compassion.

Compassion is considered by Zambrano one of the initial feelings, one of the deepest, one that struggles at being defined. It is through history that compassion has revealed itself in its multiple forms. It is of the loving and positive feelings. Zambrano calls compassion "the prehistory of all the positive feelings" (*La Cuba secreta* 125). Compassion is contrasted with that of destruction. It is a temporal happening, one that Bergson has commented upon in his works: "Time, according to Bergson, is a multiform growth in that, each instant penetrates and is penetrated by the rest; time instead of

destroying, creates” (*La Cuba secreta* 125). It is in history that these feelings are not destroyed. Rather, compassion fosters loving feelings in a positive way. The history of feelings goes on unraveling itself and revealing itself. Through historic difficulties the “human being is unraveled, he comes to light, that is to say, that man goes being born in History, in place of having been born once” (*La Cuba secreta* 126).

Compassion is the feeling that resides deep in the “original womb of the life of feeling” (*La Cuba secreta* 126). This feeling is something that corresponds to a stage of thinking in which compassion has been unknown. By drawing on ancient Hindu mystics and the ancient philosopher Plotinus, Zambrano talks about how compassion is one of those feelings that cannot be captured by its presence but rather by its compassion.

Compassion is among those feelings that

overflow our soul, flood our conscience, without taking possession. How do we define them? To define is to see distinctly the limits of what is seen, to see it among other things in a simple plane, forming a group. The great goods and ills, on the contrary, possess us, and we feel that they exceed our life and our conscience. We almost always need to have lost them; otherwise they might suffer an eclipse in order to be able to distinguish them through their absence. (*La Cuba secreta* 126)

After reading, one has to be concerned with the fact that rationalism and reason have overshadowed compassion. The question is what do we lack in this arena to not be able to give compassion its stage? Zambrano asks the question, “What is our situation as men in the Universe?” (*La Cuba secreta* 127) The answer to such a question is that we are alone, alone before many things, things that are dominated by men and that are not understood by men themselves. Compassion is something that “allows us to communicate [ it is] the gigantic, diffuse feeling that situates us among all the planes of being, among the different beings [...] Compassion is knowing how to deal with what is

different, with what is radically other than ourselves” (*La Cuba secreta* 127). This is the fundamental point of Zambrano when it comes to compassion: knowing how to deal with the other. In some respects, this attitude is similar to that of the Christian tenet of “treating your neighbor as you would want to be treated yourself.” Differences do exist among men. Zambrano acknowledges that these differences can be found among races, nationalities, cultures, social classes and economic differences. At times man struggles with dealing with anyone other than himself. Man at these times searches for a mirror that throws back his image, yet “when he does not find it, he becomes bewildered and, often, wants to break the mirror” (*La Cuba secreta* 127). Again it is this incapacity of man to be able to tolerate man other than himself.

In certain ages including our own, man has suffered from not being able to use his compassion fully. She refers to the Middle Ages when medieval man knew how to deal with everything that was different such as the “incurable sick, with the monster, including the criminal” (*La Cuba secreta* 127). Modern man in contrast has tried to reduce everything – whether the natural, supernatural, or the merely strange – to what he believes to be his own essence: conscience and reason. Because of this, man remains alone and struggles with dealing with “the other.” By doing this, by uniting the different classes of the “other,” what results is reality. Zambrano states that “apparently consciousness and intelligence, in themselves, do not provide with any guarantee of which we are in contact with reality” (*La Cuba secreta* 128). In addition, science, despite its splendid achievements, has not allowed man to deeply know reality. Reality, Ortega y Gasset contended is previous to the idea, contrary to what is formulated by idealism. Thus, if reality is previous to the idea, it must be revealed in a feeling. Here again we

have the idea of compassion as that feeling which performs our understanding of reality.

Zambrano goes on to consider:

The consciousness of solitude along with the consciousness of participation, of interaction. While the rationalist, apart from believing that reality is given to him in an idea or thought, believes also that he can only understand it by reducing reality to thought. Compassion is the feeling of the heterogeneity of the being, of the quality of being, and it is a yearning therefore for finding the approaches and ways of understanding each one of these multiple modes of reality. (*La Cuba secreta* 128)

After having written this about compassion, the question remains, will human progress condemn compassion? Will humans take the charge of living in a compassionate way?

These are questions that result from Zambrano's writings at this time, a time just following World War II. Some have substituted compassion for philanthropy or cooperation or justice. Is this enough? Do these previously mentioned substitutions fulfill the gap of feeling that compassion fills? Zambrano designates reason and justice as sisters that "walk together, the one is in practice what the other is in knowledge" (*La Cuba secreta* 129). Are they enough? Probably not, according to Zambrano. Beyond the discussion of justice and reason as sufficing for compassion, Zambrano returns to the question of reality: "The last and abysmal depth of the endless reality that man feels in himself, filling it in happy moments and in moments of suffering; happiness and suffering appear to us infinite. And within them is when we feel that reality not only touches us, but that absorbs us, floods us" (*La Cuba secreta* 129). Reality inundates the person and makes life a challenge in whatever way it manifests itself. Compassion is what deals with something else.

This "something else" that compassion deals with is the domain of "the other" as well as of mystery. On the one hand, Descartes deemed "clarity and distinction" as

important to the qualities of ideas, while on the other hand Zambrano contends that “clarity and distinction” are likewise the qualities of reality. These realities of life have plunged man into times of anguish and desperation, making these moments of reality not so clear. This to Zambrano is what she calls “simply our own life. Mystery does not find us outside; it is within each of us, as much as it surrounds and envelops us. In it we live, and we move” (*La Cuba secreta* 129-30). It is that mystery that pushes man to learn how to deal with the other, to be compassionate with the next person.

The next part of this section of *Man and the Divine* is titled “What is Compassion?” The basis of it begins with referencing a Platonic dialogue, that of *Euthyphro*. In it Socrates asks the question of “what is compassion?” just as Zambrano does here in this essay. Before getting to the heart of the question, Zambrano discusses how Socrates was there to “transform the living, the life that has been handed over to us and that we bear in an inert manner, in that which has been called experience” (*El hombre y lo divino* 200). This experience forms a first layer in which one “knows the things of life.” From knowing such things, one also comes across the knowing of compassion. Compassion is something that continues living and encouraging, yet it does not find a gap in which to dwell in the “building of the highest knowledge, of which it confers rank and hierarchy” (*El hombre y lo divino* 200). Zambrano considers that compassion has lived incognito for a long of time, and it is not until Max Scheler talks about “sympathy” that compassion is resurrected in Western philosophy. It is at this point that she feels man is at a deep conflict. This conflict is seen in several of Plato’s dialogues: *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, *Phaedo* and the *Apology*. At one point the master is condemned to death in virtue of an accusation of uncompassion. Socrates, by asking his

fellow citizens questions fills the role of being compassionate and in fact submits to knowledge.

This idea of “submitting to a knowledge” is what annoyed the fellow citizens of Socrates, for he tried to convert knowledge into something that was illuminated, or in other words, the truth. This truth was felt in Greece as a “supreme liberation, and it was in the philosophy of Plato where such meaning acquires character of sacred revelation” (*El hombre y lo divino* 201). In *The Allegory of the Cave* we can see that the rebellion of the man who did not want to be liberated. There, in the darkness of the cave, compassion lived among the shadows. According to Zambrano, man has passed through a moment in which compassion was scorned by the light, and it remains today submerged in the shadows. Today philosophy has come to doubt any reason for thought to address compassion. At times compassion shows its irrationality, something that lacks a foundation, a sort of no-being. Many would not be able to discover any characteristic of irony that could attack the essence of the virtue of compassion. But as a virtue, compassion should become an interest for a class of knowledge called philosophic. One of the first definitions is that compassion is “the virtue that makes us deal with the gods in order to arrive at the conclusion of what comprises the unjust and what is just” (*El hombre y lo divino* 202). In the *Crito*, Socrates demonstrates that to be compassionate or holy depends also upon an adequate knowledge.

Again the question arises, “What is compassion?” However, in this case, the question “What is piety?” is perhaps a more appropriate question.<sup>39</sup> This is because

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<sup>39</sup> The word “piedad” in Spanish can be translated into several different words. Among them are “compassion” and “piety.” In certain essays, Zambrano focuses on “compassion” and how it relates with dealing with the other. In this sense, she is using “compassion” on the level of human and personal interaction. In other essays, most specifically the one we center on at this point in the chapter, she uses the

Zambrano turns to the Platonic dialogue *Euthyphro*. In it Socrates poses the question, “And are you not saying that what is loved of the gods is holy; and is not this the same as what is dear to them – do you see?” (*The Works of Plato* 55). This concept of piety, in Zambrano’s view, is linked to “something or someone that is not on our same vital plane; a god, an animal, a plant, a sick or monstrous human being, something visible or without name, something that is and that is not. That is to say, a reality belonging to another region or plane of being in which we are human beings” (*El hombre y lo divino* 203). That plane of being outside of the realm of the human is the domain of the gods and of “the other.” Zambrano thus reasserts her premise (presented also in “Towards a History of Compassion”): “Compassion is knowing how to deal adequately with ‘the other’” (*El hombre y lo divino* 203-04). Here compassion and piety are related, yet they have different audiences and purposes. In Zambrano’s dealing with the Platonic dialogue *Euthyphro*, she relates to piety as behaving honorably, ethically and justly. Such behavior is aimed at the gods, and reveals a person’s piety towards them. When she refers to other things, she is referring to compassion and how we treat the other. Having an anti-compassionate attitude may suggest fear of “the other.” This may also be the consequence of the Western notion of identity – “‘the other’” is destroyed by the One” (*El hombre y lo divino* 204). In this sense, the domain of the gods is the domain of “the other.” With Parmenides, “the purest form of unity triumphed in philosophy” (*El hombre y lo divino* 204). Parmenides proposed “an unity of identity in opposition to the unity of harmony proposed by Heraclitus” (*El hombre y lo divino* 204). Identity led to the notion

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word “piedad” in her discussion of “piety.” “Piety” has a strong relationship with that of the gods, and her use of the Platonic dialogue *Euthyphro* in the essay “What is Piety” from *Man and the Divine* allows her to slip back to the usage of “piedad” as “piety.”

of the uniting subject, whereas the unity of harmony allows for differences to coexist, to harmonize. As Zambrano develops her argument, she skips from one ancient thinker to the next as if to demonstrate in her very style a harmony that can emerge from the heterogeneity of human thought.

Continuing on in this portion of the essay, Zambrano returns to the discussion of the Platonic dialogue *Euthyphro* and to the definition of piety that is given in the dialogue: “Piety is defined first as adequate treatment of the gods, in order to end recognized as a virtue, that is to say, a mode of *being man*” (*El hombre y lo divino* 205). She then goes on to discuss how dealing with “the other” is like dealing with another plane and another reality or realities. The dealing with the gods in their domain translates, eventually, with dealing with the human being on his plane. This, to Zambrano, is about *being man*. It is part of the human condition.

At this point Zambrano begins a new section that is titled “The First Form of Compassion” in which she deals with religion, sacrifice and anguish. For her all true religion has at its center a sort of mystery in which humans produce sacred actions. Her use of Greek religion is what shines here. The primitive religion of Greece does not necessarily differ in character from other known religions. What is original about the Greek religion is the poetic configuration of the Olympic gods. She states, “It is the poetry of conforming to the gods and explaining the world what makes Greece differ from the other ancient cultures, even before philosophy emerged” (*El hombre y lo divino* 208). The Greek gods are basically forms of worship. With this worship, man has been directed to a mysterious reality in the sacred form that is called sacrifice. If gods exist, so will sacrifice. In modern religions, they have diluted God in “what is divine” and

allowed sacrifice to be unlimited, dissolved in an undefinable anguish, she says. This anguish, a sacred ill, precedes sacrifice. In the anguish there is consciousness and thought: “Consciousness and thought upon growing have not been able to erase the trace of the first situation of man in the immense and unnamable reality, that is to say, they have not been able to transform into the human being from a metaphysical creature into simply a natural or rational creature” (*El hombre y lo divino* 209). Thus, anguish will bring forth what the consciousness will decline. These two will participate in the sacred world, which Zambrano considers naked, and will deal with hermetic reality without revealing too much. Zambrano writes, “In the immensity, man wants to orient himself with these sacred actions. The first thing that occurs to him is not to think but to do. In doing there is something more passive than in thinking; sacred action is a passive action, that is shown in all the ambiguity of sacrifice” (*El hombre y lo divino* 209). In such sacrifice one makes a pact. It is something in which there is an exchange for something else. Often this exchange consists of nourishment, in which offering the self occurs in order to rescue the self. In primitive Greek religion, three classes of worship exist: those directed to the dead, those directed to the divinities, and those which feel the cycle of nature, that is, birth and death of spring and of the harvests. Sacrifice before the gods is what reveals the visible nature. The act of liberation speaks to the “confidence in the order of the forces that the fruits of the earth and hope are born and reborn” (*El hombre y lo divino* 210). This liberation refers to hope, a hope that is not revealed, one that struggles with anguish and is timid, yet maintains its state of constant yearning to be heard. It is here where Zambrano concludes this section and moves into the next which is titled “Knowledge and Compassion.”

Knowledge and reality, when they correspond, in the act of sacrifice create inspiration, according to Zambrano. In such inspiration there is an exchange in which “man receives something superior that perhaps does not belong to him, a gift; gift that increases the mystery of where it comes from because it is like a glimpse, nothing more, of an entire territory that should exist and from which one appears isolated” (*El hombre y lo divino* 210). Knowledge at times is a signal. It is something that is driven with infinite care. Inspiration must seize the instant and demand a knowledge that it is dealing with it; thus, knowledge by inspiration belongs to compassion. Zambrano says, “poetry is the first knowledge that is born from this compassionate inspired knowledge” (*El hombre y lo divino* 211). Poetry conserves the trace of its inspired origin. It is also creation, the first human creation, and it is the inspired word, received yet still passive. The poet does not always know what he says, yet he is inhabited by a knowledge of inspiration, perhaps a god that appears within him. “The original poet is an oracle,” someone who does not always speak when needed nor is he understood in what he says. The inspiration that is there is a sort of knowledge that “places in relief the anguish of this world of *the other*: anguish of discontinuity, anguish of multiple, separate instants through abysses, of emptiness and of silence” (*El hombre y lo divino* 211-12). In it man has not been able to feel time, his own time, the rhythm of his life. Rhythm, number and music are the movement of that world of “the other” and with which man lives a certain continuity.

On the other hand, there is discontinuity in the knowledge of inspiration as well as in the apparitions of the divine forces. The gods may present a face, or a figure with certain qualities, and thus establish a certain continuity in a call that “makes inspiration and strength descend. It is already an announcement of being. A stage of unity. It is

poetic consciousness that first goes on revealing this sacred, hermetic world, that goes on marking the forms of the pact” (*El hombre y lo divino* 212). In these moments, the cosmogonies will offer man the reason of his anguish and of his suffering. The cosmogonies are human poetry that represent man’s mysterious genesis and his history. Zambrano goes back to point out, “[b]efore the first compassion, poetry does the job that philosophy will do much later; it is a revelation. Confused, intricate, conserving the mystery and therefore far from competing, allied with compassion” (*El hombre y lo divino* 212-13). This discussion on poetry leads again to that of continuity as something that invades poetry amid the discontinuity. She uses examples such as Homer and when he presents to the gods his name and history. She also refers to the light of Apollo and how all will be revealed by it without any sacrifice. From this light came divine compassion or a sign. This divine compassion or supreme compassion is for the Greek intelligence. Yet, the Greeks have not perceived that they were dealing with a new compassion. There is nothing that so much frightens the old compassion as does the new compassion.<sup>40</sup> Zambrano states:

And it seems inevitable that he who is its carrier does not perish at the hands of the followers of ancient compassion. Compassion brings death to the compassion that follows it. And in this crime, realized in the dominion of what is sacred, is established – by sacrifice – the birth of the new compassion. (*El hombre y lo divino* 213)

After this, Zambrano questions whether compassion can possibly emerge from being. In the unity of identity it is absorbed, and in the shadows it is condemned, yet in some way it has reality. In Aristotle she avers “compassion withdraws itself as much as

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<sup>40</sup> Here is where the distinguishing of piety and compassion come into play. Piety is the relationship with the gods where compassion is linked to the human being.

possible. It is the thought of being, that is to say, the revelation of the hermetic world of the *physis*, that is realized without any pact and without any fear” (*El hombre y lo divino* 214). From this, being is everything.

The new compassion that accompanies this new conception of being finds a home in Stoicism. According to Zambrano, only Stoicism produces “that deep calm united with its own enthusiasm of true solutions of the great conflicts” (*El hombre y lo divino* 214). Stoicism represents a lasting solution of compassion as well as the persistence of the sacred world in the world of being and thought. Again, sacrifice comes to the forefront in this essay. Stoicism conserves the inevitable sacrifice. It comes to dominate through persuasion from which knowledge and the arts will be born, “forms of pacts with ‘the other’ that will make intelligence edifying, conservative. Roman diplomacy will be born, intellectual strategy [...], subtle forms of dealing with ‘the other’ just within what is human” (*El hombre y lo divino* 215). Stoicism carries with it a form of humanized compassion that then ultimately converts into tolerance.

The idea of the true history of freedom and thought as initiating itself with the dawn of compassion is where Zambrano ends with these essays on compassion. Initially, she describes compassion as that original feeling that is housed in the soul. Such feelings are ones that are hard to define. Compassion is something that calls to action; it is a feeling that craves being effective. It fundamentally is knowing how to deal with “the other,” and this is what Zambrano attempts to show in her references to the Platonic dialogues as well as other readings. She also uses the term *piedad* as piety, which is knowing how to deal with the gods. But in doing so, she makes the realm of the gods exemplify the domain of the others. Piety thus becomes synonymous with compassion.

Both compassion and piety are translations for *piedad*, and it is in certain cases that Zambrano uses the one and not the other and vice versa. In general, the essays are dominated by compassion rather than piety because of the strong human element that Zambrano is referring to in her works.

A final significant aspect of compassion and its dealings in these texts is that Zambrano considers compassion to be incognito. It is something that has been scorned by the light and that has been submerged in the shadows. This imagery is indicative of the natural influences that occur in Zambrano's work. It is her poetic reason that allows her to form her own rationalizations behind her statements. She herself has said that poetry was born from compassion, and it is often in her work where the poetic elements dominate, difficult to decipher, yet mysterious enough to try. Compassion, whether felt in the realm of reality or in the realm of poetry, plays a role in several works of María Zambrano and help form the constellation of thought that centers on the word, the person, compassion and love.

Translation of “Towards a history of compassion”<sup>41</sup>

To María Fernández, who has taught me so much about compassion.

History, the histories have not always been made or conceived in the same manner. On the contrary, all of a science exists, Historiography, dedicated to studying and comprehending the diverse ways of how man has conceived his history: a History of History. And there are fewer things more interesting than to surprise the vision that man has of himself.

Without going on to enumerate now the diverse forms of how man has seen himself in his history, we can gather them in a summary fashion. In the first place, before History appears, there is a pre-history of history: Poetry. Certain poems constitute them like the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey* and other poems; the most ancient ones and all the civilizations where the first stories and visions of human events appear: stories that upon being poetic are religious and eminently dramatic. In them only extraordinary individuals take part, agents of great feats; history is the telling of great and extraordinary actions; to be in history means to have entered into a certain immortality that separates the heroes from the rest of the mortals.

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<sup>41</sup> María Zambrano, *La Cuba secreta y otros ensayos*, ed e intro Jorge Luis Arcos (Madrid: Endymion, 1996) 122-130.

This heroic sense of History has lasted extraordinarily long like all origins. History as the retelling of unmemorable feats still persists, especially in the naïve consciousness of the people. It is the memory of the marvelous ones.

But History has also been a science and then is directed at capturing facts, events nothing more. Decisive events, transcendent ones, but that did not have the reason for being heroic. To be transcendent means nothing more than not ending up within oneself, than surpassing one's own limits. But, from this scientific mode of historicizing left daily life in obscurity, that which passes by without stridencies and forms the plot, the canvas upon which one can only draw the extraordinary action or transcendent event.

This anonymous life that did not arrive at the category of the historic has been the innumerable material of the novel. As a result, the best history of some periods of Western culture may be the novel – the best history and the best sociology. The novel corresponds to what nowadays has been called the study of “the forms of life.” That is where we are now: more than the individuals and extraordinary, transcendent events, the novel is interested in capturing the forms of life, the way life models itself from economic, social and political relationships. However, in the novel and in poetry there is something more. The novel and poetry have reflected better than historical knowledge, the true passing, the truth of things that happen to man and his intimate meaning. History in order to be complete, total, and truly human, will have to descend to the most secret places of the being, to that which our language with such beauty calls “the core.” This core is the least visible, not only for not being seen, but for resisting being seen. And the core is the seat of feelings. However, “feelings” is a term so broad that is worth pausing

a little in it because within its field one finds that of which we are going to offer its brief history: Compassion.

What are feelings and how can they be historicized?

Perhaps there is nothing more difficult to define in the frame of life than feelings. When we try to address them we find that they constitute the life of the entire soul, that they are the soul itself. What would become of a man if it were possible to remove feeling from him? It would leave him without feeling himself as existing. Everything, all that which can be an object of knowledge, that which can be thought or submitted to experience, all that which can be designed, or calculated, is previously felt in some way; even being itself which, if it were only understood or perceived, would stop referring to its own center, to the person. Making an effort to imagine this situation, we see it like a kind of abstract fantasy, a total alienation in which even things themselves would stop being perceived for lack of interest, for the absence of someone who perceives them.

Feeling, then, constitutes us more than any other psychic function; one might say that we *have* the rest, while we *are* feeling. And thus, the supreme sign of truthfulness, of the living truth has always been feeling; the ultimate source of legitimacy regarding what man says, does or thinks.

With such a brief observation, we see that if something has the right and need of history it is, precisely, this vast world called feeling; given that its history will be the truest history of man. Yet, because of this, the difficulty is great, according to a law that seems to preside over all human matters: to the greatest necessity, the greatest difficulty. Feelings are many, they are elusive; due to being the most alive thing in our life, they are the most untouchable; the quickest to escape and to leave us with a kind of palpitating

void, whenever we pretend to capture them. They are the most resistant to being defined. Not for nothing have poetry and the novel been their greatest channel. Because what is natural to feelings is not being analyzed but rather being expressed. Expression forms part of the life of feelings which, upon achieving it, far from turning pale, they acquire a certain diamond-like quality that makes them transparent and invulnerable at the same time. And like in the period in which we are still submerged, the rationalist idea has deprived the life of the soul, the knowledge of feelings has continued declining until ending up taking refuge in places that are each time more hermetic. One of the greatest misfortunes and poverties of our time is the inscrutability of the deep life, of the true life of feeling that has gone to hide in places each time less accessible. Making its history, although timidly, will be a labor of liberation.

Yet, what among the feelings, in that immense, delicate and enormous world is Compassion?

It is, perhaps the initial feeling, the widest and deepest; something like the homeland of all the rest. The affirmation will seem very daring, even expressed in a vacillating form, but we hope that in the course of these brief pages it goes on opening the way in the mind of the hypothetical reader. We cannot pass without an attempt of “presentation” of this feeling, thus the definition, is how we have provided the clumsiest and most inadequate means of capturing it. But because the feelings do not have an adequate definition, and none less so than compassion, they must have a history. The objects that do have an adequate definition, even to the point of coinciding with it, are the so-called “ideal objects:” a triangle, a character in a novel, a polygon with a thousand sides, a round square; they, on the contrary do not have a history. In contrast, what seems

impossible to let itself be captured by a definition must develop itself in multiple and successive manifestations, without losing anything, that is, in its history.

Compassion cannot be defined adequately, less so than any other feeling, because it constitutes the supreme example in an entire class: of the loving or positive feelings. It is not love properly considered in any of its forms and meanings; neither is it charity, that determined form of compassion discovered by Christianity; nor is it even pity, that most generic and diffuse passion. It comes to be the prehistory of all the positive feelings. And, nevertheless, it accompanies them in their history and even comes to possess history itself. And here we must stop ourselves briefly in order to see the specific form of the historic happening of feelings.

The idea that we have of the historic happening, like that of all temporal happening is that of destruction: “destructive time” is the image that persists in the consciousness of almost all men; it follows that there has been no attempt to create a history of feelings nor of anything that constitutes the intimacy of the human condition, hence it would seem that history is a happening of things that annul the previous ones, a type of parade of instants that shine fleetingly and are substituted by others. The philosopher Bergson has realized in a masterly manner the critique of this idea of temporal happening conceived in the lineal manner, of points that pass some after the others, and that continue consuming themselves as they pass. Time, according to Bergson, is a multiform growth in that each instant penetrates and is penetrated by the rest; time instead of destroying, creates. This fundamental thesis of contemporary metaphysics throws a living light on our topic. And it is that feelings in their history do not destroy one another; thus we understand that Compassion can be the mother of all

that we have called loving feelings – a positive sense – without disappearing, swept away by those other feelings as they go on presenting themselves. On the other hand, it is also something that contradicts the common idea, this notion that feelings may go presenting themselves in History, and may not all have appeared suddenly. We even have the idea of man as a formed being once and for always. Perhaps it is so, but it is certain that the capacities or strengths of his being go on revealing themselves, showing up in History. Therefore there can be, there is a history of feelings; because the human being has not shown suddenly from the first moment of his apparition on the earth, all his plenitude and complexity, but rather that he goes on revealing himself, unraveling. The horrors and sufferings of which History is plagued are justified, in the “ultimate instance,” because throughout the historic vicissitudes, the human being is unraveled, he comes to light, that is to say, that man goes on being born in History, in place of having been born once.

Compassion appears to us like the original womb of the life of feeling. Let us see why. Without trying – as has already been said – to define it, we have to form for ourselves a certain idea of what we understand by compassion. To that end the idea itself of feeling obstructs us. Thus, like all well elaborated and used concepts it bears a burden of falsehood. And still more, because the term “feeling” corresponds to the stage of thinking in which Compassion rightly has been more unknown. Upon dealing with it, then, directly it seems that it escapes us. But, there exists a very ancient way to surprise these entities and it is what the theologians have called the negative way. A very ancient Hindu mystic referring to God said that is “neither this nor that.” It is the definition that the highest theology has pursued with Plotinus and the highest mysticism through the different ages. The subtlest things that cannot be captured by their presence, are by their

absence, through the hollow that they leave. And such a process should not frighten us, seeing that everyone has surely experienced it in his own life: we feel what is the beloved person, or the friend when he is lost, through the irreparable void that they leave for us, like the landscape of the homeland, like health, like all indefinable goods because of their immensity. They overflow our soul, they flood our conscience, they do not possess. How do we define them? To define is to see distinctly the limits of what is seen, to see it among other things in a simple plane, forming a group. The great goods and evils, on the contrary, possess us, and we feel that they exceed our life and our consciousness. We almost always need to have lost them or that they suffer an eclipse in order to be able to distinguish them through their absence.

Thus, Compassion. It is not possible to doubt that in recent times it has suffered an intense eclipse has suffered and that it coincides with the peak of rationalism. The enthusiasm for reason and for its results, the light that irradiates from exclusively rational knowledge seems to have thrown its shadow over Compassion. And because this has been happening for a rather long time, we can watch a little in perspective and ask ourselves, what do we lack? It allows us to see what the marvelous methods of science, the creations of skill have not been able to give us. What is our situation as men in the Universe? And the answer rises up immediately to consciousness, as if it were already here, before the question was formulated: we are alone, alone as men in front of and among things: we dominate them, we manage them, but we do not understand ourselves with them. If we confuse Compassion with the fact of treating others with delicacy, animals, or plants, it cannot seem so. But Compassion is not philanthropy, nor pity for animals and plants. It is something more: it is what allows us to communicate with them,

in sum, the gigantic, diffuse feeling that situates us among all the planes of being, among the different beings in an appropriate manner. Compassion is knowing how to deal with what is different, with what is radically other.

The idea that man is, above all, consciousness and reason has led to the notion that man is only considered similar to other man. But the process does not stop there, given that the differences among men subsist, and there are races, nationalities, cultures, social classes and economic differences, hence we have arrived at the very visible spectacle of present day society. We hardly know how to interact with those who are almost a reproduction of ourselves. Modern man upon appearing in the world goes in search of a mirror that returns his image, and when he does not find it, he becomes bewildered and, often, wants to break the mirror. We have become terribly incapable of tolerating the fact that there are men distinct from us. What has been invented, in order to fill this void is tolerance, the favorite word in the vocabulary of modern man. But “tolerance” is not understanding, nor suitable dealing, it is simply maintaining distance respectfully, yes indeed with that which he does not know how to handle.

Other Ages in which Compassion had not suffered its eclipse, like in the Middle Ages, for example, show us a contrary situation. Naturally, without violence, nor discourses, without official organisms, in a spontaneous manner, medieval men knew how to deal with everything that was different: in the world of what is human, with the incurable sick, with the monster, including, even with the criminal. And beyond man, with the illusions and ghosts, with the angels and the Gods, with God himself, not conceiving him like a great conscience, not reducing him to what is human, while Modern man has attempted to reduce him to all that he finds immediately within himself;

to what he has believed was his essence: conscience, reason. All has been reduced to conscience and reason and what could not be reduced, was left unknown, forgotten and, at times, vilified.

And hence we have come to remain alone; alone and unsuited to deal with “the other.” But, if we unite the different classes of “the other,” we see that it is nothing less than reality, the reality that surrounds us and in which we are located. And thus now we see even more clearly the vital problem hidden in the problem of the knowledge in the last stage of Philosophy. As is well-known, it was precisely reality, the apprehension of reality, since, apparently, consciousness and intelligence, in themselves alone, do not provide any guarantee that we are in contact with them. Neither has science, with its splendid results, been able to give man the deep conviction of knowing reality, that irreplaceable communion which was attained in the most ingenuous and compassionate ages.

Reality, already the philosophers discover it anew, presents itself in something anterior to knowledge, to idea. Ortega and Gasset, the Spanish philosopher, was elaborating his Vital Reason based on his discovery that reality is prior to the idea, contrary to what is formulated by “idealism.” And if it is prior to the idea, it must be given in a feeling. We call Compassion this feeling when it is felt by a subject, by someone who feels, not reality in a diffuse and heterogeneous way, but rather “types” or kinds of realities that, in some way, must be favorable. A creature that feels reality and at the same time feels himself heterogeneous from it. The consciousness of solitude along with the consciousness of participation, of interacting. While the rationalist, apart from the fact that he believes that reality presents itself to him in an idea or thought, also

believes that only by reducing the reality to thought can he understand it. Compassion is the feeling of the heterogeneity of the being, of the quality of being, and it is a yearning therefore for finding the approaches and ways of understanding each one of these multiple modes of reality.

What is now made evident to us by contrast, and in accordance with what we said before, by absence, was ingenuous belief before rationalism; it was an ingenuousness so much stronger and solid, the more we go back in history, until we see it constituting the mentality, the way of living of primitive peoples.

Will human progress unpardonably condemn Compassion? Modern ethics has tried to substitute it with different virtues or values: such as philanthropy, cooperation and justice. Today compassion is asked for always in name of justice and what is granted is made, equally, its name. Will it be sufficient? Will justice, cooperation, etc. be able to fill that sentimental gap, that state of mind of Compassion, and with it, nourish the flame of creation? Will the human heart and its core be able to be satisfied with nothing more than what is granted by justice? Will the anguish that we debate today be dissipated by remedies born of the mind? Reason and justice are sisters, they walk together; the one is in practice what the other is in knowledge. But its absolute empire will suppose that man has been converted into a being who only needs to know the visible and tangible things, and sustain himself through them. If one lives just on bread, this means to that justice and reason are not enough.

Will there not be, in addition, the distinct and clear flavors, the necessity of others, less distinct and clear, but equally indispensable? Will there not be things and relationships so subtle, hidden, and indiscernible that only by premonition or intuition

may they be capturable? Will it be possible to do without inspiration? In sum, let us say that it is the fearful word that we have observed up to now. Will there not be always, more than an ordering, a sustaining of all that is clear and visible, of all that can be enumerated, a foundation of mystery? The ultimate and abysmal depth of endless reality that man feels in himself, filling him in happy moments and in those of suffering; happiness and suffering appear to us as infinite. And in them is when we feel the reality that not only touches us, but absorbs us, floods us.

Compassion is knowing how to deal with mystery. Therefore, its language and its ways have so disgusted modern man that he has sought frenetically to deal only with what is clear and distinct. Descartes assigned qualities to ideas, “clarity” and “distinction.” Nothing can be objected to there. But insensitively we have come to believe that “clarity and distinction” are equally the notes of reality. And the truth is that not only some realities, very few and far between, can achieve that privilege, those to which we alluded to before, saying that they are the ones that achieve definition. But an immense territory remains that envelops and embraces us, that rejects us by plunging us at times into anguish or desperation, and that is neither clear nor distinct. And there it is; we have seen ourselves at each instant with that reality. It is simply our own life. The mystery does not find us outside; it is within and in each one of us, as much as it surrounds and envelops us. In it we live, and we move. The guide for not losing ourselves in it is Compassion.

Lyceum. Havana. February 1949

Translation of “What is compassion?”<sup>42</sup>

In a brief platonic dialogue, *Euthyphro*, a question is formulated – one of those questions that Socrates brings to bear on the most ordinary things, which those who lived among them had never found surprising. What is compassion? is asked here, directing the investigation toward something at the same quotidian and covert. Here the Socratic character is put on display more than any other aspect; thus we see clearly what Socrates was pursuing and gave his life for doing: to transform simple living, the life that has been handed over to us and that we bear in an inert manner, in what has been called experience. It is experience that forms that first layer, the most humble layer, of knowing “about the things of life” and without which no Ancient would had dared to call himself a philosopher.

But, with all of this, the question about compassion in one Platonic dialogue does not cease to seem strange to us. For a long time philosophic thought has had nothing to do with compassion and even allowed a type of thinking derived from it and a bit so decadent – the “ideologies”– to finalize its destruction. This destruction is nothing other than the meaning of relevance, of validity or of objectivity. Compassion, all that immense world designated by that name, continues living and motivating, but it does not find any space in which to stay in the edifice of the highest fields of knowledge, in that edifice which confers rank, hierarchy, and a place adequate to the realities so that they manifest themselves and function. Compassion has lived incognito for a long time. In

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<sup>42</sup> María Zambrano, *El hombre y lo divino*, 2a ed. (México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993) 200-215.

one of its types: “sympathy,” compassion, has been taken out into the light by the philosopher Max Scheler in a form that shows how great the effort has been. Hence, the philosophic question about compassion produces today a certain strangeness.

This strangeness involves the perception that we are facing a very deep conflict. And so it is this: *Euthyphro* forms along with *Crito* and *Phaedo*, as well as the *Apology*, the apology of the master, condemned to death by virtue of an accusation of non-compassion. The brief and not very commented dialogue thus presents the most dramatic of the questions that Socrates has been able to direct at any of his fellow citizens. Upon doing so, we see him not only as a compassionate man but rather exceeding the simple practice of that virtue, handing himself over to an inquisition of his essence, in other words, submitting his essence to a knowledge.

Rightly so, this was what most irritated Socrates’ fellow citizens: that he tried to convert into knowledge those aspects of life that pass in the shadows, reluctant to let themselves be illuminated by the light of intelligence. We even perceive the mute irritation of which Anyto and Melitus became the clumsy interpreters; a mute irritation in which one always accuses all that which lives in the shadows and which upon being illuminated we do not know if it resists or if it lets itself be carried away by the resentment of not having been liberated before. The truth was felt in Greece as a supreme liberation, and it was in the philosophy of Plato where such meaning acquires the character of sacred revelation. In *The Allegory of the Cave* we see precisely the rebellion of the man who does not want to be liberated. And in this darkness of “the cave” compassion lived together with its adversaries, the shadows. Is it possible that compassion also resisted when facing the light? Today, since we come from a contrary

moment, we feel obligated to look at this conflict. We have passed through an instant in which compassion, scorned by the light, unknown by intelligence, has been submerged in the shadows. It has found itself in the same situation of all that is disdained by consciousness: it has rebelled against this situation and nothing is more grave than a resentful compassion, than a compassion serving as a vehicle for resentment; as a vehicle and as a mask.

Thus, today one does not easily discover, given what philosophy has come to be in the modern epoch, what may be the motive for thought to address compassion. What first occurs to us is that it does so to show its irrationality, in order to uncover its lack of foundation, its not-being. But, it so happens that the conclusion arrived at in the dialogue, through a rather simple dialectic, it is on the contrary an affirmation of compassion. The most Voltaire-like of readers would not be able to discover any trace of irony that might attack the essence of this virtue. And, thus, the first thing that ought to surprise us is that compassion might interest a field of knowledge that is called philosophic.

The first definition proposed is that compassion is the virtue that relates to treating the gods properly in order to arrive at a determination of what is unjust and just.

Without a doubt, as in the *Crito*, that deals with an apology of the master, condemned to death, by virtue of an accusation of not being compassionate. In this dialogue he is presented, on the contrary, not only filled with that virtue but rather possessing it beyond the simple practice and beyond the rhetorical discourses of the sophists; handing himself over to an inquisition of the very essence of compassion. It is a

matter, then, of knowledge. To be compassionate, holy, depends also on an adequate knowledge, like any other virtue.

Plato's answer is fulfilled and goes beyond the accusation, leaving it in the extremely low, intellectual and moral plane to which it corresponds. Nevertheless, the "rumor" that finally resulted in the death and immortality of the master has had the virtue of positing something that is a touchstone, an essential question that always ought to emerge before philosophy and, therefore, before the best of philosophers. Perhaps philosophy does not destroy compassion?

However, what is compassion? In the dialogue *Euthyphro*, despite the dialectical pursuit of compassion that is evident, we do not find ourselves satisfied (perhaps because today we suffer from such a woeful lack of compassion). From this absence today we could come to say "compassion is knowing how to adequately deal with the other." Let us think for an instant: when we speak of compassion, it always refers to dealing with something or someone that is not in our same vital plane; a god, an animal, a plant, a sick or monstrous human being, something invisible or without a name, something that is and that is not. That is to say, a reality belonging to another region or plane of being in which we are human beings, or a reality that borders or is beyond the boundaries of being.

When Socrates asks himself that question, philosophy had already discovered and established the idea of being. Parmenides had triumphed; it will be Plato and Aristotle who specify that unique being through the theory of ideas, through the distinction between substance and essence, qualities and accident; through the *theory of the definition*. "Being is expressed in many ways," says Aristotle, carrying thus the unity of Parmenides' notion of being to its extreme manifestation: it was impossible to go beyond

this specification. Yet all these notions of being are of being only and *they are said*. *To say* and *to be* are in this horizon of *logos* in a perfect correlation: it is being that is properly said. When the question for compassion emerges, the theory of ideas is not even formulated. It is precisely in that first capture of the essences when the question is posited. Could they have had resisted much later when the entire territory of being, of what is said in the *logos* has been enclosed and revealed? In sum: the compassion that is to know how to treat adequately “the other,” is it within the logic of the territory of the “*logos*?” The accusation of Anyto and of Melitus, of not having been inspired by the most anti-compassionate of attitudes, could have been formulated like a serious fear, the fear of “the other;” that all the types of otherness may remain destroyed by the One.

Philosophy, from its origin and, in an evident manner, since the victorious thought of Parmenides, is the declaration and affirmation of unity. The doctrine of unity, already implied in the first question about things – things in their totality – thus already implies that *all things* are unified in being. But unity – and being – was conceived of a different way by Parmenides and by Heraclitus. The purest form of unity triumphed, as perhaps always happens when two versions of a same idea contend, since man is used to adhering to an idea by maximizing it, carrying it to its ultimate consequences. In extremism seems to reside, until now, the capacity of engendering beliefs, the capacity of inspiration.

Parmenides presents the unity of identity in opposition to the unity of harmony among opposites as Heraclitus had claimed. In identity an attractive force seems to reside for man, a force superior to all others, as if for being unrealizable in life, all of life, even without knowing it, it would lean towards it. And it so happens, moreover, since the subject comes to think much later of identity, as the single support, equal to itself, which

the unity of harmony would not have permitted. And this is found in connection with the intimate appetite of being that man has felt. When Plotinus in his fourth *Enneads* presents the proofs of the immortality of the soul, what he proves, in reality, is the existence of the subject. And his reasoning could well be of value in order to speak of the pure subject or of the transcendental subject of German idealism... It is precisely the idea of soul-harmony that Plotinus rejects with greater dialectic force, because who is the one that produces the harmony of the bow and cord? He ought to be a musician, in other words, a somebody, although in the thought of Plotinus the human person may not be present, daughter as she is of Christian inspiration.

It could be said that this unity of identity imposed by Parmenides goes on annulling in its development throughout the history of philosophy all the particular realities that identity cannot reach. If the being identical to himself ended by presenting himself as subject who created the first object, and as absolute subject thereafter, it is because already from the first moment of his formulation he acts in this manner: he reduces, and that what cannot be reduced remains estranged, without the possibility of being recognized.

Hence, we see in the brief dialogue, *Euthyphro*, something revelatory of this process that we are pointing out. Compassion is defined first as the proper treatment of the gods, in order to end up recognized as a virtue, in other words, as a mode of *being a proper man*. A typical conversion of the doctrine of being has been verified and is perhaps more evident here than in other questions: what was perhaps the interaction, relationship, feeling, subjection, of man to realities of another plane – to *other* realities –

has remained converted into a *being* of man. And was this not in order to inspire fear among those who were not philosophers and even among philosophers themselves?

The accusation of not being compassionate had weighed upon the philosophers since it began its ascendance in social life. As is well-known, Anaxagoras was freed from his death sentence by his loyal disciple Pericles. Aspasia, a follower of his philosophy, also suffered the same accusation that would cost her life and would bring immortality to Socrates. It is necessary to think that such accusations, purified of the vileness in which they tended to be wrapped, must have some deep motive, which cannot be reason; it must be that something, an entire way of living, feels threatened and reacts in that dark manner like one who finds himself without arms for battling the light of reason. Thus it is one of the saddest things that reason may only find violence facing it, and it may have to be reason itself that is chastised, like an orphan of something that persuades it.

Conversion to being; reduction to unity. If such an outcome is serious with respect to everything; it will be much more so when it is a matter of interaction with the gods, because the gods have been, until philosophy was born, the masters of the world. All men have hoped for and feared interactions with the gods, and specifically in Greece the life of the gods, their comings and goings, their histories were life, more so than human lives, so precarious, always crushed, victims of greed and slaves of poverty. The Greek gods came to have certain human characteristics, but for that very reason, they became more humiliating for the man who had to feel in them a sort of usurpation. Among gods and men there was an envious relationship. Don Miguel de Unamuno has said that “envy is a form of kinship.” Perhaps envy is the sacred form of kinship, when

beings are not yet defined and, therefore, are tangled up with the being “of one” in “the other;” relatives feel robbed among themselves, and each one finds in “the other” more than in himself. Because, in reality, there is no self... This is what happened between the simple mortals and the immortal gods of Greece... “mortals, immortals... from the ones are born the others,” said Heraclitus. Yet philosophy was going to cut this birth of one from the other, this mutual envy, this engendering and coming undone; it was going to associate the idea of the “being” with the stability of the human being... The gods, through their fearful servants, complained. Such could be the background of the accusation of a lack of compassion against Socrates, which Melito and Anyto, blinded by an envy that was only human, could not accept.

But, what is hidden behind the definition of compassion that we propose? “Compassion is knowing how to deal with the other?” Because dealing with the other is simply dealing with reality. Reality is the “counter-will,” said Ortega y Gasset, in other words, what encircles me and resists. Philosophic thought has known this well from its very roots, since that question in which the philosopher has conserved infantile wonder and which reveals the strange thing that the being called man feels himself to be, a strange thing more than any other thing.

And, now, we see ourselves transferred to a remote time, to a time in which man without the audacity even to ask himself about what surrounds him, found the answer before the question; in other words, a perplexing and measureless reality. This was a time of pure alteration, in which all interactions were hazardous and frightful, a time of interaction with the pure “other,” because “the one” was only present in a veiled manner, attracting, already operating, but without manifesting itself. When in Greece the

Olympic divinities appear, this time has already been vanquished; hence, they are the first comforting apparitions even in midst of their swingings; they are the faces that man feels watching him and the faces that man can watch. Envy, the first form of kinship, appears when there already are faces, beings in formation, unity in transit; when “the one” begins to make itself obvious. Then unity is what produces envy in he who already does not discern it in its confused dispersion.

Before the gods were presented before men, reality was accepted in some other manner; in other words, it was still not reality, and before its immensity, man, strange and confused, conducted himself by verifying some specific actions, sacred actions, “relations with the other,” in which appears what we call compassion.

#### The First Form of Compassion

All true religion conserves as its center a mystery in which subsists the first mystery, and an adequate human behavior that reproduces these sacred actions.

The character of primitive religion of Greece does not differ from the other known ones. The originality of Greek religion is marked precisely in the poetic configuration of the Olympic gods. It is poetry conforming to the gods and explaining the world what makes Greece different from the other ancient cultures even before there was philosophy. And the character of the pact that such gods have is seen clearly if we recognize this profound analogy of the primitive Greek religion with the ancient ones of the world. And the analogy rests on what are above all forms of worship: a worship much more than a revelation. It could be said that revelation (here we use revelation in

the generic sense) was preceded by a long period in which man was led to that mysterious reality in the sacred form par excellence: sacrifice. Wherever there are gods sacrifice will continue to exist and the modern religions that have diluted God in “the divine” have not done nothing other than to leave sacrifice unlimited, dissolving it in indefinable anguish. Thus, anguish is a sacred ill, like envy, but predating it.

Anguish precedes sacrifice. Man preserves – therefore he has history – his states of mind, and the possibility of returning to primitive times is always present. Consciousness and thought upon developing have not been able to erase the trace of the first situation of man in the immense and unnamable reality; in other words, they have not been able to transform the human being from a metaphysical creature into a creature that is simply natural or rational. And primitive anguish revives whenever consciousness declines or seeks too much.

Facing that first undecipherable reality, that has not revealed itself except as immensity and enigma, man claims to offer his best effort; he offers the best. His life, rather than belonging to him, will belong to the unknown deity who, asking for nothing, is satisfied with nothing. The first word has not yet been heard. The sacred world is the naked, hermetic reality, unrevealed. In the immensity, man wants to orient himself with these sacred actions. The first thing that occurs to him is not to think but to do. In doing there is something more passive than in thinking; sacred action is a passive action, as is shown in all the ambiguity of sacrifice, a supreme action that a man or a lineage only has the right to realize and that in being an offering, is a response to that pressure that reality without limits exercises.

Because sacrifice is a pact, like all ritual. It is a pact in which something in exchange for the other is offered. Without a doubt, he who approaches to offer a gift so that it may be consumed does so because he has felt a terrible violence; because he has felt in his anguish the call, because he has felt himself at the point of being totally consumed. He believes that the offering is going to satisfy that fury that threatens him. And he himself seeks in turn to nourish himself. The first relationship that we thus see between man and reality is that of nourishing and providing nourishment. Offering the self in order to rescue the self. To appease by the offering the danger of being devoured, in order to obtain its first portion of being.

If we remember the festivals that are known of primitive Greek religion, we can see three classes of worship: those directed to divinities, those directed to the dead, and those that make palpable the cycle of what later will be the order of nature: the birth and death of spring and of the harvests.

All these devotions provide a means of regulating something, of submitting to limits and rules a relationship that was at first unlimited. Sacrifice before the gods, transitory community with the dead, and the revelation of the cycle of nature, more visible in grain than in anything else. Of the three, a liberation and a strong sense of confidence should emerge. Liberation, confidence in the order of the forces that enable the fruits of the earth and hope to be born and reborn. Hope not revealed, in struggle still with anguish and timidly appearing above it, floating like a premonition, like something that lacks firm base of support.

Knowledge and Compassion

Knowledge that corresponds with reality, signified in sacrifice, is without a doubt inspiration: knowledge received, but without the clarity of knowledge revealed. In inspiration there is also barter as in sacrifice, an exchange in which man receives something superior that perhaps does not belong to him, a gift; one that amplifies the mystery of its origin because it is like nothing more than a sample of an entire territory that should exist and that appears isolated. Knowledge has the character of a gift, of a duty at times for the chosen one, it is almost a stigma, a sign. It is excessive knowledge for the human being that he will have to manage with infinite care. Thus inspiration – something already forgotten in modern times – must captivate in the instant in which it is received, but afterwards it demands a delicate course of action, a knowledge of how to deal with it, as occurs with all that which in being within us does not belong to us. And, thus, knowledge by inspiration belongs entirely to the world of compassion; it is received from something other and in itself it is felt as different from the one who has it; it is a guest whom one must know how to receive and treat, so not to disappear something worse than a void. Because all luminous inspiration has its danger in a contrary inspiration.

And thus poetry is the first knowledge that is born from this compassionate, inspired knowledge. It will always conserve the trace of its inspired origin, from something that arrives from another place, that arrives and flees, a clarity that when it is presented remembers what it did not know, a sudden, unexpected memory that in an instant frees man from that feeling that he does not remember something that is of the greatest importance to him.

Poetry is creation, the first human creation, and it is the inspired word, received, and still passive. Hence the sacred character of the poet, indelible character in all his effigies of whatever time. The poet does not fully know what he is saying, nor less even when he will say it; inhabited by a knowledge of inspiration, it is not at all strange that he may feel or felt to be first inhabited by a god that manifests itself in him. The original poet is an oracle.

But the oracle does not always speak when he is needed, nor is he understood in what he says. And furthermore, who is in the oracle? Who is the one who speaks? Inspiration is a knowledge that puts in relief the anguish of this world of *the other*: the anguish of discontinuity, the anguish of multiple, separate instants through abysses, of emptiness and of silence. Man has not even been able to feel time, his own time, the rhythm of his life. It is not surprising that philosophers called Pythagoreans, who seem to be the intermediaries between inspiration and philosophic knowledge, have discovered rhythm, numbers and music. Because rhythm, numbers, and music are the movement of that world of “the other” at a time in which man is going to begin living in a certain continuity.

There is discontinuity in the knowledge of inspiration, discontinuity in the apparitions of the divine forces. The gods, when they agree to show themselves, to present a face, a figure with certain qualities, when they agree to be named, already establish a certain continuity, a continuity that permits the invocation, the call that makes inspiration and strength descend. It is already an announcement of being, a stage of unity. It is the poetic consciousness that first goes on revealing this sacred, hermetic world, that goes on marking the forms of the pact, albeit an irregular pact, because it does

not proceed from a revelation like in the nation of Israel. The cosmogonies will dare to lift the veil, to glimpse the secrets of the becoming of things, of the engendering of reality, from this enigmatic world as man sees and endures it. Upon daring to look upon its genesis, inspiration offers to man the reason of his anguish and of his suffering. It is the first knowledge, taking advantage of the relative calm produced by the placating sacrifices. Because the cosmogonies are human poetry, that man makes in order to represent himself in unity not only with what he sees, but also with his mysterious genesis, his history. And in that genesis the instant of the irruption of man, always as a creature born of a split. In the presence of the first compassion, poetry does the job that philosophy will do much later; it is a revelation. Confused, intricate, conserving the mystery and therefore far from competing, allied with compassion.

Continuity invades and poetry invades also; it is a bursting forth that philosophy will experience much later. It is Homer who introduces the gods, with his name, with his history. It is the light of Apollo that promises that all will be revealed, it promises to know without hardly any sacrifice. Divine compassion, the answer of an unfading reality, was given in Greece by the light of Apollo. It will be a sign. The supreme compassion will come to be for the Greeks intelligence. And behold why the old, those reluctant to hope become frightened and fear the vengeance of the unnamed world confronted by man who is determined to know. They have not perceived that it is a question of a new form of compassion, of what is going to take place through thought. They do not perceive that Socrates, like Anaxagoras, serves a god. That the old sorcerer was not lying when speaking of *the daemon* enclosed in his interior, with which he was saying clearly that intelligence was responding to an inspiration.

But perhaps it was that deep truth that unleashed fear, seeing that nothing frightens so much the old compassion as the new compassion. And it seems inevitable that he who is its carrier does not perish at the hands of the followers of ancient compassion. Compassion delivers death to the compassion that follows it. And in this crime, realized in the dominion of the sacred, is established – by sacrifice – the birth of the new compassion.

But, is it possible that compassion emerges from the being? On the one hand, however, much being there is becomes absorbed in unity; and on the other hand, what cannot come to be, but in some way has reality, is condemned to the shadows. The gods, divinities opposed to Apollo have to submit themselves to him, they have to be dissolved in his light. How, once the one, the being, is discovered, will it be possible to continue dealing with what cannot be one, with what is the persistent other? The problem will penetrate through the same philosophy and until it will split it. Will there be a relentless and dogmatic response in the Plato who writes *The Republic*, a very sharp consciousness of the problem in the philosophy that thinks of being and unity in the *Parmenides* and of that new compassion that wants to absorb the histories of the old compassion in the Plato who gathers the myths and even the words of the priestess Diotimia in *The Symposium*?

In Aristotle, compassion withdraws as much as possible. It is the thought of the being, in other words, the revelation of the hermetic world of *physis*, that is realized without any pact and without fear. The “immoveable Motor” will absorb – we were going to say in a Hegelian way – the gods; it was going to reveal *physis* and to think the pure presentness where the time of death does not exist. Through Aristotle all interrelation has been converted into being. Being is everything.

The new compassion of Socrates will find its path and in it the solution to the conflict between ancient compassion and the philosophy of being in a philosophic school that is born simultaneously with others, as if all signified the intent to reach the solution of this double conflict. It is a matter of stoicism, born between epicureanism and cynicism. But it is stoicism that discovers the straight path. A desperate cynicism oscillates when facing compassion, it lets itself be devoured by it. Epicurius responds with excessive and fearful calculation. Only stoicism will produce that deep calm united to the enthusiasm proper to true solutions of the great conflicts. Its duration, its capacity, until now undefined, of rebirth, also affirms it. And there is even another proof: its capacity for anonymity, for being inspired by infra-historic paths and persisting without name and barely without written tradition, because we refer to the venerable illiterate cultures, the extreme limit of compassion of intelligence that manages to descend to those who cannot tire of pursuing it, as a form of poetry and of grace.

Stoicism will be thus the classic and lasting solution of compassion emerging from being, and therefore of something that seemed impossible: the persistence of the sacred world in the world of the being and of thought. It will conserve the inevitable “sacrifice” in a subtle form, almost insensible. Reason will be docile to “inspiration” and it will go accompanied by number and by harmony. Its way of domination will be the persuasion and from it will be born fields of knowledge and the arts, forms of negotiation with “the other” that will make intelligence be edifying, conserving. Roman diplomacy will be born, intellectual strategy and even courtesy and protocol, subtle forms of dealing with “the other” just within what is human.

The solution of the conflict would be total and unique if it would have been verified from philosophy, as a doctrine of pure *unity*. But stoicism is the doctrine of unity-harmony of Heraclitus, which Plotinus rejects in his defense of the immortality of the soul. As the lasting, classic solution, stoicism shows the only philosophy that carries with it compassion already humanized even up to that final form that is tolerance. And it is curious that stoicism had more of a musical disposition than an architectural one. And, more than stoicism, it was the pythagoreanism persistent in it, that would find the solution to the tragic conflict between the knowledge of the one and the idea of the being and the multiplicity of what will always be other.

## Chapter 5 Love

The final chapter of this dissertation deals with the concept of love through the works of María Zambrano. The essays that specifically address this concept that I analyze in this chapter come from a section in *Man and the Divine* and a chapter from *Clearings in the Forest*. As discussed in the chapter on compassion, *Man and the Divine* was one of the works that she wrote during her later years in Cuba and then was finished and published in Rome in the mid-1950s. Her work, *Clearings in the Forest*, was done mainly in a cottage in the French-Swiss Alps in the 1970s. These three texts all deal with some aspect of love as she sees it throughout her life. On the one hand, she examines love on both a historic and universal level while on the other hand, she dives into the personal and poetic in order to demonstrate how love finds its way among the relationships to man and to nature. Many times there may not be a clear understanding from her words, but it is through the poetry of the text that one can gain a sense of her thoughts.

In the chapter from *Man and the Divine*, “On a history of love,” Zambrano begins by addressing the idea that love finds itself impoverished in a moment of history. It is not that love does not exist, but that it has not found a place in the mind or the soul – hence, it

is homeless in a sense. There are many things today that impede love, many obstacles and barriers. It has also become confused with many sentiments and instincts and has been treated like a secret sickness from which it must free itself. Love must free itself, according to Zambrano. Love “has found itself without a ‘vital space’ where it can flourish; it is like a bird asphyxiated in the emptiness of a negative freedom” (*El hombre y lo divino* 256). Here we have her speaking of love in poetic terms and almost giving it natural characteristics in order to get a point across. Again, the freedom that she speaks of is a negative one. In modernity, when freedom has become the “be all and end all” of human life, man is left with an empty freedom; he inhabits a void. Freedom is unanchored from love, from compassionate interaction. Freedom is a possibility that cannot realize itself except when love breeds it: “‘In the beginning was the Word,’ love, the light of life, the word made flesh (the incarnate flesh), the future realizing itself without end. Under that light, human life was discovering the infinite space of a real freedom, the freedom that love grants to its slaves” (*El hombre y lo divino* 256). As we can see, Zambrano draws from the Gospel of John (1:1) in order to set her reader along the path of her historical play with the concept of love. At the dawn of human history, she suggests, human life was at the point of discovering a real freedom, one that would allow man to love. The absence of love is something that affects the human being in many ways. In fact, if love retreats, it has not necessarily lost anything momentarily, but certain things may emerge with more force and clarity: “the rights of the human being, having become independent, all the energies previously integrated love remain loose and rove on their own. And, as always when a disintegration is produced, there is a swift freedom, in truth a pseudo-freedom, that very soon exhausts itself” (*El hombre y lo*

*divino* 257). At this point, contrary forces that responded against the idea of “Humanism” have now assumed its face and figure. Humanism today is

the exaltation of a certain idea of man that does not even present itself as an idea, but rather as a simple reality: man’s renunciation of himself, his limitlessness; his acceptance of itself as a bare psychological-biological reality; his consolidation into a thing that has some determined necessities, all justified and justifiable. (*El hombre y lo divino* 257-58)

In this condition man is chained to necessity: he has renounced love and exchanged his passions for complexes. He denies the acceptance of divine inheritance believing himself liberated from suffering and from passion that is part of the divine. Hence, man has tried to free himself from the divine in two ways. First, he has turned to idealism, seeing history as an orderly design unfolding in time, under the auspices of a “divine” historical subject. The second attempt to free oneself from the divine is quite the opposite: the belief that reality is governed rationally by laws of cause and effect. Such believers are positivists without knowing it. In both cases, there is a denial of the ultimate mystery, the incalculability of the divine, the inaccessibility of God.

In this tireless attempt to find freedom from the divine, love falls by the wayside: love is “converted into fact, diminished into an event that is subject to judgement and to explanation, in other words, bastardized in its very essence” (*El hombre y lo divino* 259). Dispossessed of its force and virtue, in no way can love take the form of a captivating passion. Hence, Zambrano asserts, “Love, when it is not accepted, converts into nemesis, into justice; it is an implacable necessity from which there is no escape” (*El hombre y lo divino* 259). It is the retreat of the divine, and with it human love which encloses man in a historical prison that is converted into a nightmare of the eternal return. The absence of love does not mean that amorous episodes or passions no longer appear, but that it is

confined in the narrow limits of individual passions and rare events. Moreover, an individual passion, a personal one, remains confined in tragic form because it is submitted to justice. Zambrano states, “Love lives and inspires, but it is submitted to a process in front of a justice that is implacable fatality, the absence of liberty; love is being judged by a conscience where there is no place for it, before a reason that has denied itself to it. And in this way it remains as buried alive, living, but inefficient, without creative force” (*El hombre y lo divino* 260).

When love does not have space in order to transcend and when it no longer informs human life, a sort of sign appears, a nemesis that presides over the destiny of men. Then re-capping her argument, Zambrano contends that “[t]he so-called complete divinization of man and of history produces the same asphyxia that must have existed when, in remote times, man was not reaching to find placed under the sun in the space filled with gods, of semi-gods, of demons. Nor then did love exist” (*El hombre y lo divino* 260-61). When did love exist is a good question to pose. In ancient Greece, love was born as a philosophical knowledge, a moment in which gods permit man to search for his being. Love, the Greek Eros, was also eagerness and hunger, a contrary thing, “creator of distances, of limits, of borders between what is human and what was divine that united and maintained the distance!” (*El hombre y lo divino* 261) Love was something that gave meaning to the suffering of human life, to passion, and transforming it into an act. It was a strange god, a humanizing one that despite its delirium was an organizing divinity of the delirium that is human life. The history of love is one that includes delirium, according to Zambrano.

In the next section of this essay, “Historical Apparition of Love,” Zambrano discusses how love emerged in ancient times. The appearance and entry of love into society was “nothing other than its entrance into clarity of the consciousness from the surrounding world” (*El hombre y lo divino* 261). She argues its mode of appearance and how love became accessible to consciousness. At this point love “wanders outside, alienating human life, possessing it, according to the thousand-year-old and venerable beliefs of all nations. The thing that one day has shown its face, and has shown itself in figure, had been before shapeless reality” (*El hombre y lo divino* 261-62). Again, it is in Greece where love begins to reside, an epiphany of reality that forms the spirit and verifies itself. It is in the cosmogonies where love makes this initial appearance. In the appearance of love, it is seen to be a reality, an original potency

for the fixation of an orbit, of an order. The cosmogonies are the poetic instrument of order, the manifestation that announces and verifies the step from chaos to order. The most venerable ones begin: ‘In the beginning was Chaos.’ ‘In the beginning was Night,’ says the orphic, where love encounters its mysterious sign. (*El hombre y lo divino* 262)

A cosmogony is an explanation that tries to be philosophical or scientific, and it is something that does not have an inspired character, she observes. The orphic cosmogonies, on the other hand, are completely inspired and sacred and do not have a human author, for its author is a mythological character.

When we come back to the main point of the essay, we encounter a discussion of “the principal trait of love in Greece” (*El hombre y lo divino* 263). Love is presented poetically to consciousness, it is a “story of the movement from chaos to the world, the metamorphosis of the potential vagabonds in strength submitted in turn; poetic and historical consciousness of the first metamorphosis in which the habitable world for the

human being is born” (*El hombre y lo divino* 263). Love is something that appears in an instant of revelation in which the human being discovers the world. Love is a result of the work of something or someone, accompanied by a passion and effort that have taken place in some other time, one previous to human beings:

Love is a potential previous to the world that we see, and it has been in the first metamorphosis of the chain of visible metamorphoses that mark the formation of the universe. It could be said that love has produced the necessary metamorphosis so that in the immensity of the powers, a world is formed where the human being can dwell. (*El hombre y lo divino* 263)

From this chaos, which is previous to the inhabited world, the cosmic reality, one without number or harmony, one without space or time, one without conditions for human existence, there exists an immense incommensurable reality. In this reality there is this sacred revelation from which the human being traces the passage of events. When love establishes its domain or its orbit in the sacred world, it is as if some wild powers lash out. In a world created by God from nothingness, the previously mentioned powers are those that rebel before creation. Envy appears again, an envy that is similar to that of brotherly envy. Envy is a relationship, as discussed in one of the previous chapters. The residue that results from envy and chaos are the conflicts of tragedy in which “love is, deep down, the only protagonist. At the root of Greek tragedy, from its insoluble crux, is always love; a love that has not been clarified, that has not been put into order; that has not been folded into the orbit, that is not in order with nature” (*El hombre y lo divino* 264). In this, tragedy was the literary genre that must have had to follow the cosmogonies. It is a sacred genre that expresses the initial conflicts of the world. From this time period, man and gods have lived together in “true divine and human commerce” in which love has shone in all of its splendor, displaying its mediating condition. As

Zambrano observes, “Everything that love has come to be and to exercise in modest human life had already been in the passage from chaos to order, when human beings were guests of the gods and, on occasions, their rivals. The Earth was left for the human beings, for the lonely human beings. And, then, love was a passion” (*El hombre y lo divino* 265). Passion was something that absorbed love and which ended up residing with its sacred character. This sacred character can be seen in Aphrodite. Love did not necessarily reside within her, rather, “she is the sign of the humanization of love, from her appearance in the already profane human world” (*El hombre y lo divino* 265). Aphrodite presents an ambiguous aspect of a profane divinity that is offered in her expressions. This force of love resides in the world and resides in the fury of passion. This passion is something that Zambrano regards as “demonic” in the human being, something which surprises man in his own being.

Even after love enters human consciousness, it remains on the margins. She states that love “will always be in the limits of what is human with that which is not it yet or with that which will never be it, with those residues of the first womb from which man pulled himself out of in order to live as an independent being with his own life” (*El hombre y lo divino* 266). On these limits passion also dwells and passion is what inhabits the tragedies; it has a sacred character that is also ambiguous. Here is where we see the goddess of love, Aphrodite, maximizing the ambiguity of love in her figure. Revealed love is reduced to human love. However, Aphrodite is not an abject divinity but is human, Zambrano insists; she serves as “a depositary of something sacred in which the condition of the sacred has been excessively revealed in order to adapt while descending to the human dimension” (*El hombre y lo divino* 266). When referring to Aphrodite, one

sees that her most divine trait is that of being a valuable gift that had been offered by the sea. Her sea-foam is also considered a significant part of her being because along with the divine fury that throws her from the sea, there is grace, a certain kind of levity that is dominated by gravity. She is a “[f]ragile gift that man can at once make wither with his breath, and the most needed of all gifts for its purity and innocence” (*El hombre y lo divino* 266-67). The result of this is the lovechild Eros. Her companion, brother or lover, is Adonis. She is an ambiguous divinity that offers her gift like an easy present that turns out to be impossible for humans, a present that requires innocence, something which man knows he has lost.

In divinity the most profound game is love. Aphrodite is more the goddess of play than of love. In fact, she can be called the goddess of love-passion. The intent of reviving the Classical gods has its roots in that of game and diversion. Play is superficial and visible when it comes to the sacred world. Such play and festivity are on the same plane as tragedy. The intoxication of it produces the fury of passion while also producing play. Here is where Dionysus steps in, for he has the two faces, one of comedy and one of tragedy. Again, as stated before, love is something that belongs to the cosmogonies, according to Zambrano. She writes:

And only in the historical eras that have a clear consciousness of the cosmogony, be it for harboring something in their beliefs or for suffering the anxiety of it, will love live its splendor. And to the degree that the consciousness of the human being is narrowed and his vital space is circumscribed to what is merely human, love will diminish at the same time in real and daily life and in its own existence. Love corresponds to moments of maximum vital space: it is in direct relationship with the horizon. (*El hombre y lo divino* 267-68)

The horizon is something that has an intimate correspondence with love, given that love dwells on the limits of human life. Philosophy’s role is that of the human gaze. It is also

a gaze toward the horizon. Because of this, philosophy has a historical moment and receives a sort of inheritance that is love, love of the cosmogonies which is distributed between tragic passion and the gaze of philosophy. Love, then, “has been split; [...] It is divided into a passionate, intimate eros and into an eros of the gaze” (*El hombre y lo divino* 268). Tragedy and philosophy are part of this inheritance of love.

Not only are tragedy and philosophy the heirs of love, but they also mark the entrance of love into the human orbit. They make man enter himself into his consciousness, a consciousness of suffering from tragedy, through the gaze of philosophy. The difference between the two is the following:

Tragedy shows the suffering of the inextinguishable passion that neither rests nor exhausts itself, that can only hope for salvation in its total consummation. Philosophy will carry within itself, from the first instant, the contrary; the supreme aspiration to that which in its maturity declares as a virtue: apatheia, impassivity. (*El hombre y lo divino* 269)

Love, thus, creates two directions for the human being: acceptance of suffering and impassivity. Because of this, the capacity of alienation takes part in this play of love. Philosophy is a form of love that converts alienation into identity, and it is here where the split between philosophy and poetry occurs. While the cosmogonic period takes place, philosophy and poetry are one and united. Lyrical poetry itself has the love of tragedy in it while also liberating it from the event. It is abstraction and alienation. Philosophy encounters an inspired identity in which man encounters his being and things that are beyond themselves. Once man begins unfastening himself, those things then convert into facts, and philosophy disappears. At the division of poetry and philosophy, love terminates its historical appearance, it has fulfilled its revelation. What follows are human attitudes towards love, and these ideas will be opinions. Love has entered into human life

as well as into the human being. Love itself is the revelation of human life. Love is like a divine potency, and when man “feels it and knows it as his, inside of his condition, forming part of nature, he has already decided to be man and to live as such; he has found his difficult place in the cosmos, unstable place that throws him at history. If human equilibrium were stable, history would not exist” (*El hombre y lo divino* 270). It is at this point that one sees love belonging to morality with a triple existence in reality, one marked by poetry, one marked by inspiration and one marked by aspiration.

Love will eventually find its seat in the soul. This is where Psyche and Eros walk together. The soul acts as a mediating reality that has entered into the human being. The belief of having a soul is not primary. The primitive world shows a richness in integrating beliefs in what is known as animism, where souls reside in trees, in animals, and in things. In other words, “they chose as their dwelling the stones and enchanted places; they vivify the land in those sources of what is sacred – ‘rich place in the souls’ – says an ancient Egyptian document” (*El hombre y lo divino* 271). The soul and love are known to measure the distances of the universe in which they pass through different forms of reality, living them and linking them. The soul and love existed prior to the world of being. To be human consists of entering into the soul in the human being, and along with it, love. This kind of entering is suffering. The human being suffers also because in him are various other souls at discord with him. Love, therefore, is the agent of unity. According to Zambrano, “In poetic tragedy, [love] will be the agent of identity, the yearning for unity, although it remains frustrated. Love will be agent of the fixation of the soul, of each individual soul” (*El hombre y lo divino* 272). Men, carried along by love, will go along the path where the goal is unity and the becoming one.

Love also establishes the law of necessity and liberty. Loving and necessity are major categories of being. In freedom, the weight of necessity is felt and in necessity, freedom is introduced. Love transcends all, for it is the agent of transcendence in the human being. In the final section, “Love in human life,” Zambrano examines further love’s transcendence. Because of its transcendence, it opens a future, a future or an eternity that is “the opening without limits to another space and to another time, to another life that appears to us as the life of truth – the future that also attracts history” (*El hombre y lo divino* 273). At the same time love launches us into the future, obliging us to transcend. As part of its transcendent force, love has a destructive force, at times leaving a void. In the abyss one may bury love, life and reality itself. Love, Zambrano says, “discovers the reality and the inanity of things, the one that discovers the non-being and even the void. And everything that it carries within itself, a drizzle of this love some day uncovers the emptiness of things and in them, because each thing and each being that we know aspires to more than that which it really is” (*El hombre y lo divino* 273). This love goes between conflicting zones of reality. There is being and non-being, and love discovers this in order to go beyond it. Going beyond it also means giving birth to the consciousness, elevating the soul to reason. The soul itself has its limits, and it opens up to the consciousness, where it gives birth to that consciousness. If man were born into love, there would be no need for the consciousness.

Love integrates the person; it also makes a sacrifice. In the center of the sacrifice is death. As Zambrano writes, “the one who truly loves already dies in life. He learns to die. It is a true apprenticeship for death” (*El hombre y lo divino* 275). Philosophy looks to make its followers human beings that are “mature for death,” so that it is love that is in

the root of the human attitude that chooses philosophy. Love will also appear in the world in the modern age as love-passion. As such, love can also act as an instrument of consumption, “as fire that purifies and as knowledge. An inexpressible knowledge almost always in a direct way and that therefore finds itself hidden underneath the most objective thought, under the works of art of coldest appearance” (*El hombre y lo divino* 275). The action of love, which is the character of what is divine in the human being, knows itself. The human being suffers and tolerates love. Being human is to weigh upon something, and love “does not achieve a decrease but rather a disappearance of that gravity that when it does not exist is the sustenance of morality, the condition of those who live morally” (*El hombre y lo divino* 276). She sees the center of gravity of the person as something that has been moved to the person first loved, and, when passion disappears, such movement will remain, being “outside of oneself.” The human being is ready to take flight, ready for whatever departure. The unimaginable future or the unreachable future of the promise of true life that love instills is a future that inspires and consoles, and it will collect all of the hopes and dreams from where creation sprouts. It is “that fire without end that breathes in the secret of all life. What unifies with the flight of its transcending life and death, like simple moments of a love that is always reborn from itself. The most hidden of the abyss of divinity; that which is inaccessible that descends at every hour” (*El hombre y lo divino* 276). This is what Zambrano emphasizes in this essay. Again, one sees the use of nature and the use of abstract concepts to discuss her view on love. From the abstractions in the essay “On a history of love” from *Man and the Divine*, to the abstractions of the next essay from *Clearings in the Forest*, one can see the deep level in which much of Zambrano’s work resides.

In chapter five of *Clearings in the Forest*, Zambrano centers the essay on the metaphor of the heart. As is commonly known, the heart has cavities, which metaphorically allows for something to enter it. It is also known as the center of the existence of a man. She refers to Aristotle, who considered the heart an “immobile motor, ultimate and supreme center [that] impresses on all of the universe and to each one of its creatures and beings without excusing any” (*Claros del bosque* 63). The center is a sort of interiority that has an act, which is life. The heart, this center of life, moves in a sort of way without really moving itself. Circulation passes through the heart on the inside; it is likened to a house that has movement and life that also circulates throughout its center. It does so in a happy manner, and it is not like a tent, for in the tent, “first dwelling fabricated by man, the horizon is the limit, the circle that limits and covers, it is like a horizon natural for its habitant. And it shows that everything that man has as his own is dwelling and prison, at the same time his dominion and enclosure” (*Claros del bosque* 63-64). The house and place of dwelling, like the heart, is its own place of liberty. Here, like in the heart, the blood flows and is divided and returns to be reunited with itself. There is where the heart finds its reason, when it has reunited with itself in the center of its being. Inside the heart, though it be the center, there is a hollow or a vital space, a space that is its own. It is in the hollow where the being lives. This living being is part of the void of the carnal human organism. He is the living being that compares his life to the universe and lives guided by his own reason. This reason, which is vital, is eventually left in suspense.

Sound is another important factor in the story of the heart. It is one of the only organs that actually does make a sound. It is because of this that Zambrano gives the

heart a privileged position in the being. The beating of the heart is like the steps of man upon the earth which marks the sound of man moving forward in life. Man feels joyful “when he feels himself form part of a courtship in which other human creatures and other kingdoms, in perfect serenity when it feels to move at the same time with the stars and even with the firmament itself, and with the silent rotation of the earth” (*Claros del bosque* 65). The heart has at some point a single rhythm that occupies it. At times there are pauses in that rhythm, and it is here where it is “in wait of taking possession of the face of the present” (*Claros del bosque* 65). In that pause are the simple breaths of man. In this breathing, man breathes freely as he lies awaiting, with the weight of the past on him, “without knowing nor without feeling the present that comes to settle in, as pure as this present may be, for as loose as it may seem. Because the pure gift of being awaits, without any kind of effort” (*Claros del bosque* 65). Here is where the gift of life and the gift of being merge in Zambrano’s thought. She uses the heart and respiration to get at the heart of her meaning through this imagery of the human being. The use of the stars as another image that unites man with his being, calling him innocent in order to maintain the same idea of the heart as remaining part of such innocence of man.

Zambrano continues by positing the idea of the heart as a prophet. Again we have the strong imagery that complies with her method of poetic reason that is quite particular to this text: “[t]he heart is a prophet, like that which being a center is on an edge, always at the border of going even further beyond where it has already gone. It is at the point of breaking into speech, of which its reiterated sound is articulated in those instants in which it almost stops in order to catch its breath” (*Claros del bosque* 66). Once more sound appears at the site of the heart in her work, but here sound relates to the word. As in the

essay “Why One Writes,” the word bursts forth in its dawning. It is a mechanism for knowing. This knowing is also bound up with an anxiety of perhaps not being at the creation from the beginning. Man senses a “fundamental resentment” in his heart from being absent from the creative act. Zambrano refers to the story of Genesis in which man

succumbs to the promising seduction of the future: ‘You will be like gods,’ not as a desire for happiness but rather aiming for the opposite of happiness which overwhelmed him in order to go searching for his own creation, for something that he had made, and without having to contemplate what was offered to him, in order to flee from the pure presence of those beings whose name was known but not its secret. (*Claros del bosque* 66-67)

The word that results from this search is not necessarily lost but shines brightly in clarity. This word would go about being an inextinguishable clarity; it would go about transcending. The interior voice identifies some words that are heard from within the self as well as outside of the self. It is like the spirit that remains suspended when identifying that which beats in the heart. When all of this happens, the perfect music is made, the song.

At this point Zambrano returns to the heart as a metaphor. To her the heart at times remains deaf and mute, enclosed in an impenetrable silence. The mind is then left to figure out the rest. This then leads to perceptions that lead to judgments. She contends that “what is judged would not always be so when the heart were light or when its rhythmic march simply continues on; it would appear then judged in another way without throwing a load of weight, without weighing it down” (*Claros del bosque* 68). The physicality of Zambrano’s language once again appears in her work. The judgments carried in the heart are heavy and must be dealt with in order to have a sort of peace in the heart. The heart, with so much weight, feels submerged. The beating of the heart is also its call. There is also a silent invocation that departs in an undefined direction. The

mind itself signals these directions, yet it can leave the heart without having meaning. If the submerged heart is called, it may not answer for no word is worthy enough to serve it. The heart searches out an ear to hear the word, but it might not be successful in gathering what it is saying. Once again, the concept of sound plays a role in the poetic reason of Zambrano in this essay.

Like the heart, the sun is a center, a luminous center, filled with light and filled with knowledge. There are many suns and many hearts. All of this power is linked to the functioning of the many centers. Each center is filled with life and vigor. The interior space, the soul, is not an inert space. Whether called the soul or the heart it is “profound, great, wide, immense, dark, luminous” (*Claros del bosque* 69). Moreover, it is “the condition of the heart as center, [...], that determines and makes other centers appear shining and illuminating” (*Claros del bosque* 69). Zambrano also states that “whether these multiple centers pertain to so-called external reality or the world, they are reflected in the centers” (*Claros del bosque* 69). The heart supports these centers, for it is the center, and it enters into a sort of multiple reality where the heart is weighed and measured in a calculation, in the image of the calculation of the universe. Zambrano refers to a statement by Leibniz that “ ‘God, calculating, made the world’ ” (*Claros del bosque* 69). What he is suggesting here is that if the universe was created by some form of divine workmanship, then it is up to man to sustain it. The heart must then take over and be the point of balance for such an endeavor. With the multiplicity of realities that exist for man, it is difficult for him to fulfill such a role. Zambrano is saying that the heart must be the guide for such an exploration and such an endeavor. It bears the weight

of the world, knowing that it could be humiliated, but knowing that it is still part of the plan of existence for man. The heart is at the core of this existence.

The heart, the core of existence, is loaded down with a weight and cannot continue to lower itself for long. Not only does weight bear down upon it, but the heart may be lost and be difficult to find. When it is found, it announces its arrival or its presence. From this a sort of beginning takes place. If the heart is lost, it may end up returning tired, out of sorts, reified. It may end up in the abyss, the abyss of the self, one that opens up into the center of the universe. It could be alone and at the depth of nothingness. This nothingness that she refers to “is not like the simple nothing but rather a floating down into the abyss, a dumbfounding of the self” (*Claros del bosque* 70). The heart has not lost its condition as center, for it continues to feel the breeze of life, the breath under waters. The heart will then ascend to the surface of these waters, taking the invisible light and making from it a lamp that will guide its way. The heart, then, will dominate the darkness, overcoming the process of nothingness and turn to its will of continuing on in both the light and in the darkness.

This work of the heart is revealed as a beating or a pulsation of the center. The beating of the heart leads to being revealed as the core of life. It is also very vulnerable as it goes through this process, as is any heart that travels through light and dark. The fundamental thing to remember is that the heart is what lives, what pulses, and what gives meaning to the life of man. One must remain faithful to this beating, to this pulsation, so that in its constant movement a victory can be raised, which is the victory of life and of love. By not believing in this, every reason remains without a reason, while the truth comes closer to the one who feels the beating of the heart. One must defend the beating

of his heart in order to defend his own existence. All of this is the poetic reasoning of Zambrano as she pushes the idea of the heart at the core of the human being, and that the heart acts as the central agent in search for the truth of his existence.

When the heart waits in the “house of life” and the “riverbed,” it is looking for its own reality that is doused in purity and unity. It searches for this place of rest, and it does all of this in solitude: “[t]here is a type of solitude that begins by being not an isolation but rather a having stripped away every property” (*Claros del bosque* 72-73). It remains alone and extinguishes the feeling of what is one’s own. The heart remains in that state without support. Within it is a type of revelation of its interiority. The question of what is in its being is the one that arises. In that interiority lives the purity and unity of the being. There, thought is also found to exist, all of it identified by the heart. This is where intelligence and heart unite, and it is where the beating or the pulsation starts. In reference to unity, she says:

The unity that is shown as ephemeral, then is lost because of the care demanded by the human condition and that which increasingly threatens to devour it. But, the unifying withdrawal of the mind with the being saves, even giving itself in a discontinuous way, it bears witness of a being which is life, and revitalizing life. (*Claros del bosque* 73)

The mind is connected to the human condition and is continuously threatened by the unknown status of the condition of life. One condition that does exist in the human condition is silence. Silence reveals itself in the beating of the heart. There is no concern over the quantity or the quality of the beating. Whatever watches over the heart does so without jealously guarding a secret. Again, the idea of the secret persists in Zambrano’s work. What secret is she holding onto in her work? The secret of the being, which is individual in all of the beings, is the one that she may be proposing again. The silence

that surrounds the heart and its secret is, at this point, one that does not carry a weight attached to it and, thus, it feels no hardship. The test of the quality of the silence is shown in the way time passes without feeling,

without making itself felt as successive time nor as an atemporality that imprisons, but rather as a time that is consumed without leaving residue, without producing the past, like flapping its wings without escaping from itself, without threat, without even signaling even the arrival of the present, nor even less to directing itself to a future. A time without transit. (*Claros del bosque* 74)

The use of time in her essay is apparent here. Silence is subjugated to time, but it is not pursued in a ferocious manner. It is something that does not “produce a past” but is something that looks to the future as does the heart with every pulsation that it makes. The word appears here as well trying to create its own place. The word is silent to the writer and to the reader, yet when spoken is not silent. The word reflects the natural movements of the being, whether physically or mentally. From these natural movements of the being, little has been determined. They attract, and go away, creating insurmountable distances that later may be annulled. The movements stem from the divinity, and in it “they appear as the mirror of perfection, while in the human being they appear as the sharpening, or the fading, a place and it is lost, lost secret or simply a transgression” (*Claros del bosque* 74). The heart does not have the ability to breathe in the silence of its being. The place of the heart is a sort of hollow that does not float in the void, nor has it become attached as in its dark place. The heart is considered to be innocent, and it is a presence that when it stops being one will take in everything. The measure of innocence of the heart brings forth the diversity of presences that present the wealth of the world and the splendor of the universe. Only a human who is gifted with an innocent heart could dwell in the universe.

Zambrano equates the heart to a vessel of pain, “a chalice that the entire being of the person must soak up. And if it does so slowly with the necessary composure, upon spreading itself through the being it begins to circulate with the pain, mixed by it, in it, the reason” (*Claros del bosque* 75). This pain that the heart feels may not necessarily have an essence, a substance, or any kind of reason. In this offering of the heart, the vessel is converted into an act of ongoing suffering. The heart is a center that moves and suffers, yet it must also continue to give even when it goes into hiding. This is to say that the innocent heart gives despite its pain and suffering. In this instance love plays a role, for an innocent heart is a heart full of love that automatically gives to the one for whom the love and his heart is destined. This heart is the active center of feeling. Zambrano calls it “active passivity.” Here she goes into the use of nature to again make her point: “[i]t passes through the river of life that must submit to number and to rhythm. Active passivity. Mediator without pause. Slave that governs” (*Claros del bosque* 76). The river is an image that appears in several works of hers, and here it serves as the traditional metaphor for the passage of time. Like the river of time, everything passes through the heart. This heart is a mediating heart. It is a heart that must know itself among the light and the dark. Its center contains and protects the origin of light. It is with this light that the heart is able to guide itself among the world and among other beings. The heart, many times a metaphor for love, is a powerful agent that drives itself as well as the person who acts in modes of compassion and love in his life and in the life of the other. The heart is constructed with open chambers through which the blood of life flows, and it is through these chambers that love joins it. The physicality of Zambrano’s use of the

heart when referring to love and to its interaction with the other is very indicative of her style of writing in the poetic reason of her work.

Translation of "On a history of love"<sup>43</sup>

One of the poverties of our times is that which refers to love. It is not that love has not existed but rather that its existence has not found a place, an acceptance, in today's mind and even in the soul itself of he who is visited by love... In the unlimited space that, in appearance, today's mind opens to all reality, love stumbles into obstacles with infinite barriers. Love must justify itself and give reasons without end, and it must resign itself finally to be confused with the multitude of sentiments or instincts, if it does not accept that dark place of "the libido" or be treated like a secret sickness from which it would have to free itself. Freedom, indeed all the freedoms do not seem to have served love well at all. It is freedom of consciousness less than any other; since, in the same proportion that man has believed that his being consisted in being conscious and nothing more, love has gone on finding itself without a "vital space" in which to encourage, like a bird asphyxiated in the emptiness of a negative freedom.

Freedom has gone on acquiring a negative sign, it has continued converting itself – it (freedom) as well – into negativity as if upon having made liberty the *a priori* of life, love, the first thing, would have abandoned it, and man would have remained with an empty freedom, the void of his possible being, as if freedom were nothing but that possibility. Man is that the possible being that cannot realize himself except from the love that engenders. "In the beginning was the Word", the love, the light of life, the word made flesh (the incarnate flesh), the future realizing itself without end. Under that light,

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<sup>43</sup> María Zambrano, *El hombre y lo divino*, 2a ed. (México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993) 256-276.

human life was discovering the infinite space of a real freedom, the freedom that love grants to its slaves.

To live the negative aspect of liberty seems to be the destiny that the human being of our epoch must urgently face: to exhaust that difficult experience. There is nothing more difficult than the negation, that which happens in negation, in the shadow and in hollowness. Life in negation is what lives in the absence of love. When love – inspiration, divine breath in man – retreats, it does not seem at the moment that anything has been lost, and certain things even seem to emerge with more force and clarity; the rights of the independent human being, all the energies that have integrated love remain loose and roving on their own account. As always when disintegration is produced, there is a swift freedom, in truth, a pseudo-freedom, which very soon exhausts itself.

Hence, something extremely strange comes to happen and makes the matter more unfathomable. Since Romanticism, when love ascended suddenly to the surface of life, it has not ceased to have its servants, its supporters. Poets, more than any others, remember to a degree the ancient situation, when only the poets upheld love at the periphery of the city and almost at the periphery of the law. Only today no one dares formulate, not even hypothetically, any law against love, and no city closes its doors; on the contrary, everything seems to be cleared, laws included... However, in reality, the doors are open for its substitutes, for everything that supplants it. Hence, the rebellion of the poets, love's irreducible servants, fall into a type of emptiness; their deliria encounters no resistance, the clearest form of a pseudo-freedom that we enjoy; nothing resists, no law is levied.

Such it is that all contrary forces to which one day would respond to the name of “Humanism,” have today taken on its face, its figure, its very name. With a slight difference: the Humanism of today is the exaltation of a certain idea of man that does not even present itself as an idea, but rather as simple reality: man’s renunciation of himself, of his limitlessness; his acceptance of himself as unadorned psychological-biological reality; his consolidation into a thing that has some determined necessities, all justified and justifiable. Again man finds himself chained to necessity, but now by his own decision and in the name of liberty: he has renounced love in favor of the exercise of an organic function; he has exchanged his passions for complexes, because he does not want to accept the divine inheritance, believing himself freed, therefore, from the suffering and from the passion which all that is divine suffers amongst us and within us.

Modern man has tried to free himself from the divine in two ways. The first is the intention that marks idealism, all idealisms, and furthermore, that which seeks to enter into creation, seeing creation in history, and the individual as the moment of that divine happening. It is to liberate oneself from the divine because in the life of each man the divine would be nothing, and it would be everything. Inasmuch as he is subject to knowledge, man, as pure subject, is divine, and more so, if he has before him the total horizon of “absolute knowledge.” Inasmuch as he is an agent of history, he is divine because he performs a divine process himself and, therefore, has no right to make a claim. Neither when he knows nor when he acts as “the idealist” does he have the right nor the possibility of complaint, of directing himself to “someone.” He does not have anyone beyond himself; the divine is not in the hereafter; for it is no longer an unknown form; it is the ambition to finish with the unknown God, with what is unknown about

God, then everything, history, becomes the center of this everything; it is precisely revelation. But to accept the divinity of truth is to accept the ultimate mystery, the inaccessibility of God, *Deus absconditus* who lives on in the breast of the revealed God. Man refuses to endure God and the divinity that he carries within him.

The other way in which the longing to free oneself from the divine has manifested itself is naturally the opposite of idealism: the belief that all of reality, human life included, is composed of events: composed of events submitted to causes which are called reasons, thus returning to the initial meaning of the Latin *ratio* – accounts. For such a man, a positivist without knowing it, being only a believer and not a philosopher, to seek and to give reasons is to make calculations. The divine is the incalculable, that which can destroy every calculation, and that which on all accounts preserves as correctly done, an absurd number; because it transcends the events in an eternal process. Emerging from this process, like knots of the divine, man stands out. The individual who thus puts up a resistance to the divine, then, is not enslaved by it, but he is carried along only in those forms in which his life, without ceasing to be his, momentarily estranges itself, in order to later be truly his, in certain processes, in which it is necessary to lose oneself in order to find oneself conquered.

This untiring game of giving reasons for events includes within itself the events of love, love converted into an event, atrophied into a mere happening submitted to judgement and to explanation, in other words, distorted in its essence, such that everything transcends it, dispossessed of its force and its virtue. For love it is useless to appear in the form of a captivating passion: it is as if someone were to carefully perform a surgical analysis and extract the divinity and power from love in order to leave it

converted into an event, into the exercise of a human right and nothing else. This happens in an episode of necessity and of justice.

Love, when it is not accepted, turns into a nemesis, into justice; it is an inflexible necessity from which there is no escape. Like the woman who is never adored, love turns into a Fate that cuts off human beings' lives. Hence, it is the withdrawal of the divine, in the form of human love, that keeps us condemned, encloses us in this prison of historical fatality, of a history converted into a nightmare of eternal return.

The absence of love does not consist in effectively not appearing in episodes or in passions, but rather in its confinement within those narrow limits of individual passion devalued as deeds, as rare happenings. Then it so happens that even individual, personal passion also remains confined in a tragic form because it remains submitted to justice. Love lives and inspires, but it is submitted to a judicial process that is an unforgiving fatality, the absence of liberty; love is being judged by a consciousness in which there is no place for it, before a reason that has denied it a place. Therefore, love remains buried alive, living, but ineffective, without creative force.

More than ever a nemesis seems to preside over the destiny of men; it is the sign that appears on the horizon when love does not have space in order to transcend, and when love does not inform the human life that has rejected it in that movement of wanting to free oneself from the divine even as it wants to absorb it within itself. To totally absorb the divine is a form of wanting to free oneself from it. Then no space remains for the transcendence of a love that has nothing to unite, a bridge without shores on which to extend itself. It has nothing to do with mediating: reality and irreality, being and nonbeing, that which already is with the future without end, since everything seeks to

be real in the same manner. The intended, total divinization of man and of history produces the same asphyxia that must have existed when, in distant times, man did not manage to find a place under the sun in the space then filled with gods, with semi-gods, with demons. Nor did love exist then. Strangely, love was born as philosophical knowledge in Greece, in a moment in which the gods, without ceasing to act, permit man to search for his being. Then, one could say that love, being Greek *Eros*, eagerness and hunger, was also the opposite, the creator of distances, of limits, of borders between the human and the divine that united and maintained distance! One could say that it gave meaning to the suffering of human life, to passion, transforming it into an act. A strange god, a humanizing one despite his delirium, a divinity that gives order to the initial delirium that is all of human life, that represents every history that commences.

#### Historical Apparition of Love

We see the birth of love in Greece. The myth tells its story to us figuratively, but the myth is nothing more than a version of its birth, not the birth itself. However, it is extraordinarily meaningful the way in which something shows itself for the first time, the way in which it becomes accessible to consciousness.

The appearance of love is nothing other than its entrance into the clarity of consciousness from the surrounding world. To take charge of this supposes that one pauses in one of the strangest conditions of human life, latent in the depth of all historical questions: the reason for the events that are characteristics of "human nature" have not always shown themselves in any way, and historically they come to be in a determined

moment. Hence, it is the love that wanders outside, alienating human life, infuriating it, according to the venerable, thousand-year-old beliefs of all peoples. What has shown its face one day, and has shown itself as a figure, had before been shapeless reality that pursues relentlessly and alienates. Yet it is not only love but all the gods who have been strong alienators; and hence the adoration that is professed to them by the simple fact of being gods, in other words, by showing themselves with a face and figure; their grace and mercy first of all rest upon having appeared.

It is the entering into consciousness, and, even more than into consciousness, into the light – a glorious happening, the epiphany that has all of reality finally acceding in making itself visible. Love achieves this in Greece; whose perennial force resides in the fact that on its ground, the epiphanies of the realities that form our spirit have been verified. The Christian faith did not undo that orbit but rather gave that center what it needed and without which it would not have sustained itself, because it did not come with everything necessary for being an orbit.

It is in the so-called cosmogonies where love initially makes its appearance. As such, it shows its primary condition; it is a reality, an original power necessary for establishing an orbit, an order. The cosmogonies are the poetic instrument of order, the manifestation that announces and verifies the passage from chaos to order. The most venerable thinkers begin: "In the beginning was Chaos." "In the beginning was Night," says the orphic, where love encounters its mysterious sign.

The literary genres in Greece – including philosophy – go on appearing as a growing clarity that opens the way. The appearance of each one of them is not at all coincidental. The cosmogonic poems reach their maximum clarity and, therefore, their

extinction in Hesiod. In the subsequent ones, cosmogony is already an explanation that tries to be philosophical or scientific while lacking inspired character. The orphic cosmogonies, being completely inspired and of a sacred character, do not have a human author: their author is also a mythological character. Like the great mediators of all the religious cycles, he is a personage who, at the same time that he creates, intervenes in the formation of the world. The first teacher is the ultimate architect, demiurge in whom the personalities of the worker who places the last stone and says the first word are condensed.

Perhaps now we discern the principal trait of the appearance of love in Greece. In Greece the poetic consciousness appears, and along with it: the story of the passage from chaos to the world, the metamorphosis of the errant powers into forces submitted to rotation, the poetic and historical consciousness of the first metamorphosis in which the world habitable for the human being is born. Thus, love appears in this instant of revelation in which man discovers that the world, just as it is visible to him, that the nature that he has encountered while moving in a fixed cycle, has not always been like this, but rather that it is the doing of someone or of something, the result of work: love appears along with work, with the effort and the passion that have taken place far-off in another time, in the fabulous time previous to men. Love is the power previous to the world that we see, and it has been so in the first metamorphosis in the chain of visible and invisible metamorphoses that mark the formation of the universe. It could be said that love has produced the necessary metamorphosis so that in the immensity of the powers, a world is formed where man can dwell. Then chaos, the state prior to the inhabited world, is chaos for the human being; it is merely cosmic reality, without number or harmony,

without space or time, in other words, without conditions for human existence:  
incommensurable reality.

From this appearance human life saves its lasting footprint. In the human being it seems as if everything has been conserved, and perhaps, therefore, he can recall the history that is beyond himself, although it may be offered as a sacred revelation (as is Genesis for its believers). Man can understand this revelation to the degree that his own being conserves the trace of passage from the first events, which makes it possible for him to relive it.

Yet in the moment in which love establishes the orbit, in that same sacred world, still not revealed, previous to the instant in which the work upon being concluded utters the word, then the opposite bursts forth, as if something of the wild powers had remained without submitting. In a world created by God from nothing, these powers are presented as rebels against creation; in a world ordered by a demiurge, the dark powers are simply not subdued. In any case, envy appears, that sacred evil above all, which before the absolute God screams *non servium* and that in man will be brotherly envy, "the first form of kinship," as Unamuno calls it in his work "Abel Sánchez."

The Greek world is not an envious world in the sense that envy does not form part of the sacred world. Residue from chaos will be the conflicts of tragedy, in which love is, deep down, the only protagonist. At the root of Greek tragedy, from its insoluble crux, there is always love; it is a love that has not been clarified, that has not been put into order, that has not been folded into the orbit, that is not in accord with nature.

Hence, tragedy was the literary genre that necessarily had to follow the cosmogonies. It is also a sacred genre, since it expresses the initial conflicts of the world,

those previous to man himself and which nevertheless man endures, as if he might have thrown himself into dwelling in the world before the human era. Therefore, there is a period of coexistence among gods and men, of true divine-human commerce. Love shines in this period in all of its splendor and magnificence, showing its mediating condition, truly genetic. Everything that love has come to be and to exercise in modest human life it had already been achieved in the passage from chaos to order, when men were guests of the gods and, on occasions, their rivals.

The Earth was left for the human beings, for human beings alone. And, then, love was a passion. Its coetaneous, divine character is very weak, incidentally. Because passion has absorbed all the force of love, and in it the true divinity resides with its sacred, inscrutable and furious character. In compensation, the god became debilitated to the point of no longer being a god but rather a goddess in whom appeared, more than the divine character of power, the kindly character, in other words, the human one – not of love itself but rather of the object of love. The Aphrodite of the classical times is not the goddess in whom love resides; the love of the cosmogonies was not transferred to her; rather, she is the sign of the humanization of love, of its appearance in the already profane human world. Aphrodite presents the ambiguous aspect of a profane divinity and as such she will always be offered in all of her expressions. The force of love in the world already fixed the orbit of the universe in human proportion, and resides in the fury of passion. Passion, a divine residue in man who, therefore, is also demonic; something strange to man, not made to his measure, and nevertheless his own being – intimate and strange.

Here there appears another aspect of ambiguity characteristic of love, not from being at once divine and demoniacal but rather from being strange to man and at the same time the most intimate. Love is the fury that agitates and that stirs the core, the dark depths, the borders of the human with everything that lives and inspires and even goes beyond: towards the material and the cosmic.

The appearance of love in the cosmogonies marks and defines its perennial condition. Love will always be on the limits of the human, along with what is not yet human or will never be human, along with those residues of the first womb from which man emerged in order to live as an independent being with his own life. In the passion, in the furor that is expressed in tragedy, he shows his sacred character, ambiguous as well as intimate. He possesses it like a god, like a power that is not revealed, but which upon revealing itself does so at his very core, beyond the word, where the word emerges.

Meanwhile, the goddess Aphrodite maximizes the ambiguity of love in her figure. She shows that when love is entirely revealed, it is reduced to the human and inevitably becomes banal; and when it loses its distinctive character; when it loses its sacred-unrevealed character, it is also at the limit, the limit at which man too loses his distinctive character and human nature, in being so humanized can fall into abjection. Yet, Aphrodite is not an abject divinity but rather a human one, and, in being human, she is a depository of something sacred in which the condition of the sacred has excessively revealed itself in order to adapt while descending to the human dimension; it allows us to glimpse, although from afar, the threat that weighs over the human when he is freed beyond all limits, forgetting his roots; that threat is nothing else but abjection.

The most divine trait of the goddess Aphrodite is in her character of being a gift, a valuable gift thrown out by the most ambiguous of powers: the sea, and from that most weightless element, sea-spray. Her divine fury is grace, the utmost lightness subjected to gravity; it is what plays without escaping from gravity. The sea-spray is the game. Aphrodite is the divinity of love like play, grace, gift. It is the fragile gift that man can at once wither with his breath, and what is most needed by all for its purity, its innocence; hence, a lovechild corresponds to it. Eros, the child; Adonis, the adolescent, is the companion of Aphrodite, her brother or her lover, because he thereby shows the inseparable innocence of the game of love, how he makes it into a game that is almost prohibited to man, given its seriousness. Aphrodite, as an ambiguous divinity, offers its gift like an easy present that later turns out to be impossible for humans, a present that cannot be enjoyed, one that requires innocence, which man knows he has lost. It is the cruelty of a gift that recalls the happiness that existed in a time in which man existed but in a different way, a time in which he was and was not the man that he is now; he was a child, an adolescent. It was the "before" of the state of innocence.

The game is the most profound aspect of divinity. Aphrodite is more the goddess of play than of love; in a way she is the goddess of love-passion. All of the neo-classical attempts have understood it in this way, and they have understood love as a game as well. Beginning by being a game, it is already the intent of reviving the Classical gods, just as in Christian Europe all intents to revive the pagan world of Olympus had been at their roots a game, diversion, a wish to forget the near-future and the return to infancy, a nostalgia for the great clarity and visibility of the infantile world. The game is the most outward and visible aspect of the sacred world.

The game, the festival. The game and the festival are at the same time tragedy. It is already well-known that historically it has always been this way. The intoxication produces the fury of passion while also producing the game. Dionysus has two faces.

The fortune of love, its destiny, will remain forever delineated. It belongs to the cosmogonies. Only in the historical eras that have a clear consciousness of the cosmogonies, whether for harboring one in their beliefs or for suffering the longing for one, will love live in all its splendor. In the same proportion that man's consciousness is narrowed and his "vital space" is circumscribed to what is merely human, love will likewise decline in real and daily life and in its own existence. Love corresponds to moments of maximum vital space: it is in direct relationship with the horizon.

The horizon is in intimate correspondence with the love that has also been its architect. The horizon is the second conquest after the orbit. Love intervened in the establishment of the orbits, and it is the creator, the worker of the horizon. The horizon is already a human work, therefore, it is the supreme and primary question for philosophy. Philosophy is the human gaze. The love that resides in the same word that designates the action of philosophizing already speaks to its decisive intervention. Philosophy is the creative gaze of the horizon; it is a gaze on a horizon. Therefore, philosophy also has its historical moment, its irruption no less violent than the irruption of love, and it follows love up to the point of receiving its inheritance. The inheritance of love, of the love of cosmogonies, is distributed between tragic passion and the gaze of philosophy. It could be said that love has been severed; love, that has separated and united, suffers in its own way a division, primary form of engendering life. It is divided into a passionate, intimate *eros* and into an *eros* of the gaze. Tragedy will express the first *eros*. Philosophy will be

her twin sister in the inheritance of love. It will be the very expression of the life of an *eros* that does not moan from its deepest core, entirely entrenched in man and only conserving from the divine possession a strange and paradoxical intoxication: serenity.

Serenity is the passion of philosophy, the passion that levels everything in order to freely gaze. It is the passion of seeing that believes it has a horizon because it has constructed it. It does not know this because one who is intoxicated never knows what he does.

Philosophy and tragedy mark the entrance of love into the human orbit, because they make man enter into himself, into consciousness: the consciousness of suffering from tragedy, from seeing within philosophy; hence the dispute between tragedy and philosophy over the human heart. Tragedy shows the suffering of the inextinguishable passion, which neither rests nor exhausts itself, and which can only hope for salvation in its total consummation. Philosophy will carry within itself, from the first instant, the opposite; it will carry the supreme aspiration for what in its maturity it declares as virtue: *apatheia*, impassivity. Love, upon dividing itself, creates two directions for the vacillating human creature: the absolute acceptance of suffering, a passivity that comes to let itself be inundated by the fury of passion; and philosophy, a love that seems to contradict its condition, it is an impassive love.

In this dispute something extremely serious for human life is in play, a way of behaving when facing a condition of man of all times and places: it is the capacity of alienation. Philosophy emerges, above all, from the eagerness for annulling alienation and converting it into its opposite. Philosophy continues to be a form of love in this demand for the metamorphosis that converts alienation into identity, and it will produce

the great rupture between philosophy and poetry, which until this point had moved along together. So long as the cosmogonic period lasts, philosophy and poetry are united. Love, then, is one. Such unity seems to exist until Plato, the last representative of this world. Despite his condemnation of poetry, in Plato the unity of poetry and philosophy is still possible. It is in his conception of love where this unity resides.

Lyrical poetry will carry love along with it; and it will absorb the love of tragedy while freeing it from the event, from the dramatic figuration; thus, an abstraction will emerge. It will be pure alienation and pure slavery to a wandering *eros*.

Philosophy will increasingly separate itself from the original alienation of life up to the point of wanting to erase from itself all vestiges of inspiration. It will never entirely succeed and, when it persists in this, it only obtains the sad result of debilitation or decadence. Philosophy, when it comes to exist, encounters an inspired identity; man encounters his being and those things that exist in something that lies far beyond them. When man and things have an unconnected being, which is believed to be sufficient as such, then they convert into mere facts, and philosophy disappears.

Upon arriving at this point in which philosophy and poetry are divided, each one carrying away one aspect, one mode of *eros*, then love has completed its historical appearance. The revelation of love has been fulfilled, and what follows will be human attitudes that confront it; these attitudes will be, in the most respectable sense of the world, opinions. Love has already entered into human life as well as into man. And it has done so at the same time, not by chance, because love is the revelation of human life. When man has appropriated the love that was wandering outside him like divine potency, when he feels it and knows it as his own, residing inside of his own condition, forming

part of his nature, when he has already decided to be man and to live as such, then he has found his difficult place in the cosmos, an unstable place that launches him into history. If human equilibrium were stable, history would not exist.

Starting from this moment, love will belong to morality. In reality, it will maintain a triple existence, a life identified with poetry, pure alienation that does not want to cease being so. It is inspiration in the knowledge that aspires to absolute being: aspiration, the *eros* of philosophy, and that reality to which the norms of morality in the life of all men are reduced.

In the growing revelation that man acquires about himself, love will find its place (whose fortune it will share forever) in the soul. Psyche and Eros walk together, almost indiscernible in those moments of maximum fortune for both. The soul is a mediating reality that has also descended and entered into man. The belief of having a soul is by no means, ingenuous or primitive. On the contrary, all the researchers of the primitive world show us a great richness of integrating beliefs that have been called animism. Souls reside in things, in animals, in trees; they choose as their dwelling the stones and enchanted places; they vivify the land in those sources of the sacred – the “rich place in the souls” – says an ancient Egyptian document. In this epoch it was believed even among the Egyptians that only the pharaoh was born united to his *kaa*; the commonality of mortal beings had as their supreme misfortune being separated from him. Only after death would they unite: after this union they would receive a soul. The soul was not initially felt as a natural part of the human being. Rather, it so happened that upon feeling its lack, he went searching for it.

The soul and love measure the distances of the universe; they pass between the different species of reality, they live in them, and they inter-link them. But it is advisable to remember that the soul and love existed before there were “things,” before there were beings; they are previous to the world of being. To be human, to claim human existence, consists in entering into the soul of the human being, and with it, love. And this entering within is suffering: to suffer from the soul that enters within the enclosure that seems hermetic. Man suffers also because at times various souls in discord enter into him. Who today has still not felt the torture of having several souls? Or one that he does not understand?

Love in this tragedy is the agent of unity; it will always be so. In poetic tragedy, love will be the agent of identity, the yearning for unity, although it remains frustrated. Love will be the agent of the fixing of the soul, of each individual soul; in the mature eras of history this suffering was called a transcendent vocation. Thus, carried along by love, men will travel that long path whose goal is unity itself, to truly become one. Love always engenders.

There appears in human life a tyrannical double necessity to engender: it is the elemental mandate of a species that embraces all its individuals in a sacred necessity and which emerges from what each one aspires to be, the ultimate perfection of the individual. Regarding these two yearnings or functions of love, the fact that the first one makes itself felt in all times and ages has created the idea that love has always existed in the same way, such that it does not have a history. It is also one of the elements that with much effort has contributed to establishing a belief in “human nature,” above all when it has been conceived as a repertoire of invariable necessities. Without a doubt, there is

truth in this: the ensemble of necessities is inexorable; it is an inexorability that, along with the metaphysical infinity, determines the being of man.

Love, then, establishes the chain, the law of necessity. Love also provides the first notion of liberty. Necessity-freedom are the supreme categories of human life. Love will be the mediator between them. In freedom the weight of necessity will be felt and in necessity freedom will be introduced. Love is always transcendent.

### Love in Human Life

Love always transcends, for it is the agent of all transcendence in the human being. Therefore, it opens the future; not the future that is the tomorrow that one presumes is certain, the repetition of today with variations and replica of yesterday; rather, it is the future, eternity, the opening without limits to another space and to another time, to another life that appears to us as the life of truth. It is the future that also attracts history.

Yet, love launches us towards the future, obliging us to transcend everything that it promises. Its indecipherable promise discredits every achievement, every realization. Love is the most powerful agent of destruction because upon discovering the inadequacy and, at times, the inanity of its object, it leaves free a void, a terrifying nothingness at the beginning of perceived being. This is the abyss in which not only what is loved sinks, but also life itself, the very reality that one loves. It is love that discovers the reality and the inanity of things, that discovers non-being and even the void. God the creator created the world through love, love of nothingness. Everything that carries within itself is a

wisp of this love that discovers one day the void of things and in things, because everything and every being that we know aspires to more than what it really is. The one who loves fixes himself on this aspiration, on this reality that has not been achieved, on this entelechy that has not even existed, and upon loving it, carries it from non-being to a type of reality that in one instant seems total, and which later hides and even vanishes.

Hence, love creates a passage, a coming and going between conflicting zones of reality, it enters within it and discovers its non-being, its infernos. It discovers being and non-being because it aspires to go beyond being and beyond every project. It takes apart every consistency.

Love destroys and, therefore, gives birth to consciousness, it being the full life of the soul. Love elevates that avidity to the dark impetus of life, which is life in its elemental depth; it carries that life to the soul, and the soul to reason. Yet, upon showing the inanity of all that upon which it is fixed, it also reveals to the soul its limits, and it opens it up to consciousness, making it give birth to consciousness. Consciousness grows larger after a disenchantment with love as if the soul itself had expanded with its deception. If we were born into love and if we were to always move within it, there would not be consciousness.

Yet no kind of deception exists in the love that upon having it, obeys the necessity of its very essence. Because upon discovering reality in the double meaning – double and unique – of the loved object and of the one who loves, the consciousness of he who loves does not know how to situate the reality that transcends him. If there were no deception, there would be no transcendence, because we would always remain enclosed within the same limits. And deception is, on the other hand, illusory, since what has been loved –

that which in truth was loved when it was loved – is truth; it is the truth, although it may not be entirely fulfilled and in the clear. It is the truth, the truth that awaits in the future.

If love discovers the non-being in life, it discovers the negative side of what is most alive in life – in accordance with its intermediary condition of realizing what is contradictory; it is love that renders death living, changing its meaning. However, here love encounters hope and serves it at the most difficult point, on that point in which hope finds itself imprisoned because it lacks an argument.

The argument of hope would not take hold on the soul if love were not preparing the terrain, precisely through that dejection, through that offering of the person that love achieves in the instant of its fulfillment. Then the love that integrates the person, the agent of his unity, leads it to its surrender; love insists, in reality, upon making an offering of its own being, that which is so difficult to name today: a sacrifice – the unique and true sacrifice. This despondence that lies in the center of the sacrifice itself anticipates death. Hence, the one that truly loves already dies in life. He learns to die. It is a true apprenticeship for death. If philosophy, a determined class of philosophy, has been able to make its followers into men “mature for death,” it was for the love that is involved, for a specific love that is at the root of the human attitude that chooses this philosophy, and without which no dialectic would have ever been convincing.

Then the human will never change intimately by virtue of ideas, if they are not the key to its yearning. If they do not correspond to the situation in which they are found, they will turn, on the contrary, into an obstacle, into a dead letter or into simple, obsessive manias.

Love will appear before the gaze of the world in the modern age as love-passion. Yet that passion, those passions, when they truly arise, will be, and have always been, the episodes of its great half-hidden history. They are the necessary seasons so that love can offer its ultimate fruit, so that it can act as an instrument of consumption, as a fire that purifies and as knowledge. Love is an inexpressible knowledge almost always manifested in a direct way and which, therefore, finds itself hidden underneath the most objective mode of thought, beneath works of art of the coldest appearance. The love that is expressed directly, carries one away in an episode is not more valid. The action of love, its character as agent of the divine in man, is known, above all, in that sharpening of the being who suffers and bears it, even in a shift of the center of gravity of man. Because to be human is to be fixed, to weigh, or to press upon something. Love achieves not a decline, but rather a disappearance of that gravity, that in the absence of love becomes sustenance of morality, a condition of those who live morally, only morally. The centre of gravity of the person has been moved to the person first loved, and, when passion disappears, there remains that movement, the most difficult movement of being “outside oneself.” “Now I live outside of myself,” Saint Theresa said, and this experience is exclusively hers. To live outside of oneself, because of being beyond oneself. To live ready to take flight, ready for whatever departure. This is the unimaginable future, the unreachable future of that promise of true life that love hints at in the one who feels it. It is the future that inspires, that consoles from the present, making us disbelieve in it, that gathers all hopes and dreams, from where creation bursts forth the future as the unforeseen. It is freedom without arbitrariness. It is what attracts the evolution of the history that goes in search of it. It is what we do not know, and it

calls us to know. It is that fire without end that breathes in the secret of all life. It is what unifies with the flight of its transcending life and death, like simple moments of a love that is always reborn from itself. It is the most hidden in the abyss of divinity, the inaccessible that descends at every hour.

## Translation of “The metaphor of the heart”<sup>44</sup>

For Rafael Tomero Alarcón

In its carnal being, the heart has chambers, open rooms, and is divided in order to allow for something that is not shown to human consciousness as natural to its centered being. A center, at least according to the idea transmitted by the philosophy of Aristotle is the immobile motor, the ultimate and supreme center that imparts movement to all of the universe and to each one of its creatures and beings without excusing any. Yet it does not open its chambers to them in order for them to enter into that churning motor, within itself, for it does not have an inside, that which already in times of Christian philosophy is called interiority. It “attracts, just like the object of will and like the desire that attracts and moves without being moved by them.” It is impassible, a pure act, “thought whose act is life;” the life. But life attracted by and moved by this center that does not move, does not circulate through, within it. It moves without moving itself while the helpless heart that one day, in an instant must stop; it moves within our vulnerable and abated life.

In this way the circulation that our heart establishes passes through it, and without it, would become suspended. It moves by moving itself, it has an inside, a modest house, and it has occurred to us to base the houses in which we happily dwell upon this model. Happily because it is already a house, and certainly not the simple tent, or image of the firmament and of the gap that separates it from the earth. In it, in the tent or hut, the first dwelling fabricated by man, the horizon is the confine, the circle that limits and shelters;

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<sup>44</sup> María Zambrano, *Claros del bosque*, 3a ed. (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1990) 63-77.

it is like a horizon belonging to its habitant. And it shows that everything that man has good is dwelling and prison, at the same time his dominion and enclosure. The house, the modest house in the image of the heart that renders circular what asks to be enclosed is thus already only the place of liberty, of gathering and not of enclosure. The interior in the carnal heart is a riverbed of blood, where the blood divides itself and reunites once again with itself. And in this way, the heart finds its reason: the first reason for being of those organisms that have blood, destined without a doubt, like all of life is, from its original poverty. Life appears almost unknown, without any kind of splendor as poor life. Hence, every living organism tries to possess an emptiness, a hollow within itself, a true vital space, the triumph of its settledness in the space that it seems to want to conquer only by extending itself, colonizing it, and which is only the attempt of each living being to have a place, a space that is his own, pure quality; that hollow, that emptiness which stamps an impression there where it appears, the supreme conquest of life, the appearance of a living being.

The wider and more adaptable the emptiness speaks to the greater the sense of “being” experienced by the living being. The voids of the carnal human organism are an entire continent, or rather some islands supported by the heart, the center that houses the flow of life, not to retain it but rather so that it passes in the form of a dance, watching over its steps, drawing nearer to the reason that is life through the dance. Hence, we have a living being who, from within, conducts his own life in the true image of the life. He conducts this image of a certain universe in which the fire would not be possible without the extinction of a lasting reason, of a passing and re-passing that is extinguished without

reason. And in being this way, then, reason, originally vital, is left in suspense, suspended in unlimitedness.

## II

The heart is also the center because it is the only aspect of our being that makes sound. Other centers ought to exist, but they do not make a sound. And only through the heart, do the privileged organisms that have heard each other, such that we imagine that in one degree or another, all the living beings must have one, like the privilege and affliction that shows the bipolarity which opens up to and clamps down on the living being.

Although man may not pay attention to the incessant beating of his heart, he goes along supported by it, on high, up to a certain level. It would be enough for him to remain without this sonorous beating in order to sink into a greater darkness, to feel oneself more strange, but without a home, as if deprived of a certain dimension, or of a call that by itself creates the possibility of his existence.

And thus the steps of man upon the earth seem to be the marks of the sound of his heart that leads him onward, to go on in a sort of procession, if he feels himself free of condemnation while the heart feels condemned to continue. The heart is joyful when it feels itself part of a cortege in which other human creatures, from other kingdoms, go along in perfect serenity while it feels itself move along with the stars and even with the firmament itself, and with the silent rotation of the earth.

Because the sound itself, inalienable, from man its bearer, is his initial rhythm, a cadence such that time does not pass in emptiness or monotony. Yet the single rhythm populates the extension of time and interiorizes it, thus vivifying it. And the heart without pause marks the pause without which neither perception nor counterproductive will is necessary, that pause in which a situation is extinguished, a gift of the void that is necessary for the resurgence of what lies here waiting to take over the face of the present breath for man, who would need these breaths to be more generously given between one situation and another however faint their differences, and who always waits to begin living again from the first breath; to breathe free of any awareness (of breathing), free of all the weight of the past, without knowing nor without feeling the present that comes to settle in, however pure this present may be, however loose as it may seem. Because the pure gift of being awaits, without any kind of effort. The gift of being absorbed in the gift of life, of being and life without division nor any kind of difference, since each difficulty comes from what being and life confer on man, by signaling him out, more than any other living being that inhabits his planet. Only the pure, faraway stars, while they may be inaccessible to his colonization, will provide him the real image of a being identical to his life; innocent, as if he only might have been created without having to be born.

### III

The heart is a prophet, that being a center is on an edge, at the border of still always going beyond what has already gone. It is at the point of breaking out in speech,

from which its reiterated sound is articulated in those instants in which it almost stops in order to catch its breath. The new thing in which man lives is the word, but not words that we say, or at least like we say them, but rather a word that would only be new through sprouting up, because it would surprise us like the dawning of the word. For man suffers for not having attended his own creation and the creation of all the universe, known and unknown. His anxiety of knowing does not seem to have another source than that anxiety of not having attended the entire creation from the first light, from before: from the untorn darkness. The theology of the great religions testifies most cautiously, as does philosophy, to what is inescapable in this revelation.

And it does not seem to have been taken sufficiently into account this great resentment, this “fundamental” resentment that the human being carries in his heart, like the root of all resentments that settle in him, of not having attended, and in addition, not having been the only witness to the creative act. If we abide by the sacred story of Genesis, he succumbs to the promising seduction of the future: “You will be like gods,” not in appealing to happiness but rather leaving aside the happiness that would inundate him in order to go searching for his own creation, for something that he might do, without having to contemplate what is offered to him in order to flee from the pure presence of beings whose name he knew but not their secret. But the word that does not come to leap out of the heart is not lost, that new word in which what is new about the word would shine with inextinguishable clarity. The diaphanous, virginal word, without the sin of the intellect, nor of the will, nor of memory. And its clarity would have what no word gives us the certainty of reaching: to be inextinguishable. It is not lost, it dissolves in voice, a

voice that alone sighs and like the sigh ascends by crossing over anguish and awaits:  
transcending.

And it is the voice that is infiltrated in certain words of daily use and still more so in the most simple words that give certainty. And if they are not therefore made inextinguishable, they have the advantage of firmness and even of a sacred formula.

And it is the interior voice that is identified with some voices, with some words that one hears, and does not know if they are inside or outside, because they are heard from within. And one also goes out to listen to them, one goes out of the self. And between the within and outside the entire spirit remains suspended as it always remains in each act of identifying something that beats in the heart and something that exists objectively. It is the supreme terror that overcomes us upon listening as a certainty to that which is feared. And the complete oblivion of itself when hears that which was not even known to be awaiting. And in this lucky case the perfect music is made; song.

#### IV

The heart, depending on the circumstances, occasionally remains deaf and mute. It is taken away, enclosing itself in impenetrable silence, or it goes far away. It then leaves the entire place to the operations of the mind that moves in such a manner without any assistance, abandoned to themselves. And at least among us Westerners, so reluctant towards silence, the perceptions are converted at once into judgments within an imperative attitude; that attitude that precedes the content of the judgment, of “what is judged.” And what is judged would not always be so if the heart were light or when its

rhythmic march simply continues on, it would appear then judged in another way without throwing a load of weight, without causing it to weigh, since it is the weight of certain contents presented to consciousness that which determines on some occasion and reinforces on others, the judgment upon which they fall.

And thus it could perhaps establish the weight of the condemnation that falls upon certain facts or beings because of the weight that has been aroused in the consciousness, which without hearing the heart, judges them.

There is an imperceptible line, a level from which the heart begins to feel itself submerged. It does not encounter resistance nearby for the lack of an answer to its incessant call, because its beating is at the same time a calling. And there is the silent invocation, the unsayable, that departs in an undefined direction, not because it is undefined, but rather by exceeding every known direction. Because it is the habitual mind that signals the directions, that establishes the cardinal points, leaving them without meaning. It is the discursive mind, the great organizer that covers up everything.

And no direction that may be offered by the mind for its use can open the way to this unvoiceable call of the submerged heart.

And if the call is unvoiceable it is because no word that has been spoken suits it, which does not mean that between the words that it knows there may not be some or even one word that is the one for which it indescribably searches. It searches out an ear; to hear it so that they may hear it without realizing it, without distinguishing it, so that its call may be lost in the immensity of the only response.

V

Not every center is of a sun; it can be various suns; man can feel them without them competing among themselves. And it can occur that in moments of obscurity the feeling disappears along with the vision corresponding to one only, to one so alone.

These suns appear like luminous centers, more or less filled with light in the feeling and in all of the acts of knowledge that upon feeling continue and obey, and its radiating is linked with the function of the heart, with its invigorating power.

Every vital center revitalizes. And as a result the heart already emerging from “physis” may be the center of all centers. The interior space, soul, consciousness, the immediate field of our living, in truth is not the image of inert space, where the so-called facts of consciousness are inscribed and are associated as if coming from outside. On the contrary, it has been said metaphorically, when this space was called soul or heart, that it is profound, great, wide, immense, dark, luminous.

And it is the condition of the heart as center, in as much as it is center, what determines and makes emerge other centers that shine illuminating, which, of they refer to so-called exterior reality or world, are reflected in interior centers and are supported above them, since nothing from outside, nothing from another world or beyond the world that is, stops being supported by the human heart, the point where multiple realities meet, where they are weighed and measured in an unthinkable calculation, in the image of the creative calculation of the universe. “God, calculating, made the world,” Leibniz tells us. If the universe is of divine workmanship, it is man’s turn to sustain it. And thus it must be his heart as the vessel of immensity and the invulnerable point in the balance.

And in this way, the multiplicity, before establishing itself as such, is unified, in equilibrium without it being erased nor submerging into any of the realities that integrate it. Because nothing of what comes to the human heart as real should be annulled nor sent outside or left at the door; nothing real should be humiliated nor even those semi-realities that flutter around the living space of the heart; because perhaps within it they would finish collecting the reality they desire or finish giving away the hidden reality as does the beggar towards the bearer of alms of which hope fills to the brim the splendid gift of poverty. And the natural heart results in being at times poorer than anyone, and more than any one donor if it is welcomed.

## VI

The heart cannot continue going down carried by its weight, the weight that wins over it when it no longer can support itself; it cannot indefinitely continue descending without losing itself.

The heart is lost and made un-foundable and more so still if it is searched for. The heart reappears bringing something that it offers in a type of annunciation. Seeing that it announces something, at the same time it announces again its presence. And a renovation is produced, a beginning although perhaps the same thing, like from the beginning. But if the heart is lost and takes its time, even leaving the void of its absence, it returns tired, out of the habit, converted into a thing, into a fact, into the fact of a fatigue that continues on. And then, that which is announced is already a loss.

And there is the loss of the self that is the going into the abyss, into an unique abyss in which they melt – the heart always unifies – the abyss within it, within the house that is the heart, it opens, and the abyss in which it opens as if in the center of the universe where it is overwhelmed. And then one must see all things at once while all alone, or feeling oneself being alone at least, in the depth of this nothingness. And the nothingness is not therefore the simple nothing but rather a floating down into the abyss, a dumbfounding of the self. And because the heart has not lost its condition of being the center, it continues feeling itself the wind of life, the breath under the waters of post-creation. And it feels the becoming nothing in which all of creation might come to fall: like a water, due to its inconsistency, due to its lack of binding, its being the place of dissolution where everything is submerged; a place flooded by movement and by rest; by simple being and by discernment, therefore. And this heart will not be able to ascend to the surface of these waters that seem to lack a surface, if it has not been kindled in the heart, by it, within and outside of it at the same time, a unique spark, one that ignites the indivisible light that is made in the darkness, making of this heart something like that of its lamp.

The light descends, it crosses the darkness and density, seeing that the light, in this universe that presented to us as our home, is curved like a snake. And in the way of the snake it slides like water, a water that filters into the solidity there where the darkness is made into foundations, walls of foundations. Yet upon arriving there it stops and abandons the heart that descends, going down into the abyss where upon already not having any note of light, every reference is lost. Discerning is not possible where glimpsing ends. This heart would be dangerously mistaken if it were to believe, like in a

dream, that it dominated the darkness; if it were ready to confront the process of becoming nothing, going against its current without something more; if it were to try to convert itself into will. The will only can do, when it can, in the light of the understanding that discerns things and not so much beings, although they may be masks of a monster that underneath them and through them shows and hides his face; he shows his face, hiding it under things or events. In the process of becoming nothing, no thing nor event can subsist, and the will, if it is what emerges, would be a knot, the mere power of impossible display.

## VII

And the reiteration of the work of the heart is revealed finally as a beat, the pulsation of a center, the center perhaps that is manifested by making itself feel rarely, unforgettably, yes, indeed. Having produced the reiterated beating of the heart as a pulsation of the center of life remains like an unforgettable notice that awaits being revealed to go on being. And that which takes hold in the first feeling of this pulsation is its strange vulnerability, the bursting forth like in the strange confines of nothingness or with the void; with not being or with death. If it is not loyal to this first feeling, all of it results in being names, but not rightful names, rather terms of speaking. And if they are forgotten, then, the mind does not have any other name that would be a rightful name, and not the transcription of a concept forged for general use. Every concept generates an extension, although it may be unknown or unlimited. While the proper name, unique, inalienable, is the name that confers presence with only a pronouncement, the name that

undoes the plea or the invocation, or the name that explodes without letting itself to know in the moan, what is irrigated by weeping.

And thus, if one is faithful to this feeling that founds the simple perceiving of the pulsation of the heart as the center of our life, its reiteration remains as a victory that rises, the victory of our life, or that of some other life enclosed in it. A center of life, with its unique domain, without any word. Against it, all reason remains without any reason, while the truth comes closer to it as promised, only as promised, which does not imply being wed too soon, which still awaits. And upon being like that, this truth defends this center that beats in the same confines, being still there feeling itself, enclosed. Yet it no longer feels itself lost in foreign land, in the undefinable land, on the border. The white presence, barely perceptible, of the promise of truth, guards it.

## VIII

House of life and riverbed, it is difficult, for the heart to find its own reality, for it to feel itself in purity and unity. What the heart wants to say, without reflecting, without looking outside of itself, seeing itself in some mirror that gives back its image, without any anxiety either of being watched by someone that is its equal, that returns to him an image to add. And without looking for the complement or any responsibility; in solitude.

There is a type of solitude that begins by being not an isolation but rather a dispossession of every property: remaining alone, more than because of lacking company, or having extinguished that feeling of what is one's own, or having abolished the law of appropriation. And with this solitude comes the colonization that obliges to

come out of itself continuously, to take care of the other, knowing it as “other,” or, in another, to which it belongs.

The heart in itself is in that state, without feeling itself even supported, as if it did not have a need to be supported, nor a need to support anything else; it neither works nor toils. It is gathered into a type of revelation of its interiority, almost transparent. And the habitual question, that which emerges inexhaustibly from the supposition that all knowledge is awakened by a question, would be formulated saying, “And what is its being?” Well, that being with an interiority, the only one that could even tell us that it is the being to which is given to, from within, from himself, to sense man, in purity and unity, because thought also is collected. But when it does so and stops issuing its never-ending discourse, it is identified with the heart. Intelligence and heart united form that being that beats, that heartens, capable of showing its being without any reflection, without seeing itself reflected in anything and therefore without feeling nothingness either inside itself or lying in wait. This unity is shown as ephemeral, because it is lost because of the care demanded by the human condition and that in a growing way threatens to devour it. However, the just unification of the mind with the being redeems, even when giving itself in a discontinuous way, it bears witness to a being that is life, and a revitalizing life.

The silence reveals the heart in its being: a being that is offered without any qualification and even without any reference to a determined situation, which by having one would qualify it. It is neither a quantity nor a quality, and it is neither above nor below; neither is it that which seems more proper to its being, nor embraces something.

It is not in truth. And what is closest to this being, which, it bears mentioning, is what watches over it without concealing a secret, what watches over the being where it dwells.

And the silence is extended like an environment that does not make either its weight nor its limitation felt; in this pure silence no hardship is noticed.

The greatest test of the quality of this revealing silence is the way in which time passes without feeling, without making itself felt as successive time nor as an atemporality that imprisons, but rather as a time that is consumed without leaving residue, without producing the past, as if flapping its wings without escaping from itself, without threat, without even signaling the arrival of the present, nor even less directing itself to a future. A time without transit.

And the word is neither possible nor necessary, because the word, itself transitive, is given in a time that passes and accelerates or stops, without violence. What is proper to its passage is to create its own place, and to rest in it without ceasing to move. It is certainly true that from the movements natural to the being, or to something that exists, little has been determined. This is known or has been better known with regard to the movement that causes or rather than originates: to attracting, distancing, stopping, or creating insurmountable distances that later in an instant are annulled in an intimacy, in an unspeakable confidence. Everything is quality in the natural movements of being. Quality that takes possession of quantity and that, without a doubt, comes from the touch of the absolute that is produced within our human experience, that something which is felt as irreducible. One must accept it just as it is, in the manner just as it is shown. They are movements attributed to divinity, which in divinity appear as the mirror of perfection, while in the human being they appear as filled with conceit or modesty, a letting be, as is.

And it is also like a decline, of a way of being and of acting, which once took place and was lost, a lost secret or simply a transgression.

In what is human there is no movement, although it may be from the heart; it appears free from intention except in privileged instants. And in the intention, there is as a proposition of itself, a proposing to be something or someone. The lack of innocence is here where it mainly makes itself felt in these movements of being, those previous to all morality.

Hence, to rest in itself, the heart cannot but in rare moments of adventure, breathe in the silence of its being. But, does it really have enough to do it? Only while in silence is it in itself, without any pretension, without intention. Without proposing that anything come to rest in this way. And its place is that type of hollow where it does not float in the void, nor becomes attached in a dark place; it is innocent in that transitory state, revealing its being. It is a presence, nothing more. A presence that when it stops being so will take in everything that is present before a human being, every presence and, naturally, the absence of something and even the absence of everything. And the measure of the innocence of the heart, of each heart, would provide, if a measure of it were taken, the diversity of the presences that present the wealth of the world to the heart, and even the splendor of that which we call the universe.

Seeing that there is an intimacy, an indissoluble correlation between innocence and universality, only the human being endowed with an innocent heart could dwell in the universe.

IX

The heart is the vessel of pain, it can hold it during a certain time, but inexorably later, in an instant, offers it. And it is then a chalice that the entire being of the person must soak up. And if it does so slowly with the necessary composure, upon spreading itself through the diverse zones of the being, it begins to circulate with the pain, mixed by it, and in it, as reason.

The risk so many times fulfilled by the indifference which, from far away and on high, is allowed to establish what is indispensable to the exercise of rational knowledge, is that of preventing that reason be noticed, firstly in pain, united to it and as engendered or revealed at least by it, which would make pain almost accidental, given the fact that pain does not have essence, that it may be an ineludible state, but that it does not have essence nor substance, any kind of reason, that it cannot do more than be here without circulating. And upon not circulating not able to be assimilated, in truth, of truth.

This offer of the heart, vessel, chalice of pain, is actualized, is converted into an act of suffering that is continued, and is dragged during indefinite times without unity, like a vine that entwines itself in reason without letting it go free: reason in effect gets rid of this serpentine passivity, this moaning, and the will ends up achieving the deafening of the heart itself, the center of hearing in an eminent degree – that deafness of the heart which, by protecting reason, betrays it.

Vessel and center, the heart, united.

The center that moves, while suffering, and which by being receptive, must continue to give, and while hidden it cannot stop giving of itself. And being the seat of feeling, it is an active center. Passing through it is the river of life which must submit to

number and to rhythm. Active passivity. Mediator without pause. Slave that governs. Submitted to time, the heart drives it, warning it of its step and of its ending, making it sense beforehand a going beyond the temporal kingdom that we know, or rather that we assume is known. Thus, it seems that the heart is like a child of Cronos in the Theogony of Hesiod, one of his sons that he devoured in order to maintain them hidden in his insides; the child that justifies, in a certain way, this strange form of fatherhood. Because being a child of time, the heart prophesizes a kingdom that goes beyond it and which reveals in a certain way in those instants in which the heart is suspended and suspends the being that dwells over time; in those privileged instants, there are ecstasies given to all mortals, in pain without limits, and in the plenitude of life in which those contrary or at least divergent things, love and liberty, reason and passion, are unified.

Everything passes through the heart, and everything makes it pass. But something must pass in it that does not go along with the river of life and of time as we know them.

Something must go on making itself hidden in that which is its obscurity, which following the paradox of the law that governs it, would have to be something invulnerable and luminous.

And thus when in an instant what remains of all quietness will open at the same time, surrendering itself. It is dreams. Like everything that is enclosed, the heart dreams about escaping, like all that is enchained, undoing itself, even at the cost of tearing itself. Like all that which contains something precious, it dreams of overflowing. Thus while dreaming the heart repeats itself and the violence then is its chain, which more passively than usual, drags behind the heart. The heart goes blind, being the only one that can carry the light down, to the darkness of the being. The heart will not be able to be free without

knowing itself. Paradoxically, the mediating heart, that provides light and vision, must know itself. Will it be that true reflection, the silent dialogue of the light with whom receives it and suffers it, with whom carries it beyond the yearning and fear engendered by the dreams and the daydreams of the being, of the human being submitted to time that wants to pass through? And the silent dialogue of the light with the obscurity where it feels like taking root. The heart's crust, when it is known, contains and protects the origin of light. And then already free from fear, it yearns to unravel itself and to unravel others, losing itself, continuing to lose itself until identifying itself in the center, without end.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion

María Zambrano was a world traveler who lived over half of her life in exile due to the Civil War and a subsequent dictatorship. This living in exile, from 1939 to 1984, took her to Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Chile, Italy, Greece, France and Switzerland. At that point in 1984, she allowed herself to come back to her home country of Spain where she eventually was laid to rest. The work that she put forth in her life consisted of articles and short works dating from the late 1920s and including posthumously published works, such as *Los sueños y el tiempo*. The themes of her work ranged from being very specific, such as the political situation of Spain in the 1920s and 1930s to more universal pieces dealing with divinity, love, liberalism, the person and the word. Because of her various approaches to her work and the circumstantial influences that were apparent in her life dependent upon the time and place, Zambrano held a perspective that was unique and thus facilitated her richness in depth of thought. This richness of thought, again, encompasses many themes and ideas, notably those addressed in this study: the person, the word, love and compassion. The experience that she had gained in her life as a writer and as a philosopher allowed for her to clear her own methodical path, arguably

unsystematic, and one that took several twists and turns, yet a path that seemed to always reach its destination.

The concepts of the word, the person, compassion and love converge on the issue of personal responsibility. Through the lenses of these concepts, Zambrano examines the individual's being-in-the-world and connects that to the interaction and perception with daily events and natural surroundings. Nature plays a solid role in Zambrano's works. From the swarming of bees in *Clearings in the Forest* to the use of the riverbed as a place for the soul and for the truth in *Hacia un saber sobre el alma*, nature aids Zambrano in creating a metaphorical connection to her work. This is where also the use of poetic reason has come into play, not only in the works addressed here but also in others. It is through the word, knowledge, and experience that she suggests a revised method for a new person in the world, the embodiment of a positively-valued ethical pragmatism dependent upon a negotiation between subject and object within the world. Her perspective was undoubtedly shaped by having witnessed a civil war on her home soil, and having witnessed the aftermath of World War II when returning back to Paris to find her sister in the mid 1940s. The ethical action that she is looking for must precede one's own understanding of the individual's knowledge of his or her being and being-in-the-world. Hence, we encounter Zambrano's deep concern with compassion, which she defines as "knowing how to deal with the other." In dealing with "the other," the person, if after having achieved a positively-valued way about himself, acts through compassion and love in such an interaction. Similarly, Max Scheler states in one of his texts:

But if the act through which the ideal value-essence of a person is revealed is the full *understanding* of the person based on love, this pertains equally to the revelation of this essence through oneself and through others. The highest form of self-love is therefore the act through which the person *reaches* full

understanding of himself and thus the intuition and feeling of *his salvation*. But it is also possible for another person to show me the path to my salvation through *his completely understanding love of me*. (*Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values* 491)

This completely understanding love of the self that Scheler refers to is also the one that Zambrano discusses in her many works. In addition, she refers to the understanding of love for “the other.” In one portion of her essay, “Tragedy, Profession of Compassion,” Zambrano refers to how knowledge is born from “knowing how to deal with the other” (*El hombre y lo divino* 222). It is a simple reduction that she makes when referring to the self and “the other.”

In addition to love and compassion, the concepts of the person and the word play lax roles in the constellation of Zambrano’s thought. Zambrano investigates the question of the human subject and his freedom to choose through approaching the idea of daily rebirth and awakening from a dream. The concept of hope that is seen in her philosophy through the daily rebirth of the person alludes to the Christian theological spin on immortality, yet an immortality that speaks to spatio-temporal limits beyond what is placed on the human subject in the material world. Zambrano continues to face the human tragedy of having been born only to die by appealing to the hope that she finds in the ethical treatment of “the other,” which can only be achieved through compassion, love and understanding. Knowledge is another factor in this equation: for Zambrano starts from a “sentir originario,” an original feeling, which is knowledge of the interior, intuitive self. This knowledge then goes on building, transforming, and multiplying. This notion of a living, growing knowledge is explored in the work most heavily infused with poetic reason, *Clearings in the Forest*. Seeing that Zambrano posits this “original

feeling,” one can see how the notion of feeling and intuition have an extremely strong hold over her understanding of the way of being-in-the-world.

In one of her very few pieces of autobiographical works, Zambrano states: “but life needs the word, the word that is its mirror, is the word that potentializes life, that elevates it and declares, at the same time, disaster, because it deals with a human thing, and the human thing is at the same time glory and disaster” (*Anthropos: revista de documentación científica de la cultura* 69). Writing, using words, is so much of what Zambrano did. It was her method for living and for breathing. Writing is the undertaking that allows the person within solitude to justify and support the actual state of being that is often required for the writer. The word is part of any permutation or combination of thought that merges through some point of intersection, a merger that results from an empty space that has a continuous relationship with the writer in which she produces from that empty space concepts to dwell in mentally, or concepts that arise from nothingness. This is all formed by words, which leads to a vindication of a person’s temporal state of being within solitude. This solitude of the writer is necessary to produce the coherent thought that is necessary to then bring out into the world and share with “the other.” This action of explaining the word and using the word as a form of interaction with “the other” is what Zambrano is trying to say with her discourse on the word. Although the writing is done from a place in which no one is around, it is meant for some form of audience when all is said and done. Many times the writer does not know what kind of audience he is reaching or about to encounter, but he allows the words to be the driving force behind any kind of interaction that may result because of them. The interaction that arises through speech is another form of expression. Speech, unlike

writing, is not a planned act. The environment in which speech occurs takes on a feeling of immediacy, which adds gravity to the person, a gravity that attempts to squeeze out words without thought, utterances devoid of responsibility and, at times, substance.

On one hand speech may have its negative qualities to it while writing may not have as much negativity assigned to it. As before, we have said that the writer does have to justify his momentary solitude. He does this by eventually liberating himself from the act of writing. The act of writing acts as a release from a necessary creative impulse. It is a breaking free from the obvious physical imprisonment in the mind. Words are the discontinuous extensions of the mind and the play that goes on within it. This play is also equated with the secret that exists in the process of writing. This secret is something that comes along with her understanding of poetic reason in her texts. For Zambrano, truths are only revealed through writing. The writer records the secret yet does not necessarily understand it. It is up to the audience to decipher the secret that has been written. When the writer leaves his solitude, he is then able to communicate the secret of what he wrote. Again, the public is the one that understands, or hopes to understand, the secret. Eventually, the writer experiences the glory of what he has written. All of this happens through the word and about the word. Words are Zambrano's daily bread and practical tools for living and for simply being-in-the-world.

The last essay that deals specifically with the word is the section titled "Words" that can be found in *Clearings in the Forest*. Experience in the phenomenal world coupled with the perception of that experience leads to the need to express such experience and perception through language and through the written word. A space for reconciliation becomes a main preoccupation of Zambrano's, a space in which the ideal

and the material unite, an intersection of the Cartesian split between subject and object. With that aim in mind, Zambrano deploys her method of poetic reason, which is created through the word. She employs a language that dances alongside nature, abandoning the usual systematic engagement with logic and reason for the sensually irrational touch of the mysterious and poetic. The multiple meaning of the word comes into play along with its hidden roots that expose a deep mystery. The path that she goes down is one that not necessarily seeks truth but rather something that cannot be said. She is referring to the “clearing” or a sort of coming to an understanding. Words do this at times, but these words must come to one through inspiration and not through actually seeking them out. That is why her words are so often nestled in images that do not necessarily take shape for a clear understanding. Yet these images give us a glimpse of the clearing in the forest, a fleeting moment of illumination. In sum, Zambrano discusses the word in this text as being hidden and without a place. The word in this essay may be hidden, but it has found a place at least outside of the text, and that is the place that the reader stands as the witness to Zambrano and her use of poetic reason. From the words searching for truth and the soul, to words searching for an audience and for an understanding, Zambrano employs the use of the word as one of her cornerstones mentioned in this dissertation. The word is the beginning, and the person, love and compassion follow.

The person, another cornerstone of this thought process, plays a role in the two works translated in this study, segments from *Horizon of Liberalism* and *Person and Democracy: Sacrificial History*. In these works the person duals with some aspects of political theory, historical reason and ethics. In *Horizon of Liberalism* the use of the word “the person” perhaps may be scarce, but the entire essay is an attempt to speak to

the individual (or person) in relation to society in order to evaluate one's philosophy of living in the political and ethical realms. Such a method for living displays itself in the conduct of the person, which, in turn, assigns a value to the person's own ethical actions. From working with the individual or the personal, Zambrano eventually moves into the collective yet always starting from the center of the person and from every potential action of the person. The acts of the person are also representative of a historical place in time, and, thus, a historical consciousness is assigned to the person. With the burden of the historical consciousness on the modern person's back, Zambrano points the finger back at the person as the agent for change within his own realm of the present that will soon be converted into the past and become part of history. Without the recognition of the need to change, the notion of tragic history, as seen in *Person and Democracy*, will perpetuate itself and, most likely, lead to a progressive and ultimate human destruction.

The person, for Zambrano, becomes the agent for change moving from a tragic one to an ethical one. Similarly, this involves a parallel effort in understanding society and the relationship of one culture to another in the world. The notion of dealing with "the other" is not only a compassionate act, but it is also a political one that calls upon the individual to demonstrate his ethical and political values. As part of this broad ethical task, the concepts "tragedy," "sacrifice," "love," and "reconciliation" play a critical role. These specific terms lead to an understanding of an emotionality or irrationality of history but also for an understanding of a way that a person might create and share in a society composed of difference. No doubt, Zambrano's life experiences – including war, exile and financial hardship – inform her tragic sense of history. However, these circumstances, while holding her hostage to some degree, did not fully affect the

underlying strain of her thought which was one that was driven by the guiding force of hope. She projected her hope not only on the person, but she also shared her hope with the idea of a reconstructed society, one that would rise from the destruction of the past in order to create a better person at large. The person, again, is that agent of change, hopefully, in Zambrano's words and mind, for the better. This desire for change leads Zambrano to look back and singles out certain political leanings (conservative politics as well as liberal politics) and to scold them both for not having focused on the good of society as a whole. Her criticism of both leanings is woven into *Horizon of Liberalism* and ends up with promoting faith in life as a solution and as the stepping stone from whence to walk into a better future. Again, it starts with the person and a positively-charged, creative mindset.

Finally, the person faces moments of sacrifice during which he must focus on the collective and not solely on the individual in order to step into a brighter future. Despite the crisis that the West has gone through, the sacrifice that had occurred has allowed society, again, to see rays of hope. It is the idea of being born again, a rebirth of the person and of society that stands out in this essay by Zambrano called *Person and Democracy*. Not only is the idea of rebirth apparent in the text previously mentioned, but it is also evident in others if one were to read the entire *oeuvre* of María Zambrano. What is important here is that of the rebirth of the person in conjunction with society, one that leads to being an agent for change, someone with the capacity to ameliorate the daily situation of society. The suffering that man has encountered comes from being submerged in a nightmare of history. However, amid the shadows and the darkness of the thought that is presented in many moments of Zambrano's work lies a flicker of

clarity that eventually flames into a full-blown brightness. The unity of humanity begins with the person, and it is then that the person begins to open up to “the other” and to the community, yearning to communicate and transform the darkness of history and the past into the light of day. According to Zambrano, the future and the faith in the person, driven by compassion and love, are what allow the person to live and to thrive in any circumstances.

The concept of compassion centers on the historization of an emotion. The discussion comes in midst of what Zambrano would call a historical moment of agony. Much suffering had taken place, for example two world wars, and for Zambrano and others a discussion and investigation into the concept of being-in-the-world ensued. Feeling and sensing are part of being, and with a world in agony, a world highly charged with emotion, it called forth a need for understanding the irrationality of man and the world and the human’s meaning of his existence. Zambrano takes the reader back to the “original feeling” when writing her essays on compassion. The history of this feeling and the understanding of it stems from the study of the forms of life that had been found in the returning to the novel and to poetry. These forms she considers the true reservoirs of the history of life and reflect the historical consciousness. The history that is discovered in such texts reflects the core of the being, the seat of feelings, and, thus, the “original feeling.” At the core of such feelings is compassion. Some have said these feelings constitute the soul of the human being, and it is through it that the history of feeling is the truest history of man. This is when the soul no longer gravitates toward the rationalist idea but to the feeling that resides deep down, hiding in places that are at times inaccessible. Once again, one encounters compassion, what Zambrano calls the loving

and positive feelings, feelings that one encounters when dealing with “the other,” a main focus of Zambrano’s article “Towards a history of compassion” that is found in the text *La Cuba secreta y otros ensayos*.

From *La Cuba secreta* to *Man and the Divine*, Zambrano continues to investigate the concept of compassion. Compassion is something that depends upon an adequate knowledge as it does with other virtues. When referring to this knowledge, compassion can also be intertwined with piety. Piety, in this text and in others, is linked to the gods and the worshipping of them or the treating them well. This is connected to the idea of compassion and dealing with “the other” as a manner of treating the human well in addition to the gods. Dealing with “the other” is also dealing with reality. Compassion is the action of feeling and knowing “the other” in that reality. Compassion has its own language, that of action. This action leads to the true history of freedom and thought as initiating itself with the dawn of compassion as that “original feeling” that is housed in the soul. Not only is it an action, but it is also an effective action in dealing with “the other.” In the constellation of thought explored in this study, Zambrano once again speaks to the use of words, whether written or spoken, in creating and, perhaps, destroying relationships that are formed among persons of the world. Compassion is the initiating force behind the fomentation of such relationships, a force that craves effectiveness and genuineness in connecting one person to another. It is the person’s responsibility and initiative to create the kind of society that Zambrano imagines. One missing ingredient is that of love, the final cornerstone that adds strength and completeness to this train of thought.

Love, a force that is least likely to find a form, is one that provides the greatest lightness in the sometimes heavy thought of Zambrano. In the essay “On a history of love,” Zambrano takes a look at love and how it developed throughout history. In it she mixes with the myths of the Greek gods in order to provide a stage with which to dramatize a vision of historical love and how its rules had been violated in modern times. She speaks of love as a potentializing force that projects itself out into the world, creating openings without limits, rather than turning it into love that is focused on the object. Before examining the origins of love, she remarks that love in modern times lives in a state of poverty. Obstacles and barriers have impeded loved from projecting itself out into the world. It has become confused with many sentiments and instincts and has been treated like a sickness from which it must free itself. In the ancient world, human life was at the point of discovering a real freedom, one that would allow man to love. Yet in modernity love is confined within the narrow limits of the individual passion. Love, in a certain sense, is buried alive and reflects the asphyxiation of hope in present day. Love itself is threatened by history just as compassion was. Despite being buried alive at times, love, however, does have a birthplace.

The birthplace of love is with the gods in Greece. It was born, according to Zambrano, as a philosophical knowledge, a moment in which gods had permitted man to search for his being. Love was something that gave meaning to the suffering of human life, to passion, and transformed it into an act. It was a strange force, a humanizing one that also organized the delirium of human life. The history of love is one that includes delirium, a delirium that at times is also reflected in Zambrano’s method of poetic reason. The concept of love is embodied in the language of this poetic reason, providing an

awakening of the heart towards the world, whether revealed through language or through loving acts for the other. It is also an awakening to the human condition and the realization that love is needed to further the cause of man, life. Love is a conception, an idea that stems from birth and the notion of hope in the creation of a new life. Breathing, an image used in this essay, is equated to the creation and continuation of life. Each individual carves out his own existence with every breath that he takes, and with it has the force of carrying out acts of love to the “other.” This is his truth, and this is the reality of the human being after the state of birth or rebirth when guided by the compelling force of love. By opening his arms to the truth, man opens up his arms to love and is driven by it. He attains peace in the heart when the soul is united with reason and with the truth. The heart is also the guide to distinguishing the multiple realities that exist in life. The pulsation of the heart feels life and knows truth. It is the core of the being; it is the core of love. The heart has cavities, and through them the blood of life flows. Like the heart that feels the pulsation of the blood of life through itself, the person experiences the core feeling of his life, which is that of love. The poetic reason that guides Zambrano’s concept of love is apparent and presents challenges to interpretations. Readers must develop their own method of poetic reason in order to arrive at the heart of Zambrano’s understanding.

In conclusion, the essays that have been translated cover various time periods throughout the life of María Zambrano. They cover a wide variety of topics but have a unifying set of ideas that revolve around the terms of the word, the person, compassion and love. From the embodiment of the word to the embodiment of the actions of the person, Zambrano develops her systematically unsystematic approach to the many forms

of knowledge in life. Zambrano's works speak to a pragmatic and ethical undertaking that confronts the tragic consequences of history. In navigating through the darkness of the unknown and the irrationality of life, Zambrano converts such darkness into an opportunity to reside for awhile among the uncertainties while relying on the powerful reservoir of intuition in order to emerge from the darkness into the light. As she states in "A modo de autobiografía," "It could be said that I like the night because it is the prologue to the dawn" (71). For Zambrano, without the night there would be no glory to revel in with the dawning of a new day. By living out the word, compassion and love, the person forges a new reality, one guided by faith and by hope.

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