

Introduction

On Thinking with Portilla about Politics

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Jorge Portilla's (1919–1963) single most important contribution to Mexican philosophy is undoubtedly his essay “Phenomenology of Relajo,” a rich and fascinating meditation on values, nihilism, and the disruptive nature of *relajo* as a complex intersubjective mood or attitude.¹ This relatively lengthy text was published posthumously in 1966, three years after Portilla's death, in a book titled *Femenología del relajo y otros ensayos*, which also included other, shorter works making up the entirety of Portilla's known oeuvre.² Sánchez's translation of “Phenomenology of Relajo,” included as an appendix to his 2012 book, *The Suspension of Seriousness*, introduced the English-speaking philosophical community to this remarkable essay and to Portilla as a value theorist and philosopher of culture.³

The translation of “Phenomenology of Relajo,” as well as Sánchez's analysis of it, have been widely discussed and have given rise to questions surrounding the content of Portilla's other works, the “*otros ensayos*” referenced in the title of Portilla's anthology.⁴ Overshadowed by Portilla's masterpiece, these other essays have been largely ignored both in Spanish and in English-speaking treatments of Portilla's work. In this book, we attend to these forgotten “*otros ensayos*” in the hopes of, one, highlighting a contribution that, while rooted in its own time, is both timely and relevant

to our own, and two, completing a picture of a philosophical project that benefits the history of philosophy, and, in particular, the history of Latin American philosophy.

What we find is that Portilla's other essays are primarily concerned with social and cultural issues. We would like to suggest that, in their content and intention, these essays constitute Portilla's "politics." In the three essays that are translated here for the first time, Portilla discusses the allure and dangers of nationalism and the weaponization of political correctness, especially in cultural criticism ("Critique of Criticism"), the cultural and political life of the United States from the Mexican point of view, and the existential roots of US American exceptionalism and xenophobia ("The Spiritual Crisis of the United States"), and the nihilistic worldview that gave rise to Nazism and still threatens to give rise to fascism today ("Thomas Mann and German Irrationalism").⁵ These political meditations are unified by Portilla's central concern with community and its disintegration through attitudes that destroy communities from within.

The kind of community that most fascinates Portilla in these essays is that of the *nation*. Like many of his contemporaries, Portilla sought to understand the ways that nationality influences people, for good and ill. But Portilla's work stands out for both its philosophical sophistication and the extraordinary quality of his writing. Indeed, readers who are new to Portilla will be delighted to discover that his prose seems to leap off the page with one thought-provoking idea after another. Portilla's work also stands out for its deeply humane perspective. His essays are driven by a palpable anxiety concerning the possibility of experiencing genuine solidarity with one's fellow citizens, despite their differences and even their character flaws. The thread that ties these essays together is a question that is as urgent today as ever: Under what conditions does that which sustains our communities *disintegrate*? It is our belief that Portilla's post-War anxieties, as manifested in these "other essays," motivate deep and illuminating reflections that can help us answer this timely question.

In the chapters that follow, we approach Portilla's work from different angles in order to shed light on his insights and oversights, the historical context of his work, and its significance to contemporary debates on a wide range of topics—including the politics of social and cultural identity, the nature of community and nationality, and the phenomenology of moods. The chapters authored by Sánchez focus on Portilla as a *political thinker*, drawing out the political implications of his views and comparing them

to a wide range of figures in social and political philosophy. The chapters authored by Gallegos focus on Portilla as a *phenomenologist* and *social theorist*, extracting and assessing the general principles, arguments, and methodologies that underlie his intriguing views about how various kinds of “affective attunements” (emotions, moods, character traits, and so on) can profoundly shape people’s everyday lives and even alter the destinies of nations. Our different approaches reflect some differences in our interpretation of Portilla—differences that we intentionally leave unresolved in order to provide the reader with a richer understanding of Portilla’s work. At the root of our differing interpretations are questions about Portilla’s methodology and the systematicity of his thinking. Gallegos argues that in Portilla’s essays, we can discern a largely implicit but fairly well-developed philosophical system that is grounded in his commitment to phenomenology. In contrast, Sánchez views Portilla’s work as less systematically developed and less committed to any particular methodology, yet more concerned with the importance of offering rational perspectives that can battle the chaos of the world around him. But despite these divergences, the authors engage Portilla in the spirit of critique and dialog.

In a more overarching sense, the analyses contained here attempt to think *with* Portilla about our contemporary crises. This approach to Portilla’s work can be distinguished from two alternatives that are perhaps more common when discussing a figure in the history of philosophy. The first is a strictly exegetical approach that is subservient to the original texts; the second is an approach that exploits the original texts as a mere resource for the authors’ own philosophical agenda. In order to approach Portilla in a way that is neither subservient nor exploitative, we have endeavored to think of him as though he were a deeply respected colleague who has begun a philosophical investigation to which we are also committed. We thus make every effort to translate and interpret his texts accurately, but at the same time, we take liberties to agree and disagree with Portilla as we see fit, to abandon some of his lines of thought and develop or embellish others, according to our own (inevitably biased and partial) philosophical interests. For this reason, we find that thinking *with* Portilla occasionally involves thinking *after* him, pursuing independent considerations about philosophical and political themes that, while not addressed by Portilla himself, are addressed by us in his critical spirit. All of this is done with the hope that Portilla’s thinking, always so vibrant on the page, may once again animate a living philosophical investigation.

1. Portilla's Disquiet

Who was Jorge Portilla? His biography is sketchy. He never taught philosophy and never received a graduate degree in the field. Although he was a respected member of the famed but short-lived philosophical Grupo Hiperión, he did not produce, during his lifetime, the sort of celebrated academic texts that cemented the philosophical status of his contemporaries Octavio Paz, Emilio Uranga, Leopoldo Zea, or Luis Villoro.⁶ What we know is that he was anxious and uneasy, an alcoholic, a Catholic, a depressive who, apparently, succeeded in taking his own life in 1963.⁷ We know also that he had a formidable intellectual acuity. Juan José Reyes, whose father, Salvador Reyes Nevárez, was also a member of the Grupo Hiperión, describes Portilla as “brilliant and profound, attentive and loquacious, focused and expansive.”⁸ Reyes reports that Portilla was feared for his ability to engage in practical and abstract criticism with anyone, anytime, but also that he was “generous with his friends,” and kind.⁹ Although Portilla's intensity could be unnerving, it appeared to spring from a sincere search for “his own salvation and the salvation of others on the margins . . . he was given over fully to others but always inclined toward his own spiritual salvation [*al recogimiento*].”¹⁰

By all accounts, Portilla was, at heart, a remarkable and caring thinker who despised chaos, irrationalism, and the political games that separated and alienated people from one another, from themselves, and from the truth. His untimely death in 1963 left many questions unanswered, both about his person and about his philosophy. Here, our aim is to answer some of those questions about his philosophy and to solidify as much as possible his somewhat unusual philosophical orientation. As Portilla himself confessed to his friends: “I do not fit into any of the frames that make up Mexican philosophy.”¹¹ To us, this confession is an invitation to venture into his work without the burden of any orthodoxy or rigid interpretations getting in our way. And, thus, we venture beyond the usual interpretation of Portilla as phenomenologist of *relajo*, to speak about his social and political thought.

Portilla's core political values are perhaps most evident in his manner of philosophizing. It could be said that his philosophical labor was always a labor for others—or, more specifically, that it was always labor for Mexico and for Mexicans, labor that he hoped would make things better, or serve, in some way, the betterment of his countrymen. His critique of *relajo*, for

instance, is motivated by the hope that analyzing this issue would serve his community. As he puts it,

[it is] worth the effort to examine this issue, not so much because of a Pharisee-like desire to warn the youth of the dangers of the lack of seriousness [*relajo*], but rather because of the desire to understand . . . an issue that is alive and well in our community and—so to speak—to take philosophy out into the streets (which is its natural place) by stripping it as much as possible of the “technical” shell that sometimes conceals it.¹²

The idea that the “natural place” of philosophy is “the streets” or the community is tied to the pragmatic notion that philosophy should be in the service of human life itself—that if it is not in the service of the community or not performing a practical and liberating labor in the streets, among people, then it is not operating according to its nature. Portilla held firm to this conviction, even in his daily life, where he “never ceased to point out, to denounce, to reveal, those traps that get in the way of liberation.”¹³

Taking philosophy “out in to the streets” also meant that Portilla would not publish much in academic or professional journals or presses, thus restricting his output and largely confining his voice to conversations, magazines, and newspaper columns.¹⁴ In order to gain a better sense of Portilla as a philosopher, then, let us consider a sampling of his columns, which originally appeared as supplements between 1958 and 1962 in the Mexico City newspapers *Excélsior* and *Siempre!*, and were collected in his posthumous anthology under the title “Quinta Columna” (or “Fifth Column”) and “Cuaderno de Notas” (or “Notebook”). In these columns, Portilla sets as his goal the philosophical education of the masses for the sake of Mexico, based on his conviction that “philosophy is useful for understanding” [January 18, 1959; 200].¹⁵ We see in these writings philosophy, disguised as the journalistic exercises of a restless yet agile mind, unapologetically broadcasted in the streets—specifically, in newsstands, bookstores, libraries, and waiting rooms, sold at intersections or dragged listlessly by the wind through the avenues—and, thus broadcasted, sought to enlighten and edify the passersby, the factory worker, the thief, the detective, the doctor, the everyday reader who knows nothing of Marx, Hegel, or the philosophy of *lo mexicano*, but who cares about Mexico, his community, and his fellows.

A quick study of these columns reveals that the greatest influences on Portilla's political views are Marxism and Catholicism, and that Portilla is committed to a kind of socialist humanism that puts truth before ideology, community before the individual, and brotherly solidarity before nation. In many of these seemingly hurried pieces, Portilla also touches on themes that he examines in more detail in his scholarly texts. Thus, time and again Portilla targets what he views as the negative and destructive forms of human conviviality that have historically kept Mexicans from recognizing and pursuing their own excellence. Even in his first column, Portilla laments the lack of "great . . . public virtues" in the Mexican community, and he argues that this "lack" is generated by a "skepticism, to which we, Mexican intellectuals, are especially inclined," rooted in the belief that Mexico is helplessly inferior to the industrialized world, both economically and politically [December 14, 1958; 199].

Over time, Portilla comes to view this form of alienation as a symptom of a larger sickness that he refers to as "skeptical nihilism" [September 5, 1962; 201]. Skeptical nihilism is a cultural and political disease; indeed, it the polar opposite of everything Portilla cherishes. Skeptical nihilism holds that universal values do not exist, and that the larger human community is an abstraction and thus of no value. It emphasizes a historicism bordering on relativism that says that only one's specifically situated community should matter, if anything is to matter at all. And, moreover, it says that any value that does not directly contribute to the empowerment of the individual is of no use. As such, skeptical nihilism is the closing of the mind, an abandonment of understanding for the sake of tribalism and individualism.

What is the antidote for the refusal of transcendence and understanding? By the late 1950s, Portilla is preaching a variation of Marxist Catholicism that he thinks can help in the effort to combat the closing of the mind and the disintegration of community. The effort, he suggests, ought to target the dangerous emotional dispositions of *fear* and *hate*. "Fear of man," he writes, "engenders hate and contempt, which are characteristic passions of the right and the petite bourgeoisie" [October 10, 1962; 206]. This hate—hatred of the new, of the foreign, of the other, of the strange—justifies an individual's or a community's skepticism toward the other; it justifies the nihilism of values that would otherwise promote progress and growth; it justifies, finally, *relajo*, corruption, and the lazy politics of nationalists who would rather close their ranks than understand other ways of being. Portilla insists, however, that philoso-

phy can serve as a tool for the clarification and ultimate dissolution of hate. Thus, Portilla entreats the reader, “we must comprehend our own hate. We can literally drown in indignation and hate. So long as we do not clarify the origin or the meaning of this passion, we cannot be of help in anything or help anyone” [September 5, 1962; 203]. This view of the role of philosophy reflects what we could call Portilla’s basic philosophical principle, announced in one of the earliest columns: “reality is only accessible with the truth, yet only if one is in truth can we modify reality” [January 18, 1959; 200].

One of Portilla’s greatest strengths as a writer is his ability to identify and describe the *character types* that he encounters on the streets of Mexico City. Almost like a contemporary stand-up comedian, Portilla calls attention to “*that guy*—you know, the guy who . . .,” naming and describing a familiar type of person in a surprising, insightful, and humorous way. By doing so, he gently admonishes his audience not to be like the person he is criticizing, while also shedding light on aspects of our social space that we may have understood intuitively but could not articulate explicitly. In one column, for example, he targets the *mocho*, a caricature of the modern individual, or, better, of the radical individualism of the modern age [November 21, 1962; 210–211]. The *mocho* fetishizes production but ultimately seeks only his own advancement, pushing forward without respect for traditional values, cultural mores, rules, and logic. He is a narcissist, and for this reason, he is boring, pretentious, racist, closed-minded, hypocritical, and deceitful.

Portilla’s final column appeared at the end of 1962, less than a year before his death in the fall of 1963. In it, he expresses hope that individualism will be overcome. Retreating into his Marxist humanism, he proclaims that “individualism’s moment has passed,” and that a return to reason is possible [December 12, 1962; 211]. Echoing Emiliano Zapata’s famous dictum in his “Plan de Ayala” that what is important is to follow principles rather than personalities, Portilla writes, “Our time is no longer the time of ‘personality,’ but, perhaps, of ‘truth’” [211]. Here, hope is inscribed in three words, “*sino, tal vez*,”—“but, perhaps”—a rare confirmation of what careful readers already know, that, after all, Portilla’s philosophy is a philosophy of hope. His deconstructive critiques are meant to be uplifting, to help lay the groundwork for new kinds of intersubjective arrangements, or, at least, to help undo ways of thinking that obscure the possibility of new forms of being-with-others, communities grounded in trust, solidarity, and truth.

2. A Note on *Filósofas Mexicanas*

One salient feature common to Portilla's work, both the scholarly essays and his journalistic contributions, is his silence about issues related to gender. In fact, Portilla rarely discusses women at all. In his critiques of various character types (the *relajiento*, the *mocho*, the critic, etc.), for example, he consistently assumes that the individual he is criticizing is a man ("*el hombre mexicano*"). We find this assumption in his analysis of the *relajo individual* in the "Phenomenology of Relajo," where the *relajiento* is described as someone who is comfortable standing outside the rules of propriety, someone who is allowed by Mexican society to be disruptive and rebellious—social allowances made only for *men* in a traditionally patriarchal culture such that of Mexico.¹⁶ The same holds true of the *mocho* and the critic he discusses in "Critique of Criticism" (see appendix). In fact, none of the character types that Portilla discusses are specifically female, and Portilla appears to overlook the possibility that women might participate in the roles and practices he describes (for example, as literary critics or even as *relajientas*).

Portilla's silence about gender, to some extent, reflected social, political, and academic attitudes typical of his time and place. In fact, most, if not all, established or recognized¹⁷ Mexican philosophers in the first half of the twentieth century were complicit in this silence. Whether the writer was José Vasconcelos, Samuel Ramos, José Gaos, Emilio Uranga, Leopoldo Zea, or Luis Villoro, the perspective was masculine and, moreover, metropolitan, that is, related to *mestizo* males from Mexico City. One clearly sees, in the texts of these authors, that a single, relatively dominant perspective is taken for granted as the most legitimate and authoritative, a practice that although not a matter of policy was certainly adopted as a sort of implicit default. This, of course, adds a problematic layer to our discussion of Portilla's thinking regarding society's disintegration. Although we touch only briefly upon these and related issues in the chapters that follow, we are convinced that it should be the focus of future research, because retrieving diverse voices that speak about social and political issues during this period of Mexican history would certainly enrich Mexican philosophy as a whole.

When faced with Portilla's silence about issues related to gender, some readers might assume that women philosophers were simply missing from the spaces where these conversations were taking place, or that these issues were irrelevant to the topics of his inquiries. Neither of these

assumptions would be correct. While there were relatively few Mexican women contributing to the philosophical conversation in Portilla's time, they were not insignificant. (A popular positive response to those who question whether or not there were any female Mexican philosophers in the first half of the twentieth century goes like this: *¡de que las hay, las hay!* In other words, there *certainly were* female Mexican philosophers, we just haven't looked hard enough to find them!) In fact, the first comprehensive study and commentary of Portilla's own work was by Rosa Krauze (1923–2003), a friend and contemporary of Portilla, student of the famed Mexican philosopher Antonio Caso, and prolific historian of twentieth-century Mexican philosophy. Krauze was one of a handful of interlocutors capable of approaching Portilla without hesitation. If her account is any indication, their conversations were mutually enriching, philosophically and psychologically, to the point that Krauze's influence on Portilla should not be hard to spot.¹⁸

Portilla would have had many such encounters with women philosophers of his day. During his time of philosophical production (1948–1963), several women philosophers had either already left their stamp on the intellectual life of Mexico or were in the process of doing so. Among them was Krauze, but also Rosario Castellanos (1925–1974), whose *Sobre cultura femenina* [*On Feminine Culture*] sought to avoid the assumptions of the male perspective in philosophy while making a case for the place of women in the production and maintenance of culture.¹⁹ This work, published in 1950, had been written under the direction of José Gaos, and it was in Gaos' seminars that Mexican women philosophers began to flourish and assert their place in the Mexican intellectual landscape, including Monelissa Lina Pérez Marchand, Victoria Junco Posadas, Olga Victoria Quiroz Martínez, Vera Yamuni, María del Carmen Rovira Gaspar, and Elsa Cecilia Frost.²⁰ Perhaps due to Gaos's influence, most of these women went on to write on themes and issues in the philosophy of culture, feminism, or the philosophy of history, and often did so in ways that challenged the normativity of the *mestizo* male perspective.

Portilla's silence on issues related to gender and the oppression of women is thus not justified by "the times," and it is certainly not justified from a theoretical perspective. Portilla sought to understand the disintegration of community, and while his work sheds valuable insight on a wide range of factors contributing to communal disintegration—including diverse value inversions, mythologies, communal moods, relations of power, and ideologies—by ignoring the paternalistic and patriarchal tendencies that

prevailed in the social order of his day, the rampant oppression of women and the female perspective in all things political, and the marginalization of women in philosophy and other sites of cultural production, his work ignores structures that clearly contribute to communal disintegration. If this is correct, then Portilla's own silence contributed to the marginalization of women and so to the disintegration of community, thus exacerbating and obfuscating the very phenomena he sought to analyze.

We offer these assessments in the spirit of an invitation. Krauze, Castellanos, Frost, and Zambrano are giants in the history of Mexican philosophy, and as we move ahead in normalizing this tradition in the English-speaking philosophical academy, their contributions should not be overlooked. Portilla's philosophy did not develop in a vacuum; it was influenced by the history of philosophy and the writings of his peers, formed in a life of conversations, agreements and disagreement. As Krauze recalls, "with him, everything was a conversation. He spoke always with contagious enthusiasm. He didn't need an entourage; he didn't pick his interlocutor. . . . His life was wasted in talking . . . we would've gained so much if [he would have written things down], if his disposition would have been different."²¹

3. The Plan of this Book

The appendix of this book contains our translations of three of Portilla's previously untranslated essays. We have selected these texts because we believe they collectively present the essential elements of Portilla's social and political philosophy, so that English-speaking readers may develop their own interpretations of this intrepid Mexican philosopher. In order to provide readers with some guidance as they make their way into the texts—as well as offer some provocations to stimulate future discussions—the first six chapters of this book present complementary perspectives on Portilla's three essays.

In chapter 1, "The Terrorism of the Social," Sánchez provides an interpretation of the critique of nationalism and political Manichaeism in Portilla's 1955 essay "Critique of Criticism." Sánchez discusses the historical context of Portilla's urgent concern with an ideological and exclusionary form of cultural criticism that adopts an aggressively puritanical approach to political correctness. Sánchez reflects on the relevance of this text for

our own times, and he draws out the ethical ideals that underlie Portilla's concerns and can oppose the Manichaeian attitudes that he warns about.

In chapter 2, "Portilla's Conceptual Framework: Phenomenological Nationalism," Gallegos argues that "Critique of Criticism" exhibits Portilla's commitment to the view that nationality functions as a phenomenological horizon of intelligibility, and in particular, that many nations are in the grip of a mood or "affective attunement" that profoundly shapes the way individuals in these nations experience themselves, others, and the situations they encounter. Gallegos locates this idea of "phenomenological nationalism" at the intersection of phenomenological tradition's ambivalent fascination with human sociality and Latin American philosophy's guiding concern with liberation from the legacies of colonization.

In chapter 3, "The Politics of Innocence," Sánchez turns to Portilla's 1952 essay "The Spiritual Crisis of the United States," thinking through, with, and beyond Portilla about US American culture and its grounding myths. Drawing on the perspectives of philosophers including Hegel and Emerson, Sánchez reflects on what Portilla means when he insists that US Americans are "innocent" and willfully naive concerning the dark sides of human life. Sánchez then invites us to think *with* Portilla about how the myth of innocence is deployed in contemporary US American social and cultural arrangements, such as in policies that reflect a belief in "American exceptionalism" and a fear of immigrants.

In chapter 4, "Portilla's Method: A Phenomenological Social Theory," Gallegos examines the methodology that Portilla employs in his analysis of the US American way of being. Gallegos extracts from Portilla's essay the general methodological principles that guide Portilla's innovative use of a mood-oriented approach to the phenomenology of nationality as a means of explaining widespread patterns of behaviors and attitudes that are found in a given nation. Gallegos raises a few concerns regarding Portilla's empirical claims about life in the US, suggesting that Portilla's analysis would have been strengthened if he had acknowledged the diversity of the US and explicitly focused his critique on the sense of innocence found within the White mainstream of US society.

In chapter 5, "From Irrationalism to Complacency for the Death of the Other," Sánchez examines the topics of nihilism, death, and violence through the lens of Portilla's 1962 essay, "Thomas Mann and German Irrationalism," where Portilla examines what he calls the "the intellectual and affective climate" that gave rise to Nazism. Sánchez explores connections

between Portilla's views and those of fellow Mexican philosophers and others, including Immanuel Levinas. Thinking *beyond* Portilla, Sánchez concludes by considering his remarks in light of the epidemic of violence and death in twenty-first-century Mexico.

Finally, in chapter 6, "Portilla's Hope: Phenomenological Flourishing and Affective Liberation," Gallegos argues that in Portilla's critique of Mann, we can discern Portilla's positive political vision. This vision is grounded in Portilla's conception of "phenomenological flourishing," a kind of wellbeing grounded in the development of our capacities to disclose the meaning of our experience. On the basis of this quasi-ethical ideal, Portilla's work calls for us to do what is necessary to dissolve the rigid and problematic moods that grip our nations, while warning us about some of the most difficult challenges we are likely to face as we work to realize this ideal of "affective liberation."

We hope and expect that we will not have the last word on Portilla's social and political thought, and we look forward to a new generation having the opportunity to think with one of Mexico's greatest philosophers.

Notes

1. As Portilla explains, the term *relajo* refers here to the breakdown of a group activity that is intentionally brought about by individuals who refuse to take the activity "seriously"—typically by joking around incessantly. In this essay, Portilla argues that *relajo* is pervasive in Mexico and is detrimental to Mexican society. But *relajo* is also philosophically illuminating, he says, because these breakdowns in normal social cooperation reveal important features of our experience that philosophers have taken for granted and overlooked, such as the way that an individual's experience of values depends on the cooperation of others.

2. Jorge Portilla, *La fenomenología del relajo y otros ensayos* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1984). Originally published in 1966 by the Mexico City publisher ERA.

3. Carlos Sánchez, *The Suspension of Seriousness: On the Phenomenology of Jorge Portilla* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012).

4. Published discussions of Portilla's work in English include Sánchez, *The Suspension of Seriousness*; Carlos Alberto Sánchez, *Contingency and Commitment: Mexican Existentialism and the Place of Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016); Carlos Alberto Sánchez, "Serious Subjects: On Values, Time, and Death," *Spaziofilosofico* 18 (2017): 463–473; Shoni Rancher, "The Political Relevance of Kierkegaardian Humor in Jorge Portilla's *Fenomenología del relajo*,"

APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy 18, no. 1 (2018): 12–16; Francisco Gallegos, “Seriousness, Irony, and Cultural Politics: A defense of Jorge Portilla,” *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 13, no. 1 (2013): 11–18; Francisco Gallegos, “Surviving Social Disintegration: Jorge Portilla on the Phenomenology of Zozobra,” *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 17, no. 2 (2018): 3–6; Andrea Pitts, “Carlos Alberto Sánchez: *Contingency and Commitment: Mexican Existentialism and the Place of Philosophy*,” *Human Studies* 39, no. 4 (2016): 645–652.

5. *La fenomenología del relajo y otros ensayos*, the anthology of Portilla’s collected works, contains a total of eight chapters. Besides “Phenomenology of Relajo” and the three chapters that are translated in this book, the remaining chapters include “Comunidad, grandeza, y miseria del mexicano” (a translation of which is included in *Mexican Philosophy in the 20th Century: Essential Readings*, ed. Carlos Alberto Sánchez & Robert Eli Sanchez (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); “La nausea y el humanismo” and “Dostoievski y Santo Tomas” (discussed in Sánchez, *Contingency and Commitment*); and “‘Quinta Columna’ y ‘Cuaderno de Notas’” (discussed later in this introduction).

6. The Grupo Hiperión was an influential circle of intellectuals—including Portilla, Uranga, Zea, and Villoro, among others—who worked closely together in Mexico City between 1948 and the early 1950s, most famously addressing the question of *mexicanidad*.

7. See Christopher Domínguez Michael, *Octavio Paz en su siglo* (Mexico City: Aguilar, 2015). See especially Chapter 7, “Mexicanosofía,” where Domínguez provides an excellent summary of the Grupo Hiperión and its relationship with Octavio Paz. It is here, also, where Domínguez mentions Portilla’s suicide. Domínguez’s claim that Portilla committed suicide in 1963 is unconfirmed and unsupported by the obituaries of the day or the eulogies. In any case, if true, it is an end that would cohere with other accounts of this great thinker’s reckless behavior. Most references do not mention his manner of death, only that he was a heavy drinker and somewhat reckless with his health. See, especially, Rosa Krauze, “Sobre la *Fenomenología del relajo*,” *Revista de la Universidad de México* 20, no. 8 (1966): 9–14.

8. Juan José Reyes, *El péndulo y el pozo* (Mexico City: Consejo para la cultura nacional, 2004), 66. In a similar fashion, Antonio Ibarguengoitia recalls Portilla’s “tormented yet agile thinking.” Antonio Ibarguengoitia, *Filosofía mexicana: en sus hombres y en sus textos* (Mexico City: Porrúa, 1967), 254.

9. Reyes, *El péndulo y el pozo*, 66.

10. *Ibid.*, 69.

11. *Ibid.*, 67.

12. Portilla, “Phenomenology of Relajo,” in *The Suspension of Seriousness* by Carlos Alberto Sanchez (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 126.

13. Reyes, *El péndulo y el pozo*, 68.

14. See Reyes, *El péndulo y el pozo* & Krauze, “Sobre la *Fenomenología del relajo*.”

15. Portilla, *La fenomenología del relajo y otros ensayos*. We will cite these pieces by date and page number in square brackets within the text to make quick reference to the newspaper columns where these appear.

16. Portilla, “Phenomenology of Relajo,” 132ff.

17. That is, those who were in the business of philosophy—teaching, writing, advocating, or promoting philosophy.

18. Krauze, “Sobre la *Fenomenología del relajo*.”

19. See Rosario Castellanos, “On Feminine Culture,” trans. Carlos Alberto Sánchez, in *Mexican Philosophy in the 20th Century: Essential Readings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 206–215.

20. See Francesca Gargallo, *Las ideas feministas latinoamericanas* (Mexico City: UACM, 2006).

21. Krauze, “Sobre la *Fenomenología del relajo*,” 9.