

## Chapter 1

# Closer Than You Think

## Spain and Philosophy

### “Spanish Thought,” Living on the Margins of Philosophy

At the outset of his 1995 history of Spanish philosophy, the French Hispanist Alain Guy quotes his countryman Victor Delbos’s low opinion of thinking south of the Pyrenees, expressed in the early decades of the twentieth century: “If we want to get to know philosophy in its entirety, it is necessary to possess every single language, with the exception of Spanish.”<sup>1</sup> Though unmatched in his severity, Delbos was not alone in considering the Hispanic world devoid of interest for the historian of philosophy and unpromising for contemporary and future thinking. Ivo Hollhüber quotes a fellow German scholar who claims that Spanish philosophy is “insignificant” (ohne Bedeutung).<sup>2</sup> Like Guy, Hollhüber expresses a hope that a collection of profiles of Spanish thinkers might remedy the low esteem in which colleagues in the mainstream of the discipline hold the Hispanic tradition, taking a broad view to include “thinkers” who might be considered “literary.”<sup>3</sup> Guy refers to Spanish thinkers who agree with Delbos, notably the novelist, critic, and professor Juan Valera, whose 1873 “De la filosofía española” (On Spanish philosophy) noted the clear superiority of German and French philosophy.<sup>4</sup> But contemporary Spanish scholars have also expressed doubts about Spain’s philosophical relevance. Toward the end of a career that included books on José Ortega y Gasset and the editorship of *Revista de Occidente*—Ortega’s vehicle for integrating Spanish thinking into the Western intellectual scene, and vice versa—Paulino Garagorri considers Spain’s place in European

philosophy “ambiguous.”<sup>5</sup> “The mediocrity of Spanish philosophy during the modern age,” he says, “is perfectly apparent [un hecho palmario],” although he grants exceptions for Miguel de Unamuno and Ortega on the basis of “literary quality.”<sup>6</sup> The author of the prologue to *Pensadores españoles universales* (Universal Spanish thinkers)—a 2014 collection of profiles of ten Spanish thinkers, much in the style of Guy and Hollhüber—strikes a somewhat defensive tone in his first sentence: “Some poorly informed individuals insist that Spain, in contrast to Germany or France, has never produced great thinkers.”<sup>7</sup> He goes on to repeat a conventional history, that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Spain lacked much philosophical activity at all, until a period when “literary movements included thinkers among their members.”<sup>8</sup>

What is behind this dismissal of Spanish philosophy and its prompting of defenders and promoters? Moreover, why the tendency to appeal to literature’s involvement in Spanish thinking? In *Les Philosophes espagnols d’hier et aujourd’hui* (Spanish philosophers of yesterday and today), Guy avoids explicit evaluation, asserting that “psychological, historical, and social factors” have marginalized Spanish thinkers. The list of characteristics he offers provides some hints about the causes of widespread neglect. Alongside a reminder of Spain’s Catholic heritage, Guy reiterates the cliché about two Spains, an anarchist one, and an authoritarian one whose perpetual struggle occupies philosophers.<sup>9</sup> Following the Spanish scholar Joaquín Carreras y Artau, he calls the analysis of this conflict a “nationalist prejudice” and adds to it a “literary prejudice” that assumes that Spain’s philosophy is typically subordinate to its literature.<sup>10</sup> In his 2010 *Other Voices: Readings in Spanish Philosophy*, John Welch complains of the “cultural lopsidedness” that mars histories of philosophy and agrees with A.R. Caponigri that social and political forces have conspired against the prestige of Spanish culture, in favor of the French and Germans.<sup>11</sup> An educated Westerner ought to know “Spanish speculative thought” in addition to “Spanish culture in all its forms and dimensions,” says Caponigri, before calling for “reintegration of Spanish culture with the culture of the West.”<sup>12</sup> Welch and Caponigri are not alone in thinking Spain has been marginalized in histories of European culture, in general, and particularly in accounts of science and thought. But while the inclusion of literary figures might appear a recourse to fill out a meager archive, it has also been argued that Spain’s intense commitment to literature or poetry accounts for its exclusion from philosophy’s canon and conventional history. In other words, the historical course of philosophy has led it away from Spain and away from literature. As philosophy learns

to take literature seriously again, it should find a new appreciation for the Spanish tradition, where the close relationship between intuition, invention, and thought has maintained a central role.

Such, at least, is the hope of the advocates for “Spanish” “philosophy”: that writers whose work has remained at the margins of philosophical debates should move beyond specialized discussions of their literary genres or historical milieux to participate in broader dialogues about thought and ideas. While this first chapter provides a portrait of the relationship between literature and philosophy in twentieth-century Spanish letters, subsequent chapters focus on the ways its major figures’ works put that relationship into play in unique and powerful ways. The broadest purpose of *This Side of Philosophy* is to assess the contention that Spanish philosophy is by nature literary, and perhaps at its best when most literary, and for this very reason has been excluded from conventional histories of philosophy. In the works that deal with this topic, it is often taken for granted that literature and philosophy coexist in an unproblematic way, as two modes of discourse or forms of human intellectual production that can be more or less adopted and taken up at will. Another task of this book is to integrate this Spanish tendency into a debate that has occupied philosophers throughout Western history, beginning with the ancient Greeks. Because literature seems opposed to philosophy, Spanish writers and scholars came to believe that literature offers philosophical resources that *other* philosophers—especially those in the more prestigious national traditions—deliberately rejected. For this trend in Spanish philosophy, the integration of literary elements into philosophical inquiry and exposition, promised to confront philosophy with its shortcomings, and even managed to overcome them, resulting, to put it simply, in either an end of philosophy or a renovation, renewal, or rebirth of a genuine thinking, designated as a literary or poetical philosophy. In short, this episode in Spanish philosophy aims at a *this side*, by being more philosophical than philosophy, seeking to achieve a new interiority, a new or renewed concept of the human, or perhaps a space of encounter in which the human is constituted.

Before returning to the topic of scholarly discussions about Spanish philosophy, I would like to dwell for a moment on the relationship between the adjective and the noun. It is not my intention to deny the legitimacy of a national or cultural, let’s say *communal*, designation or categorization of philosophy, but to call attention to the restrictions and conceptual tension that such a perspective creates. I limit my scope to four intellectual figures who wrote in the language conventionally called “Spanish” and who

identified themselves with the country of their birth, even through their periods of study abroad and the experience of exile, which all four had in one way or another. Their shared interests and familiarity with each others' work produces a kind of unity, stronger than the one their common Spanish identity might impose. However, they all attribute some of the traits of their thought to a Spanish character at the same time that they clearly intend to intervene in that identity, to define, communicate, and even alter it.<sup>13</sup> While that might seem a worthy topic in itself, I have chosen to devote my research to the philosophical claims, and that means, in a sense, to the effort to accede to a mode of speech beyond what might be exhaustively determined by culture or ethnicity.

In the next chapter, we will look at the origins of philosophy and its effort at self-definition in relation to poetry and narrative, but for the moment I would like to recall Hegel's vision of philosophy's uniqueness, what he refers to as the "difference of philosophy" in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.<sup>14</sup> Throughout his introductions to these lectures, Hegel grapples with the historical variety of his subject, a multiplicity determined by the span of millennia and the diverse people among whom philosophy has been practiced. For Hegel, not only do the cultural determinants fail to invalidate the universality of philosophy; in addition, the world spirit develops historically by producing varied manifestations of the possibilities inherent in the abstract truth that it possessed from its beginnings in ancient Greece. The concrete forms spirit takes are not only the individual thinkers and their works; those thinkers also all represent a people or nation. In his well-known organic metaphor, the people are a plant that shows its vigor through the "supreme blossom" of a philosophical system.<sup>15</sup> But the flower is not a mere ornament; rather, it is a sign of the fecundity that lives on in the subsequent manifestations of spirit, such as art, politics, or religion. Any particular philosophy can thus be accurately regarded as simultaneously individual, collective, and universal, but for Hegel a philosophy is only properly what it is from the point of view of universality. Therefore, Hegel's *Lectures* also attempt to establish the way in which the truth is absolute—that is, objective and subjective, unified and diverse, abstract and concrete—and he contrasts the strict concept of philosophy with religion, mythology, natural science, and popular (merely subjective) philosophies.

In spite of its universal character, using one particular communal determinant, such as "Spanish," as a principle of selection for a philosophical study would not be invalid, because all of human history has taken the form of distinct linguistic and political units. But to speak about what

is philosophical about Spanish thought would require a perspective that reckons with the claim to universality. When Unamuno and Ortega seek to establish the philosophical credentials of the novel *Don Quixote*, they follow Hegel's conviction that philosophy is a people's greatest achievement, diverging from Hegel only by refusing to accept a spiritually subordinate place for a literary work, that is, by maintaining that literature can be as philosophical as philosophy. Along with Machado and Zambrano, they share a privileging of the literary, placing it at the level of philosophy or even in a place beyond. Although Hegel is often a relevant point of reference, they frequently respond to the anti-Hegelianism of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Marx, and to other imposing thinkers of the tradition, among them Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant. Their dialogues with canonical philosophical figures manifest their intention to be "universally" relevant, not merely Spanish or Hispanic philosophers.

"Universality" is often used in unphilosophical ways, such as when *Don Quixote* is said to be "universal literature" because it is so widely translated, as if its international appeal could be empirically extended to the cosmos at large. At the same time, universality is sometimes assumed to be a simple impossibility, values and principles imposed hegemonically and tyrannically on cultural others by a particular interested party, such as Hegel or the West. The history of Europe certainly shows that the word and concept of an unrestricted applicability have been wielded as a weapon in the service of racism, imperialism, and sexism, to say the least. By studying the effort to define universality through the concept of Europe, Rodolphe Gasché's *Europe, or the Infinite Task* serves to elaborate the philosophical concept of universality in contrast to empirical and commonplace meanings. In Gasché's account, universality is inextricable from particular determinations—linguistic, historical, cultural—and therefore engaged in an endless process of realization. The "philosophical difference"—what Hegel describes as different from religion, science, and so on—becomes transformed into an ongoing process of extrication from individual and communal particularities, an approach to shared knowledge and practice whose terms require constant reexamination. Gasché proposes that we think of Europe not as a concept, idea, or even proper name, but rather as "a form of identity intrinsically tied to the relentless demand of having to be critically rethought, reinvented, and recast, time and again, at any given turn in history, in short, at every moment, every day."<sup>16</sup> He sets out from Edmund Husserl's insistence that "unlike all other cultural works, philosophy is not a movement of interest which is bound to the soil of the national tradition" (quoted 29). Instead, philosophy

directs a process of transcendence of all ethnically defined customs, all “given identities” (27), in order to assume the freedom and responsibility of rational humanity. The phenomenological tradition interpreted by Gasché—Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jan Patočka, and Jacques Derrida—continues to associate this process of transcendence with the name “Europe.” Paradoxically, then, “Europe” is defined as the demand to break away from particular historical and cultural forms of human existence in order to make a claim to universality. Gasché points out—although he attributes the idea to the contemporary Japanese philosopher Tadashi Ogawa—that the “infinite task” of Europe is “nothing less than the very de-Europeanization of European life and thought” (33). Those who identify themselves as Europeans in this sense strive to step behind European identity in a quest for standards of truth that would not be limited to Europe. Paradoxically, such an extreme transcendence of cultural determinations constitutes both the particularity of this pursuit and the limitations that it seeks to overcome. Furthermore, Gasché points out that the stakes of “European” existence are those of philosophy itself, listing concepts that name possibilities of culture-neutral judgment, emerging in an idiom, at a historical moment in a cultural context: “universality, rationality, apodicticity, responsibility, and so forth” (6). In contrast to the philosophers for whom these notions serve as the guiding principles—holding that philosophy must be valid without exception, obey rational laws, be susceptible of complete certainty, and follow moral precepts—the post-Hegelian philosophers that Gasché analyzes provide different ways of opening to an inconceivable future, one that may or may not be Christian, or even European, but whose questions might go by different but still familiar names such as *democracy*, *justice*, *knowledge*, and *invention*. While they all make claims to address the status of rationality—most often conflating it with philosophy itself—Unamuno, Ortega, Machado, and Zambrano also show an interest in problems that were traditionally seen as subordinate to the more primordial problem of defining the nature of philosophical thought. Like Gasché’s figures in *Europe*, the four Spanish thinkers treated here distinguish themselves by the opportunities they offer to think the relationship between idiomaticity and generality, between the philosophical demand for universality and the particularities of culture and language, as well as the idiosyncrasies of individual lives.

Gasché’s discussion of universality and Europe—especially the observation that Europe seeks a “de-Europeanization” in its radical quest for universality—indicates a tension within the word “Europe” between a philosophical concept and an ethnological or ethnographic one. While

some Europeans might embrace the vision of a society that welcomes the challenge of diversity and hospitality held out by the philosophical concept of *Europe*, others patently do not. As we will see when we delve deeper into the meanings of philosophy and literature in chapter 2, philosophy, too, has philosophical and nonphilosophical definitions. One of the most politically suspect projects in twentieth-century Spanish thought—a minor motif of this book—is the creation of a philosophical concept of Spain, that is, of a Spanishness that, like “European,” might aspire to a universal validity and even to a (de-)Hispanization. It is worth noting, however, that within contemporary historiography of philosophy, Spain occupies a consistent place, if not a prominent one. Philosophical history has long accepted an international perspective, departing from Hegel’s *History of Philosophy* to allow a looser, less hierarchical survey of its subject matter, including Indian and Chinese thinking, and other traditions that do not stem directly from the Greek origins. Some contemporary philosophical historiography concedes Spain a unique position, even within Europe. The 1998 *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* includes articles on specific philosophical movements in France, Germany, and Russia, but only offers portraits of one region (Scandinavia) and three national traditions (Italy, Poland, and Spain). The author of its article “Spain, Philosophy in,” José Luis Abellán, reiterates the vision he has elaborated in his career as the foremost authority on Spanish philosophy, which we will discuss shortly.<sup>17</sup> The 2003 *Cambridge History of Philosophy, 1879–1945* likewise includes an article profiling “Spanish philosophy” within a section devoted to “The Diversity of Philosophy,” which includes Latin America and Japan, but no other European nation.<sup>18</sup> While Manuel Garrido’s brief article does expand on the notion of diversity even beyond the philosophical marginality of Spain by referring to Eugeni d’Ors as a “Catalan philosopher,” his insistence on approaching the other three major philosophers as part of generations could be seen as a corrective gesture, emphasizing that the major figures were part of a larger national scene. Spanish philosophy is now included in the disciplinary panorama, but its presence continues to be marked by a history of disparagement in the perceived need for advocacy and rehabilitation. For example, in her 2012 review article of Garrido’s recent *El legado filosófico español e hispanoamericano del siglo XX* (The Spanish and Hispanoamerican philosophical legacy in the twentieth century), Susana Nuccetelli praises the volume for its role in “fill[ing] an embarrassing gap in the philosophical literature,” and she expands a disciplinary discussion about the “invisibility problem in Latin American philosophy” to include Spain.<sup>19</sup>

It might be argued, however, that the dismissals of Spanish philosophy with which I began this chapter are simply a thing of the past, and, indeed, my purpose is not to ask whether there *is* a Spanish philosophy, but to examine *how* a certain Spanish claim to philosophical significance traverses an inquiry into the relationship of philosophy to literature. This has not escaped the notice of historians of Spanish philosophy, but the most authoritative volumes suffer from the choice of a narrow methodological framework to justify a lack of critical distance and the author's somewhat ambivalent patriotism. In an effort to explain the title of his five-volume *Historia crítica del pensamiento español* (Critical history of Spanish thought), José Luis Abellán explains his choice to treat "thought" rather than "philosophy" on pragmatic grounds, the former word being "broader and more flexible" than the alternative.<sup>20</sup> A history of Spanish *philosophy*, he suggests, might be in the embarrassing position of acknowledging the broad consensus that Spain has a rather modest, if not barely existent, philosophical tradition. Surprisingly, though, Abellán adds that this history of Spanish thought does not differ essentially from literary histories, for which it can serve as a sort of supplement. For Abellán, the thought particular to Spain can be adequately understood by literary history, but this more inclusive account will add "precision" and "exactitude" to the previously available portraits of a Spanish "conception of the world" based on literature alone (15). According to the *Historia crítica*, literature has provided a worldview by virtue of being a linguistic manifestation of "national consciousness"; the absence of "the study of our philosophical tradition" has forced *literature* to take an outsized role in representing Spanish thought (15). Attempting to account for this institutional deficiency, Abellán also sees fit to confess on behalf of all Spaniards that it stems from a certain incapacity, "a flaw, by all appearances, in the constitution of our collective personality as Spaniards" (15). Abellán's readers hold in their hands the history that might overcome this lack, providing both the methodology for and the fulfillment of a history that embraces both philosophy and literature in a history of *thought*.

On the first page of the prologue to the *Historia Crítica*, we read Abellán's definition of thought, "the maximum intellectual consciousness of a people, a nation, or a man," along with the promise to justify it in his methodological introduction. It is in the first part of the work that he treats the polemic about the existence of Spanish philosophy and takes sides with the revered Spanish historian Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo for what is, like his choice of the word "thought" in the title, a patriotic and pragmatic rationale. Of the positions he surveys, Menéndez Pelayo's is the



only one “with a future”: it is based on history, stimulating a search for the best of Spanish accomplishments and projecting it forward for the sake of “the national culture” (49). Toward the end of the introduction, after proclaiming that the question of the existence of Spanish philosophy has been “resolved in the positive,” he contends that a “crisis in metaphysics and philosophy” threatens what he calls the “validity of the discipline” (77). Here, he implicitly acknowledges that whatever Spanish philosophy there might be is inscribed in a larger context, measured by transnational, if not universal intellectual, spiritual, and cultural criteria. In Abellán’s telling, the crisis of legitimacy has a linear trajectory from Auguste Comte to Heidegger, in whose wake Ortega put the problem to rest. As is well known, Comte declared the end of a metaphysical era and the apotheosis of the “positive” sciences. Comte declares the end of searches for “absolute notions, the origin and destination of the universe, and the causes of phenomena” and claims that “all men who are up to their age” devote themselves solely to natural sciences.<sup>21</sup> Abellán tells how Wilhelm Dilthey adopts Comte’s point of view, including the renunciation of metaphysics; Heidegger invented phenomenology as a “transformation” of metaphysics, but, in Spain, Ortega and his student José Gaos were able to see that, in spite of Heidegger, the philosophical search for grounds or “first causes” was a dead end, an apparent detour from the forward march of Comte’s positivist revolution. In short, for Abellán, the history of “Spanish thought” assumes the end of metaphysics as the transformation of philosophy into positive science, with literature and philosophy both forming a part of the social science that Comte called “social physics” and Dilthey dubbed “Geisteswissenschaften” or “Human sciences” (79–83).

Abellán recognizes the lack of consensus regarding the meaning of “philosophy,” but he responds to this lack by installing a history of philosophy in which *Spanish* philosophy stands at the end of philosophy, authorizing the very history that it postulates. Julián Marías, too, ends his *Historia de la filosofía* (*History of Philosophy*), which aspires to represent the entirety of philosophical history, with a long chapter on Ortega’s “philosophy of vital reason,” suggesting that Ortega brings not just the *History of Philosophy* but the history of philosophy to a close.<sup>22</sup> In addition to this particular philosophical basis of his history of thought, Abellán insists that he has no choice but to believe in Spanish philosophy or to proceed as if it existed, and he claims to act to the benefit of Spain and its greater Hispanization (15–16). According to his methodological exposition, Spain has only arrived at its privileged place by wrapping up a larger, more general philosophical

project. Incidentally, although Comte is the first name mentioned in Abellán's account of philosophy's denouement, the *Cours de philosophie positive* (named in French in the English edition) identifies Descartes, Kepler, and Bacon as instigators of his revolution, while noting that no Spaniards deserve to be commemorated in his movement, since "the superiority of Spain, admirable as it is, is a superiority in feeling" (469).

Abellán attaches his own historiographic project to Comte and Dilthey, insofar as he sees them as precursors of Ortega. This gesture requires dismissing as merely incidental Comte's broader, somewhat ambivalent representation of Spain and whatever philosophy it might produce. For Comte, European society was entering into a scientific or "positive" phase, rejecting all "first principles" as fictions. While he rejects what he disparages as theology and metaphysics, he maintains a definition of philosophy as a "system of conceptions" that permits the understanding of the world, while characterizing as "laws" that which mediates between the world and the human mind. His ideal, he says, would be the reduction of the world's complexity to a limited number of laws: "The ultimate perfection of the positive system would be . . . to represent all phenomena as particular aspects of a single general fact, such as gravitation, for instance" (73). In the *Cours*, we see philosophy, reason, and logic characterized again and again as a reduction, with the constant suspicion that even the richest conceptual fabric violates the uniqueness of the phenomenon it is intended to bring into the realm of understanding. Applying the model of the natural sciences to all human activity, Comte explicitly prohibits reflection on the nature of the "laws" that govern "succession and resemblance," while other philosophers define philosophy's particularity as an inquiry into the very principles that Comte excludes. Comte's delineation of the laws of human society illustrates how oppressive his "philosophy" can be in action. He declares Europe superior to the rest of the world and identifies its five constituents and their "special contribution." These are the concluding words to the *Cours*:

France will bring a philosophical and political superiority; England, an earnest predilection for reality and utility; Germany, a natural aptitude for systematic generalization; Italy, its genius for art; and Spain, its familiar combined sense of personal dignity and universal brotherhood. By their natural cooperation, the positive philosophy will lead us on to a social condition the most conformable to human nature, in which our characteristic qualities will find their most perfect respective confirmation,

their completest mutual harmony, and the freest expansion for each and all. (306)

In spite of the cheerful tone and assurance that everyone in the world will be able to fulfill her, his, or their potential, Comte's vision clearly imposes a character upon its subjects, implying an obligation to become nothing else but what the positive philosophy has declared them to be. A "combined sense of personal dignity and universal brotherhood" grants Spaniards the distinction of representing, somehow, the relation between the individual human and the human in general, but Comte implies that Spaniards are inevitably deficient at *thinking* this relation. Their sense is "familiar" to others, who, according to their own national predilection, might actually make something of it.

That Spain's final position in the list is also a hierarchical position, is suggested in the "Second System," the *Système de politique positive* (again retaining the French name in the English edition), in which Comte contemplates the establishment of human society based on positivist principles and proposes objects for the "abstract glorification of the past" (469). There he explains that, "of the five constituents of the Western world, the Spanish type receives but scant honor; for the superiority of Spain, admirable as it is, is a superiority in *feeling*, and as such cannot be adequately appreciated when we are commemorating the development of *intellect and activity*" (469 [emphasis added]). At the same time, Comte sees fit to include in his "Positivist Library" a selection of Spanish theater, the medieval *Romancero*, and the best known works of Cervantes (477). Excluded from philosophy and action, Spain's virtues are as immediate and ephemeral as feeling, and its accomplishments are confined to literature. Abellán's history would show Comte that in the next century, Spanish thinkers will make the most of that feeling and produce a body of thought that rivals that of France, Germany, and England. Unamuno, Ortega, Machado, and Zambrano make the highest philosophical claims, often by appealing to something like a particularly Spanish "realism," all without neglecting to mention Spanish literary art, architecture, and painting. Thus, Abellán might be justified in considering *philosophy* too narrow of a focus for an assessment of what Spain contributes *to* philosophy. Nonetheless, he admits a "flaw" insofar as Spaniards had not yet been able to make the "readjustment of optics" necessary to change the operative category of philosophy in Spain to a notion of thought that would include literature alongside more conventional philosophical forms (15). Reflecting the principle of empirical science from

Aristotle to Dilthey's hermeneutic circle, he says that in the *Historia crítica del pensamiento español* "methodology and history were mutually implicated," that is, that the particular history of Spanish cultural production required its own particular concepts. Hence, concluding the prologue to his introductory volume on methodology, Abellán expresses the hope that his multivolume work should help combat the contemporary ills of "depersonalization and de-Hispanization" (17–18).

In a 2000 article, Abellán confirms a sense of his own achievement while transforming the patriotic gesture of his *Historia crítica*. "Pensamiento español" attributes the dominant character of philosophical historiography to "the Germans" and claims that they reserve a privilege for "the philosophical system" (the very character Comte attributed to Germans in his *Système*).<sup>23</sup> Applied to Spanish philosophy and Spanish reality ("nuestra filosofía" and "nuestra realidad," he says), they "ended up demeaning, blurring, and distorting it" (acaban por desvirtuarlo, desenfocarlo, tergiversarlo) (307). Abellán declares success at resolving the question of the existence of Spanish philosophy by avowing that Spanish philosophy exists as a part of the history of *thought*, one formulated by Spaniards for Spaniards (310). Finally, he acknowledges a historic shift away from patriotic history toward an "intercultural" ethos. For Abellán, now that Spanish philosophy and thought have been correctly interpreted, this project can go forward both with a particular cultural character that can be "defended and respected" and as a model for how underappreciated traditions might find tools for raising their status using their own particular character. Abellán advocates nothing less than a complete reversal of the Black Legend's image of Spain: rather than the epitome of intolerance, Spain provides a privileged site of meditation on diversity.

Abellán's declaration of theoretical victory in discussions of Spanish philosophy only applies to the question we began with regarding the existence of Spanish philosophy. Closing that question exacts a rather steep price, that of accepting a particular brand of historical thinking, one that "coincides with José Ortega y Gasset" (309), embraces a certain end of metaphysics (an end more Comtean than Hegelian, Nietzschean, or Heideggerian), and provides a particular configuration of the relation between literature and philosophy. Compared to the positions we will review, Abellán's can be stated rather simply: literature and philosophy both express thought in a form determined by their discursive genres, inflected by the national character of the thinker. As I maintain in this book, extending the question of the relationship of literature and philosophy to other configurations permits a

more expansive interpretation of the moments—texts and writers—in that history. Moreover, the very figures of that history, including Ortega, can be read as calling for a radical opening up, at the same time that they might offer a means for closing off and considering the question resolved.

The more recent *El legado filosófico español y latinoamericano del siglo XX* promises to broaden the question of Spanish thought in various ways. First, it includes Latin America together with Spain, dividing the subject into seven regional accounts. It represents a collective effort, including the perspectives of a team of researchers chosen by the editors, who also contribute overviews, specific entries, and bibliographies. It addresses directly some of the shortcomings of Abellán's work, providing a representation of Spanish scientists and theologians and making an effort to represent "reflection on woman."<sup>24</sup> However we judge the success of these efforts of broadening the account of Hispanic philosophy, the editors of *El legado filosófico* explicitly locate their project within the Ortegian framework that Abellán defined in his *Historia crítica*. While accepting some revisions of methodology proposed by Julián Marías, they maintain the concept of a "generation" as a principle, assuming a homogeneity of work produced within the same time period and the same country or group of countries, according to principles of "circumstances" and "the spirit of the age."<sup>25</sup> The result is slightly more than a new compendium of rather conventional perspectives on canonical thinkers, expanding the panorama and changing Abellán's polemical tone for a panegyric one, presenting the "legacy" as a "saga" and "epic" of Hispanic "geniuses."<sup>26</sup>

Neither of these historical accounts of Spanish intellectual life discuss the question raised by Delbos of the necessity of learning languages for the sake of philosophy or the likelihood that Spanish might have to fight to take a place beside other languages—Greek and Latin, German and French—for the sake of studying primary texts. If adding another language to philosophical curricula is not too tall an order, it would be worth wondering, also, the extent to which the inclusion of literary texts in a purportedly philosophical history might make particular demands on readers, whether multiple-language learners or not. In contrast to encyclopedias and histories, my studies of Unamuno, Ortega, Machado, and Zambrano engage texts in readings that find meaning in the intricacies and accidents of language, in the untranslatable elements bound up with the Castilian idiom that most of the world refers to as "Spanish," and occasionally others. I contend that these are not only resources for the expression of a universally comprehensible idea but that the ins and outs of language serve as signposts for

the movement of thought, for which the particularities of idiom—not just those of ethnic character—provide a means of rupturing restrictive cultural or individual perspectives.

### From the Outside In, Valera to Unamuno

After Unamuno produced an oeuvre including novels, short stories, poems, and essays, Ortega and his student Zambrano cultivated a metaphorical and rambling, “literary” style that is inseparable from their philosophical accomplishments. For his part, the poet Antonio Machado wrote poems focused on the nature of time and experience and created fictional, “apocryphal” writers to whom he attributed verses, literary criticism, and overtly philosophical texts. Because of and beyond these canonical writers, Spain possesses a distinct and coherent tradition of questioning the relation of literature and philosophy. This tradition gives rise to a conventional image that appears in many forms throughout contemporary Hispanic culture, both popular and elite: Spanish and Latin American writers blend or even fuse literature and philosophy in order to produce a hybrid discourse unique to the Hispanic world, one that overcomes the weaknesses of excessively anti-literary philosophy in the rest of Europe.<sup>27</sup> It is a forceful tradition, but certainly not the only or the dominant one; in fact, much Spanish literary and philosophical writing seems to be produced in indifference to this debate within it, even though it claims to address the most fundamental questions of individual and national identity, the nature of art and the humanities, and the meaning of life. Moreover, the oeuvres of the four major figures in this history also offer other themes. Unamuno’s novel *Niebla* (*Mist*) alone invites discussion of feminism, Esperanto and other forms of language reform, childrearing, homosociality, and love, to name a few. If the story of the relation between literature and philosophy has not occupied center stage, it is perhaps because it still occupies a prominent and even axiomatic place in more conventional histories, where it is often taken for granted that it culminates in the effacement of the difference between the two. Most commonly, the concept of the Generation of ’98 defined Unamuno’s and Machado’s work in terms of an effort to restore Spain’s self-regard and international prestige by way of the successful melding of literature and philosophy in their work. Other writers customarily included in the Generation—Pío Baroja, Ramón del Valle Inclán, José Martínez Ruiz (“Azorín”)—shared in a “concern for Spain” (*preocupación por España*), as the saying went, that gave rise to not only

literary work in a range of genres, but to a self-determined tradition of interpretation. Over the last fifty years, scholars in Spanish literature have discussed not only the questionable legitimacy of the concept of a generation devoted to the “concern for Spain,” but also its homogenizing effect on the representation of the literature of the era, with the consequent tendency to restrict the interpretation of the texts and to exclude other writers who do not fit into this canonical vision.<sup>28</sup> No one has yet assessed the claim by some of these figures of the philosophical preeminence of literature in a way that does not embrace the notion of a Spanish or Hispanic philosophical advantage that grows out of its commitment to literature.

Historical analyses based on the genres of the “philosophical novel” and the essay sidestep the issue by postulating that literature and philosophy are adequately defined in terms of form and content. In such a view, both literature and philosophy must distinguish themselves from everyday speech and do so by their extraordinary investment in form or content. Such a conception easily embraces texts that stand out for both their formal and thematic departure from ordinary discourse, and, for this reason, it is not especially surprising that the question of the relation simply failed to occupy many talented thinkers and writers beyond the handful on which I will focus here. As we will see, one of the most radical aspects of the question involves the extent to which (literary) experimentation with form, or the experience of form, provides access to certain kinds of (philosophical) content. In these cases, without the predominance of form, literature might not be philosophical. What is interesting, then, is how form opens up new content and, conversely, the demands of a certain kind of assertion or theme calls for formal invention. That being said, I have not set out to write a complete history of literary and philosophical figures in whom these dynamics are explored. Besides the abundance of fiction and poetry that explore philosophical ideas and engage in argumentation, apparently nonphilosophical work such as Ana María Matute’s stories about children, Federico García Lorca’s oneiric fantasies in verse, and Juan Ramón Jiménez’s search for a “pure” poetry also speak implicitly to the relation between literature and philosophy.<sup>29</sup>

In his 1790 *Discurso sobre el estudio metódico de la historia literaria* (Discourse on the methodical study of literary history), Cándido María Trigueros calls for a literary history that would be, among other things, “philosophical.”<sup>30</sup> Trigueros acknowledges that our approach to literature can be enriched by exposure to philosophy and shows that, even though Spanish philosophers have failed to become prominent figures on the international

stage, philosophical thinking played an important role in Enlightenment and Romantic Spain.<sup>31</sup> Debate about these issues takes concrete shape in Juan Valera's good-natured discussion "De la filosofía española" (About Spanish philosophy), from 1871, before becoming a bitter feud—whose remnants can be glimpsed in Abellán's history—and setting in motion the series of engagements with the question of literature and philosophy studied in this book. Reviewing what he regards as the beginning of an effort to understand the history of Spanish philosophy, Valera remarks that Spain is "behind" ("estamos atrasados").<sup>32</sup> Speaking with all modesty in the first-person plural, he states that Spain has never had an important philosopher. Nonetheless, he admits that the meaning of *philosophy* is as "elastic" as the definition of *Spanish*, and he advocates for the inclusion of Jewish and Muslim thinkers born in the Iberian Peninsula in any projected history of Spanish philosophy (1561–62).

In a discussion with Ramón de Campoamor compiled and published in 1891 as *Metafísica y poesía* (Metaphysics and poetry), Valera maintains his position, even when it means failing to give credit to his friend's 1855 effort at systematic philosophy, *Personalismo*. Valera distinguishes between the philosophical discipline of metaphysics and the implicit, perhaps inarticulate foundation of all human experience. He calls the latter "spontaneous prescientific metaphysics, which is just short of being innate or congenital in our being [punto menos que innata o congenital]."<sup>33</sup> Valera appears to assume that a metaphysical orientation in the world cannot be racially determined, as some of his contemporaries believed, but that multiple, distinct ways of being human are indeed experienced with a level of intimacy somewhere in between nature and culture. His disagreement with Campoamor revolves around the question of whether metaphysics and poetry are the most common thing in the world or, as his interlocutor maintained, rare, and whether they are, respectively, the most or least useful products of human consciousness. For Valera, the answer depends on whether one accepts the idea of an implicit, "spontaneous" metaphysics as existing in the same way as the one elaborated in a tome such as *Personalismo*, which aspires to articulate "the general law that resolves all the particular cases."<sup>34</sup> For Valera, such a "metaphysical" framework for human existence would guarantee that all human activity participates to some degree in poetry and philosophy, though the "metaphysical" basis is shared in common.

In "De la filosofía española," Valera asserts that the question of whether Spanish philosophy even exists will "remain unresolved indefinitely" (1567). As long as a "speculative prescientific metaphysics" lacks explicit articulation,



there is no reason to recognize its legitimacy and status alongside philosophical treatises and, in addition, no reason to privilege one above others or place some “prescientific metaphysics” in the ranks of the philosophical canon. More importantly, Valera acknowledges that the existence of Spanish philosophy depends on the stature conceded to whomever gets distinguished as a Spanish philosopher and the fact that, given the historicity of thought, we can never know once and for all whether a Spanish philosopher, past or future, will achieve the status of a Descartes, Kant, or Hobbes (1567). Consequently, while he expresses doubts about the existence of Spanish philosophy, he also maintains that the mystics St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila are probably “our most exalted and original philosophers” (1563). Henri Bergson, according to Alain Guy, will say something similar, claiming that the Spanish mystics received by revelation what philosophers try to obtain by reason.<sup>35</sup>

Valera believed, nonetheless, that scholarship might make it possible to detect some common threads in Spanish philosophy, and in “De la filosofía española” he proposes a search for the “speculative element” manifested in Spanish science, literature, history, medicine, or law (1562). In short, he looks for a pragmatic, scholarly representation of philosophical content as a way of acknowledging national traditions without abandoning a cultural neutrality proper to philosophy. Valera’s framing of the discussion of Spanish philosophy gained intellectual prominence in the form of a vehement public debate between Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo and Manuel de la Revilla. Don Marcelino is now a household name in Spanish letters, while Revilla is perhaps best known among specialists as the provocateur that motivated Pelayo’s early book *La ciencia española* (Spanish science).<sup>36</sup> A philosophy professor at the University of Madrid, Revilla published an article in 1876 acknowledging, five years after Valera had, the relative insignificance of Spanish philosophy, going so far as to declare that Spanish philosophy did not even exist (193).<sup>37</sup> The twenty-year-old Pelayo responded by enlisting his already massive encyclopedic learning (Julián Marías attributed to him “probably . . . the outer limits of the human capacity for erudition”)<sup>38</sup> to defend the Spanish race’s “particular place [lugar aparte] in the history of philosophy.”<sup>39</sup> After providing long lists of names of Spanish philosophers, Pelayo proclaims himself a “believer in Spanish philosophy.”<sup>40</sup> Constantino Lascaris Comneno’s 1955 anthology of Pelayo’s writings, entitled *Filosofía española* (Spanish philosophy), proposes that the history of philosophy should include literary figures like Pedro Calderón de la Barca, whose *La vida es sueño* (*Life Is a Dream*) is considered part of “the genre that we call

symbolic, philosophical, or ideal.”<sup>41</sup> With his comment on Spanish mystics, Valera anticipated this inclusion within Spanish philosophy of what is conventionally considered literary, although St. Teresa and St. John both participated in theological debates in addition to writing more conventionally literary texts. Calderón, too, could be said to put doctrine into literary form, namely, the epistemological skepticism and moral dogmatism of the baroque era.<sup>42</sup> Hence, although Pelayo’s reminder that Corneille modeled *Heracleio* on *Life Is a Dream* attests to the Spaniard’s originality and influence,<sup>43</sup> Spanish philosophy’s stature does not necessarily rise by its incorporation of Calderón’s play, which is still more remarkable for its poetry than its thought.

Pelayo’s account of Spanish philosophy initiated a larger project of rehabilitating the image of Spanish science after centuries of disparagement by European scholars. As Víctor Navarro Brotóns and William Eamon point out in the introduction to *Más allá de la Leyenda Negra/Beyond the Black Legend*, Spanish contributions to science from the fifteenth century on had been the target of a politically motivated campaign to cast Spain as “the quintessentially anti-modern villain” in a melodrama constructed by English and French historians.<sup>44</sup> The dismissal of Spanish philosophy forms a part of this characterization of Spain as, in the words of one of the Black Legend’s instigators, “the most ignorant nation in Europe,” which came to represent, as Eamon and Navarro Brotóns explain, “the country that typified everything against which the philosophes were struggling” (27). Naturally, we understand that the “philosophes” embodied a concept of philosophy that included the natural sciences and mathematics and culminated, not in work of reflection or what Aristotle would call “first philosophy,” but in the compendia of knowledge known as *encyclopédies*, of which Diderot and D’Alembert’s is the best known. Referring to what is perhaps a worse effect than the neglect of Spanish intellectual life on the part of northern Europeans, Navarro Brotóns and Eames describe the pernicious effect of this provocation in Spain, dividing scientists into two camps, a “nationalist” one that devoted itself to a patriotic defense of “Spanish character” and a “liberal” one that agreed with the charge of Spain’s “backwardness” and attempted to correct it with its own achievements (29). For the editors of *Beyond the Black Legend*, this dichotomy lasted well into the twentieth century, if one takes into account Ortega’s characterization of an “anti-modern” Spain and Amerigo Castro’s conviction that science was “alien to the Spanish way of life” (quoted 29). While Pelayo’s association with nationalism seems accurate, I would take issue with this understanding of Ortega, who, like Unamuno and Zambrano, combined the two tendencies in historiography by promoting

a Hispanization of Europe. For Unamuno's part, his response to the debate between Revilla and Pelayo offers a provocative but principled defense of a distinctively Spanish spiritual character on the basis of the very deficiency that the Black Legend attaches to Spain.

Both Pelayo and Valera were on Unamuno's examination committee for his appointment to a chair of Greek, and the younger man referred to Pelayo as a "great teacher"; but, as Laureano Robles points out, he considered his master a "timid thinker," one who had fallen victim to his own erudition.<sup>45</sup> The relation between literature and philosophy concerned Unamuno in many ways throughout his lifetime, and he addresses it most directly in formulations about philosophy and poetry, the novel, language, fiction, or literature in general in free-standing essays, prologues, and narrative exposition and dialogues in his novels. We may begin to assess this complex dynamic and its continuity with the Revilla-Pelayo polemic by taking stock of a number of texts written in the decade before the publication of the works I will study in depth later. In his article on Pelayo and Unamuno, Robles includes the text of an unpublished manuscript from the Unamuno archives called "Filosofía, lírica y poesía española" (Philosophy, lyricism, and Spanish poetry), which shows signs of being written in 1905. The long neglect to which this text has been subject might owe something to the frankly weird proposition that modern Spanish poetry suffers from its African character, with all of its warmth ("ardor" and "*calor*") coming "from outside," rather than, presumably, from inside (quoted 109). Pelayo's timidity shares in the inner frigidity of Unamuno's contemporaries, and his "catalogical arguments" (argumentos catalógicos) lacked not only the proper emotion but a more appropriate, philosophical logic. Unamuno joins Valera and Revilla in denying the existence of Spanish philosophy, saying of Pelayo and his followers, "It was much easier not to doubt [philosophy's] existence than to philosophize" (108). This sounds more like an accusation of laziness than timidity: a generation of Spanish intellectuals chose to gather the evidence that removes doubt, but did not practice the philosophical thinking that might render Spanish philosophy a genuine reality. In "Filosofía, lírica y poesía española" he expands the lack of Spanish philosophy to a broader absence of literary creation and appeals to divine intervention to address this lack, repeating throughout this manuscript some version of the words, "Lord, what are we to do?" (Señor, ¿qué le vamos a hacer?) (107–8). Unamuno apparently reserved this new step in Spanish philosophy for himself. Provoked by the possibility that the Spanish tradition had dwelled outside philosophy, Unamuno had already set about asserting the philosophical character of a tradition whose

literary achievement was not in doubt. While Calderón and Francisco de Quevedo, Saint Teresa of Ávila and Saint John of the Cross, don Juan and don Quixote might be marginally philosophical, he reinterpreted them and extended their legacy as the forgotten center of philosophy. This process, in his mind, generated some of the appropriate affect, the *ardor* that would be necessary for a genuine philosophy and literature in his own place and time.

The 1904 essay/dialogue “Sobre la filosofía española” (About Spanish philosophy), like Valera and Campoamor’s *Metafísica y poesía*, takes the form of a dialogue between two interlocutors, both of whom express Unamuno’s thoughts in a way that undercuts an attempt to pin down his position. We find that both speakers accept Valera’s conviction of the absence of contemporary Spanish philosophy and argue that philosophical treatises and literary works have equal philosophical status. One of the interlocutors proposes an interpretation of philosophy as a response to knowledge of the world: “Every people [pueblo] derives a different philosophy from the same sciences. After all, philosophy is the total vision of the universe and life seen through an ethnic temperament.”<sup>46</sup> A certain kind of objective knowledge (Unamuno calls it “science”) seems indisputable, but different communities draw different conclusions, and for this reason Unamuno’s discursive voice considers it legitimate to speak of a Spanish philosophy. In contrast to the debate between Revilla and Pelayo, Unamuno’s affirmation of Spanish philosophy shifts his focus from philosophers to philosophy. Spain is a nation without philosophers—this Unamuno does not question—but, as a people, Spain could not possibly lack philosophy. Nonetheless, Spain has not produced a philosophical exposition of its philosophy: “As far as our people are concerned, I don’t know of anyone who has formulated its philosophy systematically” (557). This same dialogic voice goes on to claim that Spain’s philosophy has indeed been revealed fragmentarily, appearing in other (literary and popular) genres plus “fleeting glimpses of isolated thinkers” (557). In another text, clearly thinking of Pelayo, he seems to specify that these “isolated thinkers” include “scholars, commentators, and explicators of philosophy, and the odd almost-philosopher” (eruditos, comentaristas y expositores de filósofos, y alguno que otro casi filósofo) (121). Unamuno distinguishes, then, between two types of philosophy: an implicit one that finds expression in a variety of ways; and the philosophy of philosophers, who explicitly attempt a “totalizing vision of the universe,” unaware that this vision ultimately has an ethnic or national character. He does not question whether Spain exists as an ethnicity and thus appears to have paved the