

“PROYECTO VITAL” IN THE HTI CONTEXT

Margarita Benítez

The concept of “*proyecto vital*” is central to the thinking of Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955). Alongside his existential statement “*Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia, y si no la salvo a ella, no me salvo yo*” (I am my self and my circumstance, and unless I save it, I will not be saved), Ortega presents a dynamic world view where each one of us faces the constant challenge of making choices that will determine whether the person we become will be the person we were meant to be.

Becoming the person that we need to be in order to lead an authentic life—another key *orteguiano* concept-- is the goal that should determine the many choices that are ours to make and will define who we end up being.¹ In order to choose wisely, each of us needs to have a vision of the person that we should become, and how best to get there. That is what Ortega defines as *Proyecto vital*. Others might describe it as “vocation” or “calling.” We’ll get back to these concepts in a couple of paragraphs.

What about *circunstancia*? As etymology tells us, that is what surrounds us. For Ortega, it includes our physical surroundings—country, town, homestead, family—as well as the ideological realm—*ideas y creencias*—of scientific theories, political schemes, religious doctrines, values and beliefs of our time and place. Ortega affirms the necessity of a profound commitment to our fellow men, to our society, and to the world around us as the means to give meaning to our individual lives. Such a commitment requires attention, reflection, analysis, discernment, and courage, because we will have to ask questions, formulate answers, identify choices, and ultimately, act on our choices, all of which will have consequences. The sum of our choices will end up determining whether the life we lead is an authentic life.

¹ An authentic life, as described by Polonius in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: “This above all: to thine own self be true/ And it must follow as the night the day/ Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

HTI scholars are familiar with the concepts of “vocation” or “calling,” specifically in a religious context. They already have made significant life choices, and stand in the threshold of many others, among them professional decisions as to employment, relocation or additional training. While *Proyecto vital* is not a career plan, clearly career decisions are very much a part of the choices we make that shape the life we lead. That is why questions like “Where do you see yourself 20 years from now?” and “What will it take to get there?” help illuminate our existential paths.