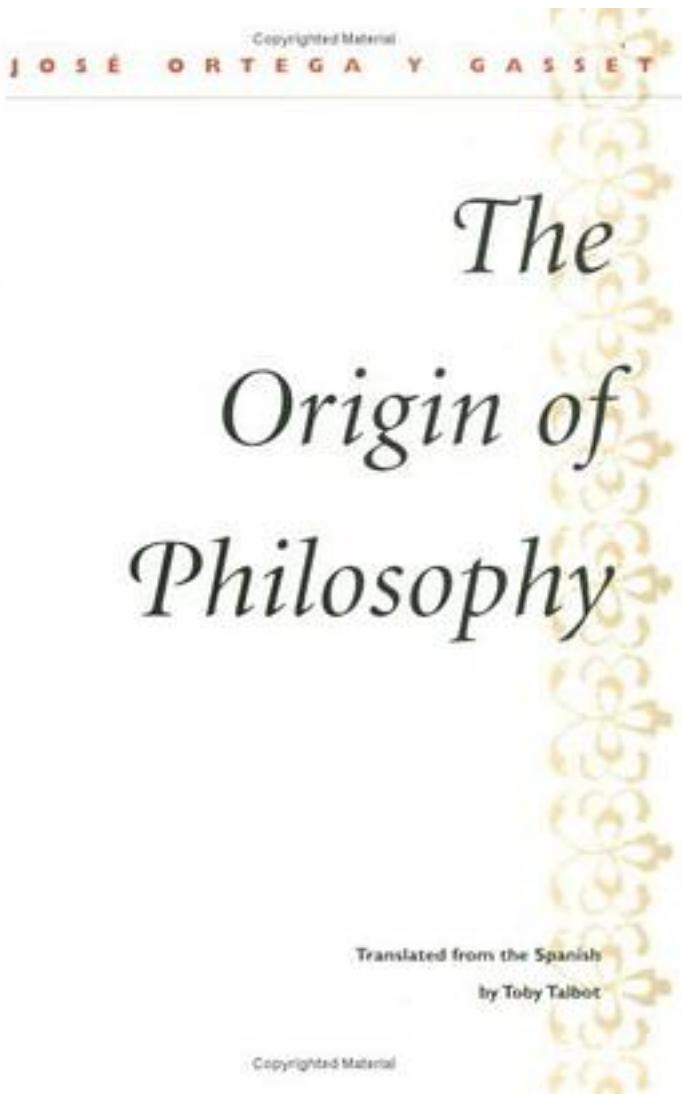


The Origin of Philosophy



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This concise, elegant essay on the roots and historical justification of philosophy marks a decisive step in posing the problem of what philosophy is. With consummate clarity and the charisma that distinguished him as a lecturer, Jos Ortega y Gasset re-creates "that moment when Parmenides began talking about something exceptionally strange, which he called 'being'". How and why, he asks, did such a surprising adventure come about? Considering the human qualities that prompt a curiosity about existence and eternity, Ortega examines philosophy's etymology, its connection to poetry, and its differentiation from religion and other modes of thought. He lucidly delineates radical differences of doctrine and style among early Greek thinkers, especially the "madman of reason" Parmenides and the "absolute individual" Heraclitus. He also considers philosophy's fundamental task of revealing the latent world poised behind the manifest world and discovering the relations between them. "Unable to find lodging among the philosophies of the past", Ortega observes, "we have no choice but to attempt to construct one of our own". "The Origin of Philosophy" argues for the vital importance of philosophy as a human endeavor, even while noting that each generation of thought reveals the past as "a defunct world of errors".

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