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Feminism and humanism

Federica Montseny

1924

A kind and anonymous friend sent me a copy of a newspaper, saying, “In case you’re interested”.

The newspaper sent was El Pueblo, from Valencia, and the sender pointed it out and I saw an article titled “The Third Sex” and signed by Antonio Dubois.

The article, of course, speaks of feminism and women. There are some very valuable and quite accurate opinions in it, and I thought it deserved a comment from a woman who, as such, is primarily concerned with the problems of her sex and who, as the person who was kind enough to send me the copy of the Valencian newspaper rightly assumed, is interested in these issues of feminism, if only to combat them and place them at the starting point of all human concerns: the transformation of an unjust society and the abandonment of a morality and concerns that have only served to enslave women and mislead the entire species.

I will therefore dedicate another article to the topic of feminism, which will perhaps merely repeat what I have said in previous articles on the same subject, since, given its continued relevance and its regrettable and erroneous tendency, I believe that feminism deserves continued criticism, and that women’s

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emancipation, the greatest problem of our times, deserves the modest effort of those of us who place our hope in it and its beneficial influence.

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Antonio Dubois, in his article, divides feminism into two: One is that which, according to him, “retains all the poetic charms of women,” and the other is that of the “Third Sex,” a formidable movement that has its cradle and strength in England, the harsh, acrid, despotic, imperative movement, with the lack of femininity that characterizes spinster women, who hate men because they have been unable to marry.

The “Third Sex,” a very numerous party, as indicated by the large contingent of women whom the war, with its monstrous devouring of men, condemned to enforced solitude, so numerous that it reaches the figure of 1,700,000 adherents, is the one that seeks to overthrow man from power and, from there, impose its dictatorship on humanity. However, Antonio Dubois humorously opines that a few hundred thousand marriages would appease the vindictive anger of those one and a half million ferocious women.

This, the so-called “Third Sex,” has been the most important feminist movement in England. The other, the one that “retains all the poetic charms of women,” is what has been baptized as Christian socialism, imported into Latin countries, where it managed to acquire, particularly in France, certain reformist overtones because it was adopted by intellectual and learned women of timid leftist leanings. Even clearer: it is Anglo-Saxon feminism itself, perfumed and softened by the gallantry and humanistic and lighthearted spirituality of the southern races. In Spain, there is no “Third Sex” feminism.

Nor does Christian socialism. In reality, there is no feminism of any kind, and if there were any, we would have to call it fascist, because it would be so reactionary and intolerant that its rise to power would mean a great disgrace for the Spanish people. Fortunately, that will not happen.

Regarding European feminisms, or the two classes into which Antonio Dubois divides feminism, I believe, as always, that both suffer from the same fundamental flaw, softened in one, harsh and strident in the other: the lack of humanism, of that love for humanity that forms the most precious and generous foundation of all ideals.

What's more, a cold examination of feminism, its points, its maximum and minimum programs, its figures and its actions, leads us to the conclusion that it, its retrograde and coercive force, gentle or harsh, is all the same, since perhaps the Latin American, with its traces of socialism, or better yet, of arm-chairism, is more reactionary than the Anglo-Saxon, with its picturesque, spiteful revolutionary yearnings—it represents a very important and very serious factor, placed at the service of reaction and with the potential to hinder the path of modern ideas. That is to say, feminism, a party of state, of privilege, of command, of religious and moral intolerance, of sexual harshness, of domineering brutality, or of false softening of morals, can become, in the evolutionary process of modern times, the catalyst that curtails the freedom of man, and of women, a minority, unfortunately, who have managed to shed the burden of centuries of obscurantism and intellectual brutalization.

I believe the question of the sexes is clear, crystal clear: Absolute equality in all aspects for both; independence for both; empowerment for both; a free, broad, and universal path for the entire species.

The rest is reformist, relativist, conditional, and traitorous in some; reactionary, narrow-minded, intransigent, and harmful in others.

Feminism? Never! Humanism always! To propagate feminism is to foster masculinism, to create an immoral and absurd struggle between the two sexes, which no natural law would tolerate.

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Antonio Dubois, while understanding the problem on the one hand, is also nonsensical. He is nonsensical, as are those who, without truly advanced ideas, try to explain and solve modern phenomena and issues.

And he says, defending the feminism he considers useful and true, "the insinuating and tender feminism that will end up enslaving us": "The day women legislate and administer, the great basic institutions of a society in crisis: family, education, birth, justice, social assistance, and hygiene, today wavering in the arms of men, will be held more firmly in their hands".

The day women legislate and administer, injustices, privileges, inequalities, miseries, and struggles will continue, because the foundations of current society, which Antonio Dubois believes can be buttressed by feminism, which preserves all the poetic charms of women who possess them, cannot be buttressed by human force, since they, being rotten and unjust, are condemned to die.

This is the fundamental error of reformism, which, like all political parties, and even like ourselves, sees in woman, as mother, educator, and companion of man, a precious auxiliary and a decisive element for the ideas that vie for hegemony of thought: Reformism, whether feminine or masculine, believes it can buttress current society with concessions and palliatives. Hence the origin of Christian socialism in England and southern feminism, promoted and fostered by left-wing political parties, a feminism more dangerous than the other, and which in the not-too-distant future we will see representing the traditionalist brake on the great social events that are coming.

This is why I will always repeat that feminism, whatever it may be, mild or harsh, reformist or ultramontane, can never be an evolutionary factor or a value of social renewal. At most, with its reformisms, it is a small conquest wrested from preoccupations and ancestralism.

Socially, he accepts and demands privileges that, if unjust when enjoyed by men, will also be unjust when enjoyed by

women. Humanly, he tolerates all the constraints of morality and religion; he is orderly and methodical, and when he becomes revolutionary, it is out of spite and not justice. In certain aspects, he agrees with those men who do not consider women worthy of equal freedom and rights. He is almost a sexual deviation and, at times, a regression, representing a danger to the very women who do not conform to his norms and intolerance. He is incapable of being devastating, generous, self-sacrificing, brave, and proud before society and life. He lacks understanding, a desire for justice, and dignity. He is fossilized by prevailing prejudices and morals and will never understand, whether he is gentle or harsh, Southern or Anglo-Saxon, reformist or reactionary, satisfied or disgruntled, what an ideal of absolute harmony, complete peace, vast universalism, infinite evolution, and limitless freedom and perspectives is.