

Envy

Francisco Ferrer

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Contents

Letter to Mr. Ricardo Fajarnes	3
Envy	3

Letter to Mr. Ricardo Fajarnes

Dear friend:

When I was very young, I understood that the farces of religion were detrimental to the progress and well-being of humanity, so in 1885 I conceived the idea of putting into discourse all those things about sins, eternal punishments, commandments of the church, articles of faith, etc., and I thought of writing a work entitled *The Capital Sins*.

As its epigraph indicates, the work was to have seven chapters, one for each sin; I thought of these chapters in the form of a story and I wrote the one corresponding to Envy.

The passing of time and other occupations prevented me from carrying out my project, and the manuscript was forgotten among various papers, but now that it has come into my hands, I have thought of printing it and giving it to friends, so that at least something of that thought I had remains.

I could have amended it, but I want to print it as I wrote it, because this may be my first work, and above all because of the taste of that time when I did not have the enlightenment that I now have, although it is not as extensive and notable as I would like to have.

And having explained the reason for the appearance of my pamphlet, I only have to tell you that I dedicate it to you, as a reward for the efforts you have made to publish your work *Popular Philosophy – Civilization*, and to make amends for the disdain that has been shown to your work by radical newspapers, who have not dealt with it, and by advanced elements, who have not propagated it as they should.

Your friend knows that you are appreciated and loved,

Francisco Ferrer

April 1900

Envy

We are in the earthly Paradise; in that heavenly mansion.

God put all his skill –when he made the world– in this privileged garden, because it is the only thing he reserved for himself; he abandoned the rest completely, so much so that if what our readers will see had not happened, the world would have been destroyed by time and nothing would have remained of all that God made, except the earthly Paradise.

He destined this pleasant garden for his bad times –which he experiences very often– and, therefore, all his care and all his wisdom were used in the formation of this oasis of happiness.

What capricious groups! What superb colors the flowers!

How God strutted, full of pride, seeing the perfection of his work.

What a perfumed atmosphere is breathed in that place, which is clearly demonstrated by the word: Paradise.

Indeed, Paradise, as one might say, happiness, pleasure, harmony, all the limits of enjoyment and delight.

God was happy surrounded by his courts of angels and archangels, but notice that in his thoughts the creative idea was continually bubbling, and he was not yet satisfied with having made the sun and the moon, the sky and the earth, the mountains and the seas, the angels and the wild beasts, and behold, one day he conceived the idea of making something like himself,

something great in his understanding, because he wanted to be alone and have no one to compete with him to know how far his immense power reached, and so he formed man.

How handsome and arrogant he appeared before her, what a manly figure, what grace, what beauty, what contours. God swelled up to no end when he contemplated his work and fell in love with the man.

–You will be the king of the world – he told him in one of those moments of passion when it is easy to promise–, you will dominate even the most ferocious beasts; you are my image and likeness and you are the only one in creation who comes close to me and can come close to equaling me.

You have talent, for that is why I give you imagination; you have affections, for that is why I give you a heart, and I also give you a conscience, so that you understand what is good and what is bad; what is bad is disobeying me.

And he smiled with satisfaction as he watched the man walk around Paradise, forming the gigantic shadow (when the sun shone on him), and the thousand drawings of his outline as he picked some little flower, as he formed some bouquet, as he lay down on the fresh grass, because that man did nothing but walk and sleep. And I say this because I do not believe that God would become a cook to serve man, nor would he allow his heavenly legions of angels to walk among the pots and the coals; so, due to his immense power, at that time there would be no food. But look, he is no longer satisfied with the man alone.

He is already tired of seeing him around, without conversation, because as there was no politics, they had nothing to talk about. They just looked at each other and smiled like two lovers. One day, when God had a nightmare, he woke up in a bad mood after taking a nap, and not knowing what to do, he imagined that he could distract himself by creating something new.

He saw that the man was sleeping very satisfied – because they had both gone to bed together – and since he had not been able to sleep, when he saw that peace, one of the seven deadly sins, which is that of Envy, entered him, or rather, took hold of him.

Envious of how well he slept, he tried to disturb his sleep for the future, and removed one of his ribs (because envy makes many bad actions, and removing a rib from a man was a bad action), and not knowing what to do with it, he formed the woman.

How beautiful and provocative the lady appeared before her Creator! Without anyone having taught her, she already presented herself with the enticing smile and the devouring eyes of passion, with those eyes hungry for pleasures with which they drive us mad and captivate us.

As God was envious of the man, he presented the woman to him, believing that the man would then envy him for his skill in forming such a beautiful sculpture, but it did not happen like that: because the man, upon seeing the woman, thought of nothing but her.

He forgot God, he forgot everything, and in that Paradise he glimpsed another type of adventures and pleasures. And how could he not, if he had fallen in love with her! If he saw her with her provocative smile and was burned by the fire of those black eyes! –Because the woman's eyes must be all black, which is how the author of this tale likes them–. Yes, he was captivated by such beauty!

And how could he not fall in love if God had given him a heart and had made it in his image and likeness, and God loved the woman as he loved him, even though he envied him? And behold, being his likeness, he showed it in this way, loving what his God loved.

And his passion for the woman grew and the woman loved him, because as she had no professional lovers, nor fools in a capriote who pursued her, she had to be content with what she had, apart from the fact that the man was also beautiful, not as much as her, but beautiful.

And a chronicle of that time tells that from the first moment the woman began to have a thousand defects and whims, she got used to combing her hair, making two braids of her beautiful hair, which the man took it upon himself to undo when he felt like it. The woman also wanted to begin by dominating the man and being the owner, the absolute queen; but the man did not yield because he did not forget that he was the king of the Earth and that he dominated everything, and commanding is something that has always been much liked.

At that time, the angels and the entire heavenly court, envious of man and woman — it is known that envy takes root very quickly, because the angels became envious-, seeing that God brought guests to his beloved mansion, formed a plot and revolted against their leader, who was God.

He had to spend a few days — they say — arranging that, so Satan, Lucifer and other winged individuals who were the authors and heads of the mutiny, were expelled from the heavenly court, and his creative mind started Hell for them, and immediately created it, putting them there as a punishment for their rebellion; these, who came to believe themselves equal to him, did not let him rest and from time to time they went to the woman — as the most foolish — and advised her to dominate not only the man but God himself if it were possible.

She, in the face of this bad advice, ended up being as bad as they were, and has always been so.

While God was busy with the insurrection, he left the man and the woman in complete freedom. They, who loved each other beyond measure, because they also had nothing else to entertain themselves with, seeing themselves free for a few days, but free for any action, began to lose themselves in the groves of Paradise to be more at ease and to contemplate each other better — because true lovers always like solitude — when the Sun, observing this, informed God of what was happening, so that he would be alert and not mock the couple.

God called them to his presence and rebuked them because they had no need to hide, when everything was theirs, and that showed bad intentions, and as a punishment he forbade them to see each other for a few days, but as lovers are stubborn, and God was very busy, they ignored the prohibition and continued to see and love each other.

The Moon — jealous of the Sun, because it received light from it and it could not give it on its own — declared itself the protector of the lovers, and advised them to rest during the day, and at night when God rested too, to do whatever they wanted, because she would not say a word to annoy the Sun.

It is known that envy is common there. The lovers followed the advice of the Moon to the letter, and the Sun never saw anything worth telling God, because as the meetings were held at night, the Moon has always been very quiet and never reveals the secrets of others.

But one night, when God was looking for a rebellious angel of the insurrection, to lock him up in hell, he heard a loud kiss from among a group of trees, which left him astonished and in suspense, because He, being God, had never heard that melodious sound; but after that kiss he heard another and another, and not being able to contain his surprise, he entered at full speed and found the woman in the arms of the man.

Then, God opened his eye as wide as he could – that is why they paint a triangle of light and a wide-open eye in the middle – and his indignation at that picture was such that he was tempted to destroy the world and return to hide in the darkness from whence he had come.

But self-love was stronger in him than dignity, and he did not dare to undo such a superb work, for fear of not making it as good later as he had done then; But he let out a colossal snort, which made the world tremble, so much so that the Sun, who was sleeping soundly, woke up startled and ran to see what was happening, which illuminated the scene and the first eclipse took place, because the Sun and the Moon quarreled, and I don't know where they would have ended up if God had not intervened and ordered the Sun to continue sleeping, which was obeyed immediately.

Since then, the Sun and the Moon quarrel when they meet. A lion who happened to be passing by, because he was not sleepy and was walking by that place, was so shocked by God's snort that he tried to imitate it, and he did so well that he has continued to do it all his life. God, indignant with the man for seeing that he had invented what had never occurred to him, even though he was God, began by covering him with hair, to see if the woman, seeing him uglier, would despise him, for all his anger was from envy that he had at seeing that it had not occurred to him to kiss and embrace the woman, and the man had devised such a delightful feat.

He called the woman aside –after forbidding them to see each other again in the future until further notice– and told her that if she disobeyed him, he would cover her with hair like the man, and he continued busy with the matter of the insurrection.

They, who had reached the heights of their passion, seeing themselves busy and protected by the Moon, continued to see each other and not only embraced and kissed each other, but they gave themselves over to endless pleasures, because the mind of man – as a resemblance to God – invented a new pleasure, a new delight every day, and the happiness of the lovers never ended; they were more immersed in their love, the more days passed.

But as everything has its end, God found out about these disobediences, and as he could no longer imagine another hell, he agreed to throw them out of Paradise, and remain alone in the place he had made for his recreation and distraction.

He began to fulfill his promise to the woman to cover her with hair, but calculating that she would be very ugly with sideburns and a moustache, he felt sorry for her and did not go any further, but... what was done was done. Let us get down to business: Do you know why God was so indignant at seeing himself disobeyed?

Well, it was because of envy.

He envied man, because, like him, he had invented and created joys that had not occurred to him with such virtue and such wisdom; that is why he tried to embitter those joys, and condemned women to have children in payment for the delight of love, and to death and illness and all the calamities we have, so as not to crush them with a breath, because after all they were his work.

But when he threw them out of Paradise, he did not have the courage to go in person, and he sent an angel to them; and his creative spirit, to humiliate man and shame him, made the scarlet tunic and placed it on the angel, so that they would not see his divine flesh, but rather the nakedness of his disobedience.

Then, seeing that man had managed to get dressed by dint of hard work, God, envious of his ingenuity – and to humiliate him further – decomposed the atmosphere that was then a warm and perfumed environment, and transformed it, sometimes making the Sun rise, so that the cold

would be felt and man would freeze, and other times, making the Sun go down too much so that it would scorch us. As a concealer, he condemned the Moon to give light for half a season and the other half to remain in darkness.

And all this for what? Out of envy.

Because if God had not been envious and had left man on his path of invention, he would now have had many more joys in that much-desired land of blessing, that is, in the earthly Paradise.

If God was envious of man, how can man not be envious of himself?

I will not say that envy is a virtue, but I want to show that it is not a sin.

Because man, in the image and likeness of God, has everything that God has.

Was God a creator? Yes.

Man is too.

God was envious, that is why men are envious of one another.

It is very bad to be envious because it brings many harms, but it cannot be avoided because it is a thing of God.

Who was the first envious person?

God.

Well, envy is not a sin, because God cannot sin.

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