

Ideario

Ricardo Mella

1926

Contents

1 Doctrine	6
Anarchist Socialism: Prolegomena	6
Free Cooperation and Community Systems	11
The Principle of Reward and the Law of Needs	17
Is Labor a Physiological Need?	22
The Practical Meaning of Anarchism	23
2 Social Criticism	25
Compound 606	25
Bellicose Literature	26
An Indictment	27
Official Science of Criminology	28
Those Who Rule	29
A Day of Almsgiving	30
Crème de la crème	32
Regimentation and Nature: Civilization's Work	33
3 Libertarian Habits	35
For the Barbarians	35
Guilty Idealisms	38
Revolutionaries, Yes; Spokesmen for the Revolution, No	40
The Great Lie	42
Overpowering Centralism	43
Authoritarian Bad Habits	45
The Absurdity of a Judgment	47
Concerning Antinomy	48
The Old Routines	49
How a Method Is Strengthened	51
4 Tactics	53
Productive Labor	53
Vote, but Listen	55
Questions of Tactics	56
Libertarian Tactics	59
How One Fights	61
5 Evolution and Revolution	63
Political Evolution and Social Evolution	63
I	63

II	63
III	64
The Great Resources	66
Revolutions	68
6 Violence	70
Sowing Death	70
Voices in the Desert	71
Justice and Triable Issues: The Case of Sancho Alegre	73
Ideas and Realities	75
Savagery and Ferocity	78
7 Freedom and Authority	81
The Uselessness of Laws	81
Psychology of Authority	82
Libertarians and Authoritarians	83
The Essence of Power: Dictatorships	84
8 Philosophical-Literary Essays	86
The Sadness of Living	86
Insignificant Things of an Insignificant Philosopher	88
Enclosures	91
Dialogue About Skepticism	92
Not Pessimistic or Optimistic	95
Reason Is Not Enough	96
Vision of the Future	98
9 Iconoclastic Ideas	100
The Bankruptcy of Beliefs	100
Enough Idolatries!	103
First of May	104
October 13, 19...	105
Beyond the Ideal	106
Dead Things	107
10 Morals	109
The Weight of Immorality	109
Secondhand Morality	110
Dunces and Crafty Devils	112
Sincerity	113
11 Sociological Topics	116
The Intellectualist Hyperbole: Intellectual Laborers and Manual Laborers	116
Class Struggle	119
Signs of the Times	121
Worn-out Socialism	122

Liberalism and Interventionism	123
Concerning Justice	125
Central Error of the Power of Nations	126
12 Pedagogy	129
The Problem with Education	129
I	129
II	131
What Is Meant by Rationalism?	133
Questions of Education	134
I	134
II	135
III	136
Verbalism in Education	138
13 Spanish Life	141
The Two Spains	141
Culture	145
For the Spanish Bourgeoisie: An Adversary's Advice	147
Regional Monographs	148
Andalusia	149
Catalonia	151
North and Northwest	154
14 Representative Men	156
The Death of Pi y Margall	156
Costa	158
Anselmo Lorenzo: A Young Old Man	159
An Exemplary Life	160
15 Polemical Works	161
One Opinion and Another	161
Two Speeches: Maeztu and Alomar	163
Hunger and Lasciviousness	165
Fictions and Realities	166
The Anarchist Danger	168
Brain and Brawn	171
The Drawbacks of Cheap Philosophy	173
16 Readings	176
Two Books	176
<i>César o nada</i> , Novel by Pio Baroja	178
<i>The Future of Latin America</i> by M. Ugarte	180
Works of Auguste Dide	181
<i>Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Protestantism and the French Revolution</i>	181

The Christian Legend 182

1 Doctrine

Anarchist Socialism: Prolegomena

Those critics of anarchism who are more open to radical ideas say that the doctrine is so far “a set of beautiful shreds without systematic coherence,” and call for a complete plan of social reorganization based on the ideas of anarchist socialism. For them, anarchism requires, as do other political ideas, a detailed design for the future. It should clearly obey, in their opinion, the practice of making laws and formulas for tomorrow. However, these more open-minded critics surely forget that society is not a building that is constructed according to the will and science of a single architect.

Political parties, particularly those that claim the need for a governing body and that aspire to conquer it in order to realize their particular public plan of reorganization, are obliged to present their future goals to the people. They are required to do so because society, theoretically, does not accord power to political parties without prior knowledge of how they will use it. In principle, society places its trust in those who have best succeeded in translating their desires. I say let us disregard this reality, which is rather contrary to some theory. For example, how should we demand an explanation of future goals from those who do not request or want power, who deny the need for any organ of social direction and proclaim the people’s ability to proceed on their own without any kind of protection? How should we require those people to describe, the day after the elections, the concrete form in which others are to freely live?

Such a claim indicates ignorance of the doctrine. The anarchist idea is the strict denial of any dogmatic systematization. It presupposes freedom without rules and unfettered spontaneity. It is not mere political denial, but a complete philosophy that explains facts and their causes, studies phenomena and ideas in keeping with the relativity of all things, and brings together, in short, experience and science, which are in reality the same. Its positive research method is the antithesis of religious, political, and philosophical doctrinarism.

Philosophical method is rejected by anarchism because anarchist method is not based on pre-judgments. Nor does it admit anything a priori. Not even from scientific positivism does it retain anything but what evidence has established incontestably. Anarchist method rejects anything that contains doctrinal systematization, not wanting to be supportive of inductions, which time and experience are able to destroy. However, does anarchism actually lack philosophical method, which is all that science demands?

All systems and doctrinal schools rely either on a principle established a priori—metaphysics—to which they fix all deductions and with which they construct their building of arbitrary science, or they derive from experience a posteriori—philosophical method in the true sense of the word, a general principle with which the systematic frame of certain doctrines is built and to whose rhythm research is tied, falling headlong into dogmatism. In both cases, a check is placed on the direction of thought, guiding it toward predetermined ends with the assumption that these ends necessarily contain the truth that is sought. Science itself, when it does not find explanation for

phenomena, or it proves easily susceptible to generalizations because of the arbitrary method of analogies, tests a priori theories, which readily change into dogma and dogma into error. These dogmatic theories work in time as a negative element of action and paralyze or hinder the true explanation of facts.

And dogmatic philosophical education of men has been and still is so strong that it always tends toward the whimsical unification of facts and ideas. As a result, there is no branch of human knowledge that does not contain many divisions and subdivisions of systems, schools, and contradictory doctrines. The natural sciences still have not been completely purged of this trend, as they explain in a very distinct way many phenomena, not only from different epochs but also from the same time period. It is not necessary to cite authors and theories. A mediocre culture makes fully known the doctrinal, philosophical, and scientific divisions.

Anarchist socialism follows, as we have said, its own method, opposed to all dogmatism, and does not establish any principle a priori. It does not generalize observed facts a posteriori and only to the extent that acquired knowledge permits, and it does not lend itself to the closed systematization of knowledge, rejecting at all cost philosophical systematization, because it understands that science is a body of knowledge in continuous formation whose cycle will never close. Therefore, in the dispute between spiritualists and materialists, for example, anarchist socialism rightly rejects both dogmas. There is in the investigation of phenomena a point where every doctrine fails. It is that point at which the boundaries of the absolute appear and block the path to our limited intelligence. When materialism, breaking with science, tries liberating both the spiritualists and the materialists, it touches the arbitrary, and it is at this precise moment when anarchist philosophy is heavily differentiated from dogmatic philosophy. Anarchist philosophy sides with the immense arsenal of scientific knowledge that forms materialism's baggage, and distances itself from any metaphysical explanation that attempts to cut the knot rather than undo it. Anarchist philosophy is not satisfied with the easy decrees of pseudoscience.

Similarly, anarchism is not added to any other school nor does it allow itself to be pigeonholed in sensualism, in positivism, in idealism, and so forth, to the extent that they are closed doctrine and methods of exclusion. Anarchism is not ignorant of the important role that the senses represent in life nor does it forget that the idea, in turn, is essential for the development of the individual and of humanity. It recognizes that all phenomena are verified following precise directions and under certain conditions, and that nature does not pertain to the capricious or to the arbitrary. Anarchism affirms pleasure, bodily comfort, and the encouragement of compassion and intelligence as the objects of life. It possesses, through science, the certainty that the universe, from the most microscopic of beings to the countless immense masses that cross space, is a closely woven chain of causes and effects in perpetual and multiple connections. But anarchism abhors the emphatic exclusivism peculiar to the dogmatism of these schools and does not want to resolve outright, under a particular point of view, the problem of the great beyond, which is all the more distant the closer man gets to his innovations and his achievements. Therefore, the easy generalizations of such schools do not form part of its philosophy. Other elements excluded from anarchism are the following: the systematization of knowledge whose coherence is pure cerebral artifice; and the whimsical unification of the universe in only one objective and purpose. On this point, metaphysics, again, attempts to save the chasms that separate the knowable from the unknowable, and the purely relative from the absolute. For anarchist philosophy, there is no immutable truth, immutable justice, or absolute science, but truths that vary in time and in space, relative conceptions of justice, and partial achievements of science. If such truth or justice or ab-

solite science were real, their existence would be null and void for humanity because men lack the means to discover and verify them. The fact that man forges these absolute conceptions, and conceives the idealism of the perfect, without determining it or defining it, does not authorize the assertion of its existence as a real fact that we should tirelessly pursue in vain.

Modern positivism is a good example of how one falls into dogmatism, even when it has to do with scientific systematizations. Biological development follows certain particular modes of evolution. As soon as this conquest of science was verified, many emulously attempted to generalize evolution, some rushing to construct by analogy the evolution of society, the evolution of institutions, and the evolution of customs, according to particular points of view and without caring about anything else except the accommodation of facts to theories rather than theories to facts. At the present time, because of a very understandable reversal in the domains of metaphysics, the theory of evolution is the philosophical and scientific dogma that prevails in the domains of knowledge, to such an extent that positivism has been rebuilding the old theology under new forms, and we are at clear risk of a modern scholasticism. The old issues of the relative and the absolute, God and the world, of matter and spirit, free will, and so forth, reemerging with new energy, have allowed the reactionary fatuity to sing the bankruptcy of science.

Because of the educational system, thought is only satisfied with definite ideas and with definitive statements. Thought is a copy of closed systems, which are simple products of cerebral abstraction, and thought is only satisfied with these abstractions because people were never taught to confess the limitations of their imagination.

But, are ideas and final states scientifically rational? Is not the eagerness for systematizations (in which all of life and all the manifestations of life are arbitrarily enclosed) contradictory to universal energy's state of perpetual movement? Anarchism has identified this contradiction and therefore does not systematize, has no dogma, and certainly lacks metaphysics, but not philosophy. Its philosophy stems from the following principle demonstrated everywhere: science is a body of knowledge in perpetual formation. There is nothing in science that is definitive, in an absolute way. There is nothing that comprises, encyclopedically, the entire universe and its phenomena. Science is "a set of beautiful shreds" partially grouped according to well-established relationships, but without a systematic coherence that covers the entire set of facts and ideas. And this philosophy—so stubbornly refused to anarchism, which is not a fixed idea, but the definitive initiation of the free development of ideas and things—is the only positive thing that can be gleaned from the vast scientific work of men. From all of science's books, from all of its struggles, from all of its systems, from all of its idiosyncrasies of school, from all of its doctrinal differences, the common feature attributed by us to all inquiries flows with singular persistence: the relativity of knowledge, which, in beautiful shreds, proves the absurdity of any definitive systematization.

Anarchism, which contains this common outcome and works to broaden the field of knowledge, is placed on the firm ground of purely scientific method. Experience has proven that when the borders of this common resultant are crossed, one necessarily falls in the metaphysics of the absolute, and then research aimlessly marches through the free spaces of the imagination.

Preferably, we confess our intellectual impotence to cross those limits and we will not foolishly decree that things will happen according to our fancy, wandering through the labyrinths of the unknown.

We do not offer diagrams of the future, because we do not propagate predetermined ideas. Our ideals are the experimental result of each moment, in view of past and present facts, which affirm the elimination of known evil for the future.

Does this philosophy close the path to the development of our abilities and deny the affirmation of better methods of human interaction?

Metaphysics is not necessary for the development of man's abilities. It is, on the contrary, a strong obstacle. When the mind is filled with the vagaries of the unknown, it loses the true notion of reality. The quintessence of the absolute is the prelude to dementia. The individuals of exceptional constitution, who resist the pathological tendency of certain investigations, make very great works of intellectual gymnastics, but nothing worthwhile, nothing effective and useful to themselves and their peers. Of the long-winded studies of metaphysics and theology, no universal, let alone practical, results have ever been able to be deduced. The conclusions of modern science are contrary to the supposed use of such studies.

For the development of our abilities, especially the intellectual ones, the serious and continuous study of nature is required. Instead of running after the fantasies of the noumenon, after the illusory penetration of the intimate nature of living beings, it is necessary to educate the mind in the inquisition of the phenomena, in the review of all real-life events, beginning with the smallest and most insignificant events and concluding with the very extensive series of causes and effects, which explain the overall workings of the universe. The natural sciences make great progress through this method. Economics, sociology, philosophy itself, resolutely will advance the day this method is folded into their practice, purging themselves of all transcendent tendencies.

Anarchist socialism strongly tends toward this end and, as a result, affirms in the first place the need for all men to fully develop, studying new methods of social coexistence in order to achieve this objective.

Its fundamental principles are, in summary, the following:

1. All men have the need for physical and mental development in indeterminate degree and form.
2. All men have the right to freely satisfy this need for development.
3. All men can satisfy this need through cooperation or voluntary community.

Let's briefly outline the argument:

Each individual is born with determined conditions of development, whether or not these conditions are able to be nurtured. By being born, and by being born with those conditions, each individual has the need, or in political terms, has the right to freely develop. Whatever the conditions under which each individual is placed, their whole organism will tend to expand in all directions. Each individual will want to meet, know, train, and enjoy. Each individual will want to feel, think, and act with complete freedom. The need for all of these things is their own being. If each individual's physical growth were limited by any means whatsoever, it would be categorized as a truly monstrous act. If sensory, intellectual, or moral development is to be limited, it should be pointed out in good faith. This does not occur today. But, nevertheless, the principle is clear. Monstrous acts are committed if the expansiveness of the human organism is constrained. All men have the need by nature for physical and mental development. All men are socially entitled to this development. How to translate this principle into practice? Tradition has bequeathed to us its regulations, imposed first by the will of the prince, then clinched by the divine right of parliaments through the vanishing of individual sovereignty.

Some men have wanted and still want each individual to move to an imposed beat, to think in accordance with the meter of arbitrary laws, to feel the melody of gubernatorial music and to act in accordance with the single pattern of official wisdom. In fact, what they wanted and want is for the multitude to never feel, or think, or act on its own and according to its own will. The theory has been invented for those who are inferior, for those who are born and live and die in the dependence of political cunningness and economic exploitation.

Nobody has proved the necessity or the justice of this subordination of nature to the capricious regulations of some men who are neither more nor less important than the rest of humanity. One might as well prove the need for the stars to move according to our whim or the need of blood to circulate through the arteries according to a particular plan of ours. The entire universe unfolds according to its particular conditions in connection with other conditions of environment and relations. Man is simply an element of the universe with its relational and environmental conditions. These conditions are studied for science. It would be absurd to encode them without being familiar with them, and insanity to encode them without recognizing them.

Any contradiction to the so-called laws of nature carries with it the proper corrective. Whoever abuses their physical strength, whoever exceeds their expenditure of energy, finds the corrective in the annihilation of their body, in the anemia and phthisis. Whoever does not manage well their brainpower pays for the wasting of their intellectual strength with impotence. Superfluous are all regulations that punish these principles. Harmful are all the laws of men who do not conform to these principles.

Within, therefore, the autonomous conditions of each individual existence, man, all men are free to meet their needs for development. Does this affirmation suppose that man alone can provide for all those needs?

Not at all. There is no need to make a tour through the territories of history and sociology to prove that from the impotence of the isolated individual has emerged the community of men, has sprung what is called society. Even when individual existence is possible outside the group, the advantage of community is incontestable because of how it widens the individual's scope of action, and because of the benefits it brings.

So, when we say all men can freely satisfy the need for comprehensive development, we add the request of the following principle: "through cooperation or voluntary community."

Forced cooperation is the almost universally practiced means of social coexistence. Under various names, the enslavement of the majority of men has been considered and is considered necessary for the production of life's indispensable things. Never mind the proclamation of labor's freedom because, under the name proletarian, the slave endures. The person without property in our individualistic society lives obligated to submit his freedom and labor force to whomever pays the best. Salary is the price for servitude. The laborer is currently hired in the public market more or less like the slave used to be. If demand surpasses supply, the worker can be paid regularly for his labor force. If demand is lower than supply, the salary lowers and only a precious few have the freedom to tear each other apart in the race for a desired bite to eat. The rest should resign themselves to starving. Such is the effective result of democratic gains.

We will not ask the men of radical ideas why they contradict in practice that which they theoretically claim. The inflexible logic of prevailing individualism is stronger than all the fraternal philosophies.

But it is necessary to continually demonstrate why the most beautiful principles are impracticable in ordinary life.

Freedom has been asserted as a thing that can be legislated like a beautiful formula lost between the bombastic rubbish of political literature. Because of the sole virtue of the rigor of its terms, equality has been stated as an equation imposed on reality. Fraternity has been claimed as the mystical appearance of new feelings whose immaculate property consisted of smoothing over, magically, all the roughness of common life. And there has been no resolution to get to the real heart of these principles. There has been no courage to translate them into action. Humanity made do with the words and remains ignorant of their beautiful content.

Property and government, conflict of interests and inequality of conditions, all subsist through tremendous revolutionary shocks, and nullify the claims of democracy. It is necessary to reach socialism in order to realize the following: that freedom is a myth without the voluntary cooperation among men; that equality is a contradiction without the destruction of private property; and that fraternity is impossible without the prior disappearance of how much in the everyday fight some men are placed opposite others. It is necessary to reach anarchism in order to warn that any system of government, no matter how radical, of some men over others makes any solution of equality and freedom impossible and blocks the way to the future.

Effective freedom to feel, think, and act in society with full independence is not practically translatable, unless through the common ability of all men to be able to willingly cooperate for the purposes that can or want to be proposed. This ability necessarily supposes the equality of means, whose full expression finds itself in the community that has been formulated and methodized according to the opinions, trends, and needs of its members. Fraternity can occur only through the identity of interests.

Let man be free to associate and voluntarily cooperate for all purposes of life. Make it possible for him to adopt the necessary means to achieve those ends, and all men will be able to produce whatever is necessary for their integral development.

The method of forced cooperation has constrained the majority of humans to work like animals so that a few can afford the luxury of going beyond the terms of all necessary development. The method of voluntary cooperation will make all men devote themselves spontaneously and in solidarity to the rational production of whatever is indispensable for existence. Nature, which the labor force shoved to the side along with needs, will substitute a thousand coercive organizations and will push toward work, toward the useful exercise of force, better than any kind of organized coercion.

Let's get to the point of the chapter or it will be necessary to erase from the program of human aspirations the words that so often have led generous men to sacrifice themselves, as well as justice, for the greater good.

If, therefore, in conclusion, we do not give outlines for the future, it is because we rather establish the fundamental principles of a new practice, open to all initiatives and all experiences, whose result will be the product of the state of development of men in every moment of time and in every location of space.

(*Natura*, numbers 17 and 18, Barcelona, June 1904.)

Free Cooperation and Community Systems

Some friends have advised me to precede this text with a brief summary explaining the mutual position of the communist and collectivist parties, because this latter kind of anarchism (anar-

chist collectivism) is not well known outside of Spain. In countries other than Spain, collectivism is always understood as Marxism, and it is unclear how one can be mutually collectivist and anarchist.

For those anarchists who pertained to the First International, such an explanation is unnecessary, because anarchist collectivism is a reminder of the beginnings of that association. Anarchists called themselves, at that time, collectivists, the same as did Marxists. The idea of free communism was not formulated until much later, and Spain is one of the countries where it penetrated very late. The former Federation of Workers, affiliated with the International, called itself anarchist and collectivist. After the break between Marxists and Bakuninists at the 1872 Hague Congress in the Netherlands, the former Federation of Workers followed Bakunin. It continued even after the dissolution of the International in 1876. In 1882, at the Congress of Seville, the idea of communism, then quite authoritarian at heart, was formulated for the first time. But the Congress rose up against this tendency.

Naturally, the idea of anarchist collectivism differs a great deal from Marxist collectivism. In anarchist collectivism, there is nothing of statist organization. Retribution is not agreed upon by directive organs within the collective. The principal foundation of anarchist collectivism is the principle of the contract to regulate production and distribution. The collectivists sustain the need to organize, through free pacts, great federations of production in such a way that neither production nor distribution are carried out or are released at random, but are the result of the combination of the forces and indications of data.

It does not accept the communist principle "to each according to his needs," and although at the beginning it affirmed the slogan "to each according to his contribution," at present it is content with establishing that individuals as well as groups will resolve the problem of distribution by means of freely arranged agreements in keeping with their tendencies, needs, and state of social development. In conclusion, anarchist collectivism aspires to the spontaneous organization of society through free pacts, without affirming neither methods nor an obligatory resultant. In this sense, the present trend of those who call themselves anarchists without some adjectives is also a throwback to collectivism. Anarchist communism in Spain is different from collectivism because it does not believe in the need to organize production or distribution. Carrying the conclusions of communism from other countries to an extreme, no doubt because of the collectivist antagonism, anarchist communism manages to absolutely affirm individualism. Especially in some cities in Andalusia and in certain ones in Catalonia, the communists are the ones who are completely opposed to any coordinated action. For them, in the future, all one will have to do is produce what one wants and take from the heap what one needs, and they think that, in the present, every agreement, every alliance, is harmful.

In fact, this type of communism is the result, on the one hand, of a great lack of research into the question, and a good dose of doctrinal dogmatism on the other. Of course, there are communists in Spain of sound mind who do not forget the difficulties and the importance of the problem of distribution. But for them, as for the dispassionate collectivists, it is not a place of polemics, because they agree on many points of view. Apart from this, one can say that communism in Spain is too elemental, too simple to be presented as a complete conception of future society because it soon touches the edges of Nietzschean anarchism as it rests on the most pernicious authoritarianism. In fact, collectivism and communism suffer from the defects that are derived from any continued polemic: doctrinal exaggeration and fanaticism. Perhaps, the atomistic overstatement that reduces social life to the absolute independence of the individual is produced in

communism because of collectivism's methodical exaggeration and vice versa. Maybe, without the antagonism of the two schools, any difference between the two would be reduced to a question of words. But, at present, both tendencies are incompatible. On the one hand, the need to organize, to coordinate the entirety of social life (anarchist collectivism); on the other hand, the affirmation that producing and consuming at random, as each one understands it, will obtain the desired social harmony (communism).

In the details and in the questions of method, the two parties differ even more, to the point that the body of Marxist socialism in Spain—which indifferently interchanges the adjectives collectivist and communist—is not wrong when it sustains that we anarchists waste time pitifully discussing the quint-essences of a future that nobody can determine beforehand or a priori. That is all I can say about the respective position of the two parties or schools within the limited conditions of this text.

I understand by “free cooperation” the voluntary gathering of an indeterminate number of men for a common objective. By “community,” any method of social coexistence that rests on the common property of things. And whenever I make use of the phrase “community systems,” it will be to designate some or all of the previous community plans. Or, in other words, the community plans determined a priori. I make these clarifications because it is very essential in order to understand the words' meaning.

Among us are anarchists, communists, collectivists, and anarchists without any adjective. With the denomination “anarchist socialism,” a rather numerous group exists that rejects any doctrinal exclusivity and accepts a fairly ample program, so that in principle all the divergences remain annulled. The denomination socialist, because of its generic character, is more acceptable than any of the others.

However, because, in fact, doctrinal differences persist, it is advisable to analyze, without compromises, the ideas and try to arrive at an agreement eliminating the causes of divergence. Apart from the individualist fraction, we anarchists are socialists, and all of us are for community. And I say “all of us” because collectivism, in the way that Spanish anarchists understand it, is a degree of community, and for those who call themselves at the same time communists, community is not translated in the same way. There is, however, a common principle. The different names that we give ourselves do not do anything but reveal different interpretations, because for each, the common possession of land, of the instruments of labor, and so forth is primordial. The differences arise as soon as the mode or modes of production and the distribution of wealth are addressed.

The disparity of opinions becomes tangible because we tend, due to education, to become dogmatic, and each tries to systematize future life, a little unaware of the necessary consequences. Such a disparity, fruit of the preferences for determined systems, is not, in my view, reasonable. I understand that the affirmation of these systems contradicts the radical principle of freedom and that, moreover, it is not indispensable for the propaganda of our ideas. It is very simple to make less enlightened people understand that things will be done a certain way in the future, but forcing them to conceive that things will be one way and not another simply amounts to reaffirming their authoritarian education. One can say with the greatest ease that each will enjoy the entire product of their work, or that each will take what they need wherever they find it. But it is not as easily explained how one will do this without detriment to anyone, nor how each will agree to work one way or another. We need, on the contrary, to get into people's heads the idea that everything will have to be done in accordance with the will of the members at each moment

and place. We must make as clear as possible the need to allow men complete independence of action, and it is certainly not by cramming heads with anarchist principles. This anti-dogmatic approach is more complicated than the authoritarian one. It makes the understanding of anarchist ideas less accessible, but it is that which corresponds to the affirmation of a better world in which organized authority has been reduced to zero. And since this way of understanding propaganda is surely common to us all, and since the flow of favorable opinion for the large scope of the concept in terms of economic material has begun, I deem it healthy that we all contribute to a propaganda that positions itself more and more in an anti-dogmatic and anti-authoritarian direction. This is what I propose when I treat the topic that serves as an epigraph to these lines.

If we affirm freedom in the sense that each individual and each group can work automatically in each instant, and we all affirm it, it is clear that we want the means so that such autonomy is practicable.

And because we want the means, we are, without a doubt, socialists, that is, we affirm justice and the need for the common possession of wealth, because without community, which denotes equality of means, autonomy would be unfeasible.

We understand, I believe without discrepancy, by "community of riches" the possession in common of everything, in such a way, that they are at the free disposition of individuals and groups. This supposes that it will be necessary to establish the opportune intelligence to make methodical use of the ability to freely have the things at one's disposal. The research on the possible forms of that necessary intelligence gives rise to the different schools indicated.

It has to do, then, with questions of pure form.

Starting from our genuinely socialist affirmations, will it be necessary to systematize general life in full anarchy? Will it be necessary to choose a special system of communist practice from now on? Will it be necessary to work for the introduction of an exclusive method?

If it were necessary, the existence of so many anarchist parties as well as the economic ideas that divide our opinions would be justified.

On the other hand, we would demonstrate with such intentions that we proposed something more than the equality of means as a guarantee of freedom. We would demonstrate that we were trying to provide a model for freedom itself; better said, for freedom's performance.

Systematizing the practice of autonomy is contradictory. Nothing can force a free individual and a free group to adopt a particular system of social coexistence. Nothing will be likewise so powerful to determine a uniform direction in the production and distribution of wealth.

Since we affirm complete individual and collective autonomy, we have to admit, as a result, the ability in each to proceed as they like, the possibility that some will work one way and others in another, the evidence of multiple practices whose diversity will not be an obstacle to the resulting harmony and social peace to which we aspire. In summary, we have to admit, then, the principle of free cooperation founded on the equality of means without having to go much farther in the practical consequences of the idea.

Why does anarchism have to be communist or collectivist?

The mere declaration of those words produces in the mind the image of a preconceived plan, of a closed system. And we, anarchists, are not systematic. We do not propose infallible panaceas. We do not construct castles over quicksand that the slightest breeze of the near future will knock down. We propagate true freedom, the possibility to work freely in every time and place. This possibility will be a reality for the people as soon as the people are in possession of the wealth and are able to dispose of it without anything or anyone blocking them. And it will be even more

in force the more people are able to freely coordinate the means of methodizing the production and distribution of the wealth placed within their reach.

We anarchists will be able to say then to the people: "Do what you want; group together as you please; arrange your relations for the use of the wealth as you see fit; organize the life of freedom as you know and are able." And under the influence of different opinions, under the influence of climate and race, under the influence of physical and social means, activity in multiple directions will be produced, different methods will be applied, and also, in the long run, the experience and the general needs will determine harmonious and universal solutions of social coexistence. We will obtain, through experience, part, at least, of what we will not achieve with all of the discussions and all of the possible intellectual effort.

The affirmation that "everything is everybody's" does not imply that everyone can arbitrarily have everything at their disposal or in accordance with a given rule. It only means that, given that wealth is made freely available to individuals, the organization of the enjoyment of the wealth remains at the mercy of these individuals.

The research into the forms of organizing this enjoyment is certainly useful and necessary, especially at the level of study and not at the level of doctrinal imposition. But this same research will not result in, nor is it essential that it result in, unanimity of opinions, nor is it desirable that it determine a social creed. In the matter of opinions, it is indispensable to be respectful of them all. The freedom to carry various opinions to fruition is the best guarantee of this respect.

In a society like the one that we propose, the different nature of jobs will compel, in some cases, the taking of turns to complete some tasks, and will need, in others, volunteers. Soon it will be necessary that a group be permanently in charge of such labors, so that other such tasks are carried out, alternating, by various associations. Here the distribution will be able to follow communist procedure, which abandons distribution to needs, or, it would be better to say, to the wills of the individuals. It will be imperative to voluntarily limit oneself to whatever rule, like reasoning or something similar. Who is able to understand the whole of future life!

It will be said to me that everything put forward is, simply, communism. In this assumption, collectivism is also communism, and vice versa. There is nothing more than a difference of degree. And what I am trying to prove is the contradiction into which one falls when a closed, invariable, uniform system subject to predetermined rules is associated with the word anarchy.

This spirit of ample freedom, this general criterion that I designate as free cooperation might be in all of our heads, but the practical results show erroneously that the idea of a complete plan of social coexistence is associated, more or less, with the words communism, collectivism, and so forth. Our fights are derived precisely from this association of certain ideas with certain words where complete exclusivism has a hold. And when school particularisms become propaganda, the results are inevitable, because instead of making anarchists of sound mind, we make fanatics of communism A or fanatics of communism B, fanatics, in short, of their dogma, whatever it may be.

To the reasons, which we could call of an interior nature, and which have already been put forward, I will add others of a general nature that corroborate my deductions.

Present-day experience and historical experience—of which future experience will not be more than a corollary—will be made to contribute to my argument.

Wherever a system has predominated, the facts are very far from following invariable rules. The principle is, generally, the same. However, the practical experiences vary notably, straying from the starting point. Only an ideal characteristic can be obtained from the communism of some

peoples. In the facts, there is no communism that is equal to another communism. Concessions to individualism are made everywhere but to varying degrees. The regulation of life oscillates from free pacts to the most repugnant despotism. From the Eskimos, who live in free communities, to the authoritarian communism of the ancient Peruvian empire, the distance is great. And, nevertheless, the practices of communism are derived from one principle: the eminent right of the collectivity. This principle does not subsist, nonetheless, without essential limitations. Everywhere, the concessions made to individualism are numerous. In some cases, the house and garden are private property. In others, the community does not get but a portion of the land, reserving the rest for the State and the priests or soldiers. Finally, the Eskimos, in their free communities, recognize in the individual the right to separate from the community and to set up on one's own in another part, hunting and fishing at one's own risk. Anyone, continuing this excursion through the domains of sociology and history, can be convinced of how difficult it is to explain how such contrary practices proceed from a common principle.

In the same way, the individualist regime found in certain regions is much closer to communism than to individualism properly said. Property, in many cases, is reduced to the possession or the usufruct that the State concedes or takes away at will. In others, the use of the land is given through periodical parceling out, because, theoretically, it is said that the soil is everyone's.

If we analyze the present-day experience of industrial or agricultural individualism, we will see that the principle or rule is one—the right to the exclusive and absolute property of things—but that the methods of application vary from country to country and from town to town. Nevertheless, the legislators' aim of unification, the absorbent and unifying power of the State, and the laws are a true multitude, and the uses and customs in industry, in agriculture and in trade are so conflicting that what is equitable in one place is taken as unfair in another.

There are countries where association works miracles and others where each individual prefers to fight alone to their own exclusive benefit. Entire regions in the same nation pertain to a handful of individuals, while others are subdivided into very small parcels. Here, great industry prevails; there, the old-fashioned artisan laborers, working in their small workshop. The transmission of property takes on many various forms. And with respect to the rents collected by the person who enjoys the eminent right to earn them, in some places they have disappeared or been transformed, and in others they persist unchanged.

Will it be necessary to make note that no so-called civilized State is completely individualistic? In spite of the right to the use and abuse of things, public power invades citizens' rights at every turn. In the name of general utility, expropriation is established, falling back on the communist principle of the eminent right of the collective. On the other hand, a considerable portion of wealth is of common use in civilized countries, and a great number of institutions and communities live in the middle of modern individualism.

I believe that it is useless to produce proof, which is at everyone's reach. I limit myself to indicating a process and to making conclusions.

From the experiences put forward, I deduce that the future will develop according to a general principle: that of the common or collective possession of wealth. This principle will, in practical terms, result in diverse methods of production, distribution, and consumption, which are all methods of free cooperation.

This same deduction is brought about immediately from the principle of freedom that is so dear to us. And now I can add that the diversity of individualistic or communist experiences, contained in the past and in the present, are not but the consequence of the principle of freedom

surviving in the human species in spite of all the coercion. The individual and the group tend to always live their lives and be guided by their opinions, their tastes and needs. And even when one is reduced to the imposition of a system, one will free one's existence within this system, infringing upon it in accordance, as much as possible, with said tastes, needs, and opinions. This happened before, is happening now, and we think it will happen again.

Opposite to, then, systematic invariability and to any exclusivism of doctrine, I believe that I have established that the corollary of anarchism is free cooperation, within which any practice of community has adequate space. And I think that under the denomination "anarchist socialism" we all can and ought to group ourselves.

The fights for doctrinal exclusivism are presently languishing. My desire is to have contributed to their complete demise.

The affirmation of the method of free cooperation is genuinely anarchist, and it will be evident, to those who come to us, that we do not decree dogmas or systems for the future, and that anarchy is not an appearance of freedom, but freedom in action.

(Statement to the International Revolutionary Congress of the Working People in Paris, May 1900.)

The Principle of Reward and the Law of Needs

The social and political organization of the civilized world rests on a variable notion of the law. Savage people are still guided by the invariable right to force. Theoretically, these two aspirations (law and force), which are all the rage in philosophy and science, end up in a radical opposition whose winner, law's perpetual regime, is believed to be the definitive triumph of justice.

Political programs and philosophical theses begin with the universal prejudice that the realization of the law is the tangible goal of human progress. Barbaric times correspond to brute force, and modern times to the indefinite evolution of justice. Are we certain of the legitimacy of this idea? Might it not be the bastard product of a vile concubinage?

Man is considered a social member whose functions are given in advance by common law. The law is the result of legislation and a product of numerical combination. Metaphysicians make subtle distinctions to such a point that they reduce the law to a nebula. All irreverence toward the modern idol, the political translation of the indecisive god of the idealists, is a very serious sin that society punishes with a heavy hand.

The facility with which a word governs the world is admirable. What is the law more than organized force? As soon as a group of people abandons its savage state and is constituted in nationality, it codes force as quickly as possible, regulating its exercise. Before this happens, force is the element of the fight that each freely has at their disposal. It is, later, patrimony conferred on a few through laws and decrees of power created and maintained by force. Every regulation and code are nothing more than the acknowledgment and sanction of acts of force, and the Constitution, its supreme law. Differences certainly exist, but more apparent than real. They consist of the fact that every law or constitution, code or rule, reflects, not the closed concept of primitive force, but that other concept, which always is elaborated for the government of the world. The differences also consist of the various ways of exercising force. The gentleness of the forms and the public concealment distinguishes this epoch from the previous ones. It is true that the feudal lord invested with civil, and criminal jurisdiction does not resemble the potbellied bourgeois of

our days who poisons with the products that he manufactures or sells, or kills for greed, or, in order to obtain a higher price, manipulates scarcity by leaving a great deal of material in the mine shaft. In the end, both the bourgeois and the feudal lord seek protection in force. Today this is called Code, Law, and Constitution. Progress is reduced to the exaltation of the move from primitive barbarism to the principle of immutable justice.

How has this evident fact escaped the critique of philosophy and democracy?

Tradition serves as a starting point for progress, and, naturally, if the causes of injustice prevail, injustice will also prevail.

To give to each their own, does that equate to establishing a series of obligations in accordance with which thousands of people will die of hunger?

The error is serious. It is said that man comes to the social world with rights and duties. However, is not man born into the physical world with needs to satisfy?

At least, in principle, the exercise of force had its excuse in the satisfaction of necessities. Today, they try to shield it in a metaphysical fiction, we have yet to say theological. By dint of talking about rights and duties, by force of edifying castles on top of a universal preoccupation, by force of quibbling about the nature of this preoccupation, man as a physiological organism, as an animal, has been forgotten. The citizen is not an organic individuality, which feels real and effective needs. The citizen is a being of reason and a product of extravagant lucubration. With what comic solemnity one talks of the rights of the citizen! With what empty wordiness is individual freedom extolled! The rights of the citizen are always illusory, well-sounding words that caress the ear deceiving the listener. Freedom is the bait with which the gullible are caught, or a hungry bird's cage. In the political order, the law is the consecration of voluntary enslavement. The citizen surrenders to the point of choosing his masters. In the economic order, freedom is the doctrine of servitude. The citizen, in order to live, must surrender to the daily wage or suffer misery. He does not even have the strength to appreciate his job because, if the citizen does not adapt to the model, he will have to fold his arms. In the social order, summary and synopsis of political and economic life, the still powerful spirit of lineage and the effective existence of classes are the most complete confirmation that force is the only right that subsists through the centuries. It is a semi-barbaric world that thinks itself civilized. Let's not talk about the religious order. We are born and we die with the theological wrapping of the transcendental in which conscience and action are subjected to the commands and suggestions of the priestly circle.

A copy of religious idealism, the political and philosophical idealism, determined to deprive us of the attributes of the material, has converted us and our ideas into subtle abstractions that only live in the inaccessible sublimities of the mind of a handful of visionaries. The metaphysical notion of the citizen corresponds to a metaphysical notion of the law.

But, powerful men of flesh and bone subsist and live with the constant stimulation of physical, moral, and intellectual necessities. However, demanding the forgers of laws and codes the satisfaction of these necessities will be in vain. The law, which is the philosophy of these builders, will remain unfeeling, deaf, blind, and silent in front of nature's loud knocking. The physiology of the functions is necromancy for the wise ones of classicism. The stomach, the heart, the brain—what difference do they make?

They do not see, they do not want to see in man an animal that eats, feels, and thinks. Preferring men to be citizens who vote, obey, and work. Because of this, their logic is the logic of individual property, political privilege, and religious suggestion. Their best argument is the rifle.

The principle of reward, from where the law is derived, is the alpha and the omega of social science. In theory, work is remunerated for the expenditure of energy that the labor represents. In practice, work is the commodity whose value oscillates at the mercy of supply and demand. If the expenditure of energy is not in relation to the needs, or the market does not give a sufficient price to cover them, what difference does it make to the theorizers? Society, according to them, should not do more than this: reward merit, give money for work, and pay a salary for available activities. The lessons begin in school. Children are stimulated with the motivation of a prize and by fear of punishment. This figure is called necessary correlation. Thus, the cradle of man swings from ambition to fear. Afterward, the individual surrenders to daily wage, increasing it at the same time as the human machine produces more and better. So, work is not for man a healthy exercise through whose means it assists with the satisfaction of needs that are not taken into account, but the instrument of torture where one's strengths are tested in order to grant him, or not, a certificate of strength. For those who it is assumed are exceptionally gifted, the profit incentive is reserved. Merchants and industrialists collect their prize by stealing the products from the workers who made them. Not even artists or scholars escape this rule. Public applause and official favor are pleasing because they mean an immediate, positive reward. Without the incentive of the reward, there would not be, according to the thesis, children who apply themselves and hard-working, studious men, lovers of beauty and science. It seems that humanity has on earth the inevitable destiny of constantly competing for a prize.

It may happen, or is happening, that with such lessons the child's nature is perverted or destroyed, and man is condemned to the sacrifice of his organism and his personality, a burnt offering of superior organisms, privileged individualities who are degraded because of greed or who die from excess. The love for work, study, and art deviates from its principle because of the baseness of the vilest feelings. No one thinks about the natural satisfaction of one's general needs, but about the orgy of wealth in the bacchanalia of every easy pleasure. The scholar and the artist, as well as the worker and the child, are perverted by the corruption that incentives provoke, reflection of an unhealthy egoism, which divides men and throws them into all-out-war where force and cleverness prevail.

Humanity is already tiring of so much fiction. It is beginning to understand that when it talks of the right to protest, nothing and no one can destroy it; that when freedom of thought and action becomes dearer, it is important to talk about the imperative need to think and create, which nothing and no one can inhibit; that when the right to work is celebrated, the need to work motivated by the need to live ought to simply be recognized. They are physiological functions upon which politics and philosophy represent an intrusion. And this is not a matter of words but a deep question from which words are nothing more than exterior signs of divergence.

Man is, above all and especially, an animal that eats, thinks, and speaks. Like any being, man has needs that must be satisfied. Like an animal, he has physical needs. Like a man, he has moral and intellectual needs. Without the nourishment that keeps the organism standing, the moral and intellectual needs would not exist. For man, the need to eat is the first imperative command of nature. From this command, the rest is derived like a never-ending chain. Work is one more need to satisfy. The physiologists who know a great deal and who are ignored by politicians and philosophers prove that exercise is such a need of the body to the point that the gym, games in the open air, regattas, track races, and the rest of the elegant sports were invented for those who disdain dirtying their hands with material labor.

What relation can be established between individual needs and the energies expended at work? John will have the advantage over Peter because he is tougher. John will do the same unit of work much faster than Peter, and, in the same unit of time, he will finish a greater quantity of work, which means that John will always earn more than Peter. However, Peter, for the very reason that he is weaker, will surely need greater and more nutritive sustenance because, in the relation between the needs and energies expended, there will always be, for him, a great deficit. A general rule can be established that needs are inversely related to strength. Will we condemn Peter to perpetual weakness and eternal consumption?

Anthony, weaker than James, will realize any job better. But greater ability implies an easier realization of said job. So, Anthony will expend less energy, will work less than James, on the same unit of production. Thus, Anthony will restore a lesser quantity of energy expended. However, according to the theory, Anthony will earn more than James, regardless of what the needs are of the one or the other. The one who expends less energy is paid more. Also, the retribution of the work is inversely related to the energy expended, and since needs keep an identical relation with effort, we ought to establish that the one with fewer needs is paid better.

Rudy, who is more intelligent than Joachim, will learn any lesson or any task more quickly. So, Joachim, in order to learn as much as Rudy, will have to make a greater intellectual effort. In summary, Joachim will expend more effort and more energy. He will, as a result, need to replenish a greater amount of employed effort in order to return equilibrium to his organism. But, according to the previously deduced laws, Joachim will have fewer elements at his disposal to satisfy his needs in order to replenish his weakened strength. Then, finally, Joachim is condemned to increasing physiological incapacity and progressive economic misery.

As a result, the principle of reward does not stimulate, not even the strongest or the most skillful, or the most intelligent, but it does reduce to absolute impotence and perpetual misery the weak, the unskillful, and the stupid. If it is easy for the former to obtain a good prize, it is clear that the promise of this does not motivate them. If, for the latter, it is almost impossible to gain the same prize, and, in fact, they get it less and less, it is evident that not gaining the prize pushes them toward desperation and suicide. We will be told that aptitude is paid, merit is rewarded, and intelligence is recompensed. And now then: a greater aptitude, a better disposition for work, always means less expenditure of energy. As a result, fewer needs to satisfy. Those organisms richest in vital properties are more easily maintained than those that are not. To give more to those who have less need is equal to placing that which is superfluous on the side of misery, in constant opposition.

What role does an ordinary notion of the law play in this tremendous antimony?

All of idealist philosophy collapses before such elemental observations. Science that forgets that man is an animal with physical, moral, and intellectual needs will come tumbling down to earth. Jurists and lawyers, philosophers, and politicians need a few lessons in physiology.

In order for any social organization to be long-lasting and equitable, it must recognize individual needs and must have as its objective a better and easier satisfaction of said needs. Organizing work is equal to organizing the means for properly satisfying general needs. Hence, it turns out that the organization of society is reduced to that of work and distribution. The infinite ways of getting to know this organism that produces, distributes, and consumes are the objectives of sociology, a new science that is born from the opposition to routine empiricism of political economy. Instead of historicizing facts that sing hymns of triumph to capitalism and to exploitation, sociology today tries to investigate the natural laws that govern social functionalism, the ten-

dency of economic evolution and the way in which well-being will be conquered more rapidly and safely. One does not study what the organization of society *is* but what it should be or, better yet, what it *will be*. The current world crumbles underneath criticism's accurate blows. The future world appears on the sensible horizon of scientific positivism. No one but the petty politicians attend to the organization of powers and the regulation of social life. Inquiry is going down clearer paths. The form of organizing human solidarity is enthusiastically researched, making it effective. Needs to be satisfied, functions to be fulfilled, mutual relations to be arranged that tend openly toward complete freedom for the individual and toward equality of conditions are the true terms of the problem that concern the present generation. Political-philosophical jargon of rights and obligations, the uproar of civil laws, the heavy and brainy jurisprudence, and the arrogant militarism are dismissed as useless and antiquated.

The priest, the soldier, the magistrate, the capitalist, and the ruler have been cornered at the same time as has the routine of so-called sciences. The new science attends preferentially to the people in general and to their needs and demands. It does not say, nor will it say, perhaps for a long time, how and in what form the near future will realize justice. Experience by a process of selection will go on determining the most equitable shape or shapes of the development of the beautiful and positive ideal, which an ample satisfaction of general needs implies. No one attempts now to forge tomorrow in accordance with molds of exclusive invention because it has been understood that humanity has not resigned to, does not resign to, and will never resign to the whims of inventors of social systems. Decrees thrown to posterity are like soap bubbles that dissipate in the air.

To carry the world back to the regular conditions of a natural functionalism is, probably, the true solution to the problem, since every artifice has failed. The absolute or parliamentary, personal or collective governmental regime cannot but perform the pantomime of civil freedom and the caricature of equality along with an anachronistic notion of justice uprooted, at first, from reward. On the other hand, traditional communism, as well as servants and the proletariat, do not produce and will not produce anything else but organized misery.

Despite everything, *superior* men will continue the same old story of our rights and obligations, paying more attention surely to the latter than the former. Little does it matter that what is derived from rights has not improved the well-being of the people, not even by an infinitely small amount. Nothing can be said to reason that has not done more than block a regular satisfaction of general necessities. Governed first by theology, and next by politics, we have forgotten that we are men, and, instead, have enslaved ourselves like beasts. The graphic representation of rights is the whip taken up by a business owner.

Let the *superior* men continue their litany. They are praying in the desert, predicating for the deaf since no one is listening to them. On our behalf, shaking off all alleged inferiority, we claim obedience to the physical laws that the civil law does not recognize. We seek to reintegrate ourselves to the nature invalidated by governmental artifice. We try to restore justice through the most complete freedom of action and through the full equality of economic conditions for life. Beings endowed with adequate organs for physical, moral, and intellectual functions, we demand the total independence of our personality, a prerequisite for the integration of its constituent elements. We break all the ties that bind us, and we will be, after a long captivity as slaves, *men* in the prime of their faculties.

(*Ciencia Social*, Barcelona, 1895.)

Is Labor a Physiological Need?

I do not propose to do a detailed study of this question. I will simply provide some observations that can serve as starting points for a more in-depth analysis of the problem.

In response to the objections that the authoritarians make to the practicability of anarchist ideas and, especially, to the affirmation of voluntary labor in a loosely organized society, it is generally argued that, supposing labor is a physiological need for the individual and assuming the conditions of equality and solidarity among men, each will work voluntarily and spontaneously.

The argument made in such terms begs the question: Is labor a physiological need?

Labor is a mode of activity. The individual in its normal state is necessarily active because exercise is derived immediately from organs and muscles. Therefore, exercise is a physiological need that no one can escape. However, labor is not the exercise itself, is not the exercise in its generic sense, but a determined and well-defined kind of exercise in view of a given end. Labor is useful exercise. Useful, please understand, not only for the subject who performs it, but also for his peers; useful for the person whose organism is affected by the satisfaction of the need for exercise, and useful also with regard to individual and social economy, to food, to shelter, to clothing, and so forth. Exercise, in general, may lack the condition of usefulness outside of the physiological benefit for the individual who performs it, and it is precisely in this way that exercise differs from labor itself. Any individual uses his energy, his activity in gymnastics, in athletic exercises, in equestrian sport or cycling, in hunting, and so forth. He does it, apparently, for recreation and pastime. He indeed responds to strongly felt needs. For him, therefore, this exercise is useful, but it turns out that, from a social and economic point of view, it is unproductive for others and for himself. In this case, the subject in question exercises, but does not labor.

Another individual, on the other hand, even without needing to, because of his position in society, dedicates his activity to the production of some artifact or else cultivates his garden, apparently as a hobby, too, but responding in fact to the same needs as the first. So, the exercise that this second subject performs is useful for him as well as for his peers; useful for him physiologically and economically; productive for him and for others. In this case, there is exercise and labor.

Thus, labor is a special mode of activity as it has already been said. It is a determined class of exercise, but it is not all activity nor all exercise. One can do muscular and mental exercise without laboring, in the social and economic sense of the word, and, therefore, likewise satisfy the physiological need for mental and physical exercise without laboring.

The conclusion is decisive and accurate. Saying that in a free society each will labor because labor is an inescapable physiological need is equivalent to substituting one unknown in the problem for another, leaving the question up in the air and leading people's common sense to deny the possibility of free labor. Anyone can argue that many will satisfy the unquestionable need for exercise through amusements and pastimes that are useless for being unproductive.

In my opinion, it is not the physiological need for muscular and mental exercise that makes voluntary labor possible. It is rather the powerful need for food, for clothing, for shelter. It is the need to "live" that induces us to labor, that is, which leads us to useful exercise, which requires us to employ our activity in view of a common end for our own advantage as well as for that of others. Without the incentive of these needs, human activity would aimlessly march without a positive objective in the social and economic order of existence. This is what happens to aris-

tocratic and wealthy classes. Because the satisfaction of their primordial needs is provided in advance, they waste their activity on games and vices that encourage idleness.

But in a free society where all individuals will find themselves in conditions of economic equality, where wealth is not the patrimony of a few, but of everyone, would it be feared that most men would not want to voluntarily labor? I say no, without the need to affirm that they would labor, because labor is a physiological need. They would voluntarily labor because they would need to eat, to dress, to read, to paint, and so forth, and the means to meet all these needs would not be graciously given to them by any modern providence.

It will be said to me that it seems then, after all, that labor is necessary to live. Yes, it is, without a doubt. It is individually and socially necessary, as a derivation of the fundamental needs for food, clothing, and so forth. It is, nevertheless, a second-order need for the organism, not mechanically felt. It is a need of which the individual realizes after an analytical operation caused by the fact of coexistence in society while the other needs are *primary*, are the ones that lead us to sociability and, therefore, to work and to community.

For this reason, because the positive grounds for voluntary and free labor rest on all physiological, psychic, and mental needs, it is absolutely inconvenient to falsely argue with the claim that labor is a physiological need when, as we have seen, this statement is reduced to muscular and mental exercise that certainly can be executed without benefit for the individual or for the community, even when it suits and pleases the individual organism.

The degree of ease in solving a problem depends largely on the way it is laid out, on the elements provided for the calculation. Thus, the demonstration of a doctrine's practicability corresponds to the more or less established way of creating its logical elements.

It is always easy to resolve the question, reduced to its true and simple terms, if reason and experience vouch for the proposed solution.

Such, in my opinion, is the right way to demonstrate the possibility of voluntary labor, without appeals to principles that are not well-founded.

(*La Revista Blanca*, number 25, Madrid, July 1, 1899.)

The Practical Meaning of Anarchism

Anarchism, practically, is simply this: the settlement of all issues through free pacts. Nothing of deliberations and decrees made by the crowd. Nothing of abdications or of privileged representatives invested with legislative powers. Let the people themselves proceed with the organization of social life. Let everyone get to work, joining those who pursue identical ends. Let freely formed associations openly come to an agreement for the common undertaking. The future organization, the anarchist organization, will not be a forced product of a preconceived plan, but a result of the partial agreements of individuals and groups, according to the circumstances and the ability of the people at the time. Preferable to government regulation of labor is that workers themselves organize it according to their needs, abilities, and tastes. Preferable to a central power, call it Government or not, which organizes the way forward according to impossible calculations and repays work in accordance with this or that more or less equitable principle, is that the very producers and consumers produce and modify production, subject to their own agreements. People understand this more, much more, than any delegation, however good and wise it may be.

Once the wealth to produce, to change, and to consume is put at everyone's disposal, the need for a general agreement is imposed by the law of nature. The producers will group together in various companies, some dedicated to the production of food, others to the production of dresses, while still others to housing. Groups, in turn, will relate to each other forming associations of groups according to their most immediate needs and their common interests, and so, through this serial organization of parts, a great federation of autonomous companies is formed that, comprising the immense variety of social life in one wide synthesis, will pack all men under the banner of real and positive happiness. Who doubts that through agreements the details of production, distribution, and consumption can be and will be arranged? Such as industry and trade proceed today, despite their shortcomings and their background of privilege, one cannot but say that they arrange their relations through agreements. The great companies are products of more or less free contracts. Associations due to private initiatives like the "Red Cross" and the "Lifeboat Association" are nothing more than examples of anarchist application. The scientific world is arranged by free relationships that do not obey but the impulse of common needs. A regulatory law or a governing authority is of no use to science. When, finally, one deals with any venture of exploration or something similar, one begins appealing to the free cooperation of volunteers and to the help of those who sympathize with the idea of the initiators. The largest and most important part of general life develops by virtue of free agreements, which constitutes the true anarchist practice.

And, why would one not do what is done today *in spite* of the Government if the Government disappeared?

(Fragment from the book *Lombroso y los anarquistas*.)

2 Social Criticism

Compound 606

Do not worry. We will not profane the sanctuary of science, for we know nothing about the knowledge that is indispensable in order to enter its temple.

But, let us say a few words from its door or from as far away as you like.

The world was overjoyed with the amazing discovery that put an end to one of the most powerful causes of social decay. And it is no wonder. We are full of feces, pestilence, and leprosy. We are a rotten body, covered with ulcers, saturated with repugnant purulence. Syphilis, tuberculosis, cancer, endemic diseases, and epidemics work our most miserable bones and our flabby flesh. We become sadly bent toward the ground, which is to receive our miserable remains.

Titanic struggle, that of those wise men who compete to the death for their mortal bodies!

Compound 606, which gets rid of syphilis' destruction, is a success, a colossal triumph. Any other combination that puts an end to tuberculosis, cancer, or leprosy will be another achievement. Science excels, will always be pushed to excel, because human corruption exists.

But it is painful to declare it. The wise ones strive in vain. Heroes of the unknown, they labor for the impossible.

They will cure syphilis, but the syphilitics will multiply tomorrow, like they have today and did yesterday. They will cure tuberculosis, and the consumptives will reappear in the country and in the city, always the same. They do not suppress neither disease nor its causes, and the illness will always resurface because its causes persist. A remedy cures, but it does not prevent ailment. Smallpox and similar illnesses continue wreaking havoc, even with immunizing vaccines. The only achievement is the reduction of the number of victims, which is certainly not nothing.

In order for the scientists' efforts to be fully effective, it would be necessary to also work toward justice and equality. Because as long as there are starving people, there will be consumptives. As long as there are prostitutes and sexually aroused men, there will be syphilitics. Perhaps the famous compound will have as the next result the loss of some prudence, which shields and defends the youth. Those who live from the exploitation of women and are supported by the brothel, and crouch in hiding in order to accumulate wealth will never attempt, not now or later, to reduce the ills that are their business and life.

The social organization with all its vices, with all its irritating inequalities, with its tremendous injustices is that which invalidates the great work of the medical sciences, which heroically fights in vain against civilization's plagues. Despite its best effort, civilization continues producing diseases, multiplying them, and perhaps inventing them. The causes of destruction are as essential to privilege as are those of conservation.

And since all vaccines and all possible compounds will be unable to renew civilized humanity, because it will continue reproducing itself as it is, the noble efforts of science, which could be new life, will not be but the quivering of the old life, patched and reseeded.

We joyfully salute these men who fight against pain, struggling to suppress it. But the greatest of pains, hunger and misery, slavery and ignorance, which, in their process of impoverishment, lead humanity to its next ruin, needs other heroic men and other heroic efforts: those who are able to renew the world from bottom up so that in full justice, in full freedom, and in complete equality of conditions, we might recover lost health, the health that makes us strong and powerful against the adversities of nature.

Meanwhile, how great is the magnanimous determination of the wise because it encourages us to pursue other objectives that will one day or another contribute to the great successes of modern science!

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 5, Gijón, December 16, 1910.)

Bellicose Literature

Higher spirits have persisted in pondering the virtues of war. Courage, audacity, and temerity are primordial virtues. War makes men strong and heroic. Races improve, progress, and become civilized by the arts of endless war. Humanity rises purified and ennobled from the fair fight between brothers.

That is the obverse. The reverse is directed against pacifism. In the sweetness of quiet, orderly, and loving life, masculine energies wither, races degenerate and become extinguished. Peace is a narcotic. The world becomes a bunch of cowards and sickly people. From peace among humans, in the lap of luxury gifted from satisfied needs, only a weakened humanity can emerge.

The final dilemma is clearly understandable.

The current literature is imbued with these warlike barbarisms. As if obeying orders, writers of the most diverse shades intone enthusiastic hymns to the bellicose fervor of the fighters.

It is an ebb and flow from the sword to the pen and from the pen to the sword.

Because the conquering appetite of nations is alive and active, the epic battle-song flows naturally from literature. From fields sown with corpses, crows return with bloody beaks, and with blood they write. Also, when they return from ponds, they write with muck. The writer is a lackey of all events.

And there, in the distance, people in droves yield their lives without knowing to what or why. The scribbling reverberates of bellicose pens, which dirty, with blood and muck, the paper on which they write. The suggestion transforms sheep into wolves.

If the serene, irrefutable philosophy of a Spencer shows that humanity evolves quickly from war to industry, if the powerful voice of one hundred geniuses cries out for the definitive end of useless killings, if the multitudinous uproar deafens space in search of peace and quiet, what does that matter to servile and sycophantic second-rate authors!

There is a powerful force to serve, and rhetoric is humbly dragged at its feet. If that force is called State, rhetoric puts on airs and graces, and directs discourse through the beaten paths of national greatness and heroics. If it is called Capital, rhetoric becomes financial and defender of the great advances of modern industry. If it is called Church, rhetoric exchanges the pen for the aspergillum, clothes the minister of justice as judge of the Inquisition, and kneels down humbly before the ancient walls of gloomy cathedrals. The triumphant force is God, three and one, in whose altar the sacrifice of all that should be more difficult for man is made.

But if the force is called rebelling proletariat, utopian exaltation, emancipated thought, then rhetoric rises irascible and, above the vulgar crowd of shabby people, fulminates rays of its anger... The wretched whore who offers the gristly meat of spoilt sex to every decrepitude's crazy desire!

War does not beget courage and audacity and temerity. Temerity, audacity, and courage are tested in the following ways: by descending down into a mine hundreds of meters below the sun-bathed surface; by standing up on the highest part of a building on a swaying beam suspended by a fraying rope; by working in the hell of foundries and forges, on machines and mastheads of boats, in the tenders of locomotives, in the struggles with storms, and in the rough fight with nature. Man is restrained in the conquest of the planet he inhabits, from the atmosphere that surrounds him, from the limitless space populated by beautiful and innumerable worlds.

In war there is only one moment of madness after a supreme effort of self-preservation. There is nothing before, and nothing after, for it is not cowardice, nor fear of losing one's life, nor the horror of blood, or of the polished steel, or of the deadly bullet. The crowd plucks up courage squeezing itself against the repeated assaults of fear. And then the procession of invalids, the detritus of battles, and the caravans of demoralized and corrupted vagabonds bring to cities and farmland the encouragement of idleness, depravity, disorder, and debauchery. The war causes degradation.

Epic literature is the bait with which power influences the masses. It is the lark mirror to attract the gullible to the mesh of the skillfully spread-out net.

People prone to sacrifice, like sheep, are needed, and bellicose literature throws its heroic verses at the exploits of nations. The wretched whore who offers the gristly meat of spoilt sex to every decrepitude's crazy desire!

(*El Libertario*, number 1, Gijón, August 10, 1912.)

An Indictment

A young stonecutter atones in jail for I-do-not-know-what terrible crime. In prison he acquires a serious ailment. He is defeated, exhausted, and ruined. From prison he goes to the hospital and dies there.

The old father does not withstand such great distress and gets sick too. Dying, they take him to the hospital and there he expires.

Within days, two victims.

The poor, sorrowful mother succumbs to terrible suffering.

She in turn falls ill. She is in imminent danger of death. She will die. At the hospital? Or in the gutter. It's all the same.

Nothing of sentimentality. It is in bad taste. Nothing of apocalyptic condemnations. They are outdated.

Without tears and heated discussion, let us coldly say the following: the above-mentioned situation is a horrible atrocity, and that awful atrocity is an indictment of the marvelous social organization in which we live.

Two women have exposed in *El País* the sad, frightening story. It is not known if voices of indignation, or even of rebuke, have arisen from men. They have fallen so low.

Let us sing with the Galician poet¹:
Si este e o mundo qu'en fixen,
Qu'ó demo me leve.²
(*El Libertario*, number 2, Gijón, August 17, 1912.)

Official Science of Criminology

An office of criminology, attached to the Ministry of Justice, has been created in France with the aim of discovering the social causes of crime. With the modest budget of 17,000 francs, the point is to organize and methodize the individual study of criminals from a physiological point of view, from a psychological point of view and from the point of view of social influences. A small matter.

It seems that French society is alarmed by increasing criminality in the youth. Almost all the thugs are very young boys, some adolescents. The “young barbarians” are legion. This is what, more or less, a brainy journalist of the court expresses.

This brainy journalist comes to very sensible and very tidy considerations about the topic in question. First of all, he estimates that the secular school (official in France) is one of the factors for the criminality even if per se said school is neither amoral nor immoral. The secular school is not, as it should be, an adequate organ of moral formation. Furthermore, the quoted journalist observes that there exists a big gap of time after graduation during which there is no institution providing models for character and personality development. In this period, the tutelary action of the State disappears and that of the family significantly decreases. The young boy of a working-class family enters the workshop or factory unprepared and at the mercy of pernicious examples. The middle-class youth launches himself into commerce, invades public or private office, and defenseless, is subjected to harmful influences. I do not remember if the brainy journalist dedicates some words to rich boys, aristocrats by blood or by wealth.

Our man wants State care to move beyond the school. He is thrilled with a moral preservation program for adolescents agreed to by the Prussian Government, which entrusts post-school care to the Ministry of Worship. And furthermore, he advocates the scientific eagerness to study step-by-step the delinquent individual offender in prisons. Another small matter.

The French government's objective, foresight of the Prussian one and insight of the journalist, is one and the same: the desire to put ostentatious patches of new science on the grungy wineskin of historic criminology. Thus, rejuvenated, governmental wisdom will be able to continue tightening the screws of repression and exercising a social “vendetta” to its satisfaction. Extending State care to all spheres of public life, wanting the State to accompany us from the cradle to the grave, as the shadow follows the body, is the predominant obsession. Faced with the rebellion of the young and even old barbarians, criminals or not, the ruling classes are left with no alternative. It is their logic.

What will official science be able to tell us that is not already said time and again? It will be able to lie with statistics, catalog prejudices, invent stigmas, and justify horrors; but not discover and, above all, not proclaim one single truth, much less if it may result in its damage.

¹ The Galician poet referred to by Mella is Manuel Curros Enríquez (1851–1908).

² In Curros Enríquez's poem “Mirando ó chau,” God looks at the evil things in the world and says, “If I made that world, the devil can take me.”

What will be able to achieve a greater extension of State care whose damages have not already been revealed? It will be able to exploit personality a little more, diminish us, mold us, guide us at will; but it will not be able to give us one iota of morality, much less of health, of wellness, or of joy, which would be magnificent factors of public and private moralization.

The secular government school in France, what is it but the translation of the religious school to political language? "The moral formation of the youth!" This, in strong words, means the castration of men.

The *bogeyman* of the increase in criminality is a cliché upon which one falls back on when it suits to justify greater abuses, much larger atrocities. It is the revolutionary hydra translated to the language of shysters. Pity on the good men who tremble at these omens! The note of delinquency will fall upon them and prison will voraciously gobble them up. The State wants eunuchs, wants servants, and wants pariahs. It is starving.

If criminality increases, it is because some people's well-being decreases atrociously while that of others grows beyond any balance. It is because happiness is limited to a handful of fortunate people and is denied the unprotected crowd. It is because health is weakened everywhere. After the anguish of misery, comes the brutal exhibition of luxury and excess. After the pain and tears of the multitude, appears the indecent bacchanalia of the powerful, who are content like a happy monkey. And above all of this, which is enough, neurosis, syphilis, tuberculosis, and alcoholism are corroding the bowels of humanity. These physiological, psychological, and sociological causes of criminality are so insignificant!

What ridiculous remedy will be found by this ridiculous official science at 17,000 francs a year? What ridiculous remedy will be found by this ridiculous post-school care administered by these *scientific* employees in the prisons? What ridiculous remedy will the return to the religious school provide, neither worse nor better than the civic school, so dear to the republicans?

Bread, bread, satiated gentlemen; bread for the body and bread for the soul; well-being, happiness, health for everyone: this is the remedy, all you stupid gentlemen of official science, of professional journalism, and of the political underworld who propose to continue the bleeding dry of your rebellious subordinates.

Well-being, happiness and health, how would you be able to provide them? Despite the conquest of all that you have unlawfully possessed, which hurls the underprivileged multitude to a life of crime, and despite plaster casts of science and cataplasm of education, human progress will not be stopped. The barbarians call at your sand doors. Open them, or they will be knocked down.

(*El Libertario*, number 3, Gijón, August 24, 1912.)

Those Who Rule

As the bourgeoisie acquires its full development, the empire of the mediocre increases.

In all orders of things, half measures and indefinite and insignificant proposals triumph. The best chances for success correspond to those who lack ideas. In the sector of business and labor, they correspond to those who seem to know everything, but, in reality, know nothing. The phenomenon is easily explained.

The bourgeoisie has managed to reduce all social activities and skills to the pursuit of money. It has established as an axiom that, to be a good trader, the abundance of knowledge is a nuisance.

It has diminished producers to work machines. It has converted artists and scientists into servants. It has suppressed man and replaced him with automated dolls. The result has inevitably been the multiplication of rich idiots. Soon fools will govern. The triumph is entirely theirs.

The three firm columns of victorious mediocrity are the fatuity of these horrendous bourgeois who fill the street with their pomposity and swollen belly, the arrogance of these rough peddlers who reek of fat and flatulence, and the ridiculous pride of these nasty toads who croak with emphatic tone.

Everywhere, the intelligent man, the artist, the scholar, the sage, the inventor, and the laborious indefectibly stumble on these fricassees of pork meat in the form of people. They are the fence that shuts out all creative work, all progress, and any attempt at innovation.

For the bourgeoisie, it is sinful to think intently, to feel deeply and talk tough. There is no right to be a person.

Servile by birth, they refuse to compromise with anyone who does not submit to their bondage. Gradually, they put everyone under the leveler of their miserable mentality. Thus, inept people direct industry; unskillful men govern work; the function of wealth distribution is in the hands of the most incapable; and the administration of interests is in those of the clumsiest. Smart alecks who rule the roost rise to the top.

If some man of real value reaches the top, up there he degrades, debases, and abandons his principles. He soon will join the large army of triumphant mediocrity.

No one is asked how much he knows and for what he serves, but how much he has in money or in backbone flexibility. Possessing or bending over enough to possess: that is everything.

With such morals, the results are completely contrary to the development of intelligence and activity. Shameless ignorance bustles below the showy façade of progress and civilization. The simplest truths proclaimed aloud become stridencies of bad taste. Any idealisms, aspirations or generous demands are translated by the rich crowd as insane delusions, if not as criminal attempts. The insanity and delinquency begin where the vulgarity of the conceited bourgeois ends.

The empire of the mediocre will cease with the defeat of the bourgeoisie. Meanwhile, it will be useless to challenge its world domination.

(El Libertario, number 20, Gijón, December 21, 1912.)

A Day of Almsgiving

Madrid, the city of death, has shuddered at the painful ordeal of tuberculosis. Life extinguished languidly and sadly in the prime of youth has filled hearts with dread, minds with reprobation, and souls with insurmountable fear.

As routine dictates, people have organized charities in order to alleviate the pain. However, these efforts simply mask the unconfessed sins that impoverish and annihilate race.

Charity has kept dread, reprobation, and fear at bay, and it has silenced our conscience. The resulting nonsensical happiness, unaware of its responsibility and ignorant of its punishment, fills our streets and squares and is what comes after the expression of human pain, which erases castes and extinguishes antagonisms.

Young bourgeois women, who entertain the public at so-much-per-hour, have wasted grace, beauty, and abnegation in order to wrest by force some money from the arrogant sex who falters before the subtlety of some gently rustling skirts.

Young male artists have sent these women to the streets in order to organize a day of almsgiving. The women have obeyed the impulses of their exquisite sensibility, capable of reducing all agonies and mitigating all pain. It is both a farce and a display of neighborly love.

As bourgeois as you like, these young women are worth a great deal. They are motivated by guilt (the feeling that they are implicated in the unpunished social crime of exploitation), on the one hand, and a sense of responsibility, on the other.

A day of almsgiving has been organized; what will the alms of one day accomplish in front of the misery and exhaustion of each instant that drains so many thousands of young lives, the blood impoverished, the lungs corroded, the entire organism destroyed? What will one and all the possible alms be able to do in front of the pertinacity of work-exploitation, organized hunger, and debased poverty? What will be of these charitable feelings before the formidable and incompatible reality that emerges from social and economic inequality?

Satisfaction for ambient hypocrisy, on one side; satisfaction for feminine sensuality on the other. And nothing more.

A few generous souls will have demonstrated that there is something that is not vile selfishness and sordid greed in the human species. A few other decrepit souls will have believed to have proved that they are not insensitive to the pain of others and that they have paid a tribute of solidarity and love to their fellow man. But tuberculosis will triumphantly continue its path of death. The fields, mines, and factories will continue sending out broken lungs, exhausted stomachs, and ruined organisms, and the exploited and starving multitude will continue on its way of appalling sacrifices, despite all of the alms.

A hospital in every city, in every village, and in every town, and all the possible millions of people with well-meaning compassion and love would not be enough to cure a disease that stems from the very root of our economic organization. Capitalism and industrialism; monopolies in the city and large landed estates in the countryside; exploitation everywhere create the immense wealth of a few, causes the unfathomable misery of others. Hunger is consubstantial of civilization. Tuberculosis is its fatal outcome.

The very same people who organize these alms in search of humiliating gratitude know this well; those who hold in their hands the tambourine of public governance and exploitation know this well; the preachers of charity, the so-called maintainers of law, those who think themselves distributors of justice know this well. They know this well and do not ignore the importance of their fake piety. But, opening the purse strings has an inflexible logic, and exploitation a mathematical rigor. It would be useless to ask the impossible. Charity will not solve anything. But it will leave the bourgeois tranquil.

The physical model—let's say with Le Dantec³—of all charities is admirably illustrated in this quote of an Italian storyteller: "A patrician submerged in the delights of Capua, and sweats seeing a slave chop wood."⁴

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 1, Madrid, May 23, 1913.)

³ Félix Le Dantec (1869–1917) was a French biologist.

⁴ A person "submerged in the delights of Capua" is one who is more concerned about personal comfort and well-being than in helping others.

Crème de la crème

A heinous crime has been discovered in the capital of Spain. Everyone—journalists, police officers, and amateur police—argues over the belatedly obtained facts. The real profit of the discovery of the crime goes to the coffers of large-circulation press, which these days has completely abandoned the coverage of public affairs.

Its abounding columns are insufficient to tell, in all the possible ways, the most frightful things. Without a doubt, it is not now appropriate to watch over the most repugnant foul deeds and the most horrible infamies with current moral modesty. The press and the public, past the first moment of astonishment, seem delighted to enjoy the most repugnant scenes of bestiality.

To our knowledge, no one has stopped to consider how, during such a long time, such monstrosities have been able to be committed among people living in the measured sphere of decent, cultured, and well-educated people. Because it is true that, in the long stories of the very same press, it turns out that rape, murder, gambling, and prostitution figure in certain social categories so significantly that it invites doubt whether the true underworld takes shelter in caves and basements or neat and well-furnished buildings, which suggests the solvent idea that classes that are said to be superior are absolutely degraded.

In the excessive desire for information, it has made us see that it is not about an isolated personal crime. A terrible process is being made out of the social world in which we live. The crème de la crème now brings all the filth to the surface. The fish traps and the aristocratic circles, the great cocottes and squalid streets, the amateurs and professionals of vice, of offenses, of crime dance at the same time. There is a portion of things that are crumbling. It is not necessary to point them out.

How many still hidden disgraces ignored forever and ever! The fierce dismemberment of a man raises the issue of human degeneration and of the legal impotence to cure or repress the crime.

There is not a lack of people who speak of regression to barbarism. But, is there something similar in prehistoric man? Nothing allows us to claim analogous abominations of our ancestors. In the struggle for life, as some would have it during the first ages, men will have been able to come to cannibalism by necessity, by hunger not otherwise satiable. The matter at hand is a very different thing: it is the fruit, it is the crème de la crème of civilization; it is also the corollary of those theories that, with new and sonorous names, want to justify all the outrages, all the horrors of golden and well-dressed cannibalism. They are parading vile deeds, scams, filth, robberies, and murders through the newspaper columns. Furthermore, terrible unpunished crimes are remembered whose genesis will remain forever forgotten. Is not this the revelation of a social state of debasement and decadence? The simple fact that the alleged offender is treated like royalty, as the press describes the steaks he eats and highlights his preferences for the good dishes, does it not emphasize how, even in this matter of bestial delinquency, there are categories, and how it is still possible that the multitude finds extenuations for perfect infamy while it is capable of being merciless with a lunatic, with a fanatic or with a poor person sick with irremediable epilepsy?

If we had enough power, we would have prevented, out of respect for human dignity, the leaking of these days' abominations to the public. A humanity that is deemed capable of such horrors is morally decapitated. No cries of indignation or angry protests, or the exaltation of ethics in

use can clean humanity of the excrescences that the cream reveals because of an inconceivable abomination.

If the horrible tragedy had an explanation, it would have to do with selfish beings, recluses of life, desperate people of existence, thugs of brothels, and gambling dens without loved ones around, without tenderness and caresses other than mercenary ones. But, in the middle of this explanation are siblings, sons and daughters, innocent children, loving families, prey to anxieties and care, and, for us, there does not exist any possible reason other than the bestial decay to which civilization leads us with all its political, social, and religious aberrations. Without a doubt, the fruit does not fall far from the tree. And if, in the world, all things obey a determinism in which inheritances of the past and acquisitions of the present concur, tell us if the frightening event of these days does not indict and pass sentence against a social order in which, if it is done at all, it will be necessary to find an honorable man with the lantern of Diogenes.

The crème de la crème, the fetid cream, brings gushing to the surface all the impurities of a moribund society.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 2, Madrid, May 30, 1913.)

Regimentation and Nature: Civilization's Work

Civilized life consists mainly of replacing nature with all kinds of artifices. Regulation and educational discipline substitute the spontaneity of movements, impulses, and actions, which comes to be a truly systematic domestication. Thus, civilizing is the same as drowning all freedom, every inclination, and every natural impulse at its inception. Civilized man thinks and works chronometrically and in the way imposed by educators in childhood. The diaphaneity of thought, the simple purity of affection, and the frank purity of acts are things to be avoided. Even with respect to organic energies, man has become an automated doll. For what do we need physical strength? There are plenty of beautiful toys that kill. Thanks to them, a serious statement has been able to be formulated: the revolver has placed all citizens on equal footing.

According to the civilizing ideal, making men powerful through their intelligence and discipline as well as through their defensive and offensive methods is what is essential. Nature delivers us to the world clumsy and undisciplined as well as quite helpless and harmless. Civilization is what transforms us. Its work is wonderful.

But the civilizers feel a little ashamed of their size and their strength. Equality before the gun does not please them. There is always a stronger weapon in the hands of a more determined man. Athleticism has become fashionable. And even the phrase *to be a good brute* becomes elegant. There is no fear, nevertheless, of a return to nature. The contradiction of civilization is not confessed. It insists on artifice. All strength sports such as calisthenics, Swedish gymnastics, circus gymnastics as well as armies of explorers, regiments of little soldiers, and bands of strong players are brought together in order to obtain good and powerful fists. Of course, everything is quite regulated, absolutely rhythmic, and tightly disciplined. There is nothing of movements out of time and out of step, nothing of exercising energy if it's not little by little, and nothing of freedom and spontaneity in action. What would be of physical education without the conductor's baton?

Some days ago, a French illustrated magazine published a beautiful picture of a group of German ladies in the most ridiculous gymnastic positions. All of them were simultaneously perform-

ing the strangest movements. Blunders, pirouettes, jumps, everything was done rhythmically and to the voice of a leader.

We immediately think that those ladies would become healthier and more vigorous and would also be happier running free across the prairie into the forest's heavy leafiness, bounding over rocks and crags or bathing in the sun on the beach's warm sand. We immediately think that tidy tough guys who waste their time in fencing halls, in ball games, in horse racing, or in water sports would be much better off running around beaches, forests, and meadows after cute girls, inviting kisses, in pink colors. They would be better off climbing trees in order to reach bountiful nature's rich fruits for their loved ones. They would be much better off in complete freedom of action and passion. The automated doll is in no way better to natural man.

This is not, however, the worst aspect of the contradiction in which civilization incurs. Let the wealthy live with their bad taste for gymnastic artifices.

The worst, irritating, and unbearable side of said contradiction is that the gilded youth devote themselves to unproductive physical exercise while the proletarian masses are forced to an excess of exhausting labor so that privileged idleness can continue its sterile and enervating frivolities. The height of civilized absurdity is that some work to exhaustion while others, for fun, ridiculously move their arms and legs and trunks aimlessly and uselessly. Does one want a vigorous and healthy man? Free labor, shared by free and equal men, would be the most beautiful of all of the sports and the healthiest of all exercises. There is no agility comparable to that which is acquired in plain nature. There is no stronger force than that which is obtained in the exercise of any work spontaneously adapted to its object. There is no more longer-lasting health than that gained in the harmonious development of a life that orders itself, working or enjoying as it pleases at all times. Freedom and spontaneity in the development of the aptitudes of man constitute the solid basis of health and happiness.

Civilization will be able to get the weaklings of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie to pull a cart better than any beast, but it will not make them healthy and happy men. Health will be a superimposed thing on these people, and happiness, a grimace of weariness.

And meanwhile, the powerful muscles of the peasant and the worker, despite the barbaric weight of slave labor, will continue developing and self-selecting while at the same time they educate themselves through intelligence and the increasing mastery of technique, until, by an inevitable reaction of nature, the man who works overturns sovereign man who delights in the caricature of labor.

The contradictions of civilization will last as long as the inconsistency of the multitudes. It seems to us that the present time, despite the resurgence of all the historical barbarities, is screaming for the end of unawareness.

No matter how small is the minority of those qualified to revolt, it is a formidable minority. (*Acción Libertaria*, number 11, Madrid, August 1, 1913.)

3 Libertarian Habits

For the Barbarians

The reckless awakening of a portion of young minds to new ideas amazes me. And I say new loosely. The awakening is subjected to servile idioms of poor literature that is conceited about its words and nourishes itself on nonsense. New ideas they are not. Any position that is taken fits well to this or that philosophy of bygone times. Remove the forms and influences of historical time, and you will find everything, better or worse defined, in everyday wisdom and family wisdom. Questions of method, grafted from science developed in stunted shrubs of growing speculation and refinements of contemporary nervousness, are the extent of novelty that can be offered to the gullible reader who seeks healthy guidance in books for his mind. In the sociological period, as well as in the political and theological ones, a major, unique, but very broad issue is debated that encompasses individual existence and the existence of all humanity: the right to comprehensive development. In each period, the terms of the problem affect a different form, but the unknown quantity remains irreducibly the same. And, because man proceeds by trial and error, it is still not currently known if we have found the equation that will provide us the immediate discovery of the real value of the unknown, connecting the true terms of the question by its real relations.

The cancellation of the individual is called, one day, faith, and, another, citizenship. Labor is organized, at one time, by slavery, later by servitude, and finally by salary. And the birth of redemptive theories always implies the same pretensions whether it is called personal interpretation, equality before the law, the emancipation of slaves and the abolition of serfdom, or, in the last place, the complete freedom of expression and action, and economic and social equality. In short, they are different degrees of the same aspiration, which can be summarized in what we have called the right to comprehensive development of personality as a producer and as a man.

Nowadays, when thought has formulated the greatest audacities, and when, we believe, the definitive equation of the problem is found, minds have embarked resolutely upon the path of intellectual surprises. Singularities, graceful poses, and beautiful gestures begin, and in the infecundity of a very personal dilettantism, the extraordinary work of the raising of a new Babel to the greater glory of individual selfishness is consumed. In the awakening of youth, there is, for the moment, only one good, noble, and pure thing: the goodness of purpose. But starting from this goodness, everyone looks with greater intensity outward to the exterior of tinsel and feathers than inward where the entire and positive value of personality resides. The multitude remains sacrificed, if not submerged, in the monumental contempt of the chosen ones: crucified before, crucified now, crucified forever.

Just as Proudhon and Marx had their satellites, the bright stars of the German philosophical school made proselytism of their work and divided minds into as many legions as their subtle distinctions required. So, our youth, our apostles, our newest precursors have infinitely divided themselves, submerged in the contemplative bliss of a few beautiful, sometimes shocking, some-

times cruel and antihuman theses. Marx and Bakunin, Stirner and Nietzsche, Spencer and Guyau, all those who have put a little bit of art or a little bit of science in speculative labor, and all those who have given a vibrant note, have at their devotion enthusiastic followers whose visibility is suitable only through a unique glass of invariable coloring.

Young and old advisers alike hastily chase after a new world, a free society, while their mentality wanders in the narrow channel of dogma and cult, while their neurotic affection is diluted in an egotistical, sterile, and dead morality. There is no liberation where the exclusivity of a thesis dries the sources of broad, great, and generous truth. There is no liberation where only a single rhythm resounds harmoniously. There is no mental or moral liberation. There is the reproduction, under new forms, of old concerns and old immorality.

Propaganda marches forward wrapped up in all kinds of errors and particularisms. Those who will get stuck in the pond of the most bestial selfishness elevated to the category of the supreme law of men are the following: each who only considers material needs; each who monotonously sings the praises of a life that until now does not deserve to be lived; each who, fed up, is alienated in the rapturous contemplation of distant beauty amid the miseries and horrors of the moment; and each who climbs to the heights of super manliness and looks with monumental disdain at the smallness of the microbes that work like wolves and sweat blood so that all of this that we live does not collapse.

Meanwhile, survivors of slavery and servitude, the very laborers of the furrow, workshop and factory, or, as some call it, the ignorant and rude mass, debate and turn angry against all ambient misfortunes that annihilate it. They are subjugated, submitted, and materially invalidated as men because they are not even given what animals have. What great work is not that of the workers who, without philosophical or artistic subtleties, are transforming the world in the din of contemporary struggles?

The spark, the light will be there in the mentality of the precursors, and the action is here in the barbarians' irresistible impulse.

Is there duality? If it exists, search for its origin in the dryness and the particularism of intellectuals, a strange word invented at a bad time to acknowledge the existence of one more breed. This is not the time for that. Not a single rampart, not a single fence, not a single dividing wall or a single demarcation should remain on the whole earth.

We recommend a new society in the name of very broad ideals of integral emancipation. Have we emancipated ourselves morally and intellectually? We show, at each step, our exclusivism to the point that while down below—allow me this classic language of heroic times of democratic and socialist sentimentality—that while down below, I say, copper is beaten every day, up above, among those who boast, quietly or loudly, of a dubious superiority, theorizing foolishness is beaten. It boasts of silly, intellectual fatuities, and the battle of small-minded personalities and of poorly concealed and petty rancor is waged.

It will be told to me that passion also wreaks havoc among the rude and ignorant multitude, and among the peasants exhausted by an overwhelming job, as among industrial workers made uncouth by the factory, when not by the tavern. The sickness of envy, rancor, and gawking sterilize the necessary force to personal emancipation and collective emancipation. But when that force is given a jolt for any reason, the legion of slaves overcomes all the minutiae; and then it is necessary to sing hymns to bravery, to the great spirit of solidarity, to the heroic boldness of the barbarians. Talk about that magic rising of Barcelona's proletariat. Talk about the laborer of La Coruña, of Badajoz, of La Línea, of Seville, and of so many cities who, in a few hours, hastened

the advent of the revolution more than the innumerable and long series of articles and speeches of intellectuals. Outside of Spain in Holland, Italy, North America, and Argentina, have they not presented in attack formation enormous, conscious masses of solidary workers in the broadest and most generous human labor?

We should annihilate the theorizing urge and garrote all exclusivism such as dogma and the sectarian spirit. Self-liberation it has been said? We must get rid of the prejudices of any school of thought, errors of method, and vices of study. Everything is true outside any doctrinal particularism. Exalt personality all you want. Against the cowardly shrinking of the individual subjected to all the brutalities of force that annul it, the provoked reaction needs to be great and formidable. Sing of life with a strong and vigorous voice, of life worth living. Energetic and decisive should be the potion that returns humanity to the splendors of a healthy, happy, and contented existence. Surrender yourself to beauty, to art, to the tribute of the purest enthusiasm. Against the hideous ugliness of a society that is dragged in all the pestilences and dirt of bestiality, the reagent must necessarily be powerful. Let us bring to the spaces of our mentality the supremacy of man and his own self as the center of all existence. Because we have become accustomed to servile life, we are unable to understand that everything is derived from ourselves and that the most beautiful ideal of all ideals is that which we formulate upon affirming that the work of centuries and generations has not been but one: to surpass ourselves. Let us go after the new man. Let us courageously climb up steep cliffs and not allow faith to blind us to the point of forgetting that there is not a term for human development; that the ideal moves farther away the closer we get to it; that the summit, in short, is inaccessible. But let us open wide the doors of our understanding, joining together into a broad synthesis the content of supreme aspiration, of which all those partial doctrines, which seem to divide the phalanges recommending a free society, are no more than component elements. The integral development of personality, anarchism without prejudices, without particularisms, such is the generic, universal, and positive term of so many seemingly divergent theses of our youth, of our predecessors, and of our propagandists.

When this has been achieved, self-liberation will have begun, whose necessity is imposed by the development of the ideas and the demands of the struggle. But it will not have done more than begin. What is required is that nobody becomes enclosed in an ivory tower, that nobody intends to stay in the summits of knowledge, and that nobody, cocky, fades with the incense of self-pride. Before being thinking intellectuals, before being artists, we are animals of flesh and bone who need to nourish ourselves, fill our stomachs, meet all physiological functions, and quell the beast so that man might emerge. We must consider the multitudes who eat poorly and dress poorly. They ignore everything because they lack everything, dragging an existence more wretched than that of beasts. We must take care of them, not out of charity, but because they have the same right to their total development as do the cleanest, the wisest, the most aesthetic of intellectuals, of the chosen; because emancipation, to be real and effective, must be universal, that amidst a flock of men no one would be able to boast of enjoying freedom, welfare, and peace.

If there were no intimate rapport between all those who, in one way or another, suffer the consequences of social anachronisms; if an exquisite gift of higher understanding were made of modern ideals and the ignorant masses were left—which are ignorant only in terms of a wise, unbearable petulance; if the *barbarians* were left abandoned to their stupidity and to their misery, emancipation would never arrive for humans, nor would it be, ultimately, for those who link it to their own efforts and their own worth, more than a mirage which, after all, would lead them to the denial and degradation of themselves.

For the barbarians must be the motto of the advocates of a new society. There must be bread, a great deal of bread for the hungry; comfortable and abundant jackets for the cold and the naked; and spacious and airy housing with plenty of light and happiness for those who huddle in dark slums. And later, or better yet, at the same time, we must expose them to science, a lot of science; to art, a lot of art; to life intensely enjoyed in all its modalities; to the very personal work of climbing steep cliffs; and to the never-ending pursuit of ideals that are never reached. Each of us is not worth more than our neighbors, no matter how wretched they are. A good pen, a beautiful word is not worth more than a strike of a hammer that forges iron, that works stone, that clears the mine; not worth more than the rope by which the sewer man lowers himself to clean common garbage. We should not have to point this out at these sociological heights that we have reached and of which many pride themselves, but it is necessary, without a doubt, because we are still in the very infancy of an acclaimed, but unfulfilled liberation.

This liberation is necessary for all the advocates of a free society. Let us not make chapels to achieve it. Let us not build dividing walls. Anarchy is the aspiration for the comprehensiveness of all developments. Let us work, then, in block for the emancipation of every man: economic emancipation, intellectual emancipation, artistic and moral emancipation.

The poor supposition of a handful of men who have been able to conceive at some length this beautiful and expansive, humanly just future, is worth very little. The barbarians are the ones who vigorously push, the ones who go straight to the partly seen future, the ones who, by their determined, very rude, but very effective actions, awaken the somnolent imaginations of our youth and our predecessors. The barbarians are the ones who furiously knock at our mentality and our effectiveness, still immersed in philosophical and dogmatic atavisms; who knock with equal fury at the doors of capitalist and authoritarian strength.

Hatred? Heavy words? Harsh, excessively squandered adjectives? What for?

What is needed are ideas, ideas, and ideas; action, action, and action. And then, the supermen (the chosen, talented ones, those who still have the drive or sacrifice) should repeat after me: *Everything for the barbarians.*

(*La Revista Blanca*, number 124, Madrid, August 15, 1903.)

Guilty Idealisms

It is worth studying the popular spirit during great political and social disturbances. Whether because of infantile atavism or whether because the spirit is derived from too idealistic sermons, the popular rebellions are often accompanied by acts that, if they show the inexhaustible goodness of the human heart, they also show what part general naivety plays in the ineffectiveness of revolutions.

For being so well known, it would be unnecessary to cite the singular fact that democratic insurrections lifted up the famous “death penalty for the thief” while they allowed the big thieves to wait crouched in their palaces until the revolutionary storm died down. But it will not be considered in this way if one takes into account that the net spirit of such behavior still lives in the people and also has been reaffirmed, somewhat modified, in the field of social conflicts.

In all contemporary events of some resonance, it has been seen how good people defended the punishment of starving men who stole bread. And with respect to the sacrosanct property of the legal thief made rich with the work of others, it has been seen how the good John always

respects the great lies on which the ancient mansion of social privilege rests. The voice of reaction is still powerful. It screams moderation, respect, and temperance. It condemns all radicalism and asks resignation and prudence in order to slowly continue elaborating a future that is little better than the detestable present. The masters of political and social quackery know and handle well the strings of popular simplicity. They speak eloquently to the heroic atavisms that convert the poor into the guard dog of the rich and awaken the stale conventions of servile honesty and humiliating loyalty. When popular rebellion breaks out, magnanimous history consigns the holy revolutionary virtue that protects banks, large properties, and the people of the flock, and executes the miserable person who believes the time has come to eat and be sheltered. And how simple a thing eludes popular penetration! In a thousand ways, it has been said and will never be repeated enough: that famous sign of the republican barricades would be very appropriate if the revolutionaries began by hanging, as they say, all the unlawful holders of other people's labor (politicians and owners, etc.,) from street lamps.

The result of people's education cannot be but that which is described. The quixotic idealisms of democracy inevitably lead to the reinforcement of all anachronisms. They are guilty idealisms, which make revolutionary action ineffective.

In our times of labor strikes and disturbances, what other thing is seen? Workers know how to protest on the street, hold their helpless chests to the bullets. The same as before, they are barricade heroes with all due respect to holy property, to authority and people. The same guilty idealisms continue inspiring the behavior of the masses.

And why do the workers who fight for an improvement or an economic ideal pass the time fighting absurd battles with armed force? They should turn their attention to the admired bourgeois who exploits them, to the politician who deceives and exploits them, to the priest who poisons, cheats, and exploits them; to the opulent palace, which insults the misery of the fortress-factory where they left, drop by drop, their blood; and to the usurer who *relieved* them an hour of housework for the last shirt or last blouse.

Sometimes the workers go to the factory gate. To do what? To avenge the betrayal of other fellow companions of hunger. The bourgeois are so calm in their comfortable homes. Death penalty to the *strikebreaker*! And peace and respect and consideration for the holder of common work, for he that exploits, for he that poisons, for he that cheats, for he that steals.

The social phenomenon did nothing more than change form: the guilty idealisms continue making of good John a legendary hero of silly honesty, of foolish loyalty that converts him into a watchdog of the master who whips him, who impoverishes him, who kills him.

A singular act to which it is necessary to pay good attention is that which reveals to us how all popular uprisings leave alone the fierce usurer who traffics, in the last step of misery, with the last remains of poverty. Is it, by chance, the memory of hunger temporarily mitigated that converts the repugnant lender into a magnanimous and generous soul, and paralyzes the revolutionary action of the people?

No, surely; the people, now as before, still do not know more than to fight, to sacrifice their life, to hold their chests to the bullets without realizing why or for what. Their action is still instinctive and is driven by the atavisms of barricade and mutiny, by the influence of guilty idealisms that convert them into unconscious heroes of ignored causes. Their reflexive action is just pointing to contemporary struggles. The popular spirit is now beginning to transform itself. Difficult task it is to operate change without damaging traditional kindness and with the loss of idealistic and quixotic candor!

The ongoing violence and the growing fury of the battle for the future must not lead us to cruelty and ferocity. We are moving toward a world of justice and love. Will we arrive there by revenge and hatred? Strength is fighting with men and not with ghosts, not with the things that they represent. But in this fight for the best, death cannot be a goal, not even a means, but a fatal accident, the result of momentary circumstances. We understand hatred, revenge, resentment, injustice, and violence as fleeting, inevitable states brought by concomitances of the struggle. We do not understand them as a sermon that places the success of a lofty aspiration in such unstable foundations.

Thoughtful action, deprived of atavistic, idealistic elements, will be that which, having its sights fixed on an aspiration for justice, begins by applying it, above all, to the small and great causes of social inequality. The best course will be that which leads us to the realization of the future more directly and with less sacrifice of human existence.

Of course, revolutionary action will never be a heartless problem of cold calculation. Passion will always play a powerful factor in the behavior of men. And struggle without passions, without vehemence, is not understandable. But passion follows the tracks plotted out in advance by education, by habit, by propaganda, and so forth. And so, when the popular masses have broken with the riotous and ridiculously heroic conventionalisms, they will take the path of thoughtful action, which will lead them to the future on the line of least resistance, that is, with less sacrifice of human life and more benefit for all men.

The ineffectiveness of all the revolutions that have cost the people so much blood and materials is good example of the guilt of certain idealisms.

Let us shake off our inevitable inheritance and we will do more and better for the future we seek.

(*Natura*, number 20, Barcelona, July 15, 1904.)

Revolutionaries, Yes; Spokesmen for the Revolution, No

In times, not so long ago, it was usual and customary between militants of socialism, anarchism and unionism to appeal to the Social Revolution for all the necessities of propaganda, of oratory and even of private correspondence. The abuse reached such an extreme that the phrase, completely worn out, passed on to better things without causing the slightest protest.

This change in customs was not merely formulaic as the little-versed in the contemporary social movement might think.

More or less, we all thought, with a closed fist, that the Social Revolution was around any corner and that when we least expected it, we were going to find ourselves in the full reign of the equality we so desired. In time, imagination made space for reflection, the heart ceded preeminence to understanding and we were realizing that ahead of us there was a long road to walk, a road of culture and experimentation, a road of struggle and resistance, an indispensable road of preparation for the future. And we all started to study and we all, studying, learned to fight, to propagate, and even to talk in new ways that corresponded to mature reflections. The change in the use of phrases, which seemed irreplaceable, responded to the change of ideas and feelings that, upon being necessary, were made more accurate and more conformed to reality.

Such novelty is not really novel if the exuberance of life in the early years is taken into consideration. There is no youth without beautiful dreams, without outbursts of passion, without irrepressible enthusiasm.

It is clear that we, who have been revolutionaries, have stopped being revolutionaries. We have stopped being revolutionaries in words more than in deeds. Revolutionary tactic persists and wins over even those who are reluctant to combine conduct with ideas. No one believes that the revolution is imminent. But one works increasingly more consciously in order to accelerate as much as possible the advent of the new society. In this plan of action, words are the least important; sometimes they are a hindrance, or a foolishness, or a concern.

The revolutionary hustle and bustle of modern times, well saturated with ideals and with brand new aspirations, is to make people aware; to switch on the light in the brain; to align deeds with principles; to harness, as much as possible, the essential part of ideas that distinguishes us from the monopolists of life; and to fight relentlessly and firmly all the forces that hamper human progress.

Nowadays, the proletarian masses act precisely in this sense even if they are not unanimously penetrated by the ideal because the ideal is in the atmosphere, and the revolutionary spirit has completely penetrated them. They work aware of their renewing mission and directly emancipate themselves from all the ropes that subject them to unjust servitude.

What does it matter that the word revolution is not on their lips if the revolution is in their thoughts and in their deeds?

The certainty of proletarian revolutionary zeal makes up for that extinguished use of grandiloquent words, which did not leave behind a trace of benefit.

But because the same laws are given in social ailments as in all sorts of human change, the revolutionary naivety of the beginning was not extinguished without leaving, as I remember, the face of faded youth. The spokesmen of the revolution remain with us, the anachronistic shouters of the craft, those who get enthusiastic about and delighted by the grotesque, the vulgarity and the foolishness of words, and know nothing about the ideal content of expressions. It is the natural result of sociological ignorance or incomplete knowledge of revolutionary principles. With the best intentions, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, healthy of heart and of thought, some, we do not know whether few or many, do not have an idea of revolution and the future other than that of violence, strong language, crude screaming, and brutal gestures. They have a feeling that the rest is a thing of the bourgeois, of the effeminate, or, at the most, of lukewarm revolutionaries, ready to become the enemy. To deserve the title of revolutionary, it is necessary to shout a lot, to seethe a lot, to gesticulate and gesture as if possessed. Do not discuss a deed however bestial it is, however cruel and anti-human it seems to you. At that very moment, they will accuse you of being a reactionary.

There are in the revolutionary ranks, with different labels, many cultivators of barbarism. One is not revolutionary if one is not barbaric. There are still many who think that the problem of emancipation is resolved very simply by pruning and cutting the rotten branches of the social tree.

We do not say that force is not necessary, that it is not inevitably necessary to prune and cut and lance. We do not say that the revolutionary spirit consists of opening oysters by persuasion, but from this to summarizing in a fierce expression of human brutality the fight for an ideal of justice for all, of freedom and equality for all, there is a gulf in which we do not want to fall.

The human undertaking of total emancipation in which we, militants for the ideals of the future, are involved do not need spokesmen for the revolution, but enlightened ones of revolutionary work, no matter how long or how short that work has to be.

Without caring a damn for professional shouters, burdened by the unconscious shouters who loyally, sincerely believe they serve the revolution by shouting and slapping, we affirm our usual convictions, telling everyone:

“Revolutionaries, yes; spokesmen for the revolution, no.”

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 14, Gijón, March 17, 1911.)

The Great Lie

It is an old story. With the lure of revolution, with the dangling dried fig of freedom, people have always been stupefied. The upright greasy pole is made for skilled climbers only. Below, agape, are the simpletons who trusted in mermaid songs.

The fact is not only attributable to the type-casted simpletons here and there. The forms of deception are as varied as the programs and promises. Up high, in the middle, and down below, there are tricksters who know how to climb on the backs of popular simplicity.

The democratic promise, the social promise, all serve to prop up the armored tower of the exploitation of the multitudes. And naturally, it serves to lead masses, to govern herds, and to impoverish them freely. Even when it is attempted to redeem in us the gregarious spirit, even when the intention is that each of us makes his own personality and redeems himself, we come up against acquired habits, against powerful sediments of education, and against everyone else's unavoidable ignorance. The very same propagandists of real independence, if they are not strong enough to throw off complete allegiance and submission, often see themselves raised on the backs of those who do not understand life without easy jobs and without awards. Even if they do not want to, they have to climb; and if vanity or ambition blinds them at all, they will see themselves, as if by magic, carried to the highest summits of denied superiority. It is an age-old human phenomenon that nobody can question.

The great lie encourages and sustains this miserable state of affairs. The great lie encourages and strongly props up this vile and infamous social scaffolding, which constitutes government and exploitation, organized government and exploitation, and also that exploitation and that government that is exercised in ordinary life by all kinds of social, economic, and political entities.

And the great lie is a promise of freedom repeated in all shades and sung by all revolutionaries: temperate freedom, rationed freedom, broadly or narrowly measured freedom, according to the broad or narrow views of its panegyrists. It is the universal lie sustained and fomented by the faith of the naïve, by the belief of the simpletons, by the goodness of the noble and sincere ones as much as the incredulity and craftiness of those who lead, of those who command, of those who impoverish the human herd.

In this great lie we all enter and, all those who can, save yourself. Things always drift in the direction of the current. We all go along more or less dragged by it, because the lie is a substantial thing in our own bodies: we have sucked it, we have fattened it, we have caressed it from the cradle, and we will caress it to the grave. To turn against inheritance is possible, and more than possible, it is necessary and indispensable. To shake off the gloom of the scaffolding that squeezes

us is not easy, but not impossible. Evolution, human progress, are carried out by virtue of these rebellions of awareness, of understanding, and of volition.

But we must not indulge in wishful thinking about rebellion, or disguise one lie with another lie. We are thousands who imagine ourselves free and we do nothing but obey good orders. When the command does not come from the outside, it comes from within. A prejudice, a faith, a preference subjects us to the esteemed writer, to the beloved newspaper, to the book that we like most. We obey without our obedience being wanted and, before long, we will make him, who had not even dreamed of it, command us. Will it not be when the propagandist, the writer, the speaker carries in their soul a little bit of ambition and a little bit of crowd tamer! The lie, already large, grows and overcomes everything. There is no space left for the pure, simple, and transparent truth of one's own independence achieved through consciousness and science.

To call ourselves democrats, socialists, anarchists, or any other term, and be inwardly slaves is a commonplace thing to which few raise objections. For almost everyone, the main thing is a vibrant word, a well-outlined idea, a well-marinated program. And the lie continues working without respite. Deception is common, it is even impersonal, as if we could not coexist outside of it.

To turn, therefore, against the great lie, to shake off the enormous weight of the legacy of lies that seduce us with the lure of revolution and freedom will be worth as much as self-emancipating internally through knowledge and experience, beginning to move without baby walkers. Each person has to do his own work, has to undertake his own redemption.

Utopia will be shouted. Well: whatever one wants; but only if we admit that life is impossible without tangible or intangible masters, living beings, or metaphysical entities; that existence would not have reality outside of the great lie.

The most ardent sermons will not be able to go against the habits of subordination in such cases. Triumphant, they will have destroyed the outer forms, not the essence of slavery. And history will be repeated until the end of time.

Utopia does not want more herds. Against voluntary servitude, there is no other battering ram than the extreme exaltation of personality.

Let us be respectful of everything and everyone—mutual respect is an essential condition of freedom. However, let us be ourselves. Rather, one has to really be free before proclaiming to be. We dream about bettering ourselves and we still have not known how to free ourselves. It is also a result of the great lie.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 25, Gijón, June 30, 1911.)

Overpowering Centralism

In vain, powerful voices are raised against increasing centralization in public life. Uselessly, one declaims against the absorption of energies and activities in the centers with the greatest intensification of life. Of little or no importance is the fact that the federalist spirit vigorously glows as much in the most advanced parties as in the most backward. Centralism continues its overpowering work.

Madrid, the official Madrid, is everything. In politics, in literature, in arts, in science, there is nothing more than Madrid. The entire life of Spain is rewritten there, is concentrated there, and there is no way, apparently, to avoid it. All efforts by the subordinate capitals to elude domination,

to evade the all-powerful influence of the monarchy's capital. Their politicians, their writers, their journalists, their painters, their poets have to surrender to Madrid if they want to save the borders of provincialism.

Centralization is the marrow of the modern social superstructure. Industry, trade, the cornering of wealth, the entire organization of political, legal, and economic life has as a condition the centralization of its functions. Without that monster full of the blood of all its vital organs, the superstructure would come down with a crash, and goodbye public order, legislative mechanism, social discipline, capitalist feudalism, military, legal, and theocratic hierarchy, in short, everything that is artifice imposed on nature, which it seems we have not been living in for a long time already.

Every principle should evolve to its last consequences. It may vacillate in theory; but once it is implemented, it goes until the end, like it or not.

Centralization will take all possible names: absolute, parliamentary, constitutional, monarchical, republican, or socialist. This is the last stage. For the moment, socialism takes refuge in the word *intervention*. Soon it will become frankly State socialism, centralist socialism, socialism of capital status.

The same parties that protest centralization work according to centralization. They do the same thing as the State. They are small states of structure similar to political structure. All the life of the party flows to the head, to leadership, to the council. From above, everything proceeds, although it seems and although it should be the opposite. The centralist thaumaturgy has the power to feed on the sap of the components and return to them, as their own, that which it has received from them. The great creator is there up high; in high places the great dispenser. And what it returns, it returns falsified, with the poison of all that is accumulated and is stagnated and is decayed. Rich, red, pure blood is sent to it, and abscesses filled with pus return. The sieve of centralization only lets detritus pass through.

In the proletarian movement, the tentacles of centralism depress the life of subaltern centers. The great focal points of industry exercise the mechanism of capital and hegemony. The central newspaper, the central board, the central group are everything. The modest newspapers of the provinces, committees, and town associations hardly serve more than to reflect and obey commands from above. Toward the center go quotas, votes, and donations. And if something comes back, what a pittance!

Few are the forces really opposed to such unfortunate trends. And they are few because routine, acquired habit, the legacy of centuries of subordination, are more powerful than preaching and rebellions. Although wanting to decentralize, one walks blindly, unconsciously toward overpowering centralism. Up above a piece of glass shines with dazzling sparkles; down below the most splendid diamond glows with dim light. Distance augments things, and the charlatan is taken to be an oracle, the boaster to be a hero, the crafty devil to be a wise man, the sham to be a martyr. The transmutation of all values is the axis around which revolves centralism.

It does not matter if we say resolutely to ourselves that we are rebels to group or individual absorption. The heaviness of our prejudices leads us to unconscious submission. We are so lazy to exercise freedom!

The struggle is hard and long. Let us fight. It is necessary to live for ourselves, to find the reason for life, for strength, for action. Ideas illuminate; deeds emancipate. Let us fully admit our real and intellectual bondage, and we will begin to know how we will make ourselves intellectually and really free. Each person knowing and wanting his own self. Again: ideas illuminate;

deeds emancipate. With all of the ideas in the world, if we do not know how to act them, we will be servants, slaves, things at the mercy of the shrewd, the cunning, the charlatan, and the swindler.

To make oneself autonomous, self-governing, *in fact*, will be worth more than the best preaching and propaganda. It is in this way how centralism will be swept from us.

In the domains of politics, of industrialism, of commerce, and of everyday life, one cannot understand this more than halfway at the most. In said domains, one can be autonomist without wanting the indispensable conditions for autonomy. We cannot. The proletariat looks at real emancipation and knows that centralization, even if it is socialist and of the working class, is a system of bondage, of superstructure, of things superimposed on nature. And because he knows it, he is radically anarchist, if he thinks so or not. But it is necessary to think it and be it, to be aware of the ideal and have the science (knowledge) to practice it. In the unconsciousness of things, it is much easier to be led than to lead; more easily governed than to govern. We urge each person to deliberate and act accordingly. Without deliberation, one is an automaton. Not even faith in the ideal is enough. Intellectual blindness cannot serve as a guide to anyone. He who voluntarily closes his eyes, voluntarily declares himself unredeemed. Let us open our eyes wide and be ourselves. True life is not in the whole; it is in the components.

When every person knows how to be his god, his king, his everything, it will be the moment of human reconciliation. Solidarity will be the result, contrary to centralization, which is imposing.

Let us work for conscious anarchy, which is at the same time freedom and solidarity.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 26, Gijón, June 7, 1911.)

Authoritarian Bad Habits

Every a priori formula fights with the idea of free analysis and free agreement, be it logical processes, or organizational procedures.

When we describe our libertarian aspiration, not only is established in advance what we wanted to do but also what each individual would do the day after the revolution. Because of the natural defects of social education, we tend to enclose ourselves in simple and concise formulas that soon change into dogmas. Current teaching and our body, saturated by the authoritarian legacy of centuries, want us to be preliminarily white or black, blue or red.

Often the first exhibition of our doctrines astonishes our listeners. The anarchist idea collides in such a way with current customs, opinions, and feelings that it is not strange that the majority of people take us for crazy. Sanity is in direct ratio to generality, not to mention the vulgarity of ideas.

But since the strength of logic of the libertarian affirmation is really indisputable, it is not less frequent that the astonished spectator, having passed the momentary stupefaction, welcomes the idea fondly and in the end proclaims it. In his mind, profound change takes effect, and soon the greatest boldness of thinking is launched. He considers himself transformed, free of prejudices. But no sooner than he tries to state explicitly his new ideas, the old errors and inveterate dogmatisms are revived. Naturally, the catechumen does not realize it, and believes to be the best and purest of the libertarians. Do not put in doubt their opinions. The controversy and the insolation will emerge immediately. Those who felt united by a common ideal will be separated by dogmatic chasms.

Authoritarian bad habits do not nourish themselves by magic. Heredity and education constantly act on each of us and we are their prisoners.

Even among the militants quite conscious of the ideal, authoritarian bad habits last a long time. We are white or black, blue or red, and we often forget that we call ourselves anarchists.

How to reconcile any adjective with the libertarian affirmation?

It is said: "It is necessary to know what one should do the day after the great rebellion; how we will organize work, distribution and consumption. It will be indispensable to act in some way."

We talk as if we had to have at our disposal some governing body. Prior confession of what they propose to do is demanded of authoritarian parties. They aspire to power and they must say how they will govern. Anarchists do not. It would be contradictory to try to establish in advance the milestones of future organization. We would establish a program, a dogma, and we would not have the means to realize it; and if we had the means and we used them, we would not still be libertarians.

Without getting to the future, we would question right now the most insignificant things, just like what the authoritarians do. We are really authoritarian when we blind ourselves to the fact that our closed limits, our creed, and our castle prevail in the air.

We shall be told: "How, then, will we explain to the people our vision for a new society?"

If you delineate a formula more or less communist, more or less individualist, the libertarian ideal will immediately vanish. Inevitably, if you explain communism, you will be communists. If you explain individualism, you will be individualists; anything but anarchists.

There is a common principle not only for anarchists but also for socialists and even for many men who are not one or the other. It is universally recognized in our times. No one doubts that each has a right to the usufruct of natural and social goods. What is called capital should be at the free disposition of every person. Each will dispose, therefore, of the means necessary to survive and develop.

Beyond this principle, schools and dogmas develop. For us, only libertarian action should develop. Is not anarchy the possibility for all, absolutely everyone, to proceed as they see fit, the possibility of freely acting, agreeing if they want, with the rest or not agreeing at all?

Begin the lesson with that. Anarchy will not be, therefore, the voluntary or forced realization of any previous plan. It will be the instrument necessary to obtain, *as a result*, a free organization, or a series of free organizations according to the moral and intellectual state and according to the will of men at each moment.

If we think in this direction, swept away are authoritarian bad habits that induce us to behave contrary to what we are and, also, we train ourselves to transmit, as exactly as possible, the very essence of the ideal.

It is indisputable that the coming revolution will have as a principal objective the socializing of wealth, putting at the disposition of each the means to live and to develop. In contrast, socialism proclaims how to proceed in an authoritarian manner promising to organize from the top and in common production, exchange, and consumption.

We, the anarchists, ought to teach the workers to organize for themselves without waiting for orders from anyone; to join forces through free agreements to achieve the various ends of the resistance.

This will suffice. Everything else that we could tell them, either they know it better than we do because it is a matter of their particular expertise or it would have as an objective the suggestion of systems which, even though they seem best to us, can be greatly erroneous.

That which is essential for anarchism is to strip away authoritarian bad habits; to furiously eliminate the last bad habits of authoritarianism; and to never relent in the tenacious work of emancipating minds that a thousand disastrous prejudices have directed toward voluntary servitude.

The possibility, by means of the equality of conditions and of all experiences, is clearly the anarchist affirmation. The rest either belongs to hypothesis or is the result of authoritarianism. (*El Libertario*, number 5, Gijón, September 7, 1912.)

The Absurdity of a Judgment

Because it expresses an ill-founded opinion of many people, I want to take charge, in public, of a few words spoken in private by a friend whom I esteem.

That good friend, basking in the venture of newspaper propaganda that we have undertaken with *El Libertario*, tells us, more or less: "One must rigidly *reproach*, without tolerance, the stupid masses."

The quote stated dryly in this way seems outrageous. But if one takes into account that we are the ones who talk in this way and who answer the masses in this manner, it will be necessary to give such words a value other than that which they feign.

In effect: the enslaved multitude made stupid by education and by habit, and subdued by the need to live, is not moved or shaken if it is not by the impulses of harsh, sudden attacks of reason that show it all the cowardice and all the vileness of its conduct. The beating that cracks with rage and the violent shaking that ignites the colors of shame, even the injustice that provokes anger, are, metaphorically, allowed. In this sense, the most active revulsive is justified. The multitude regains itself and opens its understanding to the light of ideas and feelings previously absent or asleep. To *harshly reproach* the things themselves, excluding man, is, nevertheless, the only way of judgment and reflection.

When we overstep our respect for man, we no longer work for his elevation; we depress it, insulting it, and vexing it. Badly translating the need to shake the stupid masses, firmly and without tolerance, is what tends to happen.

It is a very common irrational judgment. It seems as if with insults, with strong grievances, with violent apostrophes the smallest flash of light carries neighboring reason away. In this revulsive labor, reflections, and reasoning do not work. Heavy words are everything. What a disastrous mistake that puts gulfs between us!

Because, in the end, the ignorant and subjected is not the culprit, since he does not remain ignorant or subjected voluntarily. What has him reduced is harsh existence, is hereditary baggage, and is the lack of education and teaching from the first steps of life. What makes him a coward is capitalist power and authoritarian power, weighing heavily on him. Inciting him to analysis and pushing him to rebellion is not the same as insulting him, insulting us.

Who, of those who shout the most, will be without a stain? We fancy ourselves rebels and, every minute of existence, we deny ourselves three times. One does not live without yielding. A man alone, before the enormous heaviness of the world in which we live, is too rare. And in order to walk the rough path of human redemption, we need to feel supported, even in our own weakness.

We cannot delude ourselves that we are emancipated. We cannot really believe we are rebels—true rebels—in the middle of all submissions whose single price one can live today. Do we have the perception of rebellion, of freedom, of a great ideal of justice? Then let us carry it to our brothers through reason and even through passion. Let us hope that the rage of impotence does not drag us to scorn and insult. And if, from time to time, the loud knock that awakens the sleeping becomes necessary, or the strong apostrophe that obliges the submissive to rise is required, let us immediately give information about our appeals, our harsh words. Moving an arm threateningly is much easier than informing about the threat.

To mistreat those who are not on our side is equivalent to mistreating ourselves. Let us always remember that we were like them the day before the day in which we are now talking, the day before the day in which we were convinced by readings, by conversations, or by our own meditations.

Reproach the stupid multitude! There are many things worth being reproached. We would not be able to lift a shout very high without perhaps the multitude returning that reproach blow by blow.

Are there many things worth being reproached outside and inside of us? Well, let us be hard on them. But I hope reason accompanies it speedily, solicitously, with intense love, inundating with light the dark caves where all the historical servitudes have put down deep roots.

The absurdity of those who mistreat has only one excuse: that they themselves lack better arguments.

(El Libertario, number 8, Gijón, September 28, 1912.)

Concerning Antinomy

The historic antagonism of political and philosophical fights is reproduced today in the social conflicts of our present time. The genius of Proudhon, the greatest revolutionary dialectician, conclusively pointed out the antinomy around which human life revolves. Everything—facts, events, feelings, and ideas—appears as if it had two faces, two opposite and irreducible terms. It could be said that the principle of contradiction is the essence of life itself.

Contemporary struggles, as much in the ideal as in the real, are both different from previous struggles in orientation and content, and the same as previous struggles, because the terms used to describe conflicts have not changed. Amid aspirations for social renewal, trends connected to the making of associations and self-governing trends wage unequal combat. The ideals range from the assertion of independent individuality to the consecration of the masses and the all-powerful collectivity. Social practices, at every moment, reflect the rancor of the individual in rebellion and the prepotency of the overpowering multitude. The antinomy is flagrant between subjugated and subjugator. There is a solvent and dispersed force that is called individualism, and a conglomerate and conservative force that is called socialism or friendly societies. In the background, irrespective of the names, an opposition between unity and totality occurs.

It is true that the associationist principle, common to all social schools, differs essentially from the closed affirmation of collective sovereignty. But, in practice they are blurred, and interpenetrate one another, due to the preponderance of a gregarious spirit and the flock-mentality of education. Conscious associationism, which is derived from the free will of the autonomous

individual, is still distant reality and a topic for future ages. Now, as before, people mechanically march in groups no matter what their ideal aspirations may be.

Due to hereditary baggage as well as to the influence of the media, which in no way has replaced its position on this point, the antinomy between individuality and the group continues in favor of the indisputable and overwhelming sovereignty of the multitude. In general, individuals seem happy to submerge themselves and disappear in the motley and indefinite whole of the masses, of the crowd, of an army, of a party, or of any association. Few are jealous of its personality. They are few and commonly taken for fools and eccentrics.

And yet, many refer to themselves as autonomists. They proclaim great and incontestable truths of human liberation. They want to dignify and ennoble the individual. But, in practice, they surrender to routine habits and they join, forgetting themselves, the crowd that sweeps away, like a violent current, all obstacles.

The banner of solidarity and association tends to be placed in front. But solidarity, when it is not the fruit of personal deliberations and determinations of conscious will, does not differ from charity and Christian pietism. Association, when it is not the result of a free contract between equals, is not at all different from automatic subordination, and blinds the will of others. Solidarity and association do not require individual sacrifice, do not blind independence. This need and this denial are rooted in the remnants of voluntary submission to and observance of imposed authority.

The antinomy exists, nevertheless. Because without personal independence, the individual is annulled and, without the association of individuals, life is impossible.

To leave this blind alley, yielding to or denying the group, is to cut the knot. And what is needed is to untie it.

To untie it means to stay autonomous and to voluntarily cooperate, contribute to, and support a common task. Associationism means the same as a deliberate act of free will. Anything else is subordination, regimentation, or slavery, and is no way considered association.

He who is not free does not associate; he is subjected. He who is subjected is not free and cannot, therefore, enter into pacts or deliberate and determine his actions. Any pact implies the prior freedom and equality of the contracting parties. The pact between equal and free beings resolves the antinomy, consecrating independence and realizing solidarity.

This is, basically, the anarchist principle.

Socialism that is under the protection of the State, of society or any other mode of grouping will be able to talk about freedom, but this freedom will be conditioned in such a way that it would be worthwhile to speak frankly of collectivity's forced subordination to sovereignty. And at this point, he who considers his personal liberty will have to lean necessarily toward anarchism.

Outside of it, every promise of true liberation is false and deceitful.

(*El Libertario*, number 10, Gijón, October 12, 1912.)

The Old Routines

It is astounding how set concepts, fixed ideas, and traditionalist prejudices are rooted in the human spirit. It is said that, after any notion is acquired, man mechanically follows it, instinctively obeys it, without any intervention of reason. He who examines us from an environment other than human would not differentiate us from the dog that systematically barks at a passer-by and

then humbles itself before the person who hits it. In the submission to custom, the only reason why nothing distinguishes us from those who we deem irrational is that we do not understand them.

If it is true that any animal species remain invariably the same despite repeated and continuous hereditary experiences, it is not any less true for the animal-man whose long historical experience has not served him hardly at all, not even this same privilege of spiritually recording his experiences. Educated in authoritarian practice, he does not find a remedy that is not modeled on the exercise of authority and on the obedience to authority. Instructed in servile labor, no expedient occurs to him that allows him to work in freedom to help with his needs the best he can and knows how. Like a dog faithful to his master, he respects the priest, serves the owner, and obeys the boss. If you remove him from this domain, surely, he will not know what to do with himself. It will be as if he were lost in the immensity of a desert or in the tangle of an indecipherable labyrinth. The old routines are the soul of man and, without them, the king of creation would remain underneath the vilest vermin. Human pride moves bumpily when it loses its harness.

Our highly praised philosophies, our pompous sciences are nothing but modulations on the eternal theme of routine life, of thinking within the box, of methodized, imprisoned, and subjected action. Reason and its subtleties have only served to infinitely vary the forms of subordination and servitude.

Philosophical systems and always renewed ideal conceptions have seemed to ascend, by degrees, in a progressive direction. But if examined slowly, it is soon seen that everything starts from the same old routines, passes through the same prejudices, and arrives at the same errors: authority, property, lineage, and privilege.

Man is taken as a domesticated animal. The forced result: some domesticate, others are domesticated; some command, others obey; some possess, others work. There are rulers and ruled, owners and proletariats; in conclusion: masters and slaves. The physiological experience and the historical experience have not given more of themselves.

What strenuous work is convincing minds the necessity and justice of free life! Even in the most clairvoyant people, old routines run over one another with unusual clatter to oppose utopia. It will be in vain to appeal to the power of logic, of whose domain man is proud. It will be in vain to show how, by nature, universal forces carry in themselves the reason for their convergences and divergences. It will be in vain to accumulate facts, relationships, and analogies to show that in the equation of human activities, legislation and property are rare quantities. Old routines will systematically, mechanically, and stubbornly repeat the same old story.

And even when the human spirit is inclined to reason and to set out to formulate terms of progress, improvement, and emancipation, it is not unusual to see it fall again into the same prejudices and reproduce the same routines. Under the promise of freedom, there is always the suggestion of a new servitude; under the announcement of equality, there is always the ferment of new privileges. Tradition dictates. The servant abides. The old routines prevail.

As many times as the social creed has been renewed, the same number of times it has fallen into authoritarianism and inequality. Slowly, hereditary factors regain their influence and finally are imposed.

The current socialism is an obvious example of these revivals. Regressive evolution, initiated the same day as socialism's birth, will lead socialism to its total denial. The more powerful it becomes, the more authoritarian. It is a process of identification with routine. Socialism is accepted

all the more, the more it is reconciled with the authoritarian tradition, strongly rooted in all types of people.

The dog continues to bark at passers-by and licks the hand that hits it.

Progressive evolution? Definitely. But, in the course of time, the arduous emancipatory task is barely noticed. So tied are we to the nonsense of our reason and to the false appearance of our science! With all of the traditional baggage on one's back, it is difficult to be new. It is risky to stand in front of the flow of the centuries, and reckless to jump into the unknown future. It is easier and more comfortable and calmer to allow oneself to drive and dance to the sound that they play for us. We have too much of the herd in us. And there are those who have a lot of dancing. There are many jokers and cynical exploiters of popular ignorance and simplicity among us.

Free life? Equality of conditions? Human solidarity? Bah! Ravings of a mental asylum. The old routines; that is logic, wisdom, and knowledge.

Tomorrow as today and today as yesterday, the fools want the dog to bark at passers-by and lick the hand that hits it.

Even if the dog is called man.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 1, Madrid, May 23, 1913.)

How a Method Is Strengthened

We are rich in ideas, poor in deeds. Ideal logic's theorems even reach reason quite easily, but the rigors of practice have difficulty finding wide paths in which to spread out. How often in our brutal world do we, those of us who let imagination wander through the Eden of the dreamed-of future, face downward without realizing the irreconcilable contradiction of our behavior!

Propagators of new ideals, we almost always get to work without managing to differentiate ourselves, in the thousand details of reality, from those others who, faithful to routine, think and feel and perform in unison, modeled and inspired by the most intimate agreement between idea and reality. These crystallize in the past; those are forming themselves with the yokes of the present and the breezes of the future. We are the today that dreams about tomorrow. How much is blatant contradiction!

But in the empire of reason, the consequence compels. There is a need for declamatory idealism—the continual proclaiming of the virtues of a principle, the reiterated public announcement of new aspirations—to respond to the deeds affirming, with its closed logic, the methods with which future life should develop in accordance with our conceptions.

Of all the *ocracies* and *isms* that determine our mentality or our ideal, the most effective ones are those that have resolute supporters in the field of practice. The following will be able to live saturated with big, very big ideas: a democracy that defeats the same outdated powers in their game of hierarchies; a socialism that, with regard to discipline, has nothing to envy of the best organized army; and an anarchism that, being too clever by half, establishes hidden oligarchies. However, they will never manage to assert their greatness in the environment of life, and they will never translate their ideas into action. They will merely dominate and drag behind them the great multitude that lacks time to devote to philosophical studies.

There is an immense book, more eloquent than any other: the book with everyone's experiences. A few should look between the pages of poor human knowledge for the very essence

of every cause: the innumerable crowd will always remain in the dark if those causes are not written in the universal book of reality, of everyday practice.

Democracies fall, therefore, because the ideal does not have an effective translation in experience, because reality does not correspond with the dream, even when that reality is a faithful copy of a very precise philosophical principle. Socialism fails when people do not realize that the supporters of the good new society are nothing but sad plagiarists of last year's programs and of this year's ruminations. Anarchism, if it is incited at all, also fails when the libertarian tree bark consists of authoritarian ligneous material.

Confident that the miracle of transformation is verified as if by magic, we give free reign to beautiful words, tribunal declarations, and passionate statements of eternal aspiration without producing a single attempt to experience the method or practice the principle. And even to deceive ourselves, we look for easy explanations for our lack of correlation and we believe to have done everything when we wash ourselves of all blame in the Jordan of the environment.

In truth, the future is not affirmed in this way. Good are the reasons that sensitize understanding; better the deeds that are recorded in it in order to never be deleted. Producing reasons upon reasons and piling up dialectical proof is not sufficient to affirm the anarchist aspiration. In this area, the anarchist aspiration would remain a long time as a dilettantism of a handful of innovators. In addition, the adherents of that ideal must bring to ordinary life, especially to social life, all the possible practices of the recommended method. People must see how, without hierarchies, they are able to form one group or a hundred groups, a large association or a small one, and one or more federations of groups, of collectivities, whatever their nature and whatever their objectives. People must realize that, without previous regulations and without impositions of number, men can coordinate their forces and realize a common task. Within the natural limitations of the present social situation, it is necessary for people to see how solidarity can be a reality without those monstrous ordinances that signal step by step and minute by minute the manner and form in which individuals translate that which they carry in their constitution and blood and, moreover, in their understanding. Anarchism, like any other doctrine, has to arrive at the universality of the people through the mediation of experience. It is essential that it is read in this great book, since, moreover, not everyone can go looking for it in the treaties of philosophy or science.

Long, very long, will perhaps be this work. As long as it may be, it demands all our patience and all our perseverance. It is in this way that a method is strengthened and how we would like to see the ideal translated at any given moment.

Under no circumstances is it excusable to carry on our lips the word freedom when our deeds lack it. There is no tactical reason or excuse that prevents an anarchist, when performing a work of association, of propaganda, or of whatever, from realizing it in accordance with the method that he extols and praises.

We are rich in words and in ideas. Let us be rich in deeds, which is how best the ideal is affirmed.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 20, Madrid, October 3, 1913.)

4 Tactics

Productive Labor

Although in recent times a current of favorable opinion for corporative organizations has been initiated among anarchists, the agreement with this new tactic is still heatedly discussed, and some doubt the consistency between our principles and the intervention in workers' struggles themselves.

Many of those convinced by the need to intervene in trade organizations, led perhaps by an excess of Puritanism, argue in favor of the intervention, but with great reservations.

It seems to us that, in the present state of things, such hesitations are detrimental to propaganda.

Of all the attitudes, hesitation is the most disastrous. Ideas require determined and consistent action. It is not enough to say that it is necessary for us to go to the workers since they do not come to us, and it is not enough to add that it is convenient to help them in their struggles with capitalism, to then raise a thousand objections to the free action of each one of us. No one ignores that corporative societies are collectivities whose purpose is reduced to obtaining short-term improvements and reforms that sooner or later become sterile. One can discard this aspect of the question, since, if such reasons had merit to renounce our intervention in such societies, one equally should recognize the need to also renounce other means of propaganda and struggle, like the press and public meetings, which force us to accept at present, but continually, the impositions of the law and the environment.

Our ideas are about general emancipation. They are immediately about labor emancipation. Even without doing class politics, if one permits the expression, our ideals, our behavior, lead primarily to the working class to the point that one can say of anarchy, like of socialism, which is a labor ideal, even all men of goodwill can join in the defense of our common aspirations.

Where will we find, therefore, suitable environment for our propaganda?

It is said that the intention of improving the conditions of the worker and making small reforms is contrary to our ideas. Without a doubt. But precisely because of this, it is to the center of unions where we ought to carry our favorable reasons for a broader action of total emancipation. It is in the core of labor groupings where we ought to perform our principles as much as possible. It is in the heart of corporative societies where the influence of our logic must be felt if we want the people to get to know our ideas and our tactics.

Even while recognizing the difficulties of this intervention, given our contrary opinions to the prevailing ideas in most labor associations, we will say that the same struggles of an economic nature, and strikes for increased wages or for fewer hours in the work day have, with relation to anarchism, a meaning of the utmost importance. They put the worker face to face with the capitalist, and the traditional submission changes into rebellion, unconscious at first, but eventually conscious and durable. They give a character of irreconcilable enemy to the struggles, now habitual, between the two classes, exploited and exploiter. They have converted two social cate-

gories of men into two warring armies that will not abandon the battlefield if it is not with the definitive defeat of one of them.

There is no denying that the current behavior of the proletariat differs greatly from that of a few years ago. Today, workers, with the slightest reason, rush into formidable strikes, which put capitalism into a difficult situation, not because of how it affects interests, but precisely because of the moral state that is revealed in the workers, because of the demands of these laborers who exasperate those capitalists, accustomed as they were to the submission of the people. In fact, the proletariat is in an attitude of constant rebellion. This state of affairs is due, thus, to the ever-present spirit of association and struggle in labor societies as much, or more than, to socialist propaganda. It is due to the corporative movement, which is sometimes born without a final objective and is, as a result, often times content with the crumbs that it conquers. But, in the end, it is revolutionary and is able to disregard the small reforms and apparent improvements.

And it means nothing to the anarchists this derivation of economic struggles?

It is assumed that entry into a trade society implies the acceptance of their limited aspirations, and also maintains that the anarchists forget, within these societies, their final aspiration for futile, momentary things. And yet, if a strike occurs, what will the anarchist worker do? Well, fight alongside his companions, if he does not want to make the case for capitalism. Before crossing one's arms, one must impel the fight, trying to make it take on revolutionary aspects. Because, between our passivity and the diligence of politicians and heads of socialism, it is true that the labor movement becomes the profitable monopoly of the ambitious and the reactionary.

Do we not have an educating job to perform among the laboring masses? For the ideals of the future and for the complete emancipation of humanity, productive labor would be the transformation of these societies—regulated and governed by the supermen of professional politics, including socialist politics—into societies of conscious fighters. Productive labor would be that which, through persuasion, example, and experience, slowly convinced thousands of workers to accept the habits of freedom. Productive labor would be to bring to the center of corporative societies a growing spirit of rebellion, independence, and emancipation. And has this been done?

We think not. We believe that what has been attempted is to convert these societies into anarchist ones, very hurriedly, or to dissolve them, equally defective extremes, because conversion is not possible, and dissolution does not have other advantages than those that capitalism offers the worker in the distress of isolation.

We do not intend, with this tactic that we advocate, to convert the proletariat in its entirety to our ideal, nor do we seek thousands of supporters. What we judge as indispensable is to live the worker environment, to spread our ideas among the workers, and to educate them and ourselves about freedom. And in this sense, whatever anarchism's disagreement with the aspirations of the corporative societies may be, our field of action is in these societies, in their struggles, in their strikes, and in their increasingly energetic revolts against prevailing capitalism.

It is all the more so because these organizations are the embryo of the future. The argument that said societies, having as an aim the defense of wages, will become obsolete, once wage labor is destroyed, has no basis. And it has no merit because almost none of these societies lives for the *defense of wages*, but for the spirit of insubordination to capitalism, for the spirit, conscious or not, of emancipation and improvement. A guild has yet to be seen that conforms to the improvements achieved, however great they may be. It always wants more, and what the bourgeoisie refers to as demands has no limit in the trade groupings.

Moreover, whatever the immediate objective of these associations may be, it is indubitable that they subsist, more than for their purposes, for the bonds of cooperation and professional camaraderie, for a class spirit, we could say. There is a tendency to group together according to similar jobs; as there is to group together according to a community of ideas or needs. In this concept, they are all the future. The world that we advocate will probably not be more than this: one great association or associations of freely federated societies.

Even if it is intended that the individual will be a type of encyclopedia, an increasingly impossible aspiration given the growing domains of the arts, industries, and sciences; even if it is intended that each citizen or peasant will be able to change careers like a shirt, which will be for a long time beyond the reality of the vast majority of men, it is true that the needs of common life will constrain each and all to the formation of associations of production, of exchange or distribution, and of consumption. These future groupings will be variable, unstable because of the lesser specialization of functions; but they will be indispensable for the life of solidarity. And they will not mean more than an improvement of the corporative past in expectation of a future perfection. In the chain of human evolution, each link entails that which precedes it and announces that which follows it.

For all these reasons, we understand that, for anarchists, there is productive labor to be done in the center of guilds, without excluding, it is understood, the constant and direct propaganda in every aspect of life, whether individually, in group or in collectivity.

And if, in this work, we have had to lose some of our own people, we hope they are lost in good time, for our aspirations cannot be reduced to a kind of commercialism that takes into account gains and losses.

(Almanac of *La Question Sociale*, for 1901, Buenos Aires.)

Vote, but Listen

I, on the eve of the last elections, had the whim to peek into the gallery of a certain theater where an electoral meeting was celebrated. It was for me a new situation in which old friends with broad ideas took part with new people of very limited orientations.

I left there with a hot head and cold feet. I had to endure a regular headache of political *providential philosophy* and, naturally, I suffered the consequences.

I am amazed. Life remains stagnant for people. There is no experience strong enough to open their eyes. There is no logic that separates them from the routine.

Like believers who confide everything to providence, the radicals in this way, although they call themselves socialists, continue to put their hopes in councilors and representatives and ministers of the respective party. "Our councilors will do this and that and the other thing. Our representatives will conquer as much and so much more. Our ministers will decree, create, and transform whatever has to be decreed, created and transformed." Such is the teaching of yesterday, today and tomorrow. And so, the people, to whom they constantly appeal, keep learning that they have nothing to do but vote and patiently wait until everything is given to them pre-packaged. And they go and vote and wait.

I was tempted to ask for the floor and attack head-on the fallacious routine that thus lulls people to sleep. I was tempted to shout at the worker there present and in the great majority:

Vote yes, vote; but listen. Your first duty is to leave here and straight afterwards act on your own account. Go and in every neighborhood open a secular school, found a newspaper, a library; organize a cultural center, a union, a worker circle, a cooperation, something of all that is left for you to do in your life. And you will see that when you have done this, how the town councilors, members of Parliament and ministers, even if they are not your representatives, the representatives of your ideas, follow this current of action, and by following it, enact laws that you neither ask for or need; administer in accordance with these trends, even though you do not demand anything of them; govern, in short, according to the environment created by you directly, even though you could care less what they do. While now, if you cross your arms and rest on your laurels of vote-providence, the councilors, representatives and ministers, no matter how radical and socialist they are, will continue the routine of empty discourse, silly laws and of an administration that focuses on insignificant problems. And you will long for popular instruction, and you will remain as stupid as before. You will cry out for freedom and you will continue as tied down as before to the shackles of salary. You will demand equality, justice, solidarity, and they will give you hotchpotches and more hotchpotches of decrees, laws, and regulations, but not a pitch of that to which you have a right and you do not enjoy because you do not know how nor want to take it into your own hands.

Do you want culture, freedom, equality, justice? Well, go and conquer them. Do not desire others to come and give them to you. The strength that you do not have, others will not have. That is a miracle that has never been realized in politics. It will never be realized. Your emancipation will be your own work, or you will never emancipate yourself ever.

And now, go and vote, and rivet your chain.

(*Solidaridad Obrera*, number 4, Gijón, December 25, 1909.)

Questions of Tactics

The persistence of the same ideas or the same facts leads directly to routine. Automatically, we repeat what we do every day because of acquired habit. Nothing and no one escape this inevitable origin of things.

The associational tactic and the socialist tactic find themselves, at the present time, in a moment of crisis that announces the rupture of old molds, because the constant repetition of some of the same modes of action has come to render them ineffective.

The labor associations have not succeeded in leaving either the parsimony of the well-calculated fight with the cash box full or the random, fortuitous struggle without more elements than enthusiasm and the undoubted boldness of the fighters. Direct action and multiple base action are talked about. But, strictly speaking, neither the one nor the other has served to suggest new and more effective means of combat. Under different names, the same deeds are repeated. Because in the end, multiple-base syndicalism remains, as always, inactive, we could say useless, and direct-action syndicalism is reduced to the innocent repetition of the already old practices of the International and the various federations of resistance that have been in Spain. After slightly changing the names of organisms and describing as *general* every strike, the proletariat has been able to believe in something important, as if they were doing something better and with greater success than in the past.

All of this reveals that the workers realize that it is necessary to renew tactics because the times are not the same and the adversary is not so ill prepared that he cannot defend himself well from overly used practices. They realize it, we repeat, but they do not manage, for the moment, to renew them.

Similarly, socialist tactics insist on old routines. On the one hand, electioneering; on the other, *extreme* violence. Without interruption and without amendment, political socialism works for legislative and governmental participation, and, from there, it does not leave. Without amendment and without interruption, revolutionary socialism operates on the hypothesis of permanent revolt, and, from that, it does not escape. But reformists have emerged from political socialism, and valuable elements have also disintegrated that tend toward purely labor class tactics. And from more or less anarchist revolutionary socialism, different trends have been highlighted ranging from non-resistance to brutally, vicious violence. All of this also reveals that the need for a change of position is felt.

Because the two movements, associational and socialist, are simultaneous and are brothers, and offer the same aspects and the same circumstances, they go through the same phenomena and have identical inclinations.

So now, the crisis of action affects the two forces, which, in fact, are one and the same.

From the inefficient exchange of words, one must move on to the exchange of things. Striking in the old way does not work or is no longer enough. Political intervention always lags behind social action and is entirely useless if not harmful.

The non-resistance to evil has remained within the borders of a mysticism inapplicable to the hotly contested struggles of today. And violence, blind and barbaric, has died out in the rage of a handful of unbalanced people. We consign facts that only passion can deny. And we do not formulate judgments, at this point, because they will be the necessary derivation of what we are saying and what we might say.

In short, the proletariat keeps insisting more than ever on association and keeps acting routinely, but with obvious longings for new orientations. Political socialism and revolutionary socialism keep gaining converts and keep spreading beyond class borders, but wearing themselves out on the tired automatism of old tactics and on the point of becoming impotent if they do not modify and accommodate their action to new times and situations.

Naturally, the starting point will always be the same. The revolutionary tradition of the proletariat has its roots in principles of indestructible fairness and justice and, therefore, what is accidental—what is transitory in the broad development of the social labor phenomenon—will be modified starting from that which is essential.

In the field of economic struggle, of class struggle, a sincerely social trend is drawn. Even though the partisans do not want to admit it, more importance is given to experience than to theory. A healthy down-to-earth attitude based on the previous selection of idealisms spread everywhere inspires the militant proletariat. One wants to act directly, but not uniformly. Diffuse direct action as required by the current complicated life: that is the trend. Increasingly, the multiplicity of means excludes the prescribed forecasts. We do not say it to revert everything to our particular thesis, but because of the observation of facts. Obstacles and impediments imposed by those of labor who tend to drag their feet are useless, and the intemperance of impulsive ones who figure that things can go any way is useless. The close confederation of forces is imposed, but it is imposed outside of routines and bonds that already belong to the past. Action has to be multiple and adapted to the circumstances and means of any given moment. Uniformity in

behavior is impossible. Unification in movement, in rhythm, in tone is impossible. The powerful unity of the proletariat will result much more efficiently from the free concurrence of all elements than from any previous plan. And it is precisely from this free concurrence that the common and definitive orientation has to come. In front of the prepared and well-supplied enemy, direct action has to extend to all facets of life. One will have to break the old-fashioned strike molds. One will have to turn to sabotage, to boycotts, to all the means of resistance and of action in the true sense of the word. One will have to break the circle of class, and solicit and obtain people's cooperation via renters' strikes, the moralization of certain socially harmful jobs, and the exaltation of general life in the face of human solidarity broken and torn by rapidly expanding privileges and powers. It will be perhaps necessary to reach direct *proletocracy*, that is, the direction of life in its totality by the proletariat. All of that which is socially outside of political fiction. And if one still wanted said struggle to be political, it would be political in the way that the internationalists and the old fighters of the extinguished Spanish Regional Federation acted it under the denomination of *devastating politics*, convinced then, as many are now who are not suspicious of anarchism, that by "cultivating our garden", by working to broaden and multiply the organisms of resistance, the desired effect is achieved, not only of immediate, positive improvement "but an essential and profoundly political task" since "no matter what occurs in the field of politics, each society that is born, each federation that grows, even each consciousness that awakens and joins this movement of redemption are new ashlar stones added to the granitic wall that forever blocks reaction's and also quietism's path."

In the initiation of this new work—incomparably superior to political personalism, to the insipid sport of elections and of parliamentary speeches, and also to the reckless, stupid bustle of the restless—is the beginning of the great work that the worldwide proletariat has to realize. And it is all the more so since, up ahead, the new ethics of the new world will go in this way elaborating, based on its own aspirations of freedom and of equality for all, of the ennoblement of general life that right now places it above these emphatic ruling classes, which are only putrefaction and corruption, ignorance varnished as wisdom, bestiality dressed as worldly etiquette.

In the wide field of revolutionary action, action that is unavoidably directive and elder sister of that other one we have just examined, borders have been blurred, programs have been broken, trends and ideas have been mixed, and militants of one side and another look hard, flashlight in hand, for the true path, for how to arrive promptly at the port of emancipation. He who does not see hesitation everywhere will be deceived. Failed parliamentarism, failed terror, dying propaganda, worn-out sociological explanations, what to do? Everyone has the same question. Everyone tries to find the answer.

We do not find but a similarity to that which we have given for class struggles. A similar trend to that of workerism is recommended in the ranks of socialism. It is a trend of expansion and of generalization that is all the more powerful since the parties are not bound by spirit and class interests. Not paying attention to the ideal, militants furiously pursue new or better methods of propaganda or action. They will return to the ideal as soon as any effective orientation is imposed by experience; and then the orientation will spontaneously converge the two actions, the associational and the revolutionary, to a common purpose.

For us the problem consists of finding the best means of true anarchist social action.

And since one should not be deceived or permit certain misunderstandings to endure, we shall begin by acknowledging that, strictly speaking, there are not two different actions and two different qualities of the ideal, but one. On one side, the parliamentary socialists and labor associa-

tions, which are one and the same thing. On the other side, anarchist socialists and revolutionary syndicalism or those of direct action, which are also one body. They are well-defined fields that cannot be confused.

And if in each one of those fields there are two different organisms, because interests engender one and the quality of the ideal begets another, let us not deceive or be deceived, pretending that there are fallacious neutralities. Let us speak frankly: on the opposing side (socialism), there is reformism, active policy of aid and relief for the legislation and the State; on our side (anarchism), the revolutionary spirit and *devastating politics*, direct social action, and the permanent work of the cultivation of our own garden.

And the solution to our problem is valuable: widen the scope of syndicalism by acting as idealists, what the proletariat as a class cannot do. We will have to break old habits. We will have to escape routine, which argues under an assumed superiority, avoiding reasoning. We need to be less rectilinear, less unilateral and invade with our criticism and our propaganda all enclosed preserves of intellectualism, art, and science. We will have to, above all, eliminate any fanaticism, kill all sectarian spirit, revealing ourselves to be anarchists rising to the level of a serenity of judgment and rectitude of sentiment and conduct which, in fact, subdues and silences our adversaries. Not imaginative men and not Jacobins transplanted to our field, but studious men of reflection who go directly and firmly on their way will be necessary for this work of renewal. Neither timid nor blinded by action, whatever its form may be; not dreamers nor confirmed pessimists incapable of living the true life.

The work of the newspaper or the book is not more direct, more fruitful than the daily and small labor of personal propaganda by word and by behavior. Deeds, especially deeds, are what the proletariat, imbued with the spirit of the age, currently values. And what better for us than the so-called lessons of things?

Let us work for the revolutionary action of the proletariat; let us saturate it with our ideas. Let us be persevering sowers of truths, and when the opportunity arrives, let us hope that the workers and also our adversaries see that revolutionary action does not turn its head, and that our conduct operates in unison with our words. And in this direction, everyone will find more than enough means to contribute their grain of sand to anarchist social action.

Outlines? Previous plans? Completely useless. Circumstances of place and time, different aspects of the struggle, require modes of action. In the vast variety of variables of today's struggles, every moment is unique. The persistence of the same ideas or the same deeds would carry us straight to routine.

Let us continuously renew ourselves modifying whatever is accidental and transitory without breaking the essential, which is the anarchist idea.

(*Acción Libertaria*, numbers 12 and 13, Gijón, March 3–10, 1911.)

Libertarian Tactics

Theoretically, some ideas have been expounded. Practically, few essays on this subject have been made. In general, libertarian tactics have been reduced to oral and written propaganda or, driven by exceptional circumstances, launched as deeds. The latter has already passed into history and is unlikely to be repeated in identical form. Propaganda seems to suffer a crisis of fatigue and exhaustion.

A few attempts at direct intervention in workers' struggles have failed to revive anarchist action. However, being positioned in a new and better way to make propaganda effective is insisted upon.

Perhaps the difficulty consists of the fact that we theorize in view of the absolute goal of the ideal, and we do not manage to formulate anything but definitive solutions in the long run. Transitional solutions elude us for fear of opportunism and reformism. And yet, they are necessary. The goal is not the same as the path to travel. One can set one's sight as far as one likes, but not without looking, at the same time, where one's foot rests if one does not want to be always at risk of falling to the ground. So, anarchism is obliged, even to the point of idealism, to provide practical solutions that are like the indicators of the long road, which it is necessary to travel.

Doctrinal exposition is not enough. It is also essential to impregnate social action with libertarian spirit. And how does one do it?

In the act of class struggle, which, even if we wanted, we could not avoid, interventionism is not debatable. It is a reality above all distinctions. And since it exists, the solution to the problem is simple: widen the field of battle; excite personal dignity and the exercise of autonomy; and become strong against all particularities that have made the masses stupid. The libertarian spirit—penetrating the workers gradually—will make them conscious of their mission, and *it will make them* free and united. We must realize that we will not suddenly find ourselves, one day, with men made in accordance with the future, suitable to realize the content of new ideals. And we must surrender to the evidence that, without the continual and growing exercise of individual faculties, without the habit of autonomy, as broad as possible, free men or at least men in conditions to be free will not be made so that the social deed changes the face of things. External and internal revolutions presuppose one another and should be simultaneous in order to be fruitful.

There is for anarchists, in interventionism, the danger of being overwhelmed by class struggle. Right now, syndicalist enthusiasm has many of our own anarchists brainwashed to the point that the driving force is not the ideal but associationalist and class routine. This is not, however, enough for us to leave a field so well disposed to receive the seed of new ideals. The superficial libertarian culture of some and the disoriented impulsivity of others will inevitably produce those fruits, but also the act of saturating with libertarian spirit will, in the long run, become apparent within the core of the organized working multitudes, and, at the right moment, the anarchist method will count, by the thousands, those who act, even if it only counts by dozens, those who are adept.

Outside of trade groups, libertarian tactics also have a wide sphere of action. Not only exposing ideas repeated in a thousand newspapers, pamphlets, and books but also providing solutions and deeds suited to each subject and for each circumstance, which in real life is the anarchist method. To favor and promote the strong autonomist tendencies of our time with deeds as well as with the word and to foment simultaneously all modes of direct action in the political, in the economic, and in the religious would be such effectively libertarian work that no propaganda would equal it. To do it, anarchist groups must not reduce themselves to a negative finality, as almost always happens, but decide for positive solutions of intervention in all forms of social struggle. And for this change, it is also essential that the groups train through study, through discussion, through mutual learning, through a constant work of culture, in the clear and precise translation and sincere practice of the libertarian method. Dialectic demonstration is not enough, nor will it ever be enough. Rather, it is indispensable to clarify how things can be done experimentally according to the method of personal freedom, according to the process of volun-

tary cooperation and free agreement between men. So far are we from ambient routine that it is necessary to hammer home the possibility and the advantages of anarchist truth.

Naturally, all this excludes the usual clamor of the insolent ones without a bit of acumen and the fraud of the fools who miraculously resolve the greatest difficulties. Jacobinism and the rebellious war cry are not the means to revolutionary action nor the appropriate instruments of education and propaganda for the libertarian method. Like it or not, anarchist action has to be as pedagogical, as it were, as it is combative. The practical spirits, which so abound in the proletariats' core, will give solutions to propaganda and to anarchist experimentation, in the sense that we have indicated, that are not possible or desirable divination for a single individual. The main thing is to get on a path. Once on it, the easiness of following it will increase rapidly with the ingenuity and efforts of all.

For our part, we believe a trial period in the said sense would produce, sooner or later, a secure orientation as opposed to the thousand various activities currently wasted on useless shouting matches and harmful subtleties. And since evil is undeniable and propaganda is visibly deteriorating, it will be necessary to try something that revives, that invigorates purely anarchist action without forgetting that it does not consist so much of making converts as of getting the greatest possible number of individuals to act anarchically.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 14, Gijón, March 17, 1911.)

How One Fights

In the hectic bustle of modern life, social struggle has reached the tragic and the epic. Agitated by the clairvoyance of irreducible antagonisms, one lives in constant collision, in permanent conflict, without the end of the inevitable struggle in sight. There we all go, privileged and dispossessed, into the unknown, longing for retaliation or justice, some wanting to subdue, others to subvert, those to oppress, these to liberate. Protected by different flags, working with various platforms, the moneyed multitude and the impoverished multitude relentlessly fight, marking in the battlefield a deep groove that puts to one side the decrepit and everything outdated, and on the other side the new and healthy and thriving.

The proletariat, awake to the consciousness of its rights and strength, has in the fight the energy of youth, the ardor of the apostolate, and the serenity of knowledge. Its activity is multiplied to wonders. Its resources, its springs, its forces exceed all expectations and calculation. One would say that it works the miracle of pulling everything from nothing.

And as if that were not enough, a living spirit of constant renewal still encourages and enhances it.

It fights for the improvement or continuous transformation of working conditions in the economic field without surrendering to defeats or trusting successes. It fights in the social field for the complete liberation of individuals and groups. And in the religious and moral fields, it walks toward the absolute emancipation of consciousness. There is nothing that its action does not reach in the old world.

Its influence in common life spans from the relations of social coexistence to the conquest of art and intelligence. It is brawn and brain; it is passion and reflection. The idea and the deed are its two levers and with them they will revive the world.

The horror of the old world arises here. These disseminated forces that feel chaotic, these dispersed multitudes, pursued by a thousand different ideas and trends, block the horror everywhere, some with a strike, others with rebellion, these with instruction, those with propaganda, and the panic of such a siege makes it appeal to all the forms of violence to stop the stream.

The proletariat tries to detain it in vain. The stream progresses. There are no floodgates that capture it. And woe to all if the madness of dominating it intervenes in its course!

The real strength of the proletariat is the diversity of its action. It is useless to discuss the effectiveness of striking or of propaganda, instruction or rebellion. The effectiveness is in the whole, and for the future, not the present.

For now, all this is of little consistency. Striking will not solve the social problem, nor will it even improve working conditions really and positively. Propaganda that imposes the empire of reason and justice on everyone will not win hearts and minds. Instruction will not carry such light to understanding in order to make certainty visible to the point of removing the barriers that separate men. Rebellion will not make the miracle of changing overnight the way all things are into the way all things should be. But these and other instruments of struggle, as a whole, educate, prepare, drive forward; and there in the near or distant future, they will produce, through such diverse paths, the outcome that is looked for, the complete emancipation of humans.

We are going in this direction. Each within their forecasts, their judgments, their means. Each with his strength and his knowledge. Whatever our differences may be, there is also a common denominator for all: the conquest of bread, the conquest of freedom, the conquest of knowledge and of feeling and enjoyment.

And that is how one fights, proletarians. Intelligence is strength; strength is intelligence. Wielding your economic weapons, you have learned that there is something beyond working hours. Practicing the culture of understanding, you have learned that the ideal is a powerful force, that there is also something beyond equalitarian and free labor, and that it is not enough to be able to work comfortably and eat as needed, because human needs are not only of a physiological nature but also of a moral and intellectual order.

All of you are doing well who fight for the continual shake-up of everyday life and also all of you are doing well who fight for continual change in moral and intellectual life. That is how one fights, not leaving a trail or twigs for the opponent, besieging him everywhere. If you all are guerrillas, you are already an army. Triumph will be yours.

(Acción Libertaria, number 18, Gijón, April 14, 1911.)

5 Evolution and Revolution

Political Evolution and Social Evolution

I

Evolution is often understood as a constant development, constantly directed toward the same end. Nothing is further from reality.

Evolution is a discontinuous development with its stops, its retreats, and its jumps, according to what the facts indicate. As a result, it is very difficult to determine a priori. Progress is noticed only at long intervals of space and time.

The careful examination of any kind of events will highlight the accuracy of that statement. Not in the political sphere, the social sphere, or the economic sphere does improvement take place continuously, uniformly. There are always reactions, slowdowns, and also accelerations, all the result of opposing resistances to the ideal direction of the movement. Evolution occurs by precisely overcoming these resistances, which means that it advances in a zigzag and not rectilinearly.

Therefore, the necessity and inevitability of human progress are not of each moment, but a matter of tendency, in short, a question of the realization of the quality of what is ideal. And that is how evolution, if it really has unitary reality in indeterminate time and space, varies at every particular moment and in every specific place.

Any other way of understanding the development of human affairs will be an intellectual artifice as big and as deep as one likes, but it will be at odds with the facts, of those that we have at our disposal to necessarily help us support our opinions and knowledge, since they are the root of all science.

II

Political evolution is commonly considered a summary or compendium of the general evolution of nations. The development of institutions, laws, and political practices is studied leaving the rest of social life in almost total oblivion. That result is owed to, besides general prejudice, the circumstance of those who cultivate such studies, who live, usually, a political life and take from it, as objective realities, truly subjective prejudices.

Political action does not summarize all life of any given country. Indeed, one can say that political action plays an insignificant part in life, that in addition, they are often antithetical. One need only observe how the merchant, the industrialist, the businessman, the worker, and the employee, when they give respite to the hustle and bustle of their habitual occupations, ask: "what is politics?" as if it were a strange thing, outside of ordinary life. Neutrality and reality develop separately, entirely foreign to political events. The question of politics grows out of this situation, and it is frequently asked in order to distract themselves with a show of things that, if they arouse and excite curiosity, do not stir up feelings or move the soul.

Political evolution, reduced to the electoral, legislative, and financial mechanism, employs only a handful of professionals and amateurs. The rest of the people, despite appearances, remain oblivious and indifferent to political action. If one discounts the noise of the mercenary press, the cries of representatives, and the verbosity of candidates, one will see that life in any town is factory work, the bustling of merchants, the tilling of fields, and the material agitation of work. It is also the exchange and struggle of affects, affections, loves, and the debate of passions concerning morality. Life, socially and economically speaking, is a fierce battle of interests and qualities of the ideal, which, taken together, are incomprehensible for those who manufacture a reality for their exclusive use.

Political evolution is not even scientific, that is, it is not governed by laws of necessity, but is modeled and emptied into devices and cabalas produced arbitrarily at the wishes of those who play this game of ambition and vanity. Party dilemmas, lobbyists' tricks, and rascals' schemes force and direct events making political life a world superimposed on the real world in which we all live.

Social evolution, on the contrary, includes all manifestations of existence, even political artifice. In the overall progress of people, one can notice the trail of all the culminating facts in research as well as in the realization of ideas. Philosophy and science run parallel as drivers of the qualities of the ideal and of action. Mechanical applications develop prodigiously and would have realized human well-being if economic developments were not in the circle of the conservation of privilege and protected by the political mechanism. Art, work, and trade, with its vast network of exchange, are factors of evolution even more important than the political factor.

Life, true life, springs naturally from all that is study, work, art, science, exchange, reciprocity, and action. In no way does it spring from that fiction in whose virtue legislators supplant reality and falsify history.

The contempt that one feels for politics is, therefore, well-justified. Only that, for the purposes of social development, the contempt that leaves open evolutionary divergence is not enough, but that action is needed to destroy the obstacle.

III

When one wants to convince people that political evolution is the synthesis of social life, it is generalized in such a way so that one would be able to believe that there is nothing more in the world than ministers and representatives capable of creating everything.

The opposite would be more exact. Because, after all, individualism, in the course of its development, has done nothing more than rely on the government and its retinue of courts, cops, armed forces, and so forth, in order to ignore public business and enjoy a secure freedom of action. No one believes that the truly amazing result of the evolution of property is due to the political arts or government action. On the contrary, not infrequently, owners, industrialists, and traders have had to rein in the claims of politicians, who, set up in a true caste of professionals, forgot their servile status. The submission of politicians to the real interests of owners is a constantly repeated fact in history.

In reality, the caste is despised by everyone.

Those above, put it in a position of inferiority and, those below, judge it, not without reason, as the cause of the evils that they suffer because they see that, in addition to the direct exploitation of the owners, they have to bear the duties and taxes necessary to maintain official leisure.

Some strive in vain to show that the entire life of towns culminates in the political realm. They deceive themselves giving the concept such an extension that comprises, in a prodigious synthesis, science, art, work, philosophy, morality, business, relational life, and private life. Where, how, and when can that vile mechanism that entertains the leisure of well-educated charlatans express the whole social life? The cares of the poor people and the rich people, outside of politics and often ignorant of politics, join in open battle with the resistances of power and the resistances of environment. Only, the first are in a subordinate situation and the second are in a preponderant situation. With the result that the weight of both and also the exploitation indispensable for the maintenance of politicians and owners rests on the poor people.

For those who detest politics, to immediately follow the urge to exaggerate the political concept with a deduction that such an exaggeration is wrong or that politicians obey the interests of exclusion or reactionary ideas means very little. For everybody, politics is the great lie of parties and committees; electoral and legislative lie; governmental and financial lie. If, in politics, something lofty is revealed, it is always a reflection of external actions and reactions, and predominant influences of labor, exchange, business, intellectuality, general ethics; as a reflection, in short, of the fully social action.

It is, moreover, unquestionable that the government of all so-called civilized countries is subject to the interests and the purposes of large financial institutions and great companies which are the absolute owners of public and private wealth. Politicians are mere puppets in the hands of these financial giants and are defenseless against their whims.

In opposition to all of that, there is nothing more than a real force that contributes to the determination of social development, and this force is the militant proletariat, whether grouped by class interests or organized for the fight for social ideals. And it is noteworthy how the character, at once materialistic and idealistic, of this force imparts a determined direction to evolution, an orientation frankly opposed to political and economic privileges, which the fussiness of intellectuals and leaders are in complete ignorance.

Amid the element of conservation, which uses the political instrument to guarantee by force its advantageous position, and the element of renewal that only has association and rebellion at its disposal for combat, a great mass remains capable of tilting the balance, acting through vile ambitions in favor of the first or through generous ideals in favor of the second. It is the middle class, composed of decent poor, Levite proletarians, who are stony broke and boast of potentates, who want to move forward and cannot, who spend their lives chasing fortune and die in the service of the enrichment of others. Social evolution will strongly determine itself in the future when the idea of association and the rebellion of proletarian phalanges are powerful enough to crush, to drag, and to lead that hesitant crowd whose soul is mortgaged to the demon of wealth.

A fact that heralds the proximity of great social changes is how the proletariat continues acquiring the capacity for cooperation and management precisely outside of political action. In workers' associations, *especially in those where political practices do not govern*, workers are gaining the power of initiative, management practices, habits of freedom and direct intervention in common affairs, ease of expression and mental assurance, all things whose development is void in political entities that have as a base the delegation of powers and, therefore, the subordination and discipline, and obedience to the elected. In social associations, initiatives come from below and from below come ideas, strength, and action. In this way, free men are made and are released to walk. In political groupings, everything is imposed from above, despite the democratic fiction. Those who give the order, who have the power, initiative, idea, and action are govern-

ments, bosses, boards, and committees. He who rebels, who feels like a person, is thrown out, is expelled, and is anathematized. In this way, men are enslaved, and servitude is perpetuated. The eternal man of bound legs will never walk for himself.

If a narrow spirit of faction did not blind many men of true intelligence, they would recognize that, at present, the whole social evolution is intervened in such a way by workers' associations and by the socialist tendency, regardless of schools, and that the real crux of the future is in this intervention that fills it completely. Political struggles under this influence have an irresistible urge to perform socialism; and even international relations, emphatic diplomacy, are also subject to the word that the proletariat launches at the opportune moment of a break or of an alliance.

Action has to be governed by ambient reality and must accommodate the undeniable finality of a great social renovation. Not in the political arena, but in that of social ideals is the true field of present-day action. To persist in continuing the routine is to labor for quietism, it is to long for so-called ruins, it is to dam the mighty stream that flows toward the future.

Social action is the indisputable force of the present and it will be the living reality of the future.

(*Acción Libertaria*, numbers 9 and 10, Gijón, January 13–20, 1911.)

The Great Resources

Without the suggestion of ideas and the promotion of feelings, the deep passional shocks that make the world move will not be produced.

The smallest agitations of the party hardly alter the smooth surface of life. Pigeonholed in various categories, people act mechanically, and their work barely manages to clear the path and clean it of weeds. Such means are not sterile, but they are powerless for moving passions and guiding them to higher ideals. Their focus is generally immediate and very limited. Revolutions are not made with programs, not at a fixed date or with preconceived limits. Riots and rebellions, yes; perhaps they are the preliminary requirements for great worldly transformations. But not all of them, not always. In the complicated plot of modern life, it is not easy to differentiate between the two movements (progress in terms of material gains and progress in terms of lofty ideals) because ideals have also been derived from narrow political interests or material monopolies. Nevertheless, the two orders of deeds produce two different currents. On the one hand, everything is artifice, falsification of nature; on the other, all is reality and ideation toward improvements that are ripped from nature. However, sometimes deeds and directions are intermingled; in which case, discernment is almost impossible.

A case in point is the economic motive. Historically, materialism seems to inspire and direct social movements. Nonetheless, at first glance, it is noted that if the starting point, the course of evolution, and the point of arrival have a common substance of materialism or an economic substratum, the great resources of progress are idealistic and passionate.

To some, this statement will seem contradictory to the current proletarian movement. The laboring masses fight tooth and nail for economic improvement, organize with economic reasons, and frequently refuse all qualities of the ideal. But this is pure formalism. In fact, going back a bit on the details and glancing at the whole of social struggle, undoubtedly the proletariat follows a completely ideological direction: human emancipation. Even more, their partial fights acquire obvious importance only when the essentially moral ends of solidarity, dignity, and altruism

triumph over the immediate ends of economic improvement. In all the great modern movements in which the working class has been the principal agent, all the deep shocks that will be history have had ideal inspiration and finality. It is as if great passions do not explode if not prodded by great ideas. The numerous struggles for wage increase or the modification of the work week will not be the salient points that signal, in the course of time, the progress of the movement and even, if you will, the representation of the whole. But the huge leaps into the unknown, the heroic progress, are reserved for the qualities of the ideal.

In everyday struggles with immediate goals, the selfishness of interest remains, and petty passions, like jealousy, envy, and vileness, are rampant. Defeat is possible because brother betrays brother, the smart mock the simple, the selfish exploits the good-natured, the vain gets astride the simple multitude of modest people, and the ambitious emerge triumphant from the tangled mesh of all concupiscence. Little things have their small flaws and virtues. Life, however, is made up of all these trifles.

If we want to surpass them to enter into the realm of the great, the noble, and the beautiful, we must give ourselves over, body and soul, to the qualities of the ideal. The great human revolutions have been, in days of great and heroic virtues, suggested by high aspirations and glorious passionate movements. Crowds were ennobled, crimes dwindled; all that was little drowned. In their place, sprang live hopes of universal improvement, of the exaltation of the most beautiful feelings. One was always quick to sacrifice, to combat, and to play the hero. Meanness, jealousy, envy, vanity, and betrayal, if they arose, they were quickly punished. Great things have their great virtues and also their major flaws. The crowd can be drawn into terrible injustices. At least it will have the justification of a high, noble, and generously human motive. Vileness has no justification.

This explains, and not otherwise, how, at a given moment, all petty passions remain suffocated and selfish interests dead by the subversion of obedient crowds. On the day of revolution, as if by magic, people feel transported to a world of undreamed magnanimities. The fighter is not the weak being of the day before, known for hatred, envy, greed, ambition, and lust. The follower forgets his idolatry. The qualities of the ideal have transformed the beast into a man. And, there, you have it all.

As a result, these resources are the ones that should be put into play. Although battle has to be waged by hammer blows, we need to instill in people and ourselves lofty, ideal goals, and to make passions, instead of getting lost in the crossroads of moral turpitude. We must follow the right road to the heights of the beautiful, the just, and the good, according to the consecrated language. We are exceedingly inclined to fragility. The most despicable inclinations suit us by heredity and habit. If a breath of life's sublimation and exaltation does not encourage us, we will fall hopelessly into the abyss of bestiality from which we proceed.

Progress is an ascent, by no means a regression. It is the endless staircase that one should climb with eyes to the sky and without paying attention to the next steps. Looking back, stopping to contemplate the present, taking refuge in the immediate future may be necessary, but it is not sufficient. Keep thoughts and heart looking up!

Reality, in any case, will do its job. The contingencies of the present will be, thus, better overcome, because when one has ambition for the small things of life, satisfaction is obtained with the wretched things.

The ideal will not make miracles. All of the content of human progress is not in thought and passion. Action and the incessant labor of all powers are required. In the conflagration of

interests, the insignificant as well as the great must agitate, move, and shake. But, without these great resources of the quality of the ideal and of exalted passions, the progress of the world would be nonexistent.

Let us work, whatever may be our label, for the ennoblement of life.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 26, Gijón, July 7, 1911.)

Revolutions

Rather than making judgments based on essential circumstances, superficial spirits often do so based on merely accidental ones. Continuity and the persistence of a phenomenon escape their penetration, and only external and fleeting signs are set in their mental retina.

Revolutions have for such people a simplistic meaning reduced to the act of force; and beyond the rough battling, beyond the bloody fight in which the interior beast triumphs supreme, there is no cause of emotion or cause of study. The vision of these nearsighted people does not reach beyond the homicidal roar and inhuman rancor.

Nevertheless, the act of force is, conceivably, the least important in any profound transformation, whether of an individual life or a collective existence. It is, perhaps, no more than a sign. It may be that the act of force is reduced to the role of simple instrument, blindly working in the unconsciousness of the why and for what of its action. Revolutions, in this restricted sense of acts of force, are always instinctive movements in which humanity appears subjugated to animality. Crowds dragged by the revolutionary fervor work blindly without caring what the reason is. Once on the road to violence, they walk automatically without knowing where. For every man conscious of his work, one thousand ignore why they kill and die. For every man who knows that the revolution is not precisely the exaltation of force, but the consequence of states of opinion and of soul and of physical and moral necessities, there are thousands who do not cross the threshold of the beast that harms to harm and kills to kill. As a result of this, while conscious man succumbs before he surrenders, the crowd easily gives in to its rage and submits to new masters and new lords. Therefore, in all of human history, one sees multitudes alternately rebelling and surrendering, almost without benefit. While the beast fights, it seems as if it is guided by a desire for justice and freedom, but it quickly yields to cunning and allows itself to be tamed, calmed by the myths that take on seductive forms and simulate promises of true love. We oscillate between the wild animal and the domesticated animal.

The magic word, in turn, becomes a myth, and, for revolution, we pursue useless violence. We adopt the cult of force by force. We substitute essence with the accident; the fundamental and permanent with the circumstantial and temporary. We turn over all our prerogatives of a thinking being to instinct. We are already not men.

But revolutions are not just simple seditions. The act of force is not the revolution itself. Revolutions are fulfilled in various periods of profound transformation. The acts of force are not more than signs, revelations, or bubbles of interior fermentation. The resultant at a distance is the only thing that allows us to recognize our finished work.

Right now, in the so-called civilized world, the deepest and greatest of revolutions are occurring. Events happen almost imperceptible to our sight. Changes that have taken place escape our penetration. We feel that something is transforming in the instability of the present moment, but we would not be able to pinpoint results and consequences. In the future, we will be able to

recognize the road traveled, but not now. In the present, we get carried away with the contemplation of outward signs, such as the sparks that escape from deep embers and the vapors that rise from hidden boiling waters, and we view these outward signs as revelations that something very deep is gestating a future that we think will be happy. And nothing more.

Men conscious of their transformative work cannot be deceived. They cannot abandon themselves to the seduction of violence, or to the speculum of miraculous changes. The time of miracles has passed. And if somebody imagined a return, he would work for new and sterile sacrifices for the benefit of new masters and new myths.

Revolutionary work is long and slow. No one would be able to situate its completion. Whenever one wants to attempt to do so, it is advisable to always act, shaking one's sense of responsibility, and awakening one's consciousness, which splits the animal from man, and one's reason, which subdues instinct and overcomes it. Crowds that act blindly without knowing why and for what will never culminate in a work of freedom. They will inevitably return to slavery. If the beast is satisfied, domesticated man will bow his head.

Because of atavism, because of education, we are prone to violence. By mistake or nearsightedness, we attribute the most sublime revolutionary virtues to violence. We end up replacing the means with the end. And naturally, force becomes an idol, forgetting that every power and tyranny has been affirmed and constituted in the name of violence.

Violence itself is odious. And if it is true that we have inevitably trusted force with the ultimate solution of human struggles, it is no lesser true that revolutions are something deeper and more human and greater than the barbaric killings that in the course of the centuries have not done anything more than to affirm the beast and subdue man.

The revolution that is now being fulfilled is something more than sparks of rebellion, than the roar of relentlessly battling that distinguishes our epoch from all earlier ones.

Attentive to the essential, we will not give more importance, to what is mere accident, than it really has. And we will have to continue, to the extent of our possibilities, the work of conscience-raising, of awakening the sense of free personality, of exalting reason over instinct, of annihilating the animal so that man can rise in control of himself.

The inner beast still rules the world. The revolution will put an end to it.
(*El Libertario*, number 20, Gijón, December 21, 1912.)

6 Violence

Sowing Death

As our civilization of great battleships and enormous armies moves forward winning the world, and also as our social struggles grow bitter from the increasing exacerbation of the antagonism of interests, it seems as if we are walking faster toward a barbarity unequaled in any time. Violence rules over all peoples. A violence of unprecedented cruelty, of bestial atrocities never-before recorded in history, characterizes that which we pompously call civilization.

The same men who, in their literary or political outbursts, detest primitive barbarism, who paint with black colors the savagery and cruelty of our ancestors, are the ones who, in their capacity as leaders of peoples, enact violence and guide the world toward the most ruthless destruction of man by man. Everything that is political and financial organization, everything that is patriotic preparation, exaltation of nationality or public power, seems to be made considering the aims of banditry rather than the purpose of harmonizing the conflicting interests of the community. Subordination first, destruction after: there is no other objective. It is a blind force acting blindly for total annihilation.

The most recalcitrant conservatives brutally carry out repressions to an extreme. The most overly sweet liberals turn to trickery and gently set up traps so that the gullible fall and the wise get entangled. And there are even people who claim to serve the revolution and the future who also use their intellect to disperse and extinguish that great force that the working classes represent, now on the warpath against all governmental barbarities and against all the brutalities of triumphant capitalism.

The States of the civilized world are leaving behind a trail of blood. People are pursued, cornered, imprisoned, and killed without mercy, without pain; death is coldly sowed by calculation. The word humanity is on the lips, but fierce hatred for man moves in the heart. For the greater glory of a handful of lucky ones, it is necessary to crush the crowd who becomes irritated and rebels. And to this, we are heading without consideration, without humanistic weaknesses, without the gibberish of morality. What is important is the salvation of privilege above all else.

The atrocities of the Russian autocrat, the republican savagery of Argentina, the outrages of the quasi-socialist France were not enough ... A people recently won over to operate steel monstrosities and to become herds of men who let themselves be killed in the name of a jingoistic futility is a reflection of our politics and has resulted in the rolling of a few of our friends' heads, fighters for justice and happiness. Japan is suddenly the leader of the most civilized among civilized peoples.

And in this way, one fights and wins. An insanity of needless killing travels the world. It is the philosophy of annihilation enthroned in power and wealth. It is the delirium of fear dragging itself to the unknown.

They will say that destruction conspires and schemes in the darkness, and that we live on a volcano that will soon erupt. They will say that and more, but all of that will not be but the legal

motive, the justifying pretext of tragedies written in police stations, of plots hatched to get rid of enemies who work in the open, too much in the open when they fall so easily in the net. But even when one conspires, even when there is someone who labors in the shadows, where do we go with this ongoing slaughter, with this lopping of men, which darkens any notion of humanity and turns us into an unsupportive mob of infuriated savages?

The rebellion will not be destroyed by it. The revolutionary wave will not be detained by it. The proletarian avalanche is too powerful to stop with dikes, even though these dikes are of desolation and death.

Thousands of workers, chased and cornered, roam the world. Thousands are imprisoned. So many are killed and buried by public vengeance. As a result, there is a long martyrology. And yet, the indisputable force and thrust of new ideas are growing. Useless labor is the work of cruelty and of blind interest. A cross has been put in the road of the proletariat, and the proletariat will not let itself be crucified. It will go beyond the mountain and will realize its fertile dream of a fruitful and new life.

Perhaps the sowers of death and those who annihilate by calculation and by selfishness are enveloped by their own wave of rage and barbarism. Leaders of experts in the art of destroying, they are pushing crowds toward a terrible catastrophe. They throw the world into the unknown. Let us, surpassing ourselves as men, make new life erase, as soon as possible, this trace of blood that civilization, for its scorn and execration, is leaving on the history of humanity.

And like yesterday, today, and always, let us fight when our people fall. Let us fight with the serenity and courage that the justice of a noble and great aspiration provides.

(Acción Libertaria, number 12, Gijón, February 3, 1911.)

Voices in the Desert

If we libertarians had the unfortunate idea of appealing to common sense, even our own friends would surely soon flash the contemptuous smile that implies as much ridicule as contempt.

We are all modeled on routines that impose mental molds and consecrated verbalisms. It is hardly permitted to think and talk outside of the box dictated by political program, philosophical school, and social idealism. Sometimes the absurd vulgarity that forges intellectual fashions and dictates previously prepared and marinated discourse can be added to the list.

Abandon the current? Great offense for reactionary hypocrites; great blunder for radical fanatics. Except for all of the private jokes, there are immutable forms that one must respect in public.

Every man is one thing on the outside, another thing on the inside. Few, very few dare to reveal themselves as they really are.

Many who dirty their hands with vileness and crime often boast of honesty, decency, and honor. Many who are incapable of killing a fly speak highly of sinister arrests. And there are those who, despite the dictates of reason, are prisoners of one or another conventionality, and drown the voice of rectitude. They allow themselves to get carried away by the pestilent course of human gossip. It can be very costly to break with general hypocrisy.

This is the reason why, in given circumstances, people seem deprived of all judgment and devoid of that good sense that commands one to, first, take charge of things. It would be reckless

then to stand in front of the wave. Humanity seems to be a violent torrent of insanity and appears unworthy of itself. The calmest, bravest man would sterilely sacrifice himself if someone tried to oppose him. Being quiet and sympathetic will go a long way.

But there comes a time when silence would be cowardice and it is at that moment when nervousness yields and reason regains its rights. One can and ought to speak of justice, despising insults, infamies, calumnies, and vile condemnations. Whoever considers himself sufficiently important will do well in despising that which, unfounded, tarnishes; will do better in proclaiming loudly what he esteems fair within reason. There is absolutely no power able to cover the mouth of the man who proclaims the truth as he understands it.

Justice is not the exclusive attribute of the individual nor of society. Usually, in the hands of the individual, it is arbitrary; in the hands of society, abusive. Justice that longs for the scaffold or the dagger is not justice; it is killing, pure and simple. And who would dare, reactionary or radical, sustain the legitimacy of killing? If society wanted to exterminate evil by this means, there would not be enough executioners on earth to sever heads. If the individual aimed at being the imparter of justice, each one of us would have to travel through fields and cities, as a murderer, sacrificing lives. There would always be, for society or for the individual, justified motive or specious motive for murder. Life would be materially impossible.

Is this the case for any party or school? If it is for some, it will be for that or those who affirm social vengeance, the legitimacy of the death penalty, and the need for gallows. For those who aspire to a better life, a life of love, justice, and brotherly human fellowship, even when being wrong ideologically, the case is absolutely inapplicable. Passion can, precisely excited, utter harsh words. Lack of culture can shelter inevitable errors. Fanaticism can provoke criminal impulses. But is all of this imputable to an order of ideas? No. It is imputable to all ideas and all men. Wherever there are cruel people, there are crazy and sick ones. And about the existence of cruel, crazy, and sick people, there is a state of permanent violence that begets other states of violence and leads societies to the fiercest struggles, and the most barbarous massacres.

What causes violence is not revolutionary provocation. It is not social ideology. It is not the suggestion of libertarian propaganda. Violence is a fact of life in general. It is all of life itself bursting in a thousand barbaric ways. Will we be the only ones to blame for the lack of solidarity among men, for all the cruelties that sprinkle the rough road of existence with blood? Facts are superior to all of us, white or red, tall or short, and we are all factors of facts, directly or indirectly, for or against our will. If no one is clean of blame and of violence, how would we want to yell “crucify him”—the same as the one who uses and abuses power from above as the one who uses and abuses rebellion from below?

And if it were, as it surely is, about an accident, about a common and vulgar event, to what do we owe the exaltation of passions that demand irascible vengeance?

Lamentations, protests, for what? There wouldn't be enough time or space for the countless lamentations and countless protests to which brutal reality would lead us.

Ours will be the voices in the desert. Current humanity does not want to know about love, fraternity, justice. Some will call us liars; others cowards. Perhaps, from among our own friends, there is someone who will point at us.

O.K.: we despise all of this and we tell the truth as we understand it. We tell our truth. Killing is indefensible, whether the executioner is society or the individual.

Fatalities of the fight? Reason sits above all fatalities and it should not renounce its privileges.

As long as violence persists, the farther we will be from the free and happy life that we yearn. Too much time will pass without invoking it.

Let us allow those who do not want a free and happy life to construct gallows. In this way, they will realize the insincerity of their protests and will prove that they are the honest descendants of the buffoons who have written the history of humanity with the blood of countless victims.

Not because of that will progress stop occurring or will universal aspiration for well-being and justice stop existing.

(*El Libertario*, number 17, Gijón, November 30, 1912.)

Justice and Triable Issues: The Case of Sancho Alegre

When everything has already been said by prosecution and defense, judges and experts, and Sancho Alegre's death sentence is certain, I ask for amicability in the columns of *Acción Libertaria* to say, with complete independence, a few words, which are perhaps not the exact expression of the thinking of those who usually edit this friendly anarchist weekly, but surely will coincide, in large part, with the peaceful point of view that distinguishes it from other similar publications.¹

We have reached a point in which eyes are systematically closed to reason for one purpose or another. Few, friends or adversaries, are those who accommodate their judgments to relaxed reflection; and, in general, one talks without rhyme or reason with the sole purpose of annoying and injuring the opponent. Without passion, one talks nonsense. There is not even the excuse of momentary exaltations. Without reason, one applauds, or one condemns. One takes as unnecessary any declaration of motives. The only thing that seems indispensable is to respond with an eye for an eye.

The law of retaliation is found in court trials and in deeds. Now, as always, it predominates. He who has attempted murder will die. We excuse useless jeremiads. There is not sufficient time in life or enough resistance in one's nerves to feel compassion. So many and so great are human pains!

After all, perhaps the life that is cut did not want to be prolonged. Maybe it is unconscious of itself or ignorant of its need. Perhaps it was inhumane to conserve it. Who knows? Not this case or that one. It is any, all and none.

On the one hand, all reprisals seem justified; on the other, all *vendettas*. In the linear thinking of reactionary or revolutionary dogmatism, there is no space other than that for absolute solutions. Die or kill. The absurdity of the conclusion denies all human solidarity and coexistence.

In order to quell every rebellion, the State would have to maintain a gallows and an executioner on each corner. In order to eliminate all injustices, people would have to put a murderer on each street. Intersections will be full of executioners and victims. And yet, rebellion and injustice would persist, aggravated by the atmosphere of mutual cruelty because killing does not redeem or humanize, it drives people crazy.

There is, in history, hours of supreme insanity. The crowds, made great by the ideal, exalted by triumphant passion, have made enormous leaps into the abyss of the unknown. Humanity has progressed among streams of blood and whirlwinds of death. Because the instinct of self-preservation has been lost or muffled, life is indifferently given or taken. Sacrifice is made singing

¹ Rafael Sancho Alegre, accused of an assassination attempt against King Alfonso XIII, was sentenced to death on July 9, 1913.

or praying according to whether the atmosphere is saturated with humanism or mysticism. Ordinary man has disappeared.

These crazy people are not listed in any science. But what doubt is there that heroes and martyrs and also criminals are not well-balanced men, faithful copy of the average that we usually call a normal man?

The most pacific farmer often is a wild beast when, on the battlefield, the instinct of self-preservation is lost and, with it, hereditary fear. There is a long or brief moment, in which he is not the same man, the most mediocre man of his quiet village. Is he crazy? Even in the fallacious hypothesis of free will, how difficult and arduous is the task of responsibly discerning?

We do not advocate the preservation of a life that, perhaps, has been liquidated at the time that we are writing. We generalize the case in order to affirm conclusions that cold reason dictates, and experience vouches for.

The case of Sancho Alegre has been discussed well and ferociously. His undeniable epilepsy has not been enough, however, to declare him irresponsible and to confine him in an asylum, which would have been the worst of deaths if the triable subject intensely felt the emotion of life. Nothing about him do we know that he reveals to us inwardly. Outwardly nothing leads us to consider him like we do heroes or martyrs. He seems rather a poor, untidy man, if not mentally imbalanced, since the madness characterized does not exist, apparently, outside of asylums. He reminds us of the case of Artal, ignorant of everything; converted from murderer to victim, as much by authoritarian cruelty as by anarchist exaltation.² There is, without a doubt, some difference. Artal was not libertarian or workerist. Sancho Alegre was a militant in the labor field and the anarchical field. His mentality, however, reveals that he was quite aware of such ideas.

Pardiñas also was a militant in the anarchist field.³ Over in America, his close comrades considered him incapable of attack. They knew him to be weary of propaganda and bored with life. His faith in everything and everyone was lost. His mental confusion, psychological disorder, perhaps his physical perturbation, led him to seek in spiritualism the satisfaction of his desires, and his concerns. There can be no greater contradiction. Pardiñas roams the world and, on a normal day, kills and is killed. Why? For what? Nobody can answer satisfactorily.

Are those the normal men, of undoubted responsibility, who the courts esteem triable?

Let us not enter into the medical analysis of possible, if not certain, anomalies. We have already said it: the hero himself, the martyr, and the criminal cannot be counted among the number of well-balanced individuals, especially in the moment in which they act. They are permanently or temporarily abnormal. Everyone ask yourself in what conditions you would be able to sacrifice your own life, to be a hero, a martyr, or a criminal, and the answer will give us the set argument.

Religious passion, political, philosophical, or social passion leads, without a doubt, to great actions and great disturbances. Some killings seem sublime; others, infamous. Essentially, they are all the same. The guillotine was the great insanity of the late eighteenth century. The current powers are founded on the thousands of heads that rolled into the basket. The bourgeoisie emerged from that immense sea of plebeian and aristocratic blood.

And individuals are like crowds. The rage of a Napoleon carries the principles of the Revolution throughout the world.

² Spanish Prime Minister Antonio Maura was stabbed on April 12, 1904, by Joaquin Miguel Artal.

³ On November 12, 1912, Manuel Pardiñas assassinated Spanish Prime Minister José Canalejas.

But the normal man, the mediocre man, Doctor Ingenieros would say, does not want to understand philosophies.⁴ He applies the law of retaliation without distinction.

It is explained, however, that Angiolillo's head should be cut off.⁵ Angiolillo is an avenger, aware of a purpose that he esteems fair. He is a dreaded ideologue, to the point that he chivalrously goes through the world in search of his victim, and when he has the victim in front of him, he hardly warns the victim to be on guard. He is a belligerent who has to be exterminated. Two lives end. It is terrible, but that is the fight; not through the induction of propaganda, not through the deliberate will of fighters, but through the inevitable consequence of the terms in which the struggle for existence is fought.

But these other cases are not the same. It would be difficult to prove clear awareness of the action. It would be impossible to establish similarities between some mentalities and some deeds. All that has been said and is known about Sancho Alegre is screaming loudly unconsciousness, distraction, and mental disturbance.

Without the bias that anarchism is killing and terror, there would be no problem and there would be no discussion. As serious as these attacks may be before the law, it would be a wise move for the slaves of social misery and physiological misery to put common sense into useless reprisals and in barbaric vengeance. The law of retaliation, applied without qualification, will do no more than to perpetuate the reign of violence.

Because conscious fighters who are able to set themselves up as fair people know well in advance that they put a life in the balance of another life, we say without qualification that they themselves do not do more than to apply cursed retaliation to their opponents.

In this battle without truce today, hymns to triumphant force do not come as much from below as from above. We would like it if they did not emerge at all. We must suppress the instincts of the beast, which resurfaces at every turn. The vindication of a life is not that which is essential. What is essential is to claim the right of everyone to live, converting the respect for life into a duty.

And anarchism does not want more and does not want less than that.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 9, Madrid, July 18, 1913.)

Ideas and Realities

Mella signed this article and the previous one, "Justice and Triable Issues," with the pseudonym *Dr. Alén*, which he had never before used, believing that with the pseudonym he could give the reader opinions about violence with "complete independence of judgement," without consideration to "the conventionalities that force the party man to not say all that he thinks in given moments." He believed, in addition, that by hiding his name, his articles would awaken more anxiety and commentary among anarchists and even would provoke a serious polemic in which case he counted on returning to the issue again, but signing with his real name. (*Editors' note* from the 1926 edition of *Ideario*).

⁴ José Ingenieros wrote a very important philosophical and social work, *El hombre mediocre* [The Mediocre Man], in 1913.

⁵ Michele Angiolillo Lombardi was an Italian anarchist who assassinated Spanish Prime Minister Antonio Cánovas in 1897. He was subsequently executed in the same year.

The friends of *Acción Libertaria* will forgive me if I ask them again for understanding. An issue of the newspaper *Cultura Obrera* that has come to my attention and the reading of an article that is dedicated, in part, to me lead me to scribble some lines on paper.

I warn you that Lirio Rojo,⁶ author of the article in question, is not a militant of anarchism, and is not a political party man in need of impelling political-social realities, as are all who are party men, in the direction of their aspirational programs. The position taken in the article “Justice and Triable Issues” is, in my opinion, what befits the most complete fairness of judgment possible, and it is the same position that I will follow in these pages.

If the distinction between violence and resistance established by Lirio Rojo was something more than an artifice through which he points out a lack of courage or sincerity to affirm the justice of the reprisals—the courage and sincerity of which some anarchists supporters of the so-called propaganda by the deed boasted before—I would have believed that Lirio Rojo was really refuting my article “Justice and Triable Issues.” Not so, since he condemns violence and declares it anti-anarchist, an extreme to which I did not reach.

Resistance to evil, who can deny it? Only a theologian and a mystic can affirm and preach non-resistance. Because it is so ingrained in our nature to resist what hurts, Christianity has been sterile for twenty centuries, and Tolstoyism will be so for the rest of time.

Because there are so many ways of resisting and so many intermediary considerations of human solidarity, only a rectilinear and absolutist thought is able to arrive at the categorical statement to which Lirio Rojo comes when he says that if every anarchist were a resistance fighter (why not an avenger, a fair person, or a murderer?) of the humor of Angiolillo, Pardiñas, Caserio, Bresci, and so forth, the number of forceful people like Canovas, Canalejas, Carnot, and so forth would have decreased a great deal and we would be obliged much less by force. One forgets that Russia, with almost unimaginable atrocities and heinous killings from above and below, mutes those important words that denounce the lover of force above the man of philosophical convictions. Let us repeat: “In order to quell every rebellion, the State would have to maintain a gallows and an executioner on each corner. In order to eliminate all injustices, the people would have to put a murderer on each street. Intersections will be full of executioners and victims.” And let us add: it does not make human sense to go out into the world to mercilessly kill one another in order to settle the social struggle in which we are all placed in such varying ways.

Despite all the avengers and all resistance fighters, the revolutionary leap into the unknown future will not be possible as long as the spirit of justice, which is mutual respect, and the intense feeling of freedom and the clear perception of human solidarity, which is equality and love, have not opened a deep breach in human mentality and social evolution. That is the reason for all propaganda, without excluding anarchist propaganda. That is the reason for every effort to bring a ray of light to the mind, to bring a cause of action to the wills, to bring an incentive of expansionism to feeling.

It is not a disgrace that the instinct of self-preservation dominates the fighting qualities of man. Happily, we are increasingly less fierce, less like beasts, even amid the barbaric struggle to which we are inevitably dedicated. If this is not the case, moral progress and the influx of humanitarian ideas is an enormous lie.

⁶ The pseudonym used by Pedro Esteve of the newspaper *Cultura Obrera* in New York.

The absolute maladjustment to the environment is a chimera. It is true that the misfits or semi-misfits drive forward, but there is absolutely no one capable of living in total rebellion against the ambient world. There cannot be anyone. Nor is it necessary. It is not desirable.

In the semi-forced accommodation to the current environment, the revolutionary as well as the man of science and the artist can start preparing the future, sowing ideas of justice, feelings of humanity, respect, and love of neighbor. This is the work of idealism and this is the work that we would like reality's to be. But reality is impregnated with barbarism and is superior to our ideas. Who doubts it?

Because reality is impregnated with barbarisms, it imposes violence or force or killing where love and peace and justice are wanted. Will we elevate ambient fatalities to theory, to a principle of conduct? That is what those, like Lirio Rojo, who are obsessed with heroic remedies, seem to want.

There is undoubtable antinomy. Those who think that all violence is anti-anarchist, and those who believe that only through violence can one reach anarchism are not in error. I want to understand that anarchy is negation of all violence or imposition since it affirms complete freedom of action. To use force is therefore an anti-anarchist act. Will we cross our arms? More than as anarchists, we are, as men, obliged to resist evil and destroy it in any possible way. Subjugated, conquered, exploited, tyrannized, we will have to react against all the obstacles that oppose our free development. How? Nonviolence is in ideas and feelings; violence is reality. We will not be able, even if we wanted, to excuse ourselves from the so-called supreme appeal to force. The "how" of behavior is the great problem for militants of all revolutionary ideas. It is useless to seek revolution without limits. It is dangerous to convert ambient barbarism into philosophy. It is suicidal to get carried away by a sentimentality that would condemn us to voluntary slavery. There is, at all times, a point of hesitation because nothing clearly determines the boundaries of fairness and unfairness, respect and abuse, freedom and imposition.

I say that the justification of violence is neither anarchist nor human. I say more: I say that it is neither rational nor convenient that a party or doctrine of love, fairness, and justice becomes a proponent of killing. The current work of all humanitarian idealism is to correct the brutal reality in which we live, because all the bestialities of the flesh, all the iniquities of men, all the infamies, all the villainy, and all the tortures that we want to suppress sprout from that reality with a terrible push.

If I condemn, on the whole, the idea of violence, I cannot but condemn conditionally bottom-up violence while top-down violence subsists. Reality is stronger than philosophy, but I cannot nor want to heed the reality that disgusts me, that repulses me and overwhelms me as a thinking being and as a free citizen. The need for revolution imposes itself on me. I am therefore revolutionary because freedom and justice can only be reached by jumping over the abyss in a revolutionary way. Give me the possibility of social transformation without appeals to force and I will stop being revolutionary. Otherwise, as against violence as you like, I will be forced to acknowledge that violence is inevitable in the current conditions of coexistence, and in my humble work as a citizen who struggles for general well-being, I will not be able to do more than to act with the greatest sweetness possible, with the most intense humanism under the terms of the struggle. To this, I come obligated as a man, even those who praise without measure heroic gestures and tragic attitudes ought to also feel obligated.

I believe that, in this sense, there is quite a bit to correct in the preaching of some anarchists who are, without a doubt, more impulsive than other men of calm reflection. After some very

fervent words of freedom and humanism, the red Torquemada emerges. He disguises himself, but the Jesuit motto “the end justifies the means” is affirmed. What is pure teleologism is referred to as philosophy. A certain Jacobinist mysticism is masked as science. We walk saturated with old influences and archaic revolutionary ideas. We still love the magic of secret action, like that of a modern Carbonari to which representation and popular *vendetta* are attributed, and the magic of the Public Health Committee that decrees the general strike or the revolution in the shadows.⁷ And all of this is not anarchist nor is consistent with current ideas about social evolution and human redemption.

Against that sediment of the past, we must speak openly, healing ourselves of harmful prejudices and unhealthy enthusiasms.

The small social episodes that convert, at times, heroic and, at others, ridiculous men into criminals should not concern us so much as to make us lose sight of the great importance of social transformation to which we aspire.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 21, Madrid, October 10, 1913.)

Savagery and Ferocity

The originating savagery and ferocity of man have come to constitute scientific dogma due to the repetition and insistence of the majority of sociologists and most renowned biologists.

Because of the influence of the evolutionary postulate, all the content of human progress is forcibly explained by a presupposed development. The result is that the evil, bestiality, and ferocity of primitive man are affirmed, without evidence, reserving for civilized man goodness and humanism. Even if the theory is correct, that is not why the said description agrees with reality.

And the worst thing is not that simple hypotheses become dogmas of the wise. The worst is that people who like to study or read only take as an article of faith the articles of scientific logic, which are certainly necessary, but indubitably debatable.

The originating animality of man is more than probable; his progressive humanization is an ever-present fact of experience. Our reason could not interpret the development of the species and the world without those two conceptions, or, if you want, realities.

But, why does animality have to necessarily entail savagery and ferocity?

There are many indications that primitive men were good and gentle. Currently, there are people in a savage state who live peacefully, without hatred or rancor, without struggle, and without barbaric cruelties. The sociologist Tarde, among others, affirms the originating goodness of man.⁸

Moreover, animality does not inevitably mean ferocity. There are cruel animals. There are sweetly pacific animals. It is not proven that man is a beast in evolution or humanizing domestication, even when “biology proves that we are the bio-psychological summary through which has passed the human species up to the appearance of the individual.”

⁷ The Carbonari was a secret political society in the early part of the nineteenth century, active in Italy, France, and Spain.

⁸ Jean-Gabriel Tarde (1843–1904) was a French sociologist and criminologist.

Whatever one believes, with respect to the phases through which the embryo of man passed, there will always remain standing the insuperable difficulty of unifying all species in one common characteristic, whether it be fierceness or goodness.

Posed to document our thesis, a book would not be enough to gather data on all peoples, not only data about primitive people but also data on current people, who, notwithstanding their absolute lack of culture and historical stagnation, live almost idyllic lives, away from civilization.

The fiercest peoples are those who have passed through a civilization or those who live in the vicinity of a civilization. This is a factual truth that does not need proof.

Right now, in the midst of civilized Europe, the most frightening example of cruelty, ferocity, and bestiality recorded in history is happening. There is nothing in recent memory that compares to the mass extermination and ethnic cleansing of the Bulgarian population in Eastern Thrace and Eastern Rhodope Mountains. The wombs of pregnant Bulgarian women have been opened, and the fetuses have been extracted and threaded onto the tips of bayonets. It would be an atrocious injustice to impute anything similar to primitive, savage, or barbaric people.

The refinement of cruelty is a semi-civilized or completely civilized product. The horrendous crimes, barely explicable even to the most fervent determinists, of which the annals of civilized nations are full, do not have historical antecedents in the existence of primitive peoples. Cannibalism itself has greater and more solid foundations than the mercilessness, without adequate adjective, of certain human monsters who horribly smudge the progressive ascension of which we are proud.

Nothing equals the tremendous and continuing crimes of the great religions. And neither Christianity nor Islam are religions of primitive peoples. Nothing like the bloody, endless struggles to which modern commercialism leads us. Organized rapacity is the core of civilization. We are not thieves and murderers so much because of atavism but because of progressivism. Not to mention banking, bureaucracy, and militarism. In no way could it be argued that civilized man is the summary in which all the alleged originating evils are contained.

We are in the presence of a deviation. These reprehensible modern atrocities cannot be charged to the account of those poor, unfortunate ancestors of ours who lived in nature, completely defenseless and exhausted. The word atavism is often a weak excuse of mental laziness.

The animal-man undoubtedly has been worsened by civilization because human progress is a perennial imbalance between every imaginable improvement and all the patent miseries. Never has slavery been adorned with such vivid colors. Social inequality is the gap from which the most horrible bestialities sprout.

It is not the distant past. It is the recent past and today.

There are those who look to the past and long for lost peace. There are those who accuse us of also yearning for impossible returns. There are, in short, those who seek protection in a new dogmatic of science in order to make revolution.

Nostalgia is unfounded; the accusation is ridiculous; the protection is weak.

We have not accidentally lost something in the past; nothing better can it give us. Nothing can be expected of inside-out theologies that carry the seeds of future and possible despotisms.

Humanity has progressed ethically. There are those who detest all bestialities, love peace, and long for the good of their neighbors. There are those who study, work, and struggle for a better world. That is something. It is quite a bit. But materially, economically, progress and civilization are an enormous lie for most men. There is no greater torture than that of having interviewed

all the beauties of life and be doomed to suffer all despicable acts. And this is the abyss that civilization has opened before humanity and that will not be blinded with the hot towels of dogma, even if it is called scientific.

Savagery and ferocity are not behind us, but among us. The responsibility of continuing the progressive evolution of humanity is that of the revolutionary work of the victims of savagery and ferocity.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 13, Madrid, August 15, 1913.)

7 Freedom and Authority

The Uselessness of Laws

Whoever says law, says limitation; whoever says limitation, says lack of freedom. This is axiomatic.

Those who trust reform laws for the improvement of life and intend, through this means, to increase freedom lack logic or they lie about what they do not believe.

Because a new law destroys another old law. It destroys, therefore, some old limits but creates other new ones. And so, laws are always a hindrance to the free development of activities, ideas, and human feelings. The belief that law is the guarantee of freedom is, as a result, an error. It is one that is so generalized, but an error all the same. No, law is and will always be its limitation, which is to say its negation.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 5, Gijón, October, 1910.)

“It may be”—we are told—“that the law cannot give power to those who do not possess it. It is also possible that the law hinders rather than facilitates human relations. It will be, if you will, a limitation of individual and collective freedom, but it is undeniable that, only through good laws, do we come to prevent evildoers from offending and trampling good people, and we come to stop the strong from abusing the weak. Freedom, without laws that regulate it, degenerates into libertinism. The law is the guarantee of freedom.”

With this common reasoning, all those who trust the law to solve the problem of good and evil respond to us, without noticing that, with a similar line of reasoning, rather than justifying the laws, they, on the contrary, give greater strength to our anti-legalist opinions.

Is it possible, perhaps, that the weak impose the law on the strong? And if it is not the weak, but the strong, who are in a position to impose the law, does it not, in such a case, give one more weapon to the strong to use against the weak? There is talk of good and evil; but, by chance, are there two kinds of men on earth? Is there someone in the world who has never committed a wrongdoing or someone who has not done a good deed? Who would then be in a position to say: these are the good ones; those, the bad? Other men? Who will guarantee us the kindness of these men in such conditions? Will we give preference to smart men over ignorant ones? Is evil not generally in proportion to intelligence perhaps? And if so, will not intelligent men doubly abuse the ignorant? And if we agree to tailor laws to the ignorant, what kind of laws will not be legislated? Make sure the laws are made by the naive, and they (the laws) will be made fun of by the astute; ensure that the laws are made by the astute, and then they will be malicious and to the detriment of the righteous. The problem is always the same. Are men bad? Yes? Then they cannot make laws. Are they good? Then they do not need them.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 11, Madrid, August 1, 1913.)

Psychology of Authority

It can be done in two strokes of one's pen.

Yesterday, two guards impassively witnessed, in a square in Madrid, how a child drowned in a basin of water. Later that day, two police officers, in the same capital, cruelly separated a poor mother from her two children who were sick with diphtheria and drove her to the police station in order to charge her for stealing some clothes worth three or four *pesetas*. The claim was from the *honest* parents of a child who the good woman had taken care of. The inspector on duty, *sympathetic*, sent her to court. It was two in the morning. The judge freed her and helped her.

Nobody will have forgotten the cruel torture of that dying man who was walked around Madrid for a whole night, without the doors of a hospital or a refuge opening for him.

We could multiply these examples to infinity. They are not an accident or an exception. They are the general and constant rule, since they are derived from the very nature of authority. They are also not exclusive to Spain. They are of every latitude. In recent days, the Minister of Justice of England, Churchill, has decreed the freedom of an individual sentenced to thirteen years in prison for theft of two and a half *pesetas*. "The total of the sentence rises to *fifty-one years in prison* for insignificant infractions and petty theft. His conduct in prison has been irreproachable, and the unhappy one now is 68 years old."

"Upon regaining his freedom, in which he no longer believed, he began to cry and said he had broken the law many times out of necessity and not because of evil instincts."

We do not say all of that. The rotary and bourgeois press says it. And notice that the exceptional part in the two stories is the judge's conduct and the agreement of the Minister of Justice. As an example, some newspapers cite it. Then, the firm and substantial aspect is the authoritarian wickedness, the cold indifference, and the heartless cruelty. Man, as authority, is no longer man, he sinks below man. His ethics have no feelings. It is the ethics of beasts. His job is the work of executioners. The pain of others never rubs his hard epidermis. His pleasure is evil.

The function makes the organ. And so, the authoritative function has created the authority organ whose psychology lacks human traits and is confused with that of vermin.

Men who yesterday were kind, upright in their behavior, self-sacrificing with their peers, become today, once invested with authority, inhuman, cruel, hard of heart, and even harder of intellect. An ordinance, a discipline, any legislation promptly drowns in them all nobility of feelings and thoughts. Cold calculation invades their senses. The notion of punishment, repression, and penalty absolutely dominates their soul full of evil instincts. For authority, every man is a criminal until proven otherwise. And so, he becomes vulgar, rude, and brutal. The authoritarian function is no longer regulator of common life, a just balance that gives to each his fair share, submissive servant of the general interest. It is domineering force, owner of everything, superior to everything, above all.

One wants it to be impartial, and its impartiality puts it beyond all humanity. How could it be impartial if it had a human soul, heart, and mind? One wants it to be honest, and its rectitude places it beyond all sensibility. Indifferent to pain, suspicious of pleasure, the authoritarian function moves toward its objective, crushing all love and compassion in its path. One wants it to be just, and its justice sentences life imprisonment to a man who stole for hunger or its justice hangs from a stick he who killed out of rage, because of wicked social education, because of innate madness.

The psychology of authority is precisely that, to be impartial at the expense of humanity, to be honest at the expense of all feeling, to be just at the expense of freedom and life of men. It could not be otherwise.

Granite, steel, diamonds are no harder than its hard soul. Its brain is a pure mechanism of calculation. The logic of men does not pray with it. It is beyond reason and humanity. It is beyond the universal concert of life. It is beyond nature.

Authority is an abyss that exceeds the limits of human intelligence. Its psyche is not the psyche of man, even though man engendered it. Perhaps, it does not have a soul, and if it does, it is a misshapen and monstrous soul that emerged from the unknown and is exercised in evil and, for evil, it lasts and lasts. For the sake of humanity, it will be necessary to crush the monster.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 16, Gijón, March 1911.)

Libertarians and Authoritarians

Under these two denominations, one can really summarize the whole political and social spectrum.

No matter what the distinctions of various schools of thought are, it is impossible to get out of these two modes of opinion. Where they are not presented as program or faith, they are given as trend.

All schools and parties that, more or less, affirm autonomy or, if you like, personal independence are of the libertarian trend. Those who radically proclaim that, outside of complete freedom of thought and deed, there is nothing more than privilege and oppression are truly libertarians.

All schools and parties that, more or less, proclaim the subordination of the individual to society or to the State are of the authoritarian trend. Those who firmly hold that, outside of the prepotency of the State or of society, there is nothing more than libertinism and disorder are truly authoritarians.

Libertarians reject the concept of the whole triumphing over the parts, whereas authoritarians reject the concept of the parts acting independently of the whole. For authoritarians, the only living reality is the group, society, the State; for libertarians, it is the individual.

Is society something pre-existing or is it only an outcome? Authoritarians will be for the first of these terms; libertarians for the second.

Twist the theory as you will, it is certain that, from the strictly absolutist to the socialist who entrusts to society the government of labor and distribution, there is nothing more than a scale of authoritarian modalities. The individual, in these two extreme systems and in the intermediate ones, remains unknown, subordinate, and overshadowed. For the left, the individual is a simple gear or a zero. The treatment is the same.

It comes down to a domain transfer. One is the subject of the king, citizen of the republic, subordinate of holy social equality. Freed from the will of a single sovereign, we are now tied to the government of the majority: democracy is the modern fiction of freedom. Liberated from the sovereignty of the number, we will fall perhaps under the sovereignty of the producer-State, managed and governed by regimented workgroups: socialism is the next fiction that promises all liberations. Anyway, human phalanx is army, is flock, band of slaves, mob of voters, gang of workers. It is the hereditary patrimony affirmed and reaffirmed by habits and current teachings.

Any ideal conception that uses these materials can break through immediately, as much among a crowd of educated people as among a crowd of imbeciles that civilized societies form. With the voluntary reduction of the individual corresponds the growing exaltation of the State, or society, or group, whichever the case may be. We consider ourselves happy, kneeling before these great and magnificent entities.

Woe to him who dares to raise his voice, rising up to emphasize his rickety individuality!

All libertarian tendency is sinful, foolish, and insane. Constructing the building of any ideal on top of the conception of the autonomous individual is like erecting it on quicksand. The claim that man derives value from himself will collide against everything and everyone. It is not worth it to continue affirming weak federalism, to damper your demands for independence. It is so important to resolutely set the challenge of the free individual in a society of equals. For being anarchists and like anarchists, you will be cornered, mocked, and reviled. Both the foolish gang of cretins that runs the world and the foolish gang of eunuchs that humbly obeys will throw at you the bubbling foam of their rage and anger.

The cretins are doing well, governing; the eunuchs are doing well, obeying. At what cost will you want to redeem them or that they redeem themselves?

One would say that authoritarianism has crystallized in human understanding, because it is so difficult to bring a ray of light, of dignity and of independence, of personal value to human understanding.

And yet, the individual is the root of everything: work, exchange, consumption; art, philosophy, science. From the individual sprouts, like from an inexhaustible source, all social life. From the individual is derived, like from an initial and unique strength, all that human history records as wonderful, all that social institutions contain as wise and prudent, all that the pride of men constitutes as beautiful and noble and great. Erase the individual, and nothing will remain.

As the rock of ages, authoritarianism defies all rigors. The rock is pierced, is crumbled, and is made into powder. A few minutes go by, and the rock of ages fills space with countless fragments.

The dissolvent of authoritarianism is individual rebellion. Collective subversion arises from individual rebellion. The rock of ages tosses into space its countless fragments.

Authoritarianism lingers. Freedom struggles to make way for itself through all of the resistances. Without equality of conditions, freedom is a myth. Only among equals is justice possible. The libertarian wants full freedom, full equality, and full justice. Authoritarianism, despite the centuries, will perish.

(El Libertario, number 2, Gijón, August 17, 1912.)

The Essence of Power: Dictatorships

They are the inescapable consequence of all authority.

They are not generated only from above. Usually prepotencies also sprout from below. Whenever a process, a trend, or an impulse of domination starts, dictatorship germinates in the richly fertilized field. Sometimes it takes abhorrent names; other times, seductive names. Nothing fills the peacock that we call man with conceit more than seeing himself owner and director of the destinies of his peers. Dictatorship is the most esteemed award for the animal who reasons.

In history, there are examples for all tastes. From Nero to Robespierre, the dictatorial range is wonderfully varied. Inspired by a vivid longing for freedom, popular revolutions, which easily

become freedom-killers, are a good example of dictatorships that do not set out to become dictatorships. They germinate on the curb or at the bottom of the well. It is the alternative to political struggles.

Coming to our days, perhaps no better or worse than others, there is nothing more eloquent than rapid revolutionary mutations. A people rises up against a dictatorship and begets another dictatorship. Joao Franco falls defeated by republican bombs.¹ And Alfonso Costa stands proud against anarchists and syndicalists.² In the struggle for the revolutionary dictatorship, the most determined person triumphs for being the most despotic. The people back up and acclaim the winner and applaud the dictatorship. It would not know how to live without a master, without a whip, without a slaves' prison. Luckily, gallows are not placed in every street corner. It is more comfortable to pursue, imprison, and deport. We have humanized ourselves.

The fact simply shows how certain collaborations are too unconditional and too simplistic. If in our country a revolution gave the victory to the republicans with the disinterested help of social forces, the republican dictatorship would rise up within twenty-four hours to crush socialist and anarchist ideas. Who can doubt it?

Dictatorships are the very essence of all power, and a fruit other than that which the tree produces is impossible. The same popular masses, when they take possession of a nation, frantically surrender themselves to dictatorship. There is no more than one rectilinear reason and omnipotent imperative: its sovereign will. To oblige, force, impose, is all the vitality of authority, whoever exercises it: people, individual or group of individuals.

Above the most beautiful purposes, the determinism of all things leads to the exaltation of the winner. A cheer follows a jeer, but the master is changed and nothing else. When a revolution has broken out, it is fertilizing the next revolution. It is the necessary consequence of the exercise of authority, of political error, which consists of believing the complete necessity of the institution of public power. Power, from top down, is inevitably dictatorship, is despotism, and is tyranny. The only doubt is rebellion and rebellion becomes the incentive of every authoritarian abuse. Applause is obtained up until the day before the victory. The next day, the rebel is a subject who deserves to be imprisoned.

The herd of automatons that kick and scream chants such as "Long live the king!" or "Long live the republic!" or "Long live the Pepa!" stays so unruffled, serving the new man who shines on high.³ The dictatorship will be the only visible result of revolutions as long as people do not lose authoritarian bad habits and the prejudice of power.

Before cooperating with fallacious redemptions, one must be devoted to spreading the spirit of independence, carrying to intellects the real idea of freedom, which was made to vanish, along with the revolutionary subterfuge, by all politicians.

Dictatorships will not come to an end by helping new masters, even though they are called republicans and radicals.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 9, Madrid, July 18, 1913.)

¹ João Franco Ferreira Pinto Castelo-Branco (1855–1929) was the Prime Minister of Portugal, 1906–1908, during the last years of the Portuguese monarchy before the proclamation of the First Republic.

² Alfonso Costa (1871–1937) was the leader of the Portuguese Republican Party.

³ ¡Viva la Pepa! [Long Live the Pepa!] was what liberal Spaniards shouted in support of the 1812 Cádiz Constitution, which was also known as the Pepa.

8 Philosophical-Literary Essays

The Sadness of Living

Let others sing “the happiness of living.” Today, those, who have always looked at life resolutely, who continuously smile and are joyful, and are unable to sustain a painful feeling for a solid ten minutes, want to sing the sadness of living.

Against a friend’s unfounded prophecies, I am not a hypochondriac. My sad hours belong to my twenties when the melancholy of my homeland would overcome me during the late hours of the day. It was a sweet melancholia that would evoke in me deep songs. Now, already a little older, nothing more remains of that period in my life than the disgust that such melancholia does not recur with equal intensity. If I reach old age, I will perhaps return to the sadness of a young lad, but I will never be, theoretically or practically, a pessimist. Above all, I hope for health to be able to understand and grasp the world.

I do not feel in any way like Schopenhauer and yet I often think like he does “that living is not worth the pain.”

Am I pessimistic? Am I optimistic? What horror the theories make me feel! I am not one or the other. I simply look at life resolutely and understand life as it is. I dream the possible and desirable life (the life worth living), and the forced thesis of the happiness of living gets stuck in my throat.

The sadness of living is that which is firm for a soul that feels and a mind that thinks. Is there a more ferocious torture than that of carrying in one’s blood all desires of goodness, justice, and love, and have them burn away upon contact with all the evils, all the injustice, and all hatred? One must live very much for oneself, almost to an impossible extent, or be very beastly, in order to sing the joy of living.

Look at private life: there is nothing that is not touched and poisoned by envy, jealousy, or even resentment. The lowest passions, the obscenest vices, and the most degrading feelings quietly push us into a merciless war of vipers, fighting tooth and nail, with all human reason and kindness. If you want to stay pure and healthy, they tear you to pieces without taking any risk and without compassion. One is not even allowed to be good. And when you have imagined yourselves in possession of a higher consciousness and a strict conduct, you notice, perhaps, that evil, baseness, and the hereditary garbage of universal patrimony grow cowardly inside of you. Bitterness rises to your lips and you exclaim: “Living is not worth the pain.”

What a terrible fight! Constantly struggling against oneself; daring to scornfully pass by miseries; fighting against everything and everyone; and suddenly being caught in the nets of one’s own meanness, and smallness. There is no optimism that does not give in and give up!

Yes, in exchange for life worth living, it is necessary to sing the sadness of living. The sadness to which I am referring is mental sadness, or the sadness of reason, which falls like a funerary cloud over flesh’s laughter, which wants to expand without caring a damn about the pain and misery of others.

Let us widen a bit the circle of observation to the political world, to the world of ideas, to the literary and artistic world, to the great world of labor. What do you think?

Men resemble wind-up dolls that repeat set phrases or applaud them loudly. Don't get me started about the ostensible pettiness, farces, ambitions, and crimes of public life. It is normal behavior that does not take away or add to the honorableness of the socially marginalized. What a shame to have reached such an extreme!

Factories of programs, doctrines, and theories, like cheap trinkets, are led by the most famous eminent figures. Each neighbor clings to their thesis and climbs the endless ladder of the audacity to live, to live at all costs, at the price of indignity, of deceit, of exploitation, even of theft and murder. Oh, the happiness of living!

And not only the directors. If the multitude does not work by its own impulse in its own way, it imitates. The crowd, everyone, adopts its position, chooses its *philosophy*, and gravely, seriously, grapples for the best of the best; a ridiculous thing learned by heart in any dull litany of the first rogue who felt like teaching the special arts of his special chiromancy.

The essential thing is to think of a name, come up with a doctrine, classify oneself, bear a label and then play the game of political parties, schools, and churches. Conviction, belief, faith, sincerity? Bah! The vast majority does not even care to cover up the deception. These things are not played innocently. Each is driven by ambition, envy, greed, and the vilest passions are the real engine of all the agitation.

But artists, great artists are there to beautify life. What a huge pile of awkwardness, of barbarously prepared jumbles! They also climb, as they can, up the steep slope. They praise mass murder, falling at the feet of the triumphant Caesar; they paint the excellences of the life of the flock; they direct psalms to the powerful and glorious hymns to the bloodthirsty exploits of the homeland's adventurers; they have their gods, their priests and even their eunuchs. If they are so immensely great, why do they, at the slightest scratch of envy, get naked in front of the respectable public and show their horrible rotten, dusty skeletons, full of holes? They also try to bear a label, and, once born, they valiantly struggle for realism, for romanticism, for decadentism, and also ... for aestheticism. *The struggle for life* is necessary to reach the heights of glory. And to hell with truth, justice, and humanity!

Sorry, reader. I have not concluded yet. I am in the mood for those who sing the happiness of life to give me a thrashing.

Have a little patience. It is, now, the great social hive's turn and the working world's turn to receive my criticism. Do you see all those sheep that come and go from the factory to the pigsty, from the sown field to the cave, from the attic to the office? Poor mannequins who work like beasts, and what cowards they are! For they also have their petty heart. Now, in the great socialist gale, they follow others, the manufacturers of programs and doctrines who play at committees and elections. Occasionally blood runs: they let themselves be killed like tame domesticated animals. The happiness of life drags them to madness. And how many, how many base ambitions, how many scarcities, how many deaf struggles have yet to pass before the dangerous ascent up the ladder of desire? The chiefs, directors, those who rant on in newspapers, also adopt their corresponding posture and, for the social emancipation of the poor, they divide the poor by the axis taking them to the mud pit of the miserable fight in which only vile ambitions and ignoble greed are discussed.

If, as I do not know who said, he who thinks lowly is bourgeois, everything is bourgeois in the world in which we have the happiness of living!

I know, I know it is not just trash what overflows from the well. There are truly great men, men of faith and sincerity, among whom are those who stand out because of their genius and their talent as well as those who are humble and vegetate in silence, ignorant of everything. There are men, real men, everywhere. For these men, what is important is precisely the sadness of living, the mental sadness of reason. It is the sadness of living, because the unhealthy reality in which they move drowns all their vigorous power of kindness and justice. How could they give themselves to intellectual happiness if all that lingers around us is weak and shameful? Their refuge is the fight, the fight for good, for the regeneration of man, for the renewal of the world. But the fight is pain, is sadness, and is the brutal forcing of kindness itself, of deeply felt justice. And, therefore, fighting equals pain. The sadness of living, however fruitful it is in the good man, is inevitably the anxiety of the heart and mind.

Contact with all the filth of private and public life is loathsome when one possesses a fairly carefree sensibility. The continuous reasoning of faked honorableness, fictitious justice, affected love, and simulated friendship sickens the stomach. Unlucky is he who goes around the world in the confidence of his good nature! Every disappointment will be a hot iron that will burn the flesh. And the disappointments, one after another, will lead him slowly, slowly to the sadness of living.

Revolt against evil? Oh, yes; it is necessary! There, in the distance, the resplendent sun of new life, of the life worth living, comes out. The multitude that delights in the filth of a shameful existence degraded by the stoking of greed, ambition, envy, jealousy, hatred, and rancor will come to the paths of justice and love because the desire for renewal sustained by the flame of goodness throbs in every man even though the flame is half extinguished due to the course of infamous time that has led us to the vile and current denial of ourselves.

This life, which some people hope will inspire in us the happiness of living, brings to my pen a dirty word ...

Sorry, reader, I will not dare write it. It is the happiness of living that was at the point of making me rude.

(*Natura*, number 5, Barcelona, December 1, 1903.)

Insignificant Things of an Insignificant Philosopher

Every time I have tried to represent humanity, a throng of nasty beasts marching without knowing why or for what or to where has been offered to me. Apparently, some of these nasty beasts, better dressed than others, covered in ribbons, feathers, and other necessities, direct the throng. Really, they do not direct nor are directed. They also blindly march, like the others.

The human throng feeds and dresses like the individual people who make it up. There is everything: rags and silks; rotten pheasants and rotten herringbones; sparkling precious stones and pestilential pustules. Along the way, the weary and the defeated are being left behind, without the rest of the throng being troubled by something so petty. Everyone selfishly pushes and tramples, always moving forward without ever arriving. Why, for what, to where? What does it matter!

And the throng, at times, becomes irritated. Some fight with others, these strange creatures about which the fauna does not speak. They invent marvelous, stupendous things in order to better and more quickly annihilate themselves. Always destroying themselves and always renewing

themselves, the walk continues unchanged in the flow of thousands and thousands of randomly piled up beings, sewn to each other, always struggling to escape the uncomfortable bond.

Will not a day of plenitude arrive for humanity?

Man is still an animal on two feet. He has the presumption of reasoning. When man reaches reason in the future, he will have become man, and humanity will have culminated in the pinnacle of a conscious purpose, cause, and direction. To avoid this, some have invented man as clumsy and as cruel as they are. They paint man as fierce as the wild beast of which the human throng is formed.

To do better is not regression to animality. It is a step forward to humanization. Presumptuous of a philosophy of beasts, they have not recognized the philosophy of men.

Man will become man for his individuality, and the human throng will have bettered itself because of solidarity. Two enormous forces that coincide in the fullness of humanity. Separated, they will never bear anything but fruits of barbarism, flock of sheep and pack of wolves.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 14, Gijón, March 17, 1911.)

I flee the city.

I am infested with insignificance and baseness.

I wear clumsy country boots. I put on a soft hat with a wide brim. I take up a sturdy staff of ash wood and climb the mountain.

Among shrubs and rough stones, I walk to the summit crowned with tall and good-smelling pines. Delicious landscape.

I sit in the direction of the steepest slope, facing the valley. Legs at an acute angle, elbows on knees, face in hands, I look forward in silent contemplation of the wide space that fades into the blue of the sky, neither sky nor blue, as someone once said.¹

Insignificant, I feel important; poor, I feel rich. The insignificant and the poor also have our throne and our scepter. Nature is ours, all ours.

Through rigid pine trunks, I contemplate myself in the distance like a sphinx that challenges my insight and my calculation. Perhaps this Egyptian rhetoric proves a little unequal. It does not matter.

There, where all things merge and disappear, and the sensible horizon is transposed, I see another me, legs at an acute angle, elbows on knees, face in hands, staring, as if lost in the obsessed and obsessive immensity.

All the past parades silently. What is a life? What is it for? Where does it lead? Nothing between the two talking points. Troubles, everything is erased, canceled, and precipitated. There is no madness like the madness of living.

An existence of continuous battling for daily bread, of relentlessly struggling for ideals of remote realization; the persistent cult to dreamed justices; the daily homage to equity, truth, love, and goodness—all this boils down to a great deal of important insignificant things that are wrapped in an infinite layer of petty insignificant things. Life is that: trifles.

¹ The reference “neither sky nor blue” comes from a poem entitled “A una mujer que se afeitaba y estaba hermosa” [To a Woman who Shaved and was Beautiful] written by two brothers, Bartolomé (1562–1631) and Lupercio (1559–1613) de Argensola.

And then I understand the futility of my existence, of so many existences like mine, lost in the immensity of nature, indifferent to all the joys and sorrows, to all the struggles, to all the significant things and all the insignificant things.

My mind makes a titanic effort; the sphinx challenges me. Beyond, always beyond, I begin to glimpse a new, unknown thing. To the battle for good, for love, for bread, for justice, there is something superior. My “I” is emptied and filtered. It gets naked and, naked, it shows me that something-superior, which drives forward all of my experience.

It is something vague that the distance wants to erase. Transposed the sensible horizon, all things waver and vanish. But I imagine myself there, satisfied with myself, happy with my success. I have saved the abyss. My life has served for something. It is something in itself. It walks toward somewhere. The greatest thing of man is his own self. Its struggles, its drudgery, its joys and sorrows poorly translate the real background of its existence.

I ignore what the sphinx will say to whom carries within his soul the shackle of vileness. I only know that to me it says: love, justice, nobility, everything significant is in you. If you feel significant, it is because you are significant. And your deeds and your words will be like you—significant and magnanimous.

Twilight arrives. When it lowers to the plain, a harmonious, sweet voice with nightingale chirpings—a beautiful woman’s voice, removing the layers of air saturated by the resinous aroma of the far-off pine forest—shakes me with an indefinable shiver, inviting me to live, welcoming me to the madness of living.

Nature brutally hits me. There, I will mingle with the miniscule things of ordinary life, with its miseries, its baseness and filth. And the sphinx vanishes. All is smoke.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 30, Vigo, September 27, 1911.)

Afternoon falls. Tired from the work of the day, I wander through the streets.

A common bar posing as an elegant one. I enter. A rattan table with glass top. A server who questions. They serve me “vermouth” and some little olives that were once prisoners in a glass bottle and now try to pass for the exquisite olives marinated by Andalusian farmers.

I drink, eat, and smoke at the same time. My thought wanders through internal paths ending in the unknown corners of the body. I meditate. I am not the same citizen of the street, of work, of ordinary life. I am the one who never comes to the surface. In every man there exists an unknown “I,” unknown even after death.

Unconsciously, I continue making my own psychological process. There are two “I”s who, upon recognizing each other, feel strange. Now the passionate “I” begins, in its underclothes. How many follies would it do! The other is tamed by mentality’s development. Knowledge of mathematics imposes silence to imagination, restrains passions, and puts fences around creative activity.

The agitation of violent, disorderly life boils within. Exaltation, delirium, and dreams struggle to come to the surface. On the outside, the continent is cold, reflective, and syllogistically serene. An algebraic theorem has some magical power. The inflexible logic of numbers governs, directs, and imprisons.

Parents: do not teach your children abstract thought because they will be modest, prudent, cowardly, and petty! Great things are the work of free ingenuity, aesthetic feeling, and untamed passion.

In front of my table, an older citizen drinks tea, and also meditates. Suddenly he changes seats and posture. What is bubbling up inside? Another analysis, another process, another contradiction.

The torment of life is always to live within oneself, always lying outside of oneself. The worst and the best remain eternally unknown. No one is daring enough to show all their perversity. Nobody resolved enough to externalize all their goodness. We are afraid to be who we are. We have more of the comedian in us than man. Tamed by civilization, we are simply contemptible.

Do I lie, am I deceiving myself? Maybe. In the hotbed of ideas, in the din of passions, in the back and forth movement of blood that goes to the head in rough waves, it is difficult to discern every psychological moment. The enigma that moves is, soon enough, machine that works, and thought that creates. Allow the measly slave, if only in dreams, to think a moment at the hour of rest.

There is more than enough time for the beast to be yoked once again to the wagon.
(*Acción Libertaria*, number 3, Madrid, June 6, 1913.)

Enclosures

Pursuing the truth and walking around outside of it, things are not as they are, but as one wants them to be. Reasoning is often gymnastics that dazzles; philosophizing, wonderful art that enchants; and theorizing, thaumaturgy that seduces, hallucinates, and hypnotizes. Reasoning, philosophizing, and theorizing, the apparently most sumptuous buildings erected, are, in fact, the ones that the gentlest breeze wears away. So fragile and crumbly are their foundations.

Men open furrows in the ground. They place in them sturdy rocks and build upon them solid walls. Each one blocks the entrance to the enclosure. And the marvelous work of art begins. Here, in flashing characters, the word *idealism*. There, in ferrous signs, the word *materialism*. Everywhere, words and words. Deism, pantheism; aristocracy, democracy; authority, liberty; creation, evolution. There are scaffoldings for every taste. The authors carry glorious names: Plato and Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and Spencer. Let us be respectful of such greatness.

We are already separated into sects, schools, and parties. A thousand bifurcations, a thousand branches, a thousand more nuances engrave in history a number of other defective names. Each one chooses his enclosure and there we lock ourselves with its own logic, with a peculiar philosophy, with a thesis that excludes, that disintegrates, and that separates. Thought remains slave to its own work.

Systematizing is the labor of science, and systematizing, we enclose ourselves in science. We dogmatize, which is the reason for all enclosures.

Let us rejoice that the walls are crumbling; that the palaces are tumbling down. Art and beauty and science have multiple representatives, not just one. The work of past centuries and those to come will never be closed pending sentence.

Beyond where a new scaffold is set up, where new furrows are opened and new walls are erected, go with your wreckers and leave no stone unturned. Thought requires limitless space, time without end, freedom without landmarks. There can be no finished theories, complete sys-

tematizations, unique philosophies because there is no absolute, unchanging truth. There are truths and truths, acquired or to be acquired. Philosophizing and reasoning is to accept some truths and investigate others. That is it. Let us analyze, investigate, keeping ourselves from marking the boundary of our own understanding. Gymnastics, art, and intellectual thaumaturgy have a wide field of action and expansion in the practice of marking boundaries.

And if you find in your path someone who tries to detain you in the magic of the ideal or in the realities of matter or in the drives of passion, reflect upon it walking.

Ideal, yes; noblest aspirations of the human intellect that fly toward beauty, toward justice, toward love, acknowledge it with the emotion of the divinely human, the greatest of all great things.

Matter, yes; objective reality of all that exists, that supports all the past, all the present, and all the future; mystery where the idea fabricates the future, summarizes nature, and forges the laws of universal existence, embrace it with self-love, with the love of one's own flesh and bones, of substance and force itself, that matter is a finished and defined representation of what has no beginning or end, either in time or space.

Passion, yes; powerful flow, irresistible magnetism of strength; great engine of action and life; impulse and attraction, love and hate; revere it like the inexhaustible soul of everything that is art and feeling, reason and the qualities of the ideal.

Without passion, man is granite rock in the indifference of inert matter. Without ideal, he is like the pig, splashing in the slop that it eats. Without matter, viscera, organs, arteries, and limbs, he would be like those hallucinations made by insane creators of spirits who forge realities where there is nothing more than delusions.

Dream as much as you want, get as excited as you want, but reflect walking, since you are real bodies with organs and real needs; since the idea is a great, magnificent thing; feeling is a beautiful, optimum thing; and the stomach is a viscera that requires food, the brain is an organ that demands waves of rich blood, the body is a marvelous organism that feeds on grains and meats and also on ideas. A good piece of bread carries in its atoms the most brilliant creations of Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Spencer.

Conquer, then, bread and also the ideal; everything, in short, bread for the body, bread for the soul, bread for the mind. And that the makers of enclosures remain in solitude in their ancient palaces.

(Acción Libertaria, number 16, Gijón, March 31, 1911.)

Dialogue About Skepticism

Oh, nothing, my friend. I was just saying that fixed ideas are a real calamity. They are in circulation like potatoes, like shoes, like bills of exchange, and seem indispensable. They are the tools for mechanistic intelligences. And of course, anything that does not comply with the usual preconceptions is not understandable. It is a counterfeiter who disturbs the circulation. Well, it seems to me that the skeptic does not distinguish between values and accepts them all even though he does not believe in their legitimacy. The man without beliefs, I am not saying without faith, who blinds himself, is really incomprehensible. He is certainly repugnant to the good sense that views him as a counterfeiter.

Let us not talk about the common skeptic, about the degraded man who has the bright feathers of skepticism and the core of corruption. Let us not talk either about the skepticism of various schools of thought. In the ordinary sense of the word, a skeptic is an educated man whose distinguishing features are a strong spirit of analysis and rebellion against intellectual typecasting. Enlightened people, among the wealthy classes as among the needy, tend increasingly to doubt and have the wrath of continually and obstinately examining everything. Beliefs are bankrupt.

Well, whatever you say. But still, skepticism is harmful because it kills the spirit of initiative and action. Man without a master idea is like a blind man without a guide. He gropes along, hesitates and, in the end, never knows if he advances, retreats or is stationary. He knows and ignores all things at once and remains idle and unable to decide. The skeptic is a failure.

Your argument is a little bit extreme. I observe that the distinction between faith and belief is pure subtlety. Any belief puts us outside the reality of the rest of the world. Anything that does not fall within belief is categorized as false and unreal. The believer, as a man of faith, deems foolish all that does not adjust to the canons of his dogma, or of his master idea, if you prefer. He is the real blind man. True, he has a guide. He does not see with his own eyes but with those of his guide. He cannot walk or act more than in the direction that is imposed on him. He cannot choose nor deliberate, even though he imagines otherwise. He is irretrievably lost from freedom. Hence, the reason for the skepticism. Look at the enormous resistance that beliefs pose to any new idea, or to any discovered truth.

I have a feeling that you find yourself on the point of not believing in yourself. How do you not understand that we are all blind and are in need of a compass to guide us, of something to direct us? Reason can give us certainty and will give us at least the qualities of the ideal. Why not? And certainty or, in its defect, qualities of the ideal will lead us through the labyrinth of life, while your famous skepticism would only get lost in it. Meditate, and you will see that our physical and intellectual limitation implies this same guiding limitation. We must live on something and for something.

Oh, friend, how many times has reason deceived us! It is not that I deny it. It is as much the obliged instrument of all research and of all wisdom as it is the only authority for the individual. Take notice: I say that it is not its only guide, even though it is its only king, its only god, its only everything. Reason alone, all alone, has spawned countless historical and contemporary errors. I hope that you do not believe that a handful of people invented religious deception, political deception and economic deception, nor that a group of wise people had the happy idea of taking us for a ride filling the world with scientific atrocities. We all had a hand in it. The reasons—of the millions of men who were and are—elaborate and produce right now the entangled scheme of falsehoods in which they lived, and we live. Reason distinguishes, very badly, the good from the false coins. In search of the good ones, the individual always is rich in the false ones. I ought to add that this occurs precisely because of the individual's eagerness to provide fixed and immutable values, and to relax free of despicable and wearisome research. Fixed and immutable values are beliefs, fixed ideas. Believing is easier than verifying. And it is so comfortable to decree certainty, to believe to be in possession of absolute truth!

Your speech is long and metaphysical. You tend, even if you do not want to, to annul reason. If you do not want truth to be almost always wrapped with a thousand mistakes, invent a new, infinite, and absolute reason. Now you see that I also am *speaking metaphysically*. We are limited, reason is limited. Your efforts to clarify the mystery of all things constitute the

entire history of mankind. The future will also be composed of the triumphant development of successive efforts. And there is no way out from here. Little by little, one will come to destroy errors, discover truths. The already discovered ones give a premonition of new ones that are our guides. Without this we would walk haphazardly.

I do not want to annul reason. But I do not admire it as absolute sovereign. From here to infallibility, there is no more than one step. Truth does not reside in reason but in nature. And nature—we do not know that it is a syllogism. We know that, for us at least, all reality, all truth, and all science are there in nature. Reality does not come from logic, but logic from reality. Reason investigates, penetrates laboriously in nature, and laws and ideas are given. Maybe one believes to have created what one has only discovered with a thousand difficulties, and here are our absolute sovereign dictating rules even to the very cosmos. I tell you, indeed, that reason often does us a disservice. Provided that reason does not deceive us, does it not seem more in accordance with your own ideas to call reason to order and, thereby, to limit it to experience and to the real knowledge of things even though it digresses all that it wants? The skeptic can also digress. Perhaps he digresses more than the believer. All roads are open to the skeptic. All but one are closed to the believer. But the skeptic does not let himself be directed or let himself be imposed by any belief. He is always at the disposition of the next truth. The believer no. The believer has to, first, overcome the resistance of acquired ideas.

If you reduce reason to experience and reality, you kill the genius creator of humanity, you annihilate intuition, and you put an end to marvelous inventions and imaginative wonders that, later, are changed into beautiful realities. Let reason make poetry. Its ravings are often its glory. You have to look for the prevention of errors in reason itself. Reality, often quite weak, is inferior to reason, for reason forges illusions which, if they are not truths, should be. Let us have the comfort of creative fiction. One has to live on something and for something.

You are an incorrigible idealist. Humanity is sick with sentimentality. You are, too. Perhaps I am, and the biggest skeptics are, as well. What determination we have to live by chimeras and for chimeras! Dream life may be inevitable if we let reality push and corner us. Will humanity not be able to subsist without idols, without statues, without geniuses, without ravings, without heroes, and without martyrs? At least do not be slave to them. Be what you want. Here is why I believe that we ought to call to order reason, which is too proud of its own worth.

You will agree with me, at least, that chasing qualities of the ideal is how the world works.

Yes, I agree with it. But listen. You and I speak for radical ideas that spring from the same trunk. We have let ourselves be pigeonholed or we have typecast ourselves. Really, in this case, there is no difference. How many times have you not felt the closure of this box? How many times have you not been forced to deface, to silence the truth such as it presented itself to your own reason? I sincerely assure you that I have often felt the pinch of those bonds and I have declared myself and I still declare myself rebel within the larger rebellions. One is not mentally free until one is not beholden to any belief.

No, I do not deny it. But I think that the mental state that you so fiercely recommend is impossible.

The author intervenes and says:

Taking into account how much thought likes to freely fly, even the most fervent believer has his hours of hesitation and doubt!

Even the biggest skeptic caresses perhaps unrealizable idealisms. The illusion of beauty is so pleasant!

At opposite extremes, the blindest believer must strive to open wide his eyes and the most hardened skeptic to air his soul with dream's breeze. If they do not, the first will fall to fanaticism, the most degrading form of intellectual slavery, and the second to corruption, the most abject form of libertinism.

A mind free of prejudices, or better yet, free of any guiding element, and a healthy ideality within nature will nobly reconcile the different trends that, in short, divide men.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 27, Gijón, July 14, 1911.)

Not Pessimistic or Optimistic

Voltaire's *Candide*, Palacio Valdés' *Tristan*, and all literary or artistic creations inspired by optimism and pessimism are, more than representations of moods and thought, cases of pathology, and sad or happy examples of nerves in disorder and of incorrect or outdated mechanisms. Often, the great writer gives us either a unique kind of tragic misanthropy or a finished model of overflowing and triumphant joy. The illusion is perfect and the reader is convinced that those poor devils (toys of their neurosis, instruments of hypersensitivity, and products of poisoned livers or vigorous and healthy blood) are great and finished artistic creations that reflect an idealized human reality, which is split between the two great currents of either unsurpassed joys or irreducible sorrows.

Beneath the creative summits, vulgarity makes its way and soon people are classified and pigeonholed, against their will, like spices on the shelves of a grocery store.

The operation would not be entirely misguided if one did not forget that in reality and in nature rigid, dry, and concise divisions do not exist, and that, in all things, tonality varies insensibly to infinity and evolves in continuous and endless series.

Not everything in life is optimistic or pessimistic pathology. Frequently, neither of these two modalities occurs in the human spirit, thus defined. They occur, however, in the facts, circumstances, and conditions of life itself.

No matter how optimistic one is, how can one deny the ambient sadness and the pains that torment humanity? There is no joy capable of resisting the honest examination of the afflictions that burden us.

A well-balanced mind and a well-pondered spirit will fluctuate between the ideal joy of living and the real hardship of life. Because it is true that in the facts there is little, very little to rejoice; and much about which to get worried. We will not trace the picture of the countless miseries and limitless pains that humanity resignedly endures. We are not artists. Each person should trace it according to the reality that is offered. Would not optimism be bloody mockery or neurotic laughter?

Outside of the pathological case, of the diseased liver, there is intellectual pessimism and the pessimism of things themselves. It is objective pessimism. It is not in the individual. It is in the medium surrounding the individual.

But, is everything hopeless pain, unavoidable evil? There is no pessimism that does not shrink at the sight of the abyss that separates today from yesterday. There is no pessimism that does not surrender to the certainty of a brighter tomorrow of the human species.

A healthy heart and a clear intelligence will simultaneously give consideration to the evil present and the good future. It will have both pain and pleasure. In the presence of a continuous

progress, dotted by bloody victories, glorious achievements of science, and enduring successes of creative genius, a healthy optimism will propel one to hope.

Outside of childishness, which wants to see everything rose colored, outside of simplicity bordering on idiocy, which laughs neurotically, outside of hypersensitivity, which ponders and exalts and talks nonsense, there is an optimism of reason, an optimism of the things themselves. It is objective optimism. It is not in the subject. It is in the medium surrounding the subject.

Real life provides all the elements in order for one's understanding to recognize the evil that must be overcome and the good that must be conquered. To classify oneself as pessimistic and optimistic is to declare oneself sick. And if the sick abound, it is no less certain that the arbitrary pathological division is inapplicable to the majority of people.

Mentally, pessimism is the fruit of past and present reality whereas optimism is the reasonable result of past, present, and future reality.

One is not pessimistic or optimistic because of ideality, because of a system of doctrine, because of a philosophical bent. In the strict sense of the words, one is one or the other by defect or by excess of health. And nothing more.

Unworthy of man is to give oneself over to philosophical misanthropy in front of the blackness of life. Unworthy to let oneself be swept away by philosophical delusions, by deceptive illusions in the presence of realized dreams and in the expectation of others to be realized.

Serenely, one must face reality with its joys and sorrows, its successes and defeats, with its woes and benefits.

Neither optimistic nor pessimistic. The development of humanity is an uninterrupted series of falls and exaltations. The best is located just out of reach in the distance. Even though absolute good has to always flee before us, we must not back down or stop. There is no reason either to surrender to misanthropy or to get carried away by false imaginations. There is reason to always walk forward. He who does not walk in this way is crushed, and life without a future objective is not worth living.

(*El Libertario*, number 3, Gijón, August 24, 1912.)

Reason Is Not Enough

Rationalism does not convince me, whatever its meaning might be. It seems to me that behind that word something metaphysical and theological always hides. By the mere effort of reason, very large speculative things are built, but almost never are they solid and firm. And yet, many are extraordinarily paid because of their relationship with the resonant words *rational*, *reason*, and so forth.

In general, we pay little attention to the review and analysis of our words and our arguments. We forget that what one considers to be logical and reasonable, another deems beyond all rationality, and, what is worse, we tend to believe strongly that the dictates of reason are universal and indisputable, and something we should all respect.

Nothing is further from reality. Against the dictates of reason, the grandiose building of astronomy has been erected. Against the dictates of reason, religions and philosophical systems have fallen into complete oblivion. Against the dictates of reason, the progress of humanity has been carried out and is being carried out because human reason is that which has forged all the historical errors and that which now keeps the world on the edge of ignorance and superstition.

Even those who deem themselves revolutionaries and men of the future live by superstitions and ignorance, or, in other words, make arguments with ignorance and superstitions, because, pigeonholed in the famous dictates of reason, they do not realize that reason, without experimentation, is purely imaginative and egotistical. Minds find themselves in the personal and exclusive logic of the "I" and they throw themselves at the biggest audacities devoid of any foundation.

From man to man there is, in terms of logic, true abysses. And since we do not know of any inspired reason capable of imposing itself on all humans, it will be unavoidable to put a stop to our rationalist enthusiasms.

Neither nature nor reality is a syllogism. However, the instrument of interpretation, our understanding, must not make the mistake of allowing syllogisms to be identical for everyone.

The same perception, the same sensations, vary from man to man. Why wouldn't the translation of these sensations to ideas and words vary? Why wouldn't logic vary?

If a man, the most intelligent possible, but detached from the civilized world, were told that steel ships stay afloat on the waters of the sea, he would flatly refuse such a possibility, founded precisely on the dictates of reason. If he were told that steel airplanes fly freely through the air, he would also firmly refuse to admit it. His reason, everyone's reason, says that any object heavier than air falls to the ground.

Reason, when it is not supported in experience, errs or succeeds by chance.

But it is unnecessary to appeal to uncivilized man. There is a fact, which is the key to the question: when a vacuum is created in a tube where there is water, the water rises. Logic, unable to explain the event, invented *vacuum horror*. But experience allowed us to know atmospheric pressure, the law of gravity, and many other things that had not occurred to reason itself. Finally, reason realized that water rises through the tube where the vacuum has been created precisely because atmospheric action or pressure is not present. And this explanation, that those boxed into rationalism would call rational, is nothing more than *an explanation of fact* about which reason can still construct new inventions and new errors.

Actually, reason is as wonderfully suited to understand the causes of which nature reveals to it as unable to establish by itself one single truth or reality, if you will. It is true that the experience of centuries should make us ever so distrustful of reason as of faith. But it is easier and more comfortable to imagine and invent than to patiently investigate and discover facts and the connections that bind them. For this reason, alleged rationalism has so many followers in all zones and in all ideological climates.

Where experience is lacking, reason almost always breaks. Reason is not enough. All things taken to be rational are often unfounded and opposed to reality. At most, they conform to appearances. No, reason is not enough. Constant experimentation is necessary, stubborn and persistent analysis of the facts, tenacious research, and, above all, *verification*, necessarily a posteriori, of the deduced consequences, so that reason can rise modestly, without emphasis, to formulate the most basic of truths. Facts are something more than syllogisms and much more than scholasticism. Those of us who think of ourselves as men of the future, and we are only poor imitations of men of the past, are still deluded.

Less reason and more experience; less rationalism and more reality; less gymnastics of feverish imagination and more stock of positive knowledge and facts from nature will make us capable and worthy of other civilizations and of another better world because, along the road of speculative constructions and pretenses of faith, we will always walk revolving around everything atavistic and erroneous.

Which is precisely the opposite of what apparently we, very rationally, desire.
(*Acción Libertaria*, number 10, Madrid, July 25, 1913.)

Vision of the Future

And the good blind man, trembling, spoke to the assembly as follows:

I lost the ability to see the world. Upon losing my sight, I lost everything, because useful physical activity is next to impossible without it.

My poor science, acquired by dint of sacrifices, does not help me at all. My poor practice, learned from the ups and downs of a narrow and laborious life, is not helpful either.

I live in the solitude of darkness, orienting myself among people by the unsteady touch of my hands. I am alone with myself, without light and without hope.

But in the depths of my being, in the hours of my quiet solitude, springs inside, deep inside, a vivid clarity. A radiant star shines. Something undefined flashes that illuminates me in such a way that you cannot understand. It sparks with a singular light, one that is not the ether wave vibrating with the rhythm of the eye or the rhythm of blue. There, deep inside my organism arises the seductive vision of the future in which I delight and I bathe at ease and of which there was no recollection whatsoever of the times when my eyes saw and scanned the horizon, as now you scan the future that you daydream. And in this inner vision, I no longer see the ragged old man laboriously pulling the cart that is stuck in the mud of the big city. I no longer see the consumptive boy who reaches out to passersby breathlessly trotting down the avenue in search of their daily crust of bread. I no longer see the hunched old woman who rolls under the feet of the donkey that pulls the car of the great lord, like the impotent old man used to pull the rickety wheelbarrow through the unsteadiness of misery. I no longer see the semi-starved or starved young girl offering her flesh to the satiety of debased men. I no longer see the sexes bawdily and vilely inverted. I no longer see the silks in which lewdness is wrapped nor the rags in which innocence is crumpled up. I no longer see the bellyful of idlers and the famished nakedness of the laborious. I no longer see men in disguises of gods or servants of gods, with disguises of death or instruments of death. I no longer see the vile market where vices are just as highly valued as virtues, where things are just as highly valued as people. I no longer see evil, injustice, pain, that immense pain that humanity drags with itself through the centuries, filling the world with misery, with relentless misery.

I no longer see anything of what, before my terrible blindness, used to pass many times to the side of my indifference or to the side of my anger.

Now everything is placid. Inner light, the light of lights, has broken from the exterior darkness. The land is an immense anthill of laborious men. They work with pleasure, delight with exquisite tenderness, research, and study. The world is embellished with the marvelous spontaneity of achieved happiness.

Weeping, sorrow, cracks in the soul? The pain of the lover who loses the loved one. The weeping that waters the grave of the father, of the son, of the wife. Broken hearts lacerated by the sharp pain of a great misfortune. Who will erase your marks? The common love of humans, the pampering affection of a loyal friend, of the assiduous companion, are there to help the one who is crying, the one who succumbs to the pain of pains. The awful loneliness of the miserable, dirty, and foul death bed is horrible! Horrible the cruel lash of a claw of a beast that brutally

stands up at the supreme moment of weeping, of pain, of the nameless bitterness that harasses the sick, the needy, and the homeless!

Not anymore. Nothing of this wicked spectacle of human atrophy exists.

Now everything is placid. Happiness is not dragged among the quagmire of all humiliations. Wealth does not lurk behind the bushes of infamy. One's own safety is not sustained by the cruel delight in other's misfortunes. One does not kill or steal or suck the blood of man in order to live. Answering beautiful equality's plea for bread for everyone, for light for everyone, for enjoyment for everyone, men help each other and love each other. Within the space of limitless freedom, which has a broad field of action for everyone, goodness flowers like in a scented garden. To the plea of supreme justice, which proclaims all men are equal, human happiness is agreed upon through the generous and spontaneous effort of each person, and work becomes a great feast of love, beauty, and science. Boundless joy, inexpressible happiness, pleasure of gods! Get to work, happy children of achieved happiness.

And the good blind man, convulsively waving his arms in space, shouted:

My friends, close your eyes and let my inner light shine on you. Let my inner light be like the beacon of your actions.

And if anyone says that the world will always be the work of evil, by evil, and for evil, hunt him like a beast or tear out his eyes so that perhaps, in the solitude of his darkness, this magical and blissful vision of the future might also shine for him.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 18, Madrid, September 19, 1913.)

9 Iconoclastic Ideas

The Bankruptcy of Beliefs

Ricardo Mella adapted this work in 1912 for inclusion in the volume *Social Questions*. He made that adaptation by inserting between various paragraphs of the original text a large part of “Enclosures” and some fragments of “Dialogue about Skepticism,” articles that are fully reproduced elsewhere in *Ideario*. For this reason, we believe that it is more fitting to publish “The Bankruptcy of Beliefs” as it first appeared, which will allow the reader, besides, to better understand the evolution of Mella’s thought. (Editors’ note from the 1926 edition of *Ideario*).

Faith had its moment. It also had a noisy collapse. There is nothing left standing at this time but the lonely ruins of its altars.

If you ask both educated people and those who still wear the intellectual loincloth, and they want to answer you in conscience, they will tell you that faith has died forever, specifically political faith, religious faith, and even scientific faith, which has disappointed so many hopes.

With the death of the past, yearning eyes turned toward the rising sun. The sciences had their triumphal hymns. And it happened that the crowd found new idols. Even now, the illustrious ones with new beliefs are constantly preaching the sublime virtues of scientific dogma. The dangerous talkativeness of eulogistic adjectives, the everlasting talk of fake wise men, brings us to the point at which the bankruptcy of science is rightly proclaimed.

Actually, it is not really science that is bankrupt today. There is not one science. There are sciences. There are no finished things. There are things in perpetual formation. And what does not exist cannot fail. If one still claimed that what is in constant elaboration, what constitutes or continues constituting the flow of knowledge, goes bankrupt in our time, it would show us what sciences cannot give us. The human labor to investigate and understand is not collapsing. Beliefs are collapsing in much the same way that faith collapsed in the past.

The convenience of believing without examination or after mature deliberation, coupled with the poverty of general culture, has caused to happen to philosophical faith and later to scientific faith what happened to theological faith. Believers in a multitude of *isms* are heading down the same path as that of religious and political fanatics. These *isms*, even if they vouch for the greatest wealth of our understanding, do nothing but confirm the human spirit’s atavistic tendencies.

But, what does the clamor mean that continually rises within parties, schools, and doctrines? What does that battle without truce between the catechumens of the same church mean? Simply, it means that beliefs collapse.

The holy and crazy enthusiasm of the neophyte forges new doctrines and the doctrines’ new beliefs. Something better is desired. The ideal is pursued, and a noble and elevated use of activities is sought. After hardly a cursory examination is made (if it is given so that it reverberates harmoniously in our understanding and our heart), one believes. Belief then drags everything. It directs

and governs our entire existence and absorbs all our faculties. It is like chapels, like churches, big or small, that are powerfully lifted up everywhere. Belief has its altars, has its worship, and has its faithful, as did faith.

But there is a fatal, inevitable hour of fearsome interrogations. And this luminous hour is that in which a mature thought asks itself the reason for its beliefs and for its ideological loves.

The ideal word, which was something like the nebula of a God in whose altar we burned the incense of our enthusiasms, then wobbles. Many things fall to pieces within us. We vacillate like a building whose foundations gave way. We feel annoyed with the commitments of party and opinion, as if our own beliefs were to become an unbearable bond. We believed in man, and we no longer believe. We completely affirmed the magical virtue of certain ideas, and we no longer dare to affirm it. We enjoyed the enthusiasm of an immediate positive regeneration, and we no longer enjoy it. We are afraid of ourselves. What a prodigious will power to not fall into the most terrible vacuity of ideas and feelings!

There goes the crowd dragged by the verbosity of those who do not carry anything inside, and by the blindness of those who think themselves full of great and incontestable truths. There goes the crowd lending, with the unconsciousness of its action, apparent life to a corpse whose burial does not wait but for the strong will of a great intelligence to pull off the new faith's blindfold.

But the man who thinks, the man who meditates on his opinions and actions in the quiet solitude to which the inadequacy of beliefs leads him, outlines the beginning of the great catastrophe. He has a presentiment of the bankruptcy of everything that keeps humanity on a war footing, and gets ready for the rebuilding of his spirit.

The noisy controversies of the parties, the daily battles of personalities, of rancor, of hatred and jealousies, of vanities and ambitions, of the small and great miseries that grab the social body from top to bottom, do not mean anything other than that beliefs are going bankrupt everywhere.

Soon, perhaps now, if we delved into the consciences of believers, of all believers, we would not find more than doubts and questions. All good men would soon confess their uncertainties. The only ones who would still be affirming the closed belief would be those who, upon affirming it, derive some benefit, just as the priests of religions and the augurs of politics continue singing the praises of faith that, even after its death, still feeds them.

Is it, perhaps, that humanity will throw itself into the abyss of the final denial, the denial of itself?

Let us not think like old believers who weep before the collapsing idol. Humanity will not do anything else but break one more ring in the chain that imprisons it. The clatter matters little. Whoever does not feel in the mood for calmly attending the collapse will do well to draw back. There is always pity for the disabled.

We believed that ideas had the sovereign virtue of regenerating us, and we find ourselves now with people who do not carry in themselves elements of purity, justification, and truth. They cannot borrow them from any ideal. Under the fleeting influence of a virgin enthusiasm, we seem renewed, but in the end, the environment recovers its empire. Humanity is not composed of heroes and geniuses, and so, even the purest will sink, at last, in the filth of all petty passions. The hour in which beliefs collapse is also the hour in which all the swindlers are known.

Are we in an iron circle? Beyond all the hecatombs, life springs anew. If things do not change according to our particular theses but happen in such a way that we intend them to happen, that does not vouch for the denial of the reality of realities. Outside our claims of being believers, modification persists, and continuous change is fulfilled and everything (surroundings, men and

things) evolves. In what direction? Ah! That is precisely what is at the mercy of the unconsciousness of crowds. Ultimately, force, an element foreign to the work of understanding and of the sciences, decides.

After all the propaganda, all the lessons, and all the progress, humanity does not have, does not want to have, more creed than violence. Is it right? Is it wrong?

And it is necessary to accept things as they are, and, by accepting them, our spirit does not waver. At the critical moment in which everything crumbles in us and around us when we become aware that we are neither better nor worse than others; when we are convinced that the future is not enclosed in any of the formulas that are still dear to us; when we are convinced that the species will never conform to the molds of a determined community, call it A or call it B; and we make sure, in short, that we have not done more than forge new gold-plated chains with loved names, at that decisive moment, it is necessary to break all the knick-knacks of belief, to cut all ties, and to return stronger than ever to personal independence.

If a vigorous individuality is stirred within us, we will not die morally at the hands of an intellectual vacuum. For man, there is always a categorical affirmation, *the act of becoming*, the beyond that is reflected relentlessly and after which it is necessary to run, nevertheless. Let us run faster when the bankruptcy of beliefs is a done deal.

What does the certainty that the objective will eternally grow more and more distant from us matter? Men who fight, even in this conviction, are the ones who are needed; not those who, in everything, find elements of personal gain; not those who make of party interests the recruiting office for the satisfaction of their ambitions; not those who, poised to monopolize for their own benefit, would monopolize even feelings and ideas.

Selfishness, vanity, foolish arrogance, and base ambition find a place, even among men of healthier aspirations. Also, in the parties with more generous ideas, there are seeds of slavery and exploitation. Even in the circle of the noblest ideals, charlatanism and deification teem. Faticism soon devolves to intransigence among friends, and to cowardice among adversaries. Boastful fatuity rises up, shielded in general ignorance. Everywhere, weeds sprout and grow. Let us not live with mirages.

Will we let the weight of everything atavistic that resurfaces in us and around us, with sonorous names, crush us?

To stand up determined, more determined than ever, setting sights always beyond any conception, will reveal the true fighter, the revolutionary of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Without the boldness of a hero, it is necessary to pass fearlessly through the flames that consume the bulk of time, to take risks among the pieces of wood that crackle, ceilings that sink, walls that collapse. And when nothing is left but ashes, rubble, and formless debris that will have crushed the weeds, only one simple job will remain for those who come after: to clear the floor of lifeless obstacles.

If the fall of faith has allowed belief to grow in the fertile field of humanity, and belief, in turn, wavers and bends withered to the ground, let us sing the bankruptcy of belief because it is a new step on the road to individual freedom.

If there are ideas, no matter how advanced they are, that have tied us to the trap of doctrinarism, let us smash them to smithereens. A supreme ideality for the mind, a pleasant satisfaction for the spirit scornful of human pettiness, a powerful force for creative activity, thought poised on the future and the heart poised on the common well-being, will always remain standing, even after the bankruptcy of all beliefs.

At these moments, even though fools are frightened, even though those who are pigeonholed are worried, something incomprehensible to the dying world is bubbling up in many minds: beyond anarchy there is also a rising sun, in the succession of time there is no sunset without a rising.

(*La Revista Blanca*, number 10, Madrid, December 1, 1902.)

Enough Idolatries!

Close friends warned me, and I refused to believe it. Evidence has come to me in the form of allegories and postcards and also in the form of journalistic news.

Such a base mentality could not result in people who are radicals, socialists, or anarchists. If that which is told to me is true, if we have steeped so low—I told myself—how will there not be one single voice that rises up in protest, that loathes the mean and vile idolatry, that courageously rejects any complicity with such nefarious work?

One day fetishism is manifested in the form of apologetic meetings, laudatory articles, and glorifications that reject the weakest spirit of justice. Another day it is revealed in street demonstrations, servile acclamations, and in deifications that degrade and corrupt the multitude. The wave grows until all consideration of public decency and honesty is devastated.

On the one hand, Lerroux, on the other, Ferrer.¹ The men are not important to me. I do not want to judge them right now. There will be time to spill the beans, if it is necessary. What is important to me, what is important to everyone are the demonstrations of base idolatry and of indignant fetishism for the one and the other.

The men who dip flags when Lerroux passes by are reminiscent of how the army dips arms when the King passes by or when God passes by. The men who intone hymns to the caudillo, who revere him and warmly receive him in all forms, who almost adore him for his beautiful image more than for his ideas, those men cannot boast of progressive or radical ideas. Whoever says that the spirit of rebellion lives with such people and that such men hoist the red flag of the revolution lies. Those men are not radicals or progressives. They are lackeys or worse than lackeys. They are capable of substituting the noble beasts that pull the lord's coach. And those who receive and accept such tributes and such subservience without protest do not want the peoples' moral elevation nor do they do anything to emancipate them. They deceive them, they exploit them, and they degrade them.

And what to say about those who have made allegory out of the anti-artistic, have made the postcard ridiculous, and have made the trinket and the locket—sign of rebellion, of revolutionary acts—pretentious? Right now, I have in front of me an ignominious card: a piece of cloth with Ferrer's head wrapped in a crown of thorns and on top an inscription that says: "Ecce Homo." Below, a rough representation of his execution by Maura and his henchmen. All that is missing is Magdalene, without a doubt because the author forgot Soledad Villafranca.² Is it not horribly ridiculous? Is it not a bloody gibe? Is not this way of deification and the Christianization of Ferrerism an unspeakable brutality? Is not this a clear revelation that there are shoddy revolutionaries who idolize man and worship through man?

¹ Alejandro Lerroux (1864–1949) led the Radical Republican Party during the Second Spanish Republic (1931–1939), and Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia (1859–1909) founded the Escola Moderna in Barcelona.

² Ferrer's sentimental companion.

Those who do such things, who support such work cannot be anarchists, nor can they be socialists, nor can they be radicals. They are simply idolaters, Christians of Ferrer, red Torquemadas, souls of friars within workers' shirts, and savage Europeans able to jump into the passage of the carriage of the gods in order for it to flatten and crush them.³ There is no way to reconcile these more than primitive and insane demonstrations of bestial fanaticism with any progressive idea, much less with the anarchist ideal. And if there are anarchists capable of working for this fetishism in an active mode or a passive mode, for them, more than for others, the harsh and cutting words that most vividly express the indignation of the writer should be taken into serious consideration.

Any complicity with those two fanaticisms for two people, even if they were worth the imponderable, is impossible for a man of ideas, strong judgment, and thought free of routines and prejudices.

And it is very certain that the few who respect their own dignity, which is like respecting their own freedom, will frankly condemn this pestilence of amulets, of stamps and effigies of revolutionary or, better said, pseudo-revolutionary religiosity.

As free men, we will be able to be tolerant. We are tolerant of all ideas. We will never surrender to fanaticism for men, even if they are more representative than the supposed gods themselves. We will not help to forge a new chain, even if its links are of gold and diamonds.

A free mind, a whole heart, and a good conscience cannot but abhor all these idolatrous vile deeds that corrupt the crowds.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 9, Gijón, January 13, 1911.)

First of May

Don't you, worker, feel a little like a poet: slightly crazy and somewhat happy? Look, it's the great day of flowers, of the resurrection of life. See, we are in the heart of renewal, in the middle of vitality, in abundant love. Everything praises the glory of flowery May.

You can surrender your cult of enthusiasm, of vigor, of energy to the god of victories like the young girls who sing their virginal desires at the foot of the altar. You have won, and the songs of triumph wouldn't sound bad in the throats of fanatics.

The First of May is also your day. You have your party and your icon. Have fun, but laugh, drink, dance, sing: March in correct and full formation toward a happy future. Your heroes are ahead along with your banners; get to the doors of the authoritarian synagogues, pray your annual prayer, and sing, dance, drink, laugh, perorate, have fun again. You have your party and your icon. The First of May is also your party.

Do you know what your idol is called? Saint Routine Enlighten You. Do you know what you are celebrating and why you are celebrating it? May the divine image of slavery create in your head the clarity of all truths. March, march, like a flock of sheep, like a drove of mules, like a herd of pigs, behind your banners and your heroes. At the end of the workday, with your hoarse voice, bruised bones, blurred vision, and shaky thought caused by exhaustion, perhaps you will find your hearth cold, your loves asleep, your hopes dead, and your foolish acts frustrated. Maybe the miserable reality of your misfortunes sweeps flowery May's waves of dementia and poetry from

³ Tomás de Torquemada (1420–1498) was the first Grand Inquisitor of the Spanish Inquisition.

your mind. You have performed your duty like a good citizen, a disciplined worker, and a fervent believer. And you can sleep peacefully.

For centuries upon centuries, your tribute to routine will be sterile. Your processions, like so many other carnivals, will be a mockery of the people. A pastime, a curiosity, an anachronism, and nothing more. Some give speeches, others listen; those over there applaud, these here smile. The merrymaking can continue. Three hundred sixty-five days later, they will repeat the same pantomime with equal seriousness and level-headedness. You reached the pinnacle of political ability, of civic education, and of social power for a reason. Domesticity is the farsighted sign of civilization.

Don't you see how the wealthy people are trembling with fear? Don't you see the fright of the powerful? On this cursed day, everything is shaking: the State, Property, the Church, the Army, and the Magistracy. Only you are calm, magnificent, that is to say, majestic. You are the ruler of the roost.

You are right to feel, on this famous day, a little like a poet, slightly crazy, somewhat happy. Tomorrow, it will be late. The workshop, the factory, and the furrow await you; a barbaric foreman and a rude bourgeois beckon you. Who knows if you will end up in prison! Anyway, make the most of it: the illusion of freedom is worth living it up.

But, my friend, if you don't know more, if you don't want more, if you just do and pretend, resign yourself to be a slave for centuries upon centuries, for you will have deserved it. The First of May will be your *inri*.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 20, Gijón, April 28, 1911.)

October 13, 19...

This article was published in *El Libertario* one day earlier on October 12, 1912.

We are not devotees of the ephemerides or worship living or dead men.

Events and men pass; ideas remain. Looking to the past, living from memories, wailing for the lost is to stop on the road and to become immersed in inaction. Looking to the future and relentlessly running after it is of men of action and thought at odds with contemplative nirvana.

Every day is a good day to be aware of governmental killings and infamies, and of capitalism's robberies and tortures. Every minute that passes, an act of vandalism and an infinite pain of the suffering multitude are marked in running time. The ignored martyrs are in the millions. The pangs that kill are countless. Throughout the roundness of the earth, humanity groans in slavery and misery. Sacrifices seem sterile. Propaganda, unfruitful. Useless, the struggles. Millions of tired and lean men drag the heavy chain of existence. There is no pain like theirs. All lyricism would be a pale reflection of universal suffering. And the heart that beats fast wants to break the fragile walls in which it pumps.

Let us quiet the gleaming vibrations of the most beautiful feelings. Do not call us pietistic people surrendered to the sweetness of a good cry. Do not believe us to be invaded with Christian sleepiness that overwhelms and humbles.

Let us talk like men of our time, more with the head than with the heart. Sentimentality has not erased, in centuries, the slightest trace of human pain. Human suffering endures and perhaps grows and takes on huge proportions. Civilization is the drunkenness of pain. To break the spell of plaintive conventions, to crush the causes that engender suffering, and to annihilate evil by all

means available to man requires the act of swashbuckling on the part of intelligence and energy, requires deeds and not words, requires yearnings and not memories, requires anathemas and not wailing. One has to drown compassion, love, and mercy. The poet philosopher would say that one has to be tough.

There is no pain greater than that of drowning pain itself!

Where does the insanity of triumphant, conceited, bloodthirsty, and barbarically cruel capitalism and of governmentalism lead us?

A date arrives; a cowardly murder is perpetrated; the multitude of all nations clamors; time goes by.

Remember? No! Every day, more than one victim is abused; thousands are. Every day, the starving crowd is murdered. Every day, it is imprisoned, deported, pursued. The fighters for the ideal are cornered like wild beasts. Enough!

Let us look to the future. And if we look back, let us not forget that in a corner of the world there is a tombstone without a flower, without a keepsake, and under it a voice from beyond the grave that shouts: "Germinal!" It is the voice whose supplication changed the face of Spain and shook the world.

Every day is October 13, 19... Every day we patiently endure suffering, misery, and slavery.

Let us be free!

(*El Libertario*, number 10, Gijón, October 12, 1912.)

Beyond the Ideal

Let us not think like old believers who weep before the collapsing idol.

Believing in, fighting for, and clinging to a dead idol is what all believers do. It does not matter if the little idol is made of clay, bronze, or flesh. It does not matter if it is diluted in the mental nebula or in the whirlwind of passion. The inhuman law of sacrifice is fulfilled because of, at first, a living ideal and, then, because of a dead one. It comes from the biblical Jehovah, the evangelical Christ. Wherever there is a *holy* book that, in any language, touts the virtue of the burnt offering, one must prostrate oneself before something. The mystic falls to his knees, the fanatic surrenders his life, and, through the inversion of terms, the revolutionary rambles on about the miracle-working madness of wonderful transformations.

Do not rip their beloved illusion from them. They will defend themselves like lions. They will shred you to pieces like panthers. They shall roar like hyenas. There is no fiercer animal than the believer.

Admit error, change course, and open oneself up to the light of truth that suddenly springs from the arcane? Impossible! Struggling with himself, the man of the ideal will stubbornly persist in the error. He will stick to the aberration. He will obstinately fight against the torrent that wants to drag him. Faith, unwavering faith, will always be on guard. And whether it is called religious faith, political faith, philosophical and social faith, it will oppose all the excesses of thought, shutting itself off in its fanatical, unshakable dogmatism.

Men, figures, representations, and cults change. The artifices of logic and mental constructions change. Lexicon and rhetoric change. Only one thing remains inalterable: myth.

Like old believers, we weep in front of the collapsing idol and, if we cannot rebuild it, we create a new one. It is necessary to always be on one's knees in front of something.

Here is why the ideal remains irreducibly identical to itself through all ideological transformations. Even in the higher elevations, the crushing ram is not much unlike the knickknack that flatters the gods and praises the lords of the earth. They are various instruments of different cults.

It seems as if the habit of adoration had been frozen in the soul of men; in his brain, the idea of wonder; in his flesh and bones, the unfortunate tendency of servility.

It will be in vain to cry for the independence of spirit. The freest will desperately clutch at the straw of their fixed idea.

They would not be able to live without the master of articulated organs or without the master of ideological coherence. It is necessary to feel oneself directed by something and for something. We are made for slavery. The whip is also an icon.

The battling of centuries has brought us to a time in which dogmatic idealism will crash against the rocks of the free spirit. Beyond the ideal, there is always truth, there is always justice, and there is always reason. No one would dare show that the development of ideas has insurmountable barriers. The limit is absurd and is impossible. Do not put walls around thought. The very same thought will knock them down like a fragile rubble factory. Open your mind to the boldest analysis; surrender yourself to all the truths that arise; do not solidify yourself in the quietism of a beautiful conception, however broad and great that it seems to you. It is advisable to have the spirit open to all transformations. Beyond the ideal, there is always ideal.

We are not only speaking for the incurable believers of the past. We are rather speaking for believers of the revolution, of the blissful future, and of the happiness to come. We are talking for the dreamers who, believing to demolish, are reconstructing; who, judging themselves to be revolutionaries, are the dogmatic and blind persistence of old aberrations.

Everywhere it seems that new people, new legions of brave fighters for very new things arise. Do not believe it. They bring on their backs hereditary fanaticism. Perhaps they move forward enlightened by the spirit of sect. Perhaps the distant vision of a new age guides them. Turn on, just in case, all the lights. And you all, reveal yourself before the crowd so that it sees you clean of idolatry and servility.

Everyone who considers himself at the end of his trip is a lost man for the revolution. He will perish worshipping his idol or crying his demise. He will be like all the old believers.

Beyond the ideal, there is always more ideal.

(*El Libertario*, number 22, Gijón, January 11, 1913.)

Dead Things

All cults decline. Despite the human propensity to bow down to something; despite the faith transmitted from generation to generation for centuries, beliefs wither, ideas vacillate, rites die. The oldest dogmas weaken in human consciousness. Faith is still dead for the recalcitrant.

If, because of hereditary inclination, we forge new idols and we kneel before them, the cult soon decays and finally perishes.

Political neophilia also invented its ritual masquerades. Social neophilia invented its ephemeris, its beloved saints, and its mystical cult. Revolution invented its sparkling fetishes. Without illuminations, bright colors and rags, there is no possible faith or acceptable enthusiasm for man.

But presently only the routine of all rites remains. They live a languid, monotonous, and automatic life, faithful to habit. One goes to Mass in the same way that one goes to the promenade to ride the Ferris wheel for a couple of hours. One goes to the memorial rally in the same way that one goes to the cinema or the theater. One attends a religious, political, or social ceremony like one who completes a painful function and gets fed up and bored by the habit. There is no faith, no enthusiasm, and no conviction. Those petrified in the worship of dead things can also be included in this criticism.

Writers routinely scribble their pages on determined dates. Not having on hand anything new to say, they put together a few vulgarities to get by. Speakers repeat the same topics without art and without enthusiasm. And readers or listeners atrociously yawn, fed up with the euphuistic vulgarity that does not manage to galvanize idolatry's corpse.

There are still rallies and banquets on February 11.⁴ A few articles are written, and a few speeches are made to remember the heroic Communalists of Paris on March 18.⁵ Routinely, newspapers publish special issues to commemorate dates or events. Routinely, the stragglers of ideologism continue worshipping their beloved icons and their glorious anniversaries. The cult has no other maintainers than mummies on two feet.

The crowd, intelligent or ignorant, that walks toward the future, gradually distances itself from these adorations. Men of thought and heart, revolutionaries conscious of their work, repudiate and openly condemn them. Priests of theological religion and philosophical religion; priests of political myth and social myth are left alone. They are like the parish priest in Zola's novel saying the last mass in the last church.⁶

It is futile to attempt to prop up the secular tower that falls to the ground. It is madness to stand in front of the wave of general skepticism that overwhelms and destroys in its path the knickknacks of faith. They are dead things in human consciousness. One does not believe, does not adore, does not idolize. Thought stands powerful over all the fragilities of mystical sentimentality, even if it hides behind renovating qualities of the ideal. Revolution had its canonized puppets, its holy dates, its worship and ritual. The neophyte enthusiasm saturated it with mysticism and idolatry. Mature reason wants revolution to be iconoclastic, irreverent, and skeptical. And so today, not only does archaic faith die but also the newest faith of new idealisms.

Let the puerile entertainment of banquets and commemorative meeting be for the revolutionary fossils. The phalanges of the revolution have something better to do. They are not ready to spend their time dressing as harlequins and rehearsing dance steps. The proletarian revolution is too boorish to be distracted by dazzling filigrees of a dead aristocratism with pure bourgeois airs.

The working revolution wants substance. It wants living things, not dead things.
(*El Libertario*, number 28, Gijón, February 22, 1913.)

⁴ On February 11, 1858, a vision of the Virgin Mary appeared to 14-year-old Bernadette Soubirous asking for a chapel to be built in Massbielle, near Lourdes, France.

⁵ The Paris Commune was a radical socialist and revolutionary government that ruled Paris from March 18 to May 28, 1871.

⁶ *Lourdes* is the name of the novel.

10 Morals

The Weight of Immorality

Taking my arm, a clairvoyant and ingenious good friend, neither revolutionary nor of the labor movement, told me his point of view:

My friend, immorality is a very heavy thing. And it always comes from the top down. It obeys the law of gravity. If you enter a public office and observe that each employee idles away their time, if you come to know that absolutely everybody steals what they can, direct your sights to the top, to the leadership, because from there will come everything. When the boss is negligent or has at his disposal material or interests whose administration and custody is entrusted to him, the subordinates, looking at themselves in such a mirror, also make off with what they can and do as little as possible. If the boss is rude, the subordinates will be very rude. If the boss is lazy, the employees will be superlatively idle. Immorality is like a falling rock. The velocity accelerates uniformly, and the greater is the distance traveled, the faster is the final velocity. Immorality would go to the center of the earth, if the earth's crust did not block it. So it is with men. The last fool, which is the one who usually carries all the blame, receives immorality's violent blow at its maximum development.

I gave him a look as if to ask if he were astonished or not at his clear perception of a social phenomenon in which we are daily placed.

What occurs in the public office happens everywhere. The trading house, workshop, and factory follow the same law of immoral gravitation my friend pointed out. Even where the deleterious influence of political and administrative routine seems excluded, the law is fulfilled. Social groups, artistic or recreational societies, newspaper companies, and so forth, everything is subject to the gravity of immorality. If other people's concerns are a distraction on top, all compromise is forgotten on the bottom. The example is more powerful than the precepts. Facts are always stronger than predictions, more effective than words.

It is very singular that where displays of honorability are more frequent, demoralization is greater. From the top come eloquent speeches full of profound words; serious judgments gleaming with ethical rigorism; regulations and laws and codes swollen with wise maxims, with imperious commands to public awareness. And is there anything more outrageously immoral than everything that bustles at the top? Every respectable character is usually a rascal full of deception; every brainy moralist, a slippery and utter scoundrel. Arguably, he who proclaims morals the most is he who corrupts it the most.

It is unnecessary to cite examples. The reader always knows more cases than those that the writer can quote. Ordinary life is an arsenal of concupiscence. There is no need to mention public administration or large commercial and industrial companies. Everything is unsurpassed vileness.

In every neighbors' child, there cannot be more than a crook, more or less, dressed as a decent person.

And why not? Social life is organized for that, precisely oriented in that direction. It is a little like an ambush, an assault. A distracted traveler falls victim to a hundred bandits who lie in wait for him. He who wants to remain honest succumbs in misery. It is obligatory to follow the line of least resistance, adjusting oneself to the environment. That is, based on the circumstances, we degrade ourselves, steal, and kill, if necessary.

Exaggeration? Nothing of the sort. The soft shapes and the subterfuges or, in other words, the usual tricks hardly hide the overwhelming reality of legalized banditry. We have gotten to the point where we believe that it is very honorable and very fair to commit the greatest immoralities, because the laws and customs have sanctioned all vileness. But deep down, if we pause a moment to examine inside ourselves, we are rotting immorality. We are able to crawl through the mud, to debase ourselves with the plunder, to stain our clean hands with the neighbor's blood. All of this to arrive, to win and then ... to die like pigs.

My friend, neither revolutionary nor of the labor movement, got overexcited. I let go of his arm and said:

You talk like an anarchist. Beware of jail.

And he replied, taking my arm again:

Well, I do not mind going arm-in-arm with an anarchist. Anarchists are harmless.

(*El Libertario*, number 7, Gijón, September, 1912.)

Secondhand Morality

We will not say anything new if we affirm that our moral notions are very far from responding to the demands of nature and justice.

They openly quarrel with nature as soon as the problem of physiological needs faintly appears, such as nourishment and reproduction. The moral notions fight with justice as soon as the antagonism of interests erupts.

As is well known, it is not necessary to repeat that he who seizes something that he needs is called a thief and he who daily deducts from the other men who work for him a considerable part of the value of their work is called an honorable man. We will not repeat the vulgar consideration that deems a concubine the woman who freely surrenders herself to the love of her life and a respectable lady the woman who leases a name that serves as a cover for her flirtations. Everyone has forgotten that we live completely at the mercy of an accommodative or secondhand morality.

But digging deeper into the matter, one will observe that the false values of the present morality come to alter even the very condition of individuals, falsifying their judgments and feelings. Frequently, the paradox occurs in which we consider, in different ways, absolutely identical facts. What we hold as heroism in some cases, we call, in others, cruelty, savagery, and barbarism. A man of certain conditions is a monster or a hero, not according to the nature of his actions, but according to the concomitant circumstances of the actions. Saint or devil is any exceptionally gifted individual, not according to his behavior, but according to the ideological preferences that

encourage him. At all times we apply different weights and different measures and, contrarily, we are so satisfied and so proud of our unmatched morality.

Not even in moments of great sentimental crisis do we want to surrender ourselves confessing the irreducible antinomy in which we live. There is no sufficient will to check our judgments and recognize the vice of origin that leads us to distort the most elementary notions of fairness. At best, we are astonished that a man who we thought was honest, courageous, a good citizen, and so forth suddenly falls into the abyss of crime or into the depravity of vice.

And yet, almost never is there contradiction in the fallen. The contradiction is in us. The contradiction is in us because what in one occasion we consider as heroic courage, we judge in another as inconceivable ferocity. Under the influence of metaphysical ideas of homeland, honor, chivalry, and so forth, or religious faith, political self-denial, and good citizenship, all our moral principles are transmuted. The measure is absolutely different from that applied in ordinary life.

There are statues erected to commemorate men whose chief merit has consisted of being scourges of humanity. If these same men had applied their ferocious instincts in ordinary life, they would have been carried to the pillory and hanged from a pole. Essentially, there is no difference between the two orders of facts. Each individual offers what they have inside, according to their circumstances and environment. That which is inscribed in our organism by heredity, tradition, and education is not erased by the mere fact of being born and living in one or another social sphere. What it does is comply with our secondhand morality and nothing else.

How is it that we do not realize that certain criminal deeds, certain depraved behaviors are, basically, faithful translation, in a different medium, of inclinations recorded in a defective organism whose heroics we had applauded and fringed with flowers in different circumstances?

The teaching of false moral values, which develops ferocious instincts, warlike inclinations, brutal selfishness, and mortifying ambitions and jealousies, is that which favors the formation of those monsters who, every so often, crush humanity.

Certain deeds do not seem to us sufficiently repugnant until they bear all their terrifying fruit. At every moment and every instant, we move, without worrying, to the side of the most repulsive vices and of the most heinous crimes. We apply secondhand morality to them without our conscience accusing us of the slightest complicity. We are, nevertheless, if not vicious and delinquent, protectors and factors of vice and crime. Our amazement at the great crisis is our accusation.

We will have to revise all our moral values, all our false moral values in order to not remain fearfully silent in front of the human beast that we ourselves have modeled. From the very substance of social life begins civilized barbarism. From the very heart of our public organization springs iniquity, brutal struggle, and inhuman cruelty that dishonors and debases us. A sincere morality that made men good would lead to the end of the human monster. But this desired morality is impossible in a world of classes, of privileges, and of irritating inequalities. This yearned-for morality will be the work of a future about which only a few believers in utopias have dreamed. And the dream will become a reality one day or the human species will have disappeared into the abyss of all bestiality.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 4, Madrid, June 13, 1913.)

Dunces and Crafty Devils

A comrade on the other side of the ocean raises a number of issues that would provide enough material for a volume.

I will not fall into the temptation of writing one, for the simple reason that I lack the time and the necessary acumen. But I want to please him, and I dedicate this article to him entirely. I will try very briefly and askance to address here some of his propositions.

It is commonplace, quite well known, that in social life he who behaves well is generally taken for a ride. Success, contrarily, elevates the crafty devils. The crafty ones are strong, wise, and good. The rest, pure trash.

This common experience occurs not only in the prosperous kingdom of the bourgeoisie, but also in the miserable huts of the proletariat. The fact is repeated in the heart of parties as well as in the center of social schools, capitalist groupings, and working societies.

Those not blinded by illusions will observe that, after a period of neophyte enthusiasm, a multitude of crafty devils, who marvelously milk the workers' udder, have slipped into the social field. Where they do not get a piece of the action, God does not even get a piece, if you will pardon the vulgar expression. There is no one more workerist, more socialist, more syndicalist, and more anarchist than they are. And the worst is that they manage to impersonate the best and the sincerest. The blemishes of their history magically vanish. There is a beneficent sponge for all rogues.

Applause, successes, and money are for these exalted revolutionaries. Good-natured souls are left shocked at the overwhelming eloquence and irreducible rebellion of these crafty devils who think of themselves as eminent figures, naturally to the modest measure of the militant proletariat.

Meanwhile, those who silently work, those who render continued tribute to quiet abnegation, those who say and do what best they can, these, more than the dunce, are taken for a ride if something worse does not happen to them, and they are seen being mistreated and mocked by the supers, who better than anyone know how to be free and rebellious.

It is not uncommon for some, the crafty devils, to become informers or police; to conclude by selling their pen or their word to the first bourgeois brute who offers them a sinecure. Often the others, the dunces, end up losing heart and pondering their dissatisfaction, or end up at peace at home or in the lethargy of the tavern.

The dunces will never return. The crafty devils can always return, especially if there is something to suck.

Beware, friends, of the vile falsifiers!

A political party man, even if he is an anarchist, can have defects and vices. Anyone, proletarian or bourgeois, merchant or manufacturer, exploiter or exploited, can be socialist or anarchist. Putting one's conduct in time with one's ideas will not be anything more than a good wish. For the worker, because exploitation enslaves him, and authority oppresses him. For the bourgeois, because his denial or his position puts him in the impossibility of practicing his ideas, however altruistic they may be.

In the fertile field of ideality, everything is possible. Mentally, we can consider ourselves as anarchist, as free, as equal as we want. In the terrain of the current reality, we are constrained to enslave or be enslaved.

Precisely because of this, we fight. The jump from reality to ideality is called revolution.

Let us not speak of virtues and vices. There is probably nothing to cling to. Join us, everyone, and leave, all who can.

But what cannot be allowed is that ideas serve as a cloak that conceals individual defects. And unfortunately, there is a great abundance of this.

The school of crafty devils teaches that anarchy is orgiastic and wild. All weaknesses, all repugnance, all human depravities have a determinism that science explains; they have another determinism that ruffians of the ideal, rogues who live on inconsistencies, fanfare, vile, and defiant deeds mumble.

The man of ideas, if he has vices, must also have the courage to confess them without staining his dear ideal. We cannot be angels; it is not necessary. But simply being men, we will not confuse the present base realities with the generous dreams of the future.

To aspire to freedom and justice is worthy of noble souls and dignifies the poor souls tortured by atavistic corruption.

I realize that I have jumped to moralizing pedantically. Excuse me, friends.

I also have my Nietzschean hours.¹

All virtues are liars. Cowards feign goodness like cynics feign boldness. There are heroic vicious people and virtuous scoundrels. Innominate trash, which is neither meat nor fish, plagues me. I prefer the brutal sincerity of he who does not deceive. Comedians are the worst kind of humanity. And there are so many comedians among us!

It is worth it to be always on guard.

Although this is very laborious, I would prefer us to continue on our way shaking off the flies that bother us so.

Believe me: a cleansing campaign is imposed.

There are too many crafty devils in our field, and it is time to not be taken for a ride.

This first attempt at emancipation is worth a great deal to the ideal.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 8, Madrid, July 11, 1913.)

Sincerity

Our present time is a sad spectacle. Public and private lies gnaw the bowels of society. Vice overtakes men and women, the elderly, and children. Vanity vanishes the mind. Hypocrites and fools, liars and degraded people, we pursue miserable ends of fleeting enjoyment.

Invaded by the epidemic of the nastiest skepticism, we trample consciousness, we despise personality. Nothing matters if we carefully feign qualities that neither we nor anyone recognizes in us.

We have signed an agreement with appearances surrendering ourselves to evil. Our political education, our social education, our mentality, our effectiveness, everything, absolutely everything, rests on that agreement.

This is not pessimism driven by a theoretical school or pessimism of organic tendency. It is the expression of reality imposed everywhere. We contemplate any man, whatever his ideas and feelings are, and suddenly the lie jumps out, the pretense jumps out, the vanity jumps out. Declared skeptics confess or make excuses. He who excuses himself accuses himself, I read somewhere.

¹ With this statement, Mella is explaining that he, like Nietzsche, who was well-known to be critical of a pedantically moralizing concept of God, has moments when he, too, criticizes people who pedantically moralize.

Those who have or appear to have ideas, aspirations, veil as best as possible their own insanity. Provoke them, and they will show you more lies than truths, more vanity than science itself, and more hypocrisy. The straight line is the narrow selfishness of the most diverse concupiscence. Many cynically flaunt the perversity of modern social life.

We are in the middle of a world crisis that threatens near ruin. Worn are the springs of moral life, of transcendent idealism, and of rancid politics, but the world sinks to the basest passions. Ambition overflows: wretched, poor, and fragile ambition. Selfishness crystallizes: rickety and anemic selfishness. All the noble qualities of personality dance a macabre dance and prostrate themselves on the altar of concupiscence. Ideas and feelings are placed at the service of passion. It is necessary to:

[...] creep up, as do the caterpillars, along a stake. In vain (Dumont) a thoughtful and sensible man will want to stay motionless in his condition, to make his luxury consist of his independence and enjoy rest and relaxation. He will not be left alone. Generosity, simple living and independent severity are unfashionable articles subject to general disdain.²

Religiosity is feigned, love of neighbor is feigned, abnegation is feigned, and sincerity is feigned. The tempting easy way out, the political easy job, the slippery slope of wealth, of fame, of applause: it is all here. One has to climb even if it means dragging oneself like the nastiest insects.

Climb, then, men of the day. Climb, those who aspire to govern, those who want to lead, and those who dream about ephemeral, dazzling lights. Climb, the ambitious ones, the gluttons of wealth. Climb, those who believe themselves to be the chosen ones, predestined to a literary, political, scientific, or social hegemony. Climb, emulously, for the stupid mass will help you, believing or pretending to believe in your promises of glory or of well-being or of greatness, and in your misleading services and in your foolish superiority.

While you climb, there will be no shortage of voices calling from down below for a simple, honest, sincere life that will come upon the collapse of the agonizing world, that will emerge from the clatter of all the slippery slopes crashing to the ground.

The strength of those who place their pride in their independence, in their sincerity, in their simplicity, is the strength of a world that is ahead of the times, that comes at full speed to clean up the atmosphere, the social environment and purify the conscience of individuals providing them the heroism of truth, the courage to be themselves, simply themselves, without deceitfulness, without dissimulation, and without hypocrisy. This force intends that citizens do not live on the common delusion, that each one confesses just who he is, kind or indifferent, selfish or selfless, white or red, wise or foolish; that everyone can shake hands with the other knowing that it is the hand of the enemy or friend, the hand of the hero or the hand of the wise, the hand of a fool or of a selfish person. Each man is worth much more the more he frankly reveals just who he is. We need to have the courage of our own personality.

Let us reveal who we are. If we cloak a personal ambition, let us not pretend that we are redeemers of others. If we chase after wealth, let us not feign piety that does not sit well, a religiosity that is not just lip service. Let us have the courage to be ourselves.

² Mella is quoting French criminologist Gabriel Tarde's *La philosophie pénale* (1890).

And when we have this courage, we will have returned to honest and simple life, to simple and clear truth. There is no greater glory than the tranquility of being honest, loyal, candid, and nobly disinterested. Let us return, yes, to modest manners, to customs of independence, of simplicity, and of honesty.

The atmosphere of lies, of ambition, of vanity, and of lust corrodes the entrails of society and corrodes our own insides. We are in full plague of lies, of fatuities, arrogantly conceited of our wickedness.

Let us knock on all doors. Let us force them open, if necessary, so that our personality offers itself to public contemplation as if between diaphanous windows.

I hope that voices ring out everywhere making a vigorous appeal to simplicity, to independence, and to honesty. Let us place our pride in it. It is necessary to be honest even in heroism.

Plagues are overcome by hygiene. Social hygiene has a name: truth.

Truth will be the great reactive that returns us to the domain of ourselves.

Let us speak the truth and, doggedly, impose the truth, even with fists, if necessary, without being afraid of anything. Truth is the relentless cautery of all the wounds that plague us and suffocate us in an atmosphere of death.

Truth will set us free.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 22, Madrid, October 17, 1913.)

11 Sociological Topics

The Intellectualist Hyperbole: Intellectual Laborers and Manual Laborers

It is regrettably fashionable to distinguish certain occupations or certain personal preferences with out-of-use words and those that lack any real meaning. The word *intellectual* applied to men of letters, publicists, men of study, and so forth is currently in vogue. That title suits the favored ones so well that even journalists of the most modest condition, men who define themselves as democrats, as socialists, and even as anarchists call themselves or let themselves be called *intellectuals* with open pleasure. Whether they believe it or not, they establish new and unjustified social difference in this manner. They create a new class, modernizing the detestable past. They tend to institute new idolatry in these times of egalitarian ferment, democratic customs, and collapsing altars.

Besides the lack of meaning and even the incorrectness of the buzzword, in what capacity should any man, who dedicates himself to jobs more or less dependent on the exercise of mental faculties, be distinguished? Is not, on the contrary, labor an imperceptible gradation from the least cerebral to the most cerebral, without, in any case, remaining entirely excluded either of the two forms of human activity? The aristocracy of talent seems to show, behind this high-sounding word, that they should abhor all men of real merit.

The individual who does no more than think, feel, immerse himself into the contemplation of beauty or the mysteries of science would be almost useless to the society in which he lived. He would be a freak, a failure, and he truly would not have anything of which to be proud. Pure intelligence, as it were, pure spirit; brain without muscles and organs to sustain it, without nerves and without matter to give it plasticity and life. I have here perhaps the arrogant idea that intellectuals are self-made. And, nevertheless, they know well that a man, not in those conditions, but simply in those of excessive cerebral exercise, cannot be more than an unbalanced and sick person, and they realize that only in rare cases sprout geniuses, sages, artists, those who reach the highest peaks of thought and beauty. They know well that there is no exclusively intellectual job just like there is not an exclusively material one. They understand that, more or less, writers, artists, and scholars work manually with the pen, with the palette, with the burin, with the research instrument, with the tool of operations.

Is not this exaggeration of intellectualism in reality arrogance in bad taste, and forgive me the word?

At the heart of the issue burns a profound contempt for eminently useful labor. Certain so-called intellectual workers are not of the stuff of those who sing very glorious hymns to the industry of man; are not of the stock of those who write "Germinal" and "Labor;" are not of those

who, from the height of a Fourier, lend a helping hand to the unfortunate sewer man to present him to society as one of its most useful members.¹

A well-defined distinction between the semi-idleness of a part of the ruling classes (men of letters, artists, etc.) and the grueling daily labor of the crowd is wanted. And as if, in order to carve a stone, to repair shoes by putting on new half soles or to forge any piece of iron, it were not necessary to sharpen the mind, to think and discuss and even feel the beautiful part of the work, a strong divide is drawn between the so-called manual laborers and laborers of intelligence.

If we observe that the so-called manual laborer hardly perfects his works because of the increasing automation of his functions, we will remember that it is the law of concurrence in which we live that forces him to produce mechanically, paying more attention to the amount than to the quality. And we will also remember that in the work of the writer and the artist, this same automatism is not lacking but is present. So much so that, if they were honest, the majority of intellectuals would confess it.

Even though the intellectuals are always salaried whereas the manual laborers, oftentimes, are not, both have in reality common interests and needs. If they are not equal, they are similar. Feelings and ideas divide them, not the nature of their occupations.

It is true that the people have a grudge against the *young gentlemen*, that the workshop laborer and field laborer hate the cashier or desk clerk. The people collectively hate those from the comfortable classes. But, don't the comfortable classes despise the people? Is there not among those upper classes, whether or not *intellectuals*, deeply rooted disdain for blue-collar workers? From the humblest grocer, from the syrupiest shop assistant, even the most illustrious bourgeois, everyone feels undisguised contempt for the poor day laborer. The very people, from newspaper columns or pages of the book, who woo the working classes, don't the majority participate in said disdain? It is necessary to speak the language of sincerity. How many would not feel uncomfortable, almost dishonored, if one of those ragged workers, who they say they defend, stopped them in public!

Between hatred and contempt, we prefer hatred. Everyone with medium sense will prefer it. Hate is a feeling of equal to equal. Contempt is a feeling of superior to inferior. Hate ignites hate and retaliation. Contempt humiliates, confuses, and annihilates.

All this is explained by the antagonism of interests. We are not solidary in coexistence; even less so at work and in the enjoyment of the fruits of labor. Moreover, the majority of enlightened people still regard labor as a curse, as a stain. And the so-called intellectuals are not those who least share this detestable opinion, even if they do not admit it.

But, in spite of everything, there is no denying that feelings and popular ideas go frankly toward the merging of classes. Disregarding the influence of socialism and its propagandists, the people in general tend to erase any distinction and aspire to equality by improvement of conditions and the development of intelligence. What remains contrary to this trend, as we have said, is the result of the opposition of interests.

Can the same be said of the feelings and ideas of intellectuals?

We think not. Their very desire for new distinctions proves it. Whatever may be their profession of faith, archaic or progressive, they see the people as inferiors, who they have the right to lead. Theoretically, they will affirm the greatest daring, but they will soon reveal that they do not feel or think the same as the worker who knows something more than the mechanism of his art

¹ Charles Fourier (1772–1837) was a French utopian socialist thinker.

or industry. Few would be able to exclaim like Proudhon when his editor apologized for having confused him with a repairman: "I also am a tradesman!"

From these general considerations, it does not follow, of course, that there are not men of intelligence and artists of merit who feel equal to other men and put their talents to the service of the people. But they do not live from hyperbolic titles or pursue loud success or feel the stimulus of conquering fame and climbing to the highest positions. They are more modest, precisely because they are worth more.

If we examine the attitude of the intellectuals in relation to the militant workers of socialism and anarchism, we see that the divergence becomes deeper.

The intellectuals claim that the workers who do something about their emancipation are owed it and yet, they belittle or reject their cooperation. Neither the one nor the other is true.

The militants of socialism, generically speaking, are precisely those who, with the most insistence, propagate among the people ideas contrary to any difference between intellectual workers and manual laborers. For socialists, there is nothing more than salary earners on the one side, whatever their profession may be, and exploiters on the other. All salary earners are, therefore, peers, first because of the community of interests, then because of the solidarity of opinions. Against the proletariat, the bourgeoisie (capitalists, governors, legislators, etc.) are, for the socialist worker, the enemy. And even if the bourgeois shares the opinions and feelings of the workers, neither class struggle nor social doctrine is an obstacle in order for the bourgeois to be well received. Above all, anarchists continually declare that emancipation will be the work of men of good will.

Proof that socialism is not rejected by the so-called workers of intelligence is the large number of men of letters, publicists, artists, and thinkers who are active both in the field of authoritarian socialism and anarchist socialism. Men of social position are also included in both parties and they enjoy the respect of shop workers and the country workers.

There is no need to mention names. Spanish and foreign, there are many exceptional conditions known as socialists and anarchists. To insist, therefore, on the alleged prejudice toward intellectual laborers seems to us perfectly useless.

It is clear, moreover, that the popular classes hold men of talent who have worked or are working for them in high regard. Perhaps they are revered too much. Because, after all, it is unworthy that in proper matters of justice and humanity, bookkeeping is applied, and the collecting of interest is attempted. When we say that a man struggles and sacrifices himself for the people, we would do well to say that he struggles and sacrifices himself for equity. Simply this and nothing more. So, there would not be he who perpetually proclaims himself creditor of the people, forgetting that it is the people who make great men, who honor them, who glorify them.

And even without this consideration, one could say to the intellectuals who talk in such a way that they do not know about the modern workers' movement, not even superficially. The starting point of socialism may be in Fourier, Cabet, Marx, Bakunin, and so forth, but the immense socialist labor that gives such prodigious fruits is due to the working masses, ignorant of transcendental philosophies and complicated economics. It is the result of their practical spirit together with their marvelous intuitions of truth and goodness. Of the works of those thinkers, one in a thousand militant workers will know some, but not all of them. It is certain that even the very journalists and orators of socialism do not know them all. So, the work done by the many political and resistance associations in which the workers are grouped is due not to the intellectuals of our day, neither to those eminent men who recorded in their immortal books the

principles of socialism, but, we repeat, to the very workers who *experimentally* have been providing themselves a doctrine and an organization. Who doubts that the soul of the great thinkers of socialism is in them!

What, then, do the socialist workers owe the intellectuals, when it is they who are now beginning to be roped in by them? The same *protective laws* that some States have enacted, certain press campaigns, what are they but the result of the great pressure exerted on everyone by the labor organizations? Instead, the workers could say that they owe the so-called *evil laws* to the intellectuals in France; in Spain and Portugal, the exceptional laws against anarchists; in Italy, the forced domicile (*el domicilio coatto*). Were they not the result of iniquitous campaigns in which all notions of justice and humanity were lost?

If intellectual men lived the life of working socialism, they would not formulate opinions that reveal at the same time their claims and ignorance. All their readings of ancient and modern authors cannot even give them the approximation of socialist reality. At most they would have a notion of what socialism is, like one would have of the sea who contemplates it in a good colored print. But it is necessary to go to, or, at least, show the coast in order to admire the magnificent spectacle that the people inland ignore.

If intellectuals approach workers without pedantic airs, the worker will welcome them with applause. What often happens is that intellectuals do not tolerate the workers discussing them. They want them to listen to them and follow them uncritically. However, the worker who is not interested in enduring such annoying pests rudely shakes them off and moves on. The worker will not tolerate the rising of the aristocracy of the pen over the ruins of all aristocracies.

If there are men of sincere faith in the future among those who call themselves intellectuals—and yes there are—I hope that they generously work on what they believe is fair without demanding submission nor tolerating any type of submission much less insisting upon, not only, questionable, but also inadmissible gratitude. This is the honest thing to do.

The distinction between intellectual workers and manual laborers is absurd. Every man has need and ought to work in a useful way for themselves and for their peers. In the realization of work, they are nothing more than equals: producers. He who does not produce is an idler. Take from this what you want.

The intellectualist hyperbole, more than ridiculous, is unworthy of men who are esteemed. Talent does not need heralds or mottos. A simple and modest virtue is worth more than all the dithyrambs of snobbish wisdom. Let us be simple and modestly virtuous.

(*Natura*, number 1, Barcelona, October 1, 1903.)

Class Struggle

Presently, one cannot reasonably sustain that social conflict is enclosed in terms of class struggle.

Contemporary socialism begins, it is true, from the resounding affirmation of that struggle, and it sought protection in and continues to seek shelter in the exclusivist spirit of class. But, in the course of time, ideas have evolved, and we are very far from the Chinese walls that ceremoniously split human society in two.

At the present time, there are more socialists and anarchists in the modest middle class than in the ranks of the proletariat. Workers generally remain unaware of their rights, asleep to emanci-

patory aspirations, interested more in small and disputable momentary advantages. The militant workers of socialism and anarchism are, usually, people chosen for their enlightenment, for their tastes, for their peculiar intellectuality. But outside of this tiny minority, socialism and anarchism have their main and largest core of adherents in the very bosom of the bourgeoisie. Social literature, book, and leaflet propaganda are today in every modest or sumptuous middle-class library, while they are missing in the vast majority of worker houses.² The enormous success of social literature in recent years can be added to the account of our times, and it has been precisely the petty bourgeoisie who has crowned the proselytizing efforts with the most brilliant triumph.

In the terrain of interests, boundary lines are increasingly erased. It is difficult to pinpoint where one particularism ends, and another begins. Social struggles agitate and cause a multitude of unforeseen issues. The most opposing sides intertwine and blend, and frequently provoke unexpected antagonisms, which completely change the face of things. A simple strike initiated by a particular trade, perhaps touches all of society, generalizing the conflict. Opinions are divided or brought together. Selfishness is exasperated, passions are exalted, and sometimes what comes from an insignificant difference of money or time turns into a deep ethical problem, which galvanizes and strongly shakes all human energies.

On the other hand, the same capitalist organization has produced a sediment of rebellion outside the friendly societies and socialist field. Not only the ideas of emancipation learned from books, newspapers, or at rallies, but also the longing, the vibrant desire, almost the firm will to emancipate has arisen among the numerous class of people situated between the sword of the workers' movement and the wall of capitalism. Lawyers, doctors, men of letters, artists, engineers, small industrialists, and merchants, all who live in the style of the bourgeois without the money that the true bourgeoisie possesses, feel socialism more vividly than many workers, and even if they do not join the liberation movement, even if they do not *militate* in the ranks of the revolution, they do more for the dissemination of ideas than the majority of those who allow themselves to be called socialists without understanding a word of socialism. Maybe the atavism of class weighs upon them. But, undoubtedly, parapets and defensive fortifications prevent those without the password to penetrate the fortress. Perhaps it also happens that the socialist workers' way, which is rather exclusivist, mechanical, and has a follow-the-crowd mentality, does not fit well with people who are more interested in issues of ideality than in the great problem of bread. Whatever way it is, and we refer now to the smart, studious, and hardworking petty bourgeoisie, these social elements habituated to ambient individualism do not conform at all to the regime of authoritarian socialism's strict discipline nor to the boldness of anarchism and argues head-on with everything decreed. There is a solution of continuity which, for the moment, makes the formation of a large social nucleus impossible, soon to be assaulted and taken to battle for the intuited future.

In the very worker movements, it often happens that a certain strike awakens great sympathies among the middle classes while the general mass of workers sees it with indifference, or a part of that very mass betrays the fighters.

Little by little, the tendency of general interest movements like rent strikes, the inspection of the weight of bread and of food quality, the resistance against the fabrication of harmful products, and so forth find a way to infiltrate socialism.

² Also known as Houses of the People.

All these facts, and others that we could point out, make evident the decay of class spirit and shows us that the battlefield gets wider at times. And in the end, even when *historical materialism* is the starting point, even when the certainty of bread for all is the great question of questions, all human conflict necessarily ends in a question of ethics, of ideality, for the very reason that perhaps the satisfaction of material needs is the least important for most men.

The whole social question, socialism's complete profound meaning, generically speaking, is reduced to the following: to ensure all men a material life so that they are able to develop morally and intellectually in such a way that is as free as it is indefinite. It represents the highest and noblest of all the aspirations that the philosophy has been able to formulate.

That is why we, anarchists, can and must say: "The revolution that we advocate goes beyond the interest of this or that class. It wants to reach the full and integral liberation of humanity, and of all political, economic and moral slavery."

(*Tribuna Libre*, number 3, Gijón, May 8, 1909.)

Signs of the Times

A moment ago, planted on the sidewalk, a ten- or twelve-year-old boy shamelessly shouted:

“¡No one exploits me!”

I do not know to whom or why he said it. But a plump Philistine screamed irately:

¡Urchin, good-for-nothing, rogue!

“¡No one exploits me!” That, said by a snotty-nosed child, is every bit a revelation of the times to come.

It is possible that certain ideas have not been well understood. Perhaps the propaganda of the good news did not transcend beyond a small group of believers. Perhaps the struggle still does not cover the amplitudes of the general revolt against the powerful of the earth. But the atmosphere is saturated with the original idea to such an extent that a kid can shout: “No one exploits me!”

And while these great words run from mouth to mouth repeatedly by men, women, and children, it does not matter that there is dismay in the fight, a lack of enthusiasm in the propaganda, and a giving up on the ideology. However indeterminate the substance of social claims are, it becomes the verb of the crowds, and it announces that the times are arriving in which the great work will be fulfilled in spite of the popular ignorance of all the *isms* and the doctrinal divergences that divide parties and labor groups.

It does not matter either that ideas are distorted, proposals are falsified, and men give in to ambition or vanity: the firm conviction that they should not be exploited, the resolved will to not let themselves be exploited will always remain irreducible in the multitudes, and will finish what political parties and doctrines have not accomplished. It is a state of the soul produced by propaganda and social struggles. It is a fatal and inevitable result. Its translation into immediate deeds, which will renovate the world sooner than what many believe, is inevitable as well.

“¡No one exploits me!” Here is beautifully and energetically summarized the social situation over and above the pessimisms and the impatient and vain hopes of those who exploit.

These beautiful words are signs of the times to come, of the times in which all accounts are going to be liquidated. Oh, the powerful of the land, proud exploiters, phantoms who govern, fools who still imagine that your reign will last forever and ever!

Meditate well on these words and then, if you please, shout:

¡Urchin, good-for-nothing, rogue!

(*Solidaridad Obrera*, number 28, Gijón, October 29, 1910.)

Worn-out Socialism

A colleague asks me, on his behalf and on that of other friends, for a clarification of words I wrote in my article about Maeztu’s and Alomar’s lectures.³ They assume that I affirmed the bankruptcy of revolutionary sociologism. And although that is not so, I take the opportunity, which they offer me, to unwrap the affirmation I made, at that time, with respect to that matter.

Literally I said: “German philosophism, the sociologism of Marx, Engels, Bakunin, Kropotkin, etc., of vibrant current importance yesterday, is no longer making history at this moment. People take the word and, in full social down-to-earth attitude, jump into action at their own risk. All current theories do not have more value than that which springs from deeds. One conveys, demonstrates, and convinces with acts.”

In those words, there is nothing more than the affirmation of one aspect of the struggles of our day.

Philosophism had its preponderance and its time, and wore out upon flowing into the practices of ordinary life. So too, sociologism is exhausted at these hours after having been disseminated among the crowds.

Philosophism was never fully realized. Sociologism has not fully achieved its goals. Evolution is, in both cases, a phenomenon of expansion and dispersion. The ideas fragment, intermingle, and penetrate the crowds, and then vanish to the point of seeming lost.

Sociological literature is still topical, but its enormous strength has come and gone. The times in which sociologism absolutely dominated whole life are recent, but totally past. The press, books, politicians, men of study, proletarians, and owners, everything was influenced, almost subjugated, by the various social theories that peremptorily asked for radical change in the world. The most profound transformation of social life seemed eminent at any moment.

What remains of all of this?

On the surface, nothing; down below, everything. All is diluted, fighting for experimental success, for practical proof. The proletariat, alone again in his revolutionary faith, hardly reads, hardly studies or discusses. His desire is action. Does he know how, why, and for what? Currently, he does not discern. His practices are contradictory, ambiguous, and sometimes harmful. The delimitation of schools and the opposition of doctrines are fictitious. One operates simultaneously

³ See the article “Two lectures Maeztu and Alomar,” in the chapter “Polemical Works.” – (Editors’ note from the 1926 edition of *Ideario*).

in very different ways and it is not uncommon to see those who boast of being revolutionaries acting like moderates and moderates acting like revolutionaries. If there is opposition, if there is a discussion or a fight, it is not because of doctrines but because of applications. The down-to-earth attitude fills everything. The workers have not freed themselves from this characteristic of the times.

Is it bad? Is it good? It is a fact. Sociologism is worn-out. "Of vibrant current importance yesterday, it is no longer making history at this moment."

Men of study, great souls of the ideal, have constructed sumptuous buildings of human well-being and now the anxious crowds seek partial realizations, live translations of dead letters. And, upon contact with reality, ideas are distorted, principles are corrupted, proposals are twisted, parties are decomposed, and men abandon their principles. Because of this, is there someone who talks of decay? Decay no; nor bankruptcy. Transition; period of accommodation to the new substance; trial-and-error time in search of a definitive orientation. Closer now than before to the deepest transformations of social life.

For quite some time now, books have been able to offer a constant objective or a result. Deeds have not. Until now. Social conflicts will acquire new forms and will take new directions. Perhaps they will exceed class struggle, they will break out of the old partisan molds, and they will surpass philosophers' forecasts. We are in a full experimental period. The working people have taken the word, and at their own risk, have jumped into action. In the end, the working people will give us, sooner or later, the *social deed*, translation or not, of this or that theory, but an undoubtable representation of all the content of exhausted sociologism.

In this problem of orientation, there is a broad field for all activities and also for all ideologisms.

Let us labor tirelessly for the advent of the reality predicted by Marx, Engels, Bakunin, Kropotkin, and so forth. On the march to the future, this is but a necessary moment of the long walk.

When I said that sociologism is no longer making history at this moment, I meant it as I have just described.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 11, Gijón, January 27, 1911.)

Liberalism and Interventionism

A few days ago, a renowned publicist ironically mourned the death of liberalism. The decline in popularity of hymns led him to make some pitiful comments. And whether or not it is abusive, he took for dead and buried the very great things awaiting the patriarchy of the future's best, who are the intellectuals, the only ones worthy of citizenship, for everyone else is subservient.

The little acumen of our most outstanding minds makes them talk nonsense. Political idealism's death in the style of Victor Hugo and Castelar is not a recent one.⁴ "La Marseillaise" and the "Anthem of Riego" passed to better lives a long time ago.⁵ Only very old people who do not live

⁴ Victor Hugo (1802–1885) was a French author best known for his novels *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*. Emilio Castelar (1832–1899) was a Spanish politician during the First Republic (1873–1874).

⁵ "La Marseillaise" is the national anthem of France, and "Himno de Riego" was the national anthem of Spain during the Trienio Liberal (1820–1823) and the First (1873–1874) and Second Spanish Republics (1931–1939).

in the present can talk about the liberalism of the Manchester School.⁶ And the famous trio of principles “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” ended up, one good day, in the flea market of civilized nations. Knick-knacks of old, their mere evocation is archaic in our times.

Under the influence of the demands of the rude mob, which, according to the above-mentioned publicist, makes emancipation impossible, the ruling classes have had to change tactics. Liberalism was in immediate ruin and they adopted interventionism. Strictly speaking, they do now the same as before: Everything for and by the State. “The State—the only, full, and intangible sovereignty.” Proudhon and Godwin were visionaries.⁷ Spencer a fool.⁸ Reclus, Kropotkin, and many others, madmen. We are now right: Asquith and Lloyd George are the idols of interventionism.⁹ There is no reason to exclude the great Canalejas.¹⁰

The State has always intervened in favor of its own. It also intervenes in our days on behalf of its dearest maintainers. How to proceed otherwise? While the power from below was not to be feared, liberal advice was prudent, the etiquette of letting people do and be. When the power from below was felt, it was even more prudent to intervene in the conflict, to adopt protective airs and social programs. The lesser evil was tolerated. The essential thing was to maintain authority over things and people. And the victorious State again proclaimed its unique, full, and intangible sovereignty. The State will be quite capable of reaching even socialism before allowing the vulgar mob to activate socialist ideas, which, according to our publicist, makes emancipation impossible, but is the very emancipation for which he longs.

All the blame is now on liberalism. The outrages of the press, the excesses of the theater and the book, the horrors of pornography, the atrocities of the exploitation that has fun torturing Indians and hunting them dead, all this and much more is attributable to abstract historical liberalism. Protection and intervention, everyone shouts.

And there are silly publicists who believe anything. It is necessary to return to prior censorship, that the State has its hand in everything, that it hoards everything, that it monopolizes everything. One must suppress the individual.

But, is not all of that the failure of governmentalism? Is it not the unfortunate consequence of exploitation itself?

Come on then with your liberal sophistry! Come on then with your interventionist trap!

Corruption, bestiality, disorder, and the ignominy of all sodomy and all human binges come from the intangible sovereignty of the State, which is the shelter for theft, banditry, and murders. It is organized exploitation, methodized religious poisoning, tributary prostitution, and promoted tavern and bull rings. That is what the State represents and what, in the highest period of decomposition, has us destined for a terrible cataclysm.

People cry out in vain. Corny men of letters weep in vain. Interventionism will not even serve as emollient. The State is the major culprit. No care has been taken to raise people’s moral level. The State has decreased, crushed, and depressed it. No care has been taken to ennoble us through justice. The State has degraded us to the level of beasts in brutal struggle for the daily ration. No

⁶ The liberalism of the Manchester School promoted free trade and laissez-faire capitalism in the nineteenth century.

⁷ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865) and William Godwin (1756–1836) were early anarchist thinkers.

⁸ Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) was a liberal political theorist.

⁹ Herbert Asquith (1852–1928) was a member of the Liberal Party and British Prime Minister from 1908 until 1916. David Lloyd George (1863–1945) succeeded Asquith as British Prime Minister (1916–1922).

¹⁰ José Canalejas (1854–1912) was the Prime Minister of Spain from 1910 until 1912.

care has been taken to beautify us through love. The State has taught us hatred, war, destruction, and has made humanity a monster. No care has been taken to unite us through equality. The State has made some of us slaves, and others masters. The State gave everything to some, nothing to others. And because of the continued curtailment of freedom, the State has converted us into living mummies eaten away by all the ulcerations.

Castrate at once the whole of humanity! In this way, the only, full, intangible sovereignty of the State will settle on a world of corpses. Interventionism that clamors for the annihilation of the individual can only lead us to that.

But as long as there is in the world a handful of men jealous of their personality, as long as there is one group of rebels against humiliation and servility, as long as there is one stentorian voice that shouts for freedom, freedom will not die.

Go ahead and dream the fools who think themselves wise in archaic patriarchates. Claim as much as they want for themselves the decrepit intellectuals who should walk yoked to a cart. Neigh as they please the ones fed up with all the vile deeds and filthiness. Freedom will not perish because, to defend and conquer it, the vile mob that makes emancipation impossible still remains.

(*El Libertario*, number 4, Gijón, August 31, 1912.)

Concerning Justice

In Kropotkin's last book *Modern Science and Anarchism*, which the publishing house Sampere has recently edited, the Russian anarchist affirms: "*Justice necessarily implies the recognition of equality.*"

For the author of *The Conquest of Bread*, only among equals is justice possible since men can only obey the moral rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you", or the "categorical imperative" of consciousness, as Kant would say, in as much as it deals with similar beings similarly considered. Undoubtedly, any estimation of inferiority exonerates certain duties and, reciprocally, any estimation of superiority compels beyond those same duties. Comrade Kropotkin formulates in brief words a rich, convincing argument, full of logic, which we want to develop in these lines.

His thought throws such a vivid light on the problem of justice, undeniable essence of revolutionary demands, that a brief statement of facts will convince even the most skeptical.

The citizen of Rome, the free man of Greece, would believe themselves to be obliged to their equals; never to their slaves. The lord of servants would feel bound by moral duties to other lords; never to those who by degree or by force had to pay him vassalage. The aristocrat, respectful of the aristocrat, was, at the most, condescending to the commoner. The bourgeois or boss is subjected to civil law, which commands him to keep respect for other bourgeois or bosses; but in no way does he feel the same way about his laborers. At most, there may be from superior to inferior a dispensation of favors. What one does in benefit or consideration of the slave, the servant, the laborer, is by grace, not by justice.

How to not do unto others what one does not want done unto oneself if it has to do with inferior beings who are not subordinate? The boss does not want to be exploited, but he exploits.

The categorical imperative is totally void with respect to *our* servants, *our* workers, and *our* servers. They are not *our* equals. We do not owe them anything. Justice does not pray with them.

The moral law does not reach them. If there is a categorical imperative, it is with relation to our peers who are free men: aristocratic and bourgeois gentlemen. The slave, plebian, and day laborer are below *our* moral obligations.

This iniquitous word, *master*, loudly screams the impossibility of justice without equality.

While men are considered superior on one level to others, the rules of equity do not obligate more that the first among themselves; never with respect to the latter. *Justice necessarily implies the recognition of equality.*

The bourgeois will procure to respect the wife of his neighbor, bourgeois also. He will take, if he can, without fastidiousness, the wife of his servant and of his worker, who are scarcely his neighbors. He does not feel equally obliged to the two because he does not recognize them as equals, which is between whom moral obligation is solely established. Even in the words, even in the good ways, there will be profound difference. With the female worker, he will talk rudely, work rudely, and assault rudely. With the lady of his colleague, of his equal, even in order to conquer her, he will employ dignified ways, sweet words. He will take the fortress *chivalrously* with the lordly permission of the feeble lady.

And that will not be the worst. The same worker will tolerate, perhaps, will like the bourgeois vulgarity, something which he would in no way consent to his peers in social inferiority. The person who is below, whether man or woman, feels distinguished, honored, when a superior focuses his attention on him or her even if it is to have sex with him or her.

The consequences are bound. The moral law and the categorical imperative are given by class. *Justice necessarily implies the recognition of equality.*

The bourgeois, educated in the notions of archaic honor, will be able to behave with impunity like a scoundrel with his servants. The bourgeois, instructed in all knowledge, will appear with his workers like the most ignorant big brute. The bourgeois, schooled in the most rigorous principles of urbanity, will be able to treat and will treat their inferiors with the rudest manners and meanest words. The bourgeois, still inspired by the chivalrous respect for the ladies, will work with the others, with the women who are not ladies, like a ruffian and as a scoundrel. The moral law has not been made for inferiors, but for equals. The categorical imperative is food of the gods, only for gods. And the bourgeois work accordingly. He is logical with himself. He is logical with society. He is logical with the unequal estimation of men. And it is also unfair.

Justice necessarily implies the recognition of equality.

Whoever wants justice must necessarily want equality.

(*El Libertario*, number 6, Gijón, September 14, 1912.)

Central Error of the Power of Nations

The measured issue of the power of nations is under consideration. Writers of importance and journalists of substance each discuss emulously in articles the transcendence of the values created by booming countries and the depreciation of those others that correspond to the ones lagging behind.

Like a tranquil stream through gentle channels, what we will call the central error of the power of nations is slipping into public opinion, accepting and adopting the language dear to the cultivators of a modern language full of Gallicisms.

The greatness of nations is currently measured by the number and size of battleships, by the number and power of canons, by the number and discipline of armies. This is one way. The other is to measure greatness by the number of commercial banks, of trusts, of monopolies, and of corporations and large industrial fiefdoms. Too much emphasis is placed in measurement, and not enough in judgment. The armed forces imply a sacrifice of production, which leads to unproductive greatness, and financial strength implies the hoarding of wealth, which leads to the increase of misery. Before the astonished crowd, a veil of sparkling precious stones is spread out. Behind the veil, pauperism is clawing the bowels of civilization. Hunger, ignorance, and vice: anxiety makes its work of destruction and one day, near or remote, it will crown its undertaking. Social cataclysms are always the product of wealth and misery. The sign that connects them is called revolutionary cerebation.

The central error of the power of nations lies in the preference given to external force, which translates into huge armies, behemoth squadrons, absorbent monopolies, and titanic factories. The initial impulse throws us into the vortex of a disastrous education. Intellectual factors as well as morals are placed in the service of this fundamental error. And spokesmen of success, famous publicists, writers of note, and renowned journalists intone enthusiastic hymns of praise to dazzling civilization, which in Europe and America produces such wonderful fruit. The current, the gentle current does the rest.

Right now, the need to make soldiers for war, soldiers for work, soldiers for industry and trade spreads to countries that are lagging behind. Education ought to have at its core military discipline. It is necessary to make obedient, submissive, and automatic specialists who, once placed on the track, fulfill their mission blindly, without knowing and without wanting to know more. Societies whose purpose is denounced by the preponderance given in them to the brute element are even being presented as culture associations.

England, North America, and Germany are taken as examples, most commonly Germany. The German Empire is fashionable. Many want to introduce the British down-to-earth attitude here in Spain. Such an attitude recommends that a wise man possess the quality of being athletic also. We are expected to imitate—Alas for us!—the stupendous, reckless Yankee boldness with which they create, as well as dilute, in a second of time, the most fantastic things. We are expected to adopt German routine—forgive me, German outstanding ingenuity, which converts every citizen into a mechanism able to repeat ad infinitum the same rhythm for the very purpose of national aggrandizement, European hegemony, and conquest through trade and weapons. And, in passing, they declaim against Latin theoreticism, Latin verbosity, and Latin decadence. The genius of the race goes bankrupt.

All this comes from the central error that serves as a common measure for the powerful nations. The profound knowledge of mathematical sciences, the expeditious procedures that enable mediocre people to behave as wise ones, is replaced by this central error. A lifetime devoted to the repeated and continuous application of a few empirical methods can give and gives really optimal fruit in all branches of work. A cursory knowledge of some scientific generalities and mastery, easily acquired by habit, of the procedures of graphostatistics and the able handling of the slide rule in the resolution of difficult problems can give and gives, in fact, very estimable yields at all levels of production. Mathematical analysis is taxing, and research that philosophizes is exhausting. As a result, we tend to do research mechanically. An instructed man in the modern sense is like any piece of artifice without a soul.

The education that is given and that the ruling classes receive in the large conglomerates is precisely this cursory knowledge of science, because the primary objective is to fabricate men able to rapidly enter into battle and sustain competition, men whose whole energy concurs to only one end and automatically, blindly, and passionately tends toward said end. Theoreticism and Latin idealism would be a heavy baggage in such an undertaking.

Let us spare our hackneyed verbalism because the tendency to be real chatterboxes and prolific writers is the same the whole world over.

But, gentlemen panegyrists of powerful nations, is there not something more to do morally and intellectually? Is there not something else to deal with and to worry about than the splendor of armies, naval forces, banks, trusts, and industrial fiefdoms? Is there not something more than the fight to the death to get one's rotten share?

The central error of modern civilization is the worship and promotion of those factors of pompous grandeur that wither the feeling of the beautiful, the good, and the just in people's souls. The central error of modern industrialism's spokesmen, who are also the cultists of force, is to completely forget that national life springs from below, from the lower layers, over whose tiring work rests the entire social scaffolding that sustains armies, monopolies, and large and small factories. The central error of our times is the preference given to man-mechanism over man-intelligence, as if the entire human evolution culminated in a return to the barbaric, to the unsupportive struggle for bread of prehistoric men, coated with the trappings of civilization.

This central error, which disregards inner strength, will soon realize the unsustainable power of great nations, because pauperism undermines their dazzling appearance, and revolutionary cerebration, which is goodness and justice, does the same.

Some weapons defeat other weapons. Some monopolies end other monopolies. Some great things succumb to other great things. But moral and intellectual work, the inner strength of humanity, is imperishable.

(Acción Libertaria, number 3, Madrid, June 6, 1912.)

12 Pedagogy

The Problem with Education

I

Because of the opposition to religious education, to which people of various political and social ideas appear increasingly more opposed, secular, neutral, and rationalist teachings are advocated and performed.

At first, secularism sufficiently satisfied popular aspirations. But, when people understood that in secular schools nothing more was being done other than the replacement of religion with civism, of God with the State, the idea emerged to liberate teaching from doctrinal constraints, whether religious or political. Soon, the neutral school was proclaimed by some, the rationalist by others.

Objections to these new methods are not lacking, and the corresponding denominations will soon fall into crisis too.

Because, strictly speaking, as long as teaching and education are not perfectly differentiated, any method will be defective. If we reduced the issue to teaching itself, there would be no problem. There is a problem because what is wanted in all cases is *to educate*, to inculcate in children a special mode of behaving, of being, and of thinking. And against this trend and imposition, those few who place the intellectual and bodily independence of the youth above any objective will always rise.

The issue does not consist, then, of the fact that the school is called secular, neutral, or rationalist. This would be simple wordplay moved from our political concerns to our pedagogical opinions.

Rationalism will vary and varies according to the ideas of those who propagate or practice it. Neutralism, on the other hand, even in the relative sense that one ought to give it, is at the mercy of remaining free and above its own ideas and feelings. As long as teaching and education are interchanged, the trend, if not the objective, will be to shape the youth according to particular and determined purposes.

But basically, the question is simpler if one attends to the real aim more than to the extreme forms. It encourages, in those who speak out against religious education, the desire to emancipate children and youth from every imposition and every dogma. Then come the political and social prejudices that confuse and mix the educational mission with the instructive function. But everybody will simply recognize that only where politics, sociology or morality, and tendentious philosophy is not done or is not intended to be done will true instruction be given, whatever may be the name in which it is sheltered.

And precisely because each method is proclaimed to be able to not only teach but also to educate according to pre-established principles, and waves a doctrinaire flag, it is necessary to clearly see that if we limited ourselves to instructing the youth in acquired truths, making those

truths accessible to them through experience and understanding, the problem would be fully solved.

However good we think we are, however much we deem our own goodness and our own righteousness, we do not have neither a worse nor a better right than those on the sidewalk in front of us to make the young people in our image and likeness. If there is no right to suggest, to impose any religious dogma on children, neither is there a right to lecture them on a political opinion, in a social, economic, and philosophical ideal.

Moreover, it is clear that to teach literature, geometry, grammar, mathematics, and so forth, as much in their useful aspect as in their purely artistic or scientific one, it is not necessary to rely on secular or rationalist doctrines that assume determined trends, and for being pre-determined, they are contrary to the instructive function itself. In clear and precise terms: school should not, cannot be neither republican nor masonic, nor socialist, nor anarchist, just as it cannot and should not be religious.

School cannot and should not be more than the gym suitable for the full and complete development of individuals. One should not, therefore, give youth fixed ideas, whatever they may be, because it implies castration and atrophy of those very powers that are sought to be excited.

Beyond all flag-waving, one must institute teaching, pulling the youth from the power of doctrinaire people even if they call themselves revolutionaries. Universally recognized and conquered truths will be sufficient to form intellectually free individuals.

We will be told that youth need broader teachings, that it is necessary for them to know all the mental and historical development, that they should be in possession of events and ideals without which knowledge would be incomplete.

Without a doubt. But this knowledge no longer corresponds to school, and it is here when neutrality reclaims its rights. To focus the attention of young people on the development of metaphysics, theologies, philosophical systems, present, past, and future forms of organization, and fulfilled facts and idealities will be precisely the required complement of school work, and the indispensable means to arouse, not to impose, a real conception of life. The idea is that each person, before this immense arsenal of rights and ideas, forms him or herself. The teacher will be easily neutral, if they are required to teach and not to dogmatize.

It is quite another thing to explain religious ideas than to teach a religious dogma; to expose political ideas than to teach democracy, socialism, or anarchy. It is necessary to explain it all, but not to impose anything however certain and just it may be thought. Only at this price will intellectual independence be effective.

And we, who place above all freedom, complete freedom of thought and action, who proclaim the real independence of the individual, cannot advocate methods of imposition for young people, not even methods of doctrinaire teaching.

The school that we want, without denomination, is that in which young people are instilled with the desire to learn for themselves, and to form their own ideas. Wherever this is done, there we will be with our modest cooperation.

Everything else, to a greater or lesser degree, is to retake the beaten path, to orientate oneself voluntarily, to change directions, but not to throw them out the window.

And what is precisely important is to get rid of them once and for all.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 5, Gijón, December 16, 1910.)

II

We knew that there is no shortage of free thinkers, radicals, and anarchists who understand freedom the way that religious sectarians understand it. We knew that such people act in education, as in all manifestations of life, in the manner that the inquisitors acted and in the way that their worthy heirs, the secular or religious Jesuits, act today. And because we knew it, we addressed the problem of education in our previous article.

Because we do not want any fanaticism, not even anarchist fanaticism; because we do not tolerate any imposition, even if it seeks protection in science, we will insist on our point of view.

Sectarianism has gone so far that it is presented in the form of a dilemma: you are either with me or against me. Those who talk like this call themselves libertarians. The euphony of a word perturbs them: rationalism. And we ask: What is rationalism? Is it the philosophy of Kant? Is it pure and simple science? Is it atheism and anarchism? How many voices would cry out against such assertions!

Be it whatever rationalism intends, it is for some of ours the imposition of a doctrine on the youth. Their own language betrays it. It is said and repeated that rationalist education will be anarchist or it will not be rationalist. It is emphatically affirmed that the mission of a rationalist professor is *to make beings capable of living in a society of happiness and freedom*. Science, rationalism, and anarchism are identified as important, and they, as professors, lose themselves in the process by converting education into propaganda and proselytism. The most logical are those who go farthest and sustain that one should resolutely call education anarchist and lay aside the rest of the sonorous adjectives that make happy the fools who do not carry in the brain a trace of light.

These libertarians do not realize that no one has the mission to make others one way or another, but the duty to not inhibit individuals from making themselves the way they want. They do not understand that it is one thing to instruct in the sciences and another to teach a doctrine. They do not stop to consider that what is for adults simply propaganda, is for children imposition. And ultimately, even if rationalism and anarchism are as identical as one wants, we, anarchists, should watch out for deliberately burning any belief in the tender children's minds in order to prevent or to try to prevent future developments.

Clementina Jacquet, ¹ in a conference given in Barcelona about sociology in school, stated:

For a lot of people and unfortunately for many teachers, social science is entirely contained in its newspapers, in the problems of emancipation that so vibrantly is shaking our times. All its knowledge consists of inculcating in its disciples its preferred opinions, so that they cause in their minds an indelible impression, so that they are implanted in them and spread like a parasitic weed. All that they have been able to find to best form libertarians is to act in the manner of priests of all religions. They do not realize that, by forging intelligences according to their favorite model, *they are acting in an anti-libertarian way*, since they snatch from children, beginning in infancy, the ability to think on their own initiative.

It will be stressed, notwithstanding what has been written and transcribed here, that anarchy and rationalism are the same thing. It will be even said that they are the undisputed truth or com-

¹ First director of the Escola Moderna in Barcelona founded by Ferrer.

plete science or absolute evidence. Placed on the dogmatic track, they will decree the infallibility of their beliefs.

But even if their beliefs were infallible, what would happen to free choice, to the child's intellectual independence? Not even absolute freedom should be imposed, but freely sought and accepted, if absolute truth were not an absurdity and impossibility in the inevitably limited terms of our understanding.

No, we do not have the right to imprint on virgin children's minds our particular ideas. If they are true, it is the child who must deduce them from the general knowledge that we have placed at their reach. No opinions, but well-tested principles for everyone. What is properly called science should constitute the program of true education, which yesterday was called integral, and today secular, neutral, or rationalist, the name matters little. The substance of things: I have here what is interesting. And if, in that substance, is, as we believe, the fundamental truth of anarchism, anarchists will be, when men, young people educated in scientific truths, but they will be by free choice, by their own conviction, not because we have modeled them, following the routine of all believers, according to our faithful knowledge and understanding.

The evidence becomes immediate. What kind of anarchism would we teach in schools in the assumption that science and anarchism were the same thing? A communist professor would point out to the children the elementary and idyllic anarchism of Kropotkin. Another individualist professor would teach the fierce self-worshipping of Nietzsche and Stirner, or Proudhon's complicated mutualism. A third professor would teach anarchism of the syndicalist bent influenced by the ideas of Malatesta or others. What is the truth here, the science, in order for that absurdity of the rationalist absolute to remain firmly established?

It is forgotten that anarchism is nothing more than a body of doctrine, and however firm and reasonable and scientific may be its base, it does not leave the realm of the speculative, of the arguable and, as such, can and should be explained, like all other doctrines, but not taught, which is not the same. It is also forgotten that one day's truth is another day's mistake and that there is nothing able to establish firmly that the future does not hold other aspirations and other truths. And it is forgotten, finally, that we ourselves are prisoners of a thousand prejudices, of a thousand anachronisms, of a thousand sophistries that we would have had to necessarily pass on to the following generations if the sectarian and narrow criteria of the doctrinarians of anarchism would have prevailed.

Like us, there are thousands of men who believe to be in possession of the truth. They are probably, surely honest, and think and feel honestly. They have the right to neutrality. Neither should they impose their ideas on children, nor should we impose on them our own ideas. Let us teach the acquired truths and *let each make themselves the way they can and want*. This will be more libertarian than the disastrous work of giving children fixed ideas that can be, that will often be, enormous errors.

And avoid the dogmatists of anarchism who consider themselves the sole possessors of truth and put aside their sticks for another day because it is too late to resuscitate laughable dictatorships and to issue or reject patents that no one asks for and no one admits.

As anarchists, precisely as anarchists, we want education free of all kinds of *isms*, so that men of the future can become free and happy by themselves and not through the mediation of so-called modelers, which is another way of saying saviors.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 11, Gijón, January 27, 1911.)

What Is Meant by Rationalism?

We will not examine what rationalism means for Tom, Dick, or Harry, but what it means in general, what it means for the majority of people. We would pitifully lose time if we stopped to consider the thousand individual opinions, which do not have any more basis than the easy decrees of intellectual laziness.

Rationalism (first definition): philosophical doctrine whose base is the omnipotence and independence of human reason.

Rationalism (second definition): philosophical system in which religious beliefs are founded on reason.

Rationalism (third definition): more than a philosophical system or method, it is the general character of all *speculative* thought that only accepts reason as criterion of truth.

As one can see, in the three definitions, the sovereignty of reason is proclaimed. Standing before all faith and all authority, reason obtains its rights. And upon obtaining them, it creates new systems of philosophy, new religions also. The whole great philosophical movement performed by the German philosophers has been essentially rationalist.

A rationalist and a freethinker are one and the same, since both: "Rely just on the very process of thinking and its laws in order to guarantee the truth of their thought, refuting all other kinds of arguments, including the historical. Meanwhile, reason does not discern for itself how much truth it holds."

And that's it. Standing before faith and authority, reason. But, who's reason? Tom's, Dick's, or Harry's? Reason is merely individual, and upon proclaiming itself sovereign, it has engendered errors and absurdities that experience has been charged to demolish. Rationalism has filled the world with thousands of great metaphysical and philosophical digressions. In addition to religious error, we had philosophical error, political error, and economic error. Reason has created such systems, such dogmas, and it must rebel against itself. If there is not any rule or law that produces the same conclusions in every individual, even in the event that the premises are identical, is it any wonder that reason has erred?

The individual has the right to be guided by the dictates of reason, but to lift it up supreme, supposing it capable of giving everyone the exact criteria and certainty of truth, is such a great act of folly. Even the hundred geniuses of rationalist philosophism have failed to agree even once. The great Leibnitz developed the concept of impersonal reason (perennial philosophy) as the basis of truth, penetrated, without a doubt, by the fact that, for individual reason, everything depends on the eye of the beholder. But impersonal reason is pure abstraction, pure philosophical means to resolve in the best way possible an insurmountable difficulty. Thus, rationalism as a system, method, or mode of inquiry of truth has failed, even though it remains firm as a fight against revelation, against faith, and against the authority of dogma.

As a result, philosophism is a thing of the past and the intended sovereignty of reason is anachronistic. True science that does not live off of sovereignties has resolutely taken the path of experience, and bases its constructions on proven facts and laws and not on fragile creations of thought that are so given to the extraordinary and the marvelous. Of course, reason is the necessary instrument to translate, order, and methodize experience's data, but it does not go beyond that, and when it tries to, for every one time that it hits upon the truth, it falls into error one hundred times.

And do not argue with us that just as there is Tom's reason, Dick's reason, and Harry's reason, there is also Tom's science, Dick's science, and Harry's science. When one talks of science, it goes beyond its own limits, if one wants to include in it something that is not checked and verified and, as a result, cannot supply information to the discussion. If it supplies such information, the matter may be in the domains of scientific research but will not be in the realm of constituted science. Science, properly speaking, is one and only one.

Given these premises, how to admit the indoctrination of people by means of rationalism when for each individual it may mean this or that other method, system or philosophical and even religious doctrine? How to admit it, especially when it comes to children who are not yet in full use of their powers and can therefore be induced to error?

It is perfectly fine that each person thinks the way they want, that each person, as is natural, does not admit any authority over their reason. But, if this same reason is not blinded by dogmatic teachings or by its reminders, it will have to tell said person that reason is not enough to determine the truth. Rather, everything is found in universal things, in its laws, in the facts of experience and in the realities of a lifetime, and not in the imaginations of some good citizens on a random beautiful day. And that same reason, which is proclaimed sovereign, must imperatively dictate to said person respect for other reasons, as sovereign as its own. And dictating respect to said person, education must necessarily be reduced to things tested and verified, which is what constitutes science. Not even the ideas that seem true, because universal consent works in their favor, should be taught, at least not as proven truths, given that great absurdities have been told and are still told by that universal consent.

What has been argued here seems to us clear and simple, beyond all partiality of doctrine or opinion, and because it seems so to us, we tried to bring these ideas to the feeling of our readers. If someone gets upset or bothered, it will be appreciable, but not sufficient to give up the constant affirmation of what we believe to be right.

And even if you still say that this is not rationalism, we reply in advance that neither before nor now do we worry about what things can be for Tom, Dick, or Harry, very respectable gentlemen, but what they mean in themselves or seem to mean for us.

For all these reasons we must continue, while we can, multiplying hammer blows without fear of breaking the anvil.

(Acción Libertaria, number 19, Gijón, April 21, 1911.)

Questions of Education

I

Explaining and teaching are not synonyms even when all teaching supposes previous explanation. Many things are explained without the intent to teach them.

When what one thinks is declared or disclosed, when details or news of a doctrine, of an event, and so forth, are given, the opinion, doctrine, and event are explained to the listener in order to teach or renounce that opinion, doctrine, or event, depending on the situations.

Teaching is something more than explaining, since it is instructing or indoctrinating. He who explains an erroneous doctrine in order to reveal its falsity clearly teaches, but does not teach the doctrine he is explaining, but rather repudiates it.

One example among thousands will clarify that difference. One opens any book of elemental geography, and in the part that deals with astronomy one finds, in the first place, the explanation of the Ptolemaic system, which supposes that the earth is in the center of the universe and all other bodies revolve around it. Then comes the Copernican system, which considers that the sun is fixed, and the planets revolve around it. *This last system is the accepted one today.*

Clearly, the first is explained or disclosed, and the second is explained and taught. The first is not taught because it is believed to be false. Note that if the professor is conscientious, he will not even teach the Copernican system without reservation, because nothing allows us to ensure that in the system of the universe there is nothing more than the heliocentric theory. Therefore, it is only said that it is the accepted system today, instead of presenting it dogmatically as true.

The difference between explaining and teaching is even greater when there are no more than hypotheses to answer the questions of understanding. So it is with the internal constitution of our planet. The professor can and should explain the different theories that try to decipher the enigma, but he should not teach any as true and proven since we do not know that they are.

Instead, he can empirically and rationally teach hundreds of things with examples and reasons such as the so-called Pythagorean Theorem, which verifies that in every triangle the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides.

And since the field of positive and verified knowledge proven by everyone and methodized by science is very extensive; and the field of hypotheses, opinions, and very probable theories that only lack proof and certainty is even more extensive still, it is clear that, for every free thinking man, teaching should not go beyond conquered indisputable truths, and therefore everything that is, at the time, a matter of opinion should be reduced to the circle of necessary explanations or exhibitions.

Whatever may be the basis of a political, economic, or social doctrine, and however great the love that we feel for it may be, our due respect for the mental freedom of children, for the right to self-formation that is theirs should prevent us from cramming their minds with all of our particular ideas that are not indisputable and universally proven truths, even though they may be for us.

Because, ultimately, if we proceed in the opposite way, we would come to recognize, in everyone who believes to be in possession of the truth and does not think like us, the right to continue modeling children in accordance with their errors and prejudices. And this is precisely what must end.

This is how we understand teaching, sticking to the substance of things and not to the words that seek to represent it.

II

A child of twelve or thirteen years who begins to perorate about social issues and very seriously affirms that money, or something similar, is not necessary does not excite us. This smacks of catechism recitation, of a lesson lodged in the mind by force of suggestion. Another professor and another approach to the problem, and the child will very seriously affirm the complete opposite. He will recite another catechism; he will repeat another lesson. There are premature things like there are late things.

A personal opinion is not necessarily a science and only in this capacity can it be taught. The opposite is equivalent to kidnapping young children's minds. We stand for education that is absolutely free of matters of opinion.

An example will illustrate the point. Let us suppose the case of a pedagogue who is a determined adversary of money and income. This pedagogue will banish the odious and corrupting rule of interest from his arithmetic lesson and will make stupid remarks by not discerning between the interest of money, with which arithmetic by itself has nothing to do, and a rule of calculation that, whatever its name may be, serves to deduce, for example, the following: proportions in which a given material has to enter in a mixture; the certain percentage that results from a vitality or population statistic; the yield of a product under given conditions; or the proportion of increasing or decreasing fertility of a certain land, and so forth.

We will be told that all this can be explained and taught without giving at the same time the notion of income or return on capital. We do not deny it. But here in lies the seriousness of the issue. If the material is explained allowing the student complete freedom to meditate and decide—and in order to decide he needs the knowledge of all those things, true and false—there will be nothing to object to. But if, on the other hand, the professor intervenes with his particular ideas and tips the scales to the side of his opinion, however free a man he may be, however anarchist he may proclaim himself, he will commit an attack on the intellectual freedom of the child, who, in his lack of intellectual development, will take as unquestionable truths both the true and the false. Children taught in such a way will recite wise lessons ... on behalf of others. And we think it is preferable that they recite them on their own even though they may be somewhat less wise.

If it were about men, the question would be different.

Free examination should be applied not only because of opposition to theological things, but also as a necessary limitation to possible impositions from a political party, school, or doctrine.

Education cannot and should not be propaganda. The spirit of proselytism oversteps when it goes beyond man in full possession of his mental faculties. If there is a case when abstention or neutrality is absolutely required, it is in the instruction of children.

In this area we—all men of progressive ideas—can agree. And we ought to agree to remove from childhood the power of the modelers of human mummies, of the makers of herds.

III

A child educated in accordance with truly scientific knowledge will probably not ask about God's existence since the child will not even have notice of such an idea. But if the child asked about it, the professor would do well to show that in the whole series of human knowledge there is nothing that guarantees such a statement. God is a matter of faith or opinion, but not something proven and as such it should be taught.

He who writes these lines can offer the experience of his eleven children who, having not even been instructed with the necessary scientific rigor, never had the idea to formulate the before-mentioned question. God's existence never occurred to them when they were little because they did not have any idea of God, and it did not occur to them as older children because they found satisfactory answers to their questions in the home environment, in the example of all that surrounded them, and in the books available to them—and there were books of different tendencies. Their atheism will be therefore the fruit of their own brain work, not the lesson learned from

the preceptor. Their ideas will be all their own peculiar work, not the result of an outside action deliberately exercised. The difference is essential, and it seems crystal clear.

Since even today and perhaps for some time the antagonism between street education and home education will endure, it will be natural for children to ask about many things that do not have scientific basis, and in any case, the professor should dispel the doubts of his disciples, being careful, however, not to operate a simple change of opinions. School cannot and should not be a *club*.

For some reason, we sustain that, in time and season, everything ought to be applied, but only that which has scientific sanction and universal proof should be taught. A good part of the problems posed by human understanding do not have as a solution more than hypotheses, and it is clear that in their explanation an absolute neutrality must be sought because the solution that seems indubitable and rational to one, to another seems absurd, and hence rationalism is insufficient to guide education. Discarded all matters of faith, the instruction of youth would be reduced to the teaching of proven things and to the explanation of problems whose solution does not have more than probabilities of certainty.

Let us offer some examples. Given the daily experience that makes them see that when it rains we all get wet, that there is nothing that does not come from something or someone, that there is not, in the end, effect without cause, young men, if they do not ask about God's existence surely they will ask about the origin of the universe. At a certain age there is not anyone who does not ask about the beginning and the cause and the finality and end of all things. And all of this is an undeniable difficulty. What will the teacher do? For some, since there is no effect without a cause, the world will have had an origin and a beginning, it will have a finality and an end. For others, the series of causes and effects will not have a previous or future limit and the world will exist for eternity in infinite space. Since everything around us begins and ends, and happens because of something and for something, the realist spirits will opt for the first hypothesis. Those capable of abstraction will decide for the second. It will not be worth it to invoke science because science cannot currently, perhaps will never be able, to give us entirely probative answers. Those who believe that the categorical solution is in materialism or evolutionism, will speak on behalf of an opinion or belief (rationalism), but will not do anything but dodge, defer the problem, figuring to have solved it by replacing words. The intellectually honest thing will be, therefore, for the teacher to clearly explain the facts of the problem and the different hypotheses that try to clarify it. To do something else will always be an imposition of doctrine.

Tyndall,² whose science nobody will doubt, finished the explanation of the theory of heat as a mode of movement, wondering how a movement without something that moves would be able to be conceived, and he answered, with a truly wise simplicity, that contemporary science could not respond to such a question. And, will one want, through our very good, but useless desire, to completely resolve these and a hundred other issues offering children a finished science, fruit of the alleged infallibility of rationalism?

It matters little to believe that there has always been an earlier cause and that the series of causes and effects will not end. The word infinite will be a subterfuge of our thought, but not a conclusive answer, and we will not be able to offer more than an opinion, not a certainty; a probability, not proof. What will we respond if man persists in finding a beginning and in determining an end? We will respond using the method of freedom or, if one wants, neutrality,

² John Tyndall (1820–1893) was an Irish physicist.

not the method of rationalism precisely: let man form his judgment for himself by putting in his reach as many knowledges that may illustrate the point.

And this method of freedom that we proclaim is that which is expected of all those who, think what they may, say that they are respectful of the child's intellectual independence. We proclaim it, not in the capacity of anarchists nor, much less, in the capacity of rationalists, but as men of equity and mutual respect who believe that people of all the extremes of progressive ideas can coincide with this method, if they do not understand education to mean the indoctrination of a determined opinion.

We therefore believe that those who are bent on establishing perfect synonymy between rationalism and anarchism—which in no way are equivalents—would do well to get straight to the point and openly proclaim themselves supporters of anarchist teaching because this would indicate the terms of the issue, and if not to an agreement, it could undoubtedly lead to a complete delimitation of trends.

Even these good friends who, in their enthusiasm for the ideal, wanted to inculcate it, we would have to object explaining that in all fields, and especially in that of teaching, anarchy should not be material for imposition.

Two more words to finish this series of articles.

Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, asked his teacher, the geometrician Euclid, to do him the favor of levelling out the difficulties of scientific demonstration, indeed quite complicated in those days. And Euclid replied, "Lord, there are no special paths in geometry for kings."

Friends, in science there are no special paths for anarchists.

(*Acción Libertaria*, numbers 20, 21, 22, Gijón, April 26 and May 5–12, 1911.)

Verbalism in Education

The influence of the old predominates, unfortunately, over everything that claims to be new. The patrimony of our ancestors, Le Dantec would say, with its enormous weight, prevents the rapid advance of science's conquests and knowledge. Current experience has as a powerful counterbalance to atavistic experience.

Words are the required vehicle in the transmission of knowledge. Through them, generations transmit their mistakes and truths, more the first than the latter. Imitators of each other, we do not manage to do more than to use the same weapons as our opponents in the fight. With words we intend to destroy the empire of words.

Everything that predates science is reduced to pure verbalism. Behind theology and speculative metaphysics, there is nothing more than rhetorical artifices, beautiful phrases, and poetic figures, but no reality, no positive knowledge. All the past is very pregnant with a great aversion to deeds and realities.

What do we innovators do in front of the pernicious influence of that atavistic verbalism?

More or less the same as our adversaries. We also make a living from words. The magic of sonorous names seduces us. And with some high-sounding concepts, we oppose other high-sounding concepts. We answer metaphysical entities with other abstruse entities. For some artifices, we substitute other artifices. Inheritance is more powerful than our reason and our will.

In physiological and social determinism, there is an explanation for the phenomenon. But in the unconsciousness of reality and in the ignorance of human knowledge, we must search for the efficient cause of our renewing impotence.

We intend to be scientists, and we know nothing about science. We want to be practical, and we atrociously digress. We dream about the simple and natural life, and we do nothing more than accumulate complications and amass old or new knick-knacks. We have acquired words and not realities. The word knowledge has sounded pleasantly in our ears, but we have yet to be able to seize the harmonic rhythm of its content. We are new by desire, null and void by knowledge.

And so, because we are verbalists like our rivals, we constantly turn in a vicious circle.

This sad reality shows up most clearly in the matter of education. In our schools, children are crammed with indigestible words that want to be something, that enclose something in the generous desire of which they proffer, but in reality, they do not send not even one ray of light to the brain. We teach and learn, as before, rhetorical figures, philosophical concepts, abstruse metaphysics, and logical artifices, but nothing of realities, nothing of experimental truths. To put experience and deeds before the children and let them, on their own, create their knowledge, their logic, and their science is something that does not enter into our calculations. The routine of giving them fixed opinions, of filling their heads with vehement speeches, of suggesting arguments in correct formation is simpler and more comfortable. Good intentions are not lacking. What is missing are means and knowledge, pedagogical education, and doctrinal equanimity.

First, we ought to learn that all experience is grounded in reality and that all science is found in experience in order to realize that education should be reduced to lessons of things and not lessons of words. And learning it first, we would later be on the road to acquiring the best methods so that reality itself, and not the teacher, were recorded in the brain and those examples of goodness, love, and justice that ought to constitute the future man of a society of justice, love, and kindness is recorded in children's conscious.

Unwittingly, we manufacture men today in accordance with our prejudices, our routines, and our scientific inadequacy because we are verbalists and we ourselves are made in accordance with other verbalisms that we repudiate. How many useless beautiful speeches! How many impotent intellectual efforts to suggest ideas! How much energy wasted in vain ramblings!

New education must be something simpler than all that. Without wordy instruction, great things can be taught; even better, you can make children learn many things on their own. Without speeches, without the effort of logic that always involves some imposition, optimum results can be obtained in the intellectual development of children. Let the children go on successively unraveling the world around them, the facts of nature and social facts, so that, with little effort by the professor, they themselves will form their science of life. For every hundred words of the many that are employed to the detriment of children, one deed alone will be sufficient for any child to realize the reasons that perhaps the most eloquent speeches would not manage to impart. Lessons of things, the examination of reality, and the repetition of experiences are the only solid basis of reason. Without experiences, without realities, reason often fails.

Our efforts in education should tend, not toward extensive proselytism, but toward the intensive cultivation of intelligence. A handful of children educated at their own initiative will be a greater conquest than if we won some thousands of them to propagate determined ideas.

The freedom factor is of such efficacy that, even in children educated in abandonment, it gives its beneficial fruits. There is no silly scoundrel or little rascal who is not intelligent.

And if, in humanity, moral and material slavery persists, it is precisely because in education the imposition factor has been used. The instrument of this imposition has been and is theological, metaphysical, or philosophical verbalism.

Do we want a new education? Well, nothing of verbalism nor of imposition. Experience, observation, analysis, and complete freedom of judgment, and men of the future will not have to reproach us the continuation of the chain that we want to break.

Verbalism is the plague of humanity. In education it is worse than the plague. It is the atrophy, if not the death, of intelligence.

(El Libertario, number 7, Gijón, September 21, 1912.)

13 Spanish Life

The Two Spains

I am not going to talk, naturally, in the capacity of a patriot. However, because it could seem like I am, a tiny digression with that intention follows.

Substituting one concern for another concern, one prejudice for another prejudice, does not resolve or correct anything. The affirmation of the homeland as state of force or law has nothing or little to do with the affirmation of the homeland as affective state. One can deeply feel the things of the land and be as cosmopolitan as you like. To deny homelands, irreducible expression of antagonisms, it is not necessary to fall headlong into the exclusivism that finds good and excellent everything distant; and bad, rather abominable, everything nearby simply because it refers to one's own homeland. This is a way of being patriotic in reverse, that is, patriot of other homelands. In order to dispassionately discuss any issue having to do with the idea or reality of the homeland, one has to be cured of these two equally harmful prejudices.

In that case, can an anarchist of a particular country speak and examine, without bias, the recommended or objectionable conditions of said country, even if the individual were from that country? I believe the answer is not uncertain.

However it may seem, I am accused of being jingoistic, protected by, what I believe, is an indisputable reason and right. I am going to say straight away what I think about certain judgments and certain statements concerning Spain.

There is a legend going around depicting us as an absolutely ignorant country, degenerated by bullfighting and a love of flamenco, slavishly subjected to the harshest tyranny, and cruelly afflicted by inquisitorial atavism. Here, apparently, women still carry a knife in the garter, the "right of the first night" (*jus primae noctis*) remains, feudal lords and convent soup still exist, hunger is alleviated by rabidly scratching guitar strings, and between beers and bulls, and wild times and prayers, the Spanish people are as stupefied as ever. The other countries in Europe and America view us as strange, and we ourselves seem pleased that they take us for anachronistic.

I said legend and I will not correct it. For Spain, at this time, certainly keeps memories of old times (how to deny it?). It conserves perhaps too many remnants of inquisitorial power and political despotism. It moves pulseless in an undeniable crisis of transition. It persists in its unique idiosyncrasy, in customs and habits that, perhaps, take root in its character and temperament. But the current Spain also has other conditions that definitively distance it from the past. To not recognize them is as good as denying the evidence and endeavoring to galvanize a corpse. This is the aim, certainly, of those who, from the outside or from the inside, shout, paint, and exaggerate things that used to be, and silence things that are.

It is true that the official, religious, and capitalist world thrives on the history of tyrannies and barbarous cruelties. It is true that our so-called political progress is mere appearance, our constitutionalism is a mask, and our parliament is a farce. It is true that there is neither respect nor guarantee for independence and personal right, that whim and nullity govern, that shameful

punishment, torture, and torment are at times revived, and that, for a little more than nothing, anyone who dissents from the comfortable thinking of those who rule is persecuted and imprisoned. But, where, how, and when does one live outside political and religious atavism? What country has broken with its past of blood and blackness? Where is the Eden in which parliament is not a farce and the constitution is not a mask? Which is the promised land of inflexible laws, equal for all, where rogues, prevaricators, and the lustful do not govern?

The French Republic has, on its record, its own emergency laws against anarchists. It has the Dreyfus affair, the shooting of strikers, and the scandalous process in which the grouping of revolutionary writers with common criminals was attempted.¹ The police traps against our friends had not been seen, until recently, anywhere else. They were besieged to the point where they were thrown out of workshops and housing, covertly cornering them. The revolutionary socialist Congress convened during the Exposition would surely have met in Spain, and it could not meet in Paris because that republican government banned it. The motto Liberty, Equality, Fraternity is flaunted everywhere boastfully, and it is there, as in any nation, a rude mockery with which the people are insulted.

The laws of repression of anarchism in Spain are copies of the French laws, like current banishments are a very bad translation of the notion of house arrest in Italy. If here we have the Montjuich tortures, the very republican and very federal North America has the gallows of Chicago, and the very free Argentina has its expulsion of anarchists.

These are very shallow notes written superficially. A volume, with the aim of *documenting* all of this, would not be enough for the thousands of examples that prove that the treatment of anarchists is the same the whole world over. Will we say a platitude stating that there is another Spain that is not villainous, that is not despotic, that is not servile, that is not ignorant; that there is, in the end, two Spains, like there are two Frances, two Italys, and so forth?

Yes, there is another Spain that is little known, of which there is little news. Socially, there is a Spain opposite to dandyism and bulls, a Spain that studies and works for a better state; that develops and spreads culture, foments the arts and moralizes customs.

Mainly in Catalonia (let it be clearly understood that the writer is not Catalan), the working class and the modest bourgeoisie could and should serve as a model for other countries that judge us badly because they do not know us. The love of music and singing is common. The favorite diversions are theaters, concerts, lectures, and excursions to the country. The moderation of customs is such that hardly a drunk is seen on the streets. I keep a pleasant memory of one of those excursions to which I was invited by some friends. My surprise was great, despite the background that I had, when I observed that at the meeting of twenty or thirty men and their families, during which music was played, songs were sung, dances were interpreted and food was eaten and alcohol was enjoyed, there was not one jarring note, no hint of drunkenness, nor the smallest shock, nothing that could make the face of the most demanding wince.

And what to say about the North and Northwest of Spain? Well known and pondered are their well-mannered habits, their kindness of interaction and customs.

It is said that Andalusia is appallingly ignorant and miserable and still lives in the Middle Ages. It is an unfortunate region that, for being rich, is poor. It sets the tone for typical Spain,

¹ After several bombings and assassination attempts orchestrated by anarchists in France, the 1881 freedom of the press laws passed under the Third Republic (1870–1940) were restricted. These new laws were known as the *lois scélérates*, the villainous laws, by those who were critical of the restrictions.

at once painful and cheerful! And nevertheless, the misanthropes, who denigrate those squalid and impoverished peasants, wanted their wit, vivid imagination, and richness of feeling and joy of living for themselves. There, one sings, dances, and laughs because all nature—air, light, sun—laughs and dances. The splendor of full life sparkles in the minds, disseminated in the splendid, magnificent, and unbeatable environment. The vigorous impulse, the fertilizing and warm habit of nature, which vibrates very strongly there more than anywhere, tickles the nerves. And the joy of living leaps and jumps in the swishing of feminine skirts and in the scent of flowers that adorn their heads and in the bright colors of their shawl scarves. This does not prevent nor will it prevent Andalusia from progressing, and their peasants from entering the realm of general culture. The fierce, stubborn obstacle is accumulated wealth, the scandalous exploitation that helps barbaric authorities. But the obstacle will be overcome because there is a Spain that will crush it, a Spain without *manolas*² and *chisperos*³ that studies, worships art, and strives after science.

Are we, for all that has been said, better or worse than others? Neither worse nor better. We are like we are, and others are as they are. And those who want to get to know us, I wish that they would visit us here. Instead of unexpectedly slipping into bullrings and degenerate singing cafes, where they will only get the caricature of Spain, I wish they would take the trouble to study us. And in turn those on this side, full of bile, who openly make known their pessimisms, I wish they would tour Europe and America, and if they do not just visit museums and libraries, they will see that nowhere there does money grow on trees.

Politically, the current Spain, the other Spain, outside the ruling coalition, different and opposite of the State, contrary to a system of government ruled by priests, our greatest calamity, completely at odds with the tradition that the legend creates, is perhaps lesser known than social Spain. This other Spain is the Spain of insurgent federalism, of active socialism and anarchism, a Spain of clearly progressive ideas, instigator, not simply receiver, of generous ideals and aspirations. This other Spain is that of hundreds of neutral schools closed now because of the reaction, no doubt to let us come to understand the impact that we ourselves did not realize at its height. This other Spain is that of that great work of education and culture that reveals the existence of a people capable of all endeavors, full of energy and perseverance and firmness. Besides those hundreds of schools that will be opened again, thousands of political, social, and cultural centers, progressive associations, unions and workers' cooperatives reveal that in all directions a new Spain works for the total regeneration of the country, indeed of all countries.

Does not the uprising of all of Catalonia, plus some cities in the rest of Spain, in July of 1909, a case unequalled to this day, demonstrate *with actions* that the Spain of the legend is a false Spain, mixed with conventionalisms and black or red lies?⁴

In spite of the reiterated agreements of the International Workingmen's Association about the war, no one, not even the French people when they were in Casablanca, made such a vigorous

² Madrilenians of the working-class neighborhood Lavapiés who wear what are considered stereotypically Spanish clothes during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

³ Working-class neighbors of Malasaña in Madrid who wear what are considered stereotypically Spanish clothes during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁴ This uprising is better known as the Tragic Week during which working-class men protested against conscripted military service in North Africa.

protest like the one realized by the Spanish people who do not obey agreements, but valiantly follow their own impulses.⁵

Beware that I am not making comparisons to establish supremacy and less to mortify. I am not being patriotic either. I note facts to fix ideas and conditions and I defend myself and defend my comrades in struggle, showing that we are where the whole progressive world is.

There is thus a Spain that is not Torquemada's Spain like there is a France that is not that of the brute Thiers.⁶

The Montjuich tortures will not be repeated, they are not repeated now, because of the constant action of that new Spain. No matter what those who cannot live without forging novels say, friends or adversaries, the current reaction does not dare give battle head-on. It challenges with words, it is cruel and hypocritical in its deeds, but also cowardly with respect to its desire for extermination, which is contained by the threat of greater evils that it senses and avoids.

What happens, in truth, is that the reactionaries here swell the revolutionary dog, for the purposes that are expected, and the revolutionaries from beyond inflate the reactionary dog for the very same purposes, but in the opposite direction. And I want to shout: liars, everyone! Of this reaction, which is certainly not soft, no trace will be left in a few months. The closed schools will be reopened, the propaganda will resume, centers and unions will be reorganized, new press will be created, and perhaps, perhaps, not even prisoners will remain in jails. For what would this untamed independence and this untamed stubbornness that distinguishes us from other people serve us?

A few Torquemadas remain, but there are thousands of rebels. I laugh when I see serious people organize truculent campaigns around a single name when here we have a thousand prisoners at their disposition. I laugh at the menacing notes that seem to declare our revolutionary impotence. And I will laugh madly, in order to not get indignant, if the threats of some of our people in another recent campaign, threats of appealing to foreign governments made by circumspect internationalists, are repeated. Are freedom, respect for citizens, guarantees of rights, humanity, and fairness given in governments, in the judiciary, in capitalism and churches beyond the Pyrenees and the Iberian coasts?

International solidarity is good, but let us not confuse it with compassion and alms. Let it not become a lie that depresses and upsets. The new Spain goes where all the renovating people go and offers its spontaneous solidarity to those who are in need of it, and it not only accepts but also clamors, now more than ever, for the solidarity of those who struggle for human emancipation.

In the hours of combat, distinctions are of no use. Let us fight without respite, with the truth, which is what interests us above the jumble of concerns that still wells up in ourselves, radicals, socialists, and anarchists of all shades.

When it is not this, it is stepping on the heels of our enemies, following their own route of lies, deceit, and iniquities. And certainly, a fat lot of good that is.

(*La Protesta*, Buenos Aires, October 23, 1909.)

⁵ France begins to colonize Morocco in the early twentieth century.

⁶ Adolphe Thiers (1797–1877) was the French politician who gave the orders to suppress the Paris Commune in 1871.

Culture

Journalists, writers, and politicians do not know what to do with themselves without a platform to entertain the respectable audience.

Right now, they have made fashionable the issue of culture and a day does not go by without them dedicating long, extensive, and annoying paragraphs to it.

Indeed, the issue is of undoubted importance for everyone. We grant them its importance without haggling.

We are a people lagging behind, almost asleep, who hardly get excited about anything. Intellectual development is little more than zero, and our will does not usually resolve into action through reflective impulses. When our will sometimes leads to action, it is driven only by passion. Thought does not help us here but to form *Châteaux en Espagne*, as our neighbors the French say.⁷ And here we find ourselves.

Who doubts the imperative need for culture? Who doubts the effectiveness of an intensely cultural work that shakes up our minds' laziness?

To jump, at the right time and reason, from the contemplative "I want" to the fruitful "I take action" would be the immediate result of that indicated work.

But for such great work, we lack the appropriate elements in Spain. The so-called intellectuals are, for the most part, verbalists and, moreover, weak-willed. Those who are attributed the mission of leading us, the politicians, are professionals of cheating and sleight of hand, empty of intelligence, incapable of greatness, and rickety of soul and heart.

So, all the present work of culture is resolved in a huge conventional lie. No one ignores it, but everyone silences it. Centers of private or official education are temples of castration and atrophy. Programs are a thick mesh of tangles of supposed science. Years of study and teaching methods are an eternal and sustained practice of intellectual masturbation. An academic degree is frequently the equivalent of incurable imbecility.

On that slippery track, we continue gliding happily. New teachings have been instituted. New centers of popular instruction with pretensions of healthy practical lessons, of viable reform, and the new centers are nothing but a sad imitation of the old ones.

Professors lack, in general, the conditions if not the sufficient knowledge to teach. And why not, if they are the ripe fruit of routine, castration, and atrophy?

The same factors, the same means, the same procedures, even the same knick-knacks, and the same corruption remain of the old time.

Outside of the so-called temples of official wisdom, what poverty, what pitiful poverty of action! In grappling with the scarcity of action, private education has limited itself to slavishly copying formal education, when it does not make it worse and aggravate it. All ideality is reduced to the conquest of the chickpea. It is true that professors would be heroic if they were not slaves, servants, and pariahs of misery.

And nothing remains but the work of writers struggling day after day for the desired regeneration and the legislative work of the rulers.

With permission from one another, we will say purely and simply that what is needed are not articles, speeches, and laws, but deeds, deeds, and deeds.

⁷ The French expression *faire des châteaux en Espagne* literally means to build castles in the air and figuratively to have impossible dreams.

Because we have reached a point in which evil will be remedied only revolutionarily. As long as one operates on the old organisms and the old precepts, all work will be fruitless.

I do not want the ones fearful of euphemism, the dandies of elegance and the circumspect people with the senile serenity of donkeys to get scared. One must say out loud what everyone says softly.

And it is namely the following: that if one wants a real campaign of general culture, it is necessary to begin by destroying, by annihilating the whole ancient building of education, by removing the repeating devices that are called professors and teachers of *antonomasia*; by burning, just like it sounds, the damned texts attentive only to speculative ends and not scientific ones; by forever discarding complicated programs and the categorization of time and faculties; and even, finally, by knocking down the unhygienic and foul-smelling mansions where patent stupidity and idiocy is manufactured.

In time with this first work of mending education, one should give the death blow to privilege, which reserves the monopoly of knowledge for the rich and semi-rich at the same time that education is materially redeemed, is spiritually emancipated. The avalanche of crowds, anxious to learn, would be a fertile field for experimentation of those who knew and wanted to undertake the work of comprehensive education.

We can accept as initiated the great undertaking of culture, which many proclaim and so few want, when we have real and truly free professors; absolute independence for the choice of books; new methods adapted to the nature of each teaching and to the variety of attitudes; hygienic and comfortable buildings, courtyards, and fields; and all the necessary elements for an indispensable practicality and effectiveness of precise demonstrations in order to not produce illustrated parrots.

Meanwhile, there is a preparatory work that is not being done, even though much about it is declaimed. For those who know and can leave the ivory tower, this work consists of stopping sterile preaching to the moon and going straight to offering people the tribute of their knowledge, not only in words and language but also in deeds that verify.

Villages, towns, and cities are anxiously awaiting the good news and nothing but foolish long-winded speeches and monstrosities of insipid prose, both empty of scientific content and even of artistic content, reach there.

And if we were told that, even for this preparatory undertaking of culture, resources and means are needed that are lacking, we will reply simply that in the same way that there are resources and means to maintain a cult with ostentation and a clergy who curse the lack, in the same way that there are abundant resources to sustain on the warpath a crowd of young people who would be better off studying and working, and in the same way that they do not skimp on the maintenance of one hundred institutions of leisure, there should be resources to teach, to enlighten, and to emancipate the minds from the sick automatism in which we are wearing ourselves out.

Because, at all events, reason is evident, the powerful reason of those who affirm—and we with them—that the work of culture will not even be carried out revolutionarily if that other revolution is not previously carried out that wants more than anything to fill stomachs, and cloth and strengthen bodies.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 3, Gijón, December 2, 1910.)

For the Spanish Bourgeoisie: An Adversary's Advice

A few famous journalists do not cease to beat the drum clamoring for the revival of Spain. The principal journalistic companies and talented correspondents fulfill their patriotic mission by pointing out the flowery path through which great peoples go to fortune and to happiness. The minor gods of the earth who enjoy fair and well-deserved reputation in the newsrooms of our newspapers, and not beyond their perhaps grimy walls, second this marvelous work of culture. Envy eats at us. With the zeal of African blood, which they say we have, we walk hurried to correspond to the noble efforts of our most illustrious intellectuals. Spain is reborn.

Is reborn? Classic grocers are still reluctant to sell something more than eighths of paprika and quarters of sugar. The respectable "I sell everything" ones of small dark and gloomy bazaars full of knick-knacks and clothes of all sorts still hardly dare leave the squalid gloom in which they were born and in which they will die. The amazed industrialists of their great industry still lie in admiring contemplation of their very poor ironworks, of their historic looms, and of their laughable factories. The science of the serious and inflated technicians graduated from schools and universities is still full of wordiness, very packed with empty theories of cabalistic formulas, and of vain pretensions. Persistence in the mediocre and in the superfluous parallels with the aversion for the big and necessary.

All our bourgeoisie, from the humblest merchant to the most powerful banker, from the last apprentice of science to the most learned of graduates, continues imperturbable in its adherence to the routine of low wages and extensive labor, without account or measure of time. Our bourgeoisie continues the tradition of intransigence and of hate for ideas and of the persecution of the independent man. It continues attached to all the rancidity, which prevents it from taking a look at the horizon of modern things, good or bad, because there are both. These modern things are forerunners of a new life, which comes at full speed from the revolutionary gait. All our bourgeoisie is incapable of rehabilitation if it does not shake off the medieval filth that gnaws at it.

The rebirth of Spain could come as soon as his majesty capital gave in, acknowledging that: (1) with salaries of one, two, and three pesetas there cannot be skillful workers, strong workers, or intelligent workers; (2) with ten-, twelve-, and more hour working days there cannot be careful, regular, and remunerative production; (3) with earnings of a miser there cannot be splendid buyers; (4) with routines of vulgar practice there can be no industrial developments; and (5) with petulance acquired from books there can be no technical successes or improvements or inventions. The rebirth of Spain could start the day: (1) in which, instead of pepper and sugar being sold by the brass coin, they were sold by pesetas; (2) in which, instead of dirty and dark secondhand goods, spacious, ventilated, and very clean warehouses were established; (3) in which pretentious workshops were succeeded by well-mounted and well-equipped factories; and (4) in which, instead of practical vulgarity and theoretical pretentiousness, careful study and the conscious trial of all the problems of industrial technology were undertaken. The rebirth of Spain could start the very day in which the middle classes: (1) stopped being ridiculously frightened of labor agitations; (2) stopped being afraid of the mere presence of anyone who says they are revolutionary, socialist, syndicalist, or anarchist; and (3) stopped living in the holy ignorance of all that is ideology and passion and self-sacrificing love for things that affect all men, whatever their race, color, or condition.

How unnecessarily some agitate the problem of culture! How foolishly they repeat the refrain of Europeanization!

Our advice, adversary's advice, enemy's advice if you want, goes through other paths. In order to stop being a begging and ignorant people, more begging, at least, and more ignorant than are other peoples, all the bourgeoisie has to do is open their wallets and shake their mental laziness. It should pay good wages to the workers, worthily remunerate its employees and its directors, not require of the worker more effort than it would require of its machines. Time and money, money and time, and there will be culture, a culture, and less hunger and less fatigue. The work will be smarter, and the production more remunerative. Commercial transactions will be wider and more important. Also, the demands will be greater. And also, the agitations will be deeper and more dreadful. There will be more revolutionaries, more socialists, more trade unionists and anarchists.

Do you not want the rehabilitation of the country? Well, make no mistake: there is no other way. The two terms are implicated. More industry, more trade, more science, and more wealth correspond to more tremendous concerns, more serious problems, and more heated struggles. In the elevation of all things, all things are enlarged. The skirmish turns into battle, the battle into epic.

The enemy's advice: follow it. The day in which you know how to be rich and powerful, which you do not know how to be; the day in which you are capable of large financial combinations, of which you are not capable; the day in which you are bold enough to undertake colossal industrial companies, which you are not; the day in which you possess the science you lack; and also the day in which anarchy and revolution do not frighten you, that day you will be rehabilitated and your beloved homeland will be restored. Your desires of greatness will have been filled. You will be great.

In the ascent to that greatness, you will have to drag the baggage of the proletariat. Without it, you will not take a single step. And in order to drag it, you will have to get rid of greedy gain, of user interest, sacrificing, in its honor, money, and time. The proletariat will correspond, do not doubt it, to your nobility. It will learn to live and will want to live more, it will learn to enjoy and will want to enjoy more; it will become more demanding, more rebellious, more anarchist. Here begins your journey from a group of fighters to the big time. You are currently poor, stingy, and despicable. However, after the journey, we will be able to bestow on you the honor of considering you something.

It is well worth it to live for something, to be something, to fight for something. With the old world's defeat, you, bourgeoisie, will still be able to fall gracefully. Follow the enemy's advice, if you do not want to die like pigs.

(El Libertario, number 3, Gijón, November 9, 1912.)

Regional Monographs

I propose to analyze in these descriptions the particular circumstances of social struggles in each of the regions of Spain of which I have some knowledge or experience.

The lack of precise data will make me fall easily into inaccurate statements. But since I do not intend to make a record, but to call attention to certain conditions and to express opinions,

of course personal, I will content myself with suggesting to others the desire to study and to do better what I do poorly.

The aspect of social struggles in all of the Spanish regions has varied for some years. Catalonia, Andalusia, the entire North and Northwest, Valencia, and Murcia have suffered profound modifications under the influence of simultaneous changes, not only in industry but also in the way the proletariat feel and think. Also, the political factor has determined phenomena worthy of special attention with regard to the varied success of workers' demands.

For this and other reasons, I judge that the review and deductions that I propose to make will be of some use, submitting the necessity of this kind of study to the consideration of comrades.

It is not enough to regret mistakes and point out shortcomings. It is necessary to apply to the known deficiencies the appropriate remedy and to put activity where there was negligence, enthusiasm where there was tepidity, perseverance where there was abandonment.

Propaganda work is never finished. Atavistic education and the environment, above all, are too important to be able, with just a few speeches and a few readings, to shake up the world. It is really easy to make believers; it is not so easy to make doers. And much, much harder to get the average worker to be purged of routines, prejudices, and bad habits. And no one will doubt that this work is essential in order to enable the conscious revolution of the oppressed.

I will begin my task without order of preference, but focusing continuously, and one after the other, on the two regions of Spain most significant in the social world.

Andalusia

Of all the regions in Spain, the Andalusian region is perhaps the one that I know the best. I lived many years there, precisely during the era of prevailing workers' societies.

Since the Congress of the Spanish Regional Federation of the International Workingmen's Association—regeneration of the publicly dissolved International—celebrated in Seville in 1882, I was able to follow step by step and up-close the evolution of workers' societies in that region.

Already in the period of the revolution and of the Republic, Andalusia had given brave indications of its rebellious spirit and of its revolutionary power. The Andalusian proletariat and its very inspirers—Salvochea, Cala, Córdoba and López,⁸ and many others—were leaders of internationalism and federalism, which were intermixed at the time. The movement would have profoundly transformed the country if it were not for the cowardice and the Byzantinism of the bosses and the politicians.

To drown the Andalusian revolution, famous deportations were made to the Philippines, to the Mariana Islands and Fernando Póo.

Nevertheless, even though the before-mentioned Regional Federation at the Barcelona Congress of 1881 was barely organized, the resurgence of that proletariat was so strong that it came to form part of the Federation in the heart of big cities and major rural centers of Andalusia. Seville, Malaga, Cadiz, Cordoba, Jerez, and twenty more towns, besides almost all of the Jerez countryside and the Ronda Mountains, whose Arabic names are bubbling in my head, gave such powerful forces to the nascent organization, which soon inspired serious fears among the ruling classes.

⁸ Fermín Salvochea (1842–1907) was an influential anarchist thinker who founded the newspaper *El Socialismo* (1886–1891) in Cádiz, Spain. Ramón de Cala (1827–1902) was an active anarchist in Jerez, Spain. Córdoba and López are lesser-known figures.

The influence of these resistance organizations that formed the Regional Federation was felt to the extent that a newspaper as reactionary as *El Imparcial* had to admit, referring to Malaga, that in the beautiful city of the Mediterranean, delinquency had significantly decreased since the workers were organized.

In Seville, with its enormous labor center, big enough to accommodate thousands of men, morality was imposed in the customs in such a way that drunkenness considered itself abolished. No worker would have dared then, not even if he would have been allowed, to show up inebriated at the doors of the great house of the people.

I could multiply the examples ad nauseam.

This very cultural and moral elevation of the Andalusian proletariat put the rulers on alert.

Especially the lowlands, the Jerez countryside, the Ronda mountain range constituted a serious threat. Those farmers felt obligated to secretly meet in small groups whether in the vineyards, whether in the olive groves, whether in the unevenness and nooks of the mountains. That gave a tone of conspiracy to what was simply a forced means to get in touch with each other, to associate, to read the press, because in the Andalusian countryside the laws common to all the peoples of Spain did not apply.

A private bloody episode gave the ruling classes the pretext to invent the famous *Mano Negra* [Black Hand]⁹ and initiate a brutal persecution that extended to all of Spain, and in which the inquisitorial practices of testicle twisting and other improprieties were not lacking, on the contrary, they were plentiful.

The organization almost disbanded. In Andalusia, it was hardly possible to maintain the sacred fire. *La Revista Social*, which circulated about twenty thousand copies, died at the hands of the workers' persecutors.

It was a great error to suppose that the revolutionary spirit was extinguished in Andalusia. If in the cities it was not reborn as strong as before, in the country it was soon more alive, more resolved. After a short period of reorganization, the Jerez uprising began while Pedro Esteve and Enrique Malatesta traveled through Spain on a propaganda tour.¹⁰ Malatesta was made the head of that movement and certainly returned to Andalusia at the first notice that he had of the event, but arrived late. In Seville, one of those nights, we commented together on the great lies that the large circulation newspapers were writing about his personage.

And what to say about persecutions? They existed then like always.

Reaching present times, other not-too-distant events revealed that occasionally some fire remained among the ashes.

Andalusia, under anarchist ideas, like under ideas of federalism before that and of the International, has maintained the revolutionary flag upright during many years.

How has it come to end up in the present atony?

As carnivorous birds descend on battlefields, so too shrewd politicians and paid redeemers descended on the destroyed Andalusian region as soon as the anarchist element was almost totally broken up by the continuous and brutal persecutions of public power.

⁹ La Mano Negra was an alleged secret and violent anarchist organization that was founded in Andalusia, Spain, at the end of the nineteenth century.

¹⁰ Pedro Esteve (1865–1925) was a Catalan anarchist who helped found *El Despertar* (1891–1902), the first anarchist newspaper based in New York written in Spanish. Errico Malatesta (1853–1932) was an Italian anarchist.

The forced emigration of the best propagandists, the putting out of action of others in jails and prisons, the death of some all contributed, together with the decline of libertarian propaganda, to the fact that the Andalusian proletariat fell into indifference and inaction.

Some wise politicians achieved fleeting success, more beneficial for their particular objectives than for the workers' cause. The socialists were able to attract some unenthusiastic or disheartened elements, but, in reality, neither the politicians nor the socialists have been able to help Andalusia intensely redevelop its workers' societies.

The people of that land are impressionable and imaginative, sentimental and idealist to the extreme, and just as likely to get to know one another and get excited as to give in to discouragement. If a strong current of ideas and feelings does not deeply touch them, they easily conform to the routine of a miserable life. Instinctively they are socialists and libertarians. But if they do not come across the exact note that resounds in their lively souls, full of light and sun and happiness, one will call in vain at their doors.

In spite of their situation, politically and socially inferior to the rest of Spain; in spite of their economic state, more reminiscent of the Middle Ages than of our present days, it will not be the materialist note that will touch these workers. They are of such little needs, they are satisfied with such frugal dishes and with such light clothes that, in reality, this aspect of the issue does not worry them despite the doleful lyricism of which they are so fond. They always speak with the heart more than with the stomach.

Who will give the key to awaken the beautiful and rich region, which sleeps to the cooing of the atony that kills?

Is there an ideal form capable of seducing those spirits, clairvoyant even in the greatest oppression, almost happy even in the greatest poverty?

Each people has its special tick, and Andalusia like no other.

It will be in vain to pretend to guide it through hard, plain country embankments. One has to add beauty, something of music, something of poetry, something of imagination and of art and of love in order to conquer it.

Will we conquer it again?

Catalonia

Just as Andalusia was the feeling, passion, and enthusiasm in Spain's awakening to social ideas, Catalonia was the thought and reflection. It had been so during the International. It was so from 1881 onward.

I have spent little time in Catalonia and, of the time spent, it has been in passing. But because of my continual relations with those companions in the day-to-day struggle and propaganda, I can imagine that I know that region as well as the Andalusian. Initiatives, action, and even the direction of the labor movement started there, and it is not strange that we, those of us from other lands who collaborated in the work of emancipation, had for the Catalonian region requests and inclinations that ended up putting us under its moral and intellectual dependence.

At the Congress of Seville, in 1882, it was quite clear that the soul of the organization was Catalonia. With the passage of time, it was also obvious that the Regional Federation languished as soon as the Catalonian direction was removed. Finally, the Catalans themselves, led by a puritanical strictness and deeming themselves too much at the forefront of militant socialism, definitively put an end to that powerful association. It was not enough for them to transform it into an or-

ganization of purely economic struggle without giving it an adjective or abandoning it. So, they declared it dissolved. Soon the socialism connected with the church, which was on the lookout for such a demise, grabbed the scattered elements.

With such admiration I remember the brave fighters of old time! Serious, fair; with a foolproof morality; capable of all daring without ridiculous posturing; reflective to the point of never compromising the interests of the proletariat, toiling for ideas with a firm determination and without weakness; advocating continuously without flinching, but also without talking nonsense; and when moments of struggle arrived, they did not look away, and if they fell defeated, they did not implore favor nor did they accept mercy from the powerful.

So, these men became directors without the pretension of directing anybody. *La Revista Social*, which Serrano y Oteiza, a man of talent and ability, a man of letters and a juridical writer and a thinker of great substance, published in Madrid, did not disdain, rather, on the contrary, it sought the collaboration and agreement of the most important Catalan propagandists. Between Barcelona and Madrid, there was a constant current of exchanging views. Action and propaganda penetrated each other more closely than they would have under a closed discipline and an established leadership.

The power of workerism was so strong in Catalonia at that time that it radiated to all of Spain and gathered great proletarian masses in a single objective. It will be difficult for another worker organization to equal the historic Regional Federation.

It would be tedious to follow step by step the slow evolution of the social movement of that time period. It will be sufficient to highlight two facts that summarize it. One of them is the Catalans' great mistake of breaking up the Regional Federation at the congress celebrated in Valencia, if I remember correctly, in order to constitute a type of anarchist party, because if they achieved the former easily, they did not succeed in creating an anarchist party at all. Even supposing Catalonia's greater ability to form workers' societies, the decision was hasty and insane because, even though all the Spanish regions were coexisting in a community of aspirations, one should never have ignored the conditions in which each one found itself. This was the first act of Catalanism, if I can express myself in this way, and as a result, the first act of divorce between the Spanish regions in the workers' field. The second fact has been continually on display for all the world. Catalonia, through all of its vicissitudes, has remained a region of societies and organizations. Barely dissolved the Regional Federation, Catalonia resuscitated it under the name of *Pacto de Solidaridad y Resistencia al Capital*. The Catalan proletariat has not stopped being organized in one way or another. The organization *Solidaridad Obrera* is good proof of what I have said. But this whole movement has continually had a particularist character, as if another workers' current corresponded to the bourgeois Catalanist current. Some will tell me that *Solidaridad Obrera* recently became the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*, but one will not be able to say that without recognizing that the conversion was requested from diverse points of Spain and that the bond of union and solidarity was more apparent than real. In this, the worker and bourgeois tendencies seem to also correspond. Lately, bourgeois Catalanism has lost a great deal of ground and the trends of approximation among Catalan politicians, writers, and businessmen to the rest of the regions are undeniable.

I do not want to say with this that such a spirit of exclusivism has never been an aim of the militant workers. But the separation that I have indicated arises from the facts; and since facts are more powerful than we are, it would be useless to evade reality.

In summary, starting from the dissolution of the Regional Federation, the divorce between the social development of Catalonia and that of the rest of Spain is undeniable. It is equally undeniable that while in Catalonia the struggle has always continued strong, it has clearly languished in the rest of the country.

The disparity in the degree of the evolution of workers' societies does not justify at all a separation that transcends to exclusivism, an exclusivism all the more disastrous when it implies disintegration of forces and lack of solidarity. I believe rather, and I have already said it in another section, a moral and intellectual direction would explain it. Whoever can and knows how, should go ahead. A guiding force that does not impose itself always is preferable to a complete rupture. Hegemony in such cases is not discussed. It results as a matter of fact and that is all.

But, is worker Catalonia in a position to recuperate this guiding force, this lost hegemony due to the pretention, conscious or unconscious, of being self-sufficient?

I will treat this point next.

The anarchist movement is inseparable from the worker movement in Catalonia. The successes and defeats of the one have been those of the other. The arrival of the hour of separation is unlikely. They will share the same fate for some time.

No one denies the great force that anarchism has had and still has in Catalonia. But from the time in which anarchism organized literary competitions, resounding meetings, assemblies of undeniable transcendence, and sustained newspapers and very notable journals and profusely edited leaflets and books to the present time in which it languishes, badly sustained by a press that lives with difficulty and hardly edits literature or celebrates meetings, the distance is enormous. Anarchism has spread, it is true, but it is also true that it has weakened.

Through the period called heroic and due to campaigns and propaganda that have greatly broken the anarchist morale, it has been observed how a period of dissolution, subsequent to the completed evolution, was initiated.

Heroes became miserable cops or vile exploiters of enthusiastic workers. Passionate supporters turned into Byzantine discussers of riddles. Fair and resolved men became worthless, gossiping women. We are speaking in general terms.

Propaganda drifted through paths of stupid vanity under the suggestion of a proud and foolish spirit that set itself up as a pedant and dispenser of favors. Action became fictional and deceitful, invented by feverish imaginations, persistent and vile, under the corruption of political and literary influences. We fell as low as we had been high.

The scattering was soon initiated. And, with the scattering, demoralization ran rampant.

Finally, the Jacobin spirit took possession of the anarchists. No more peaceful and serious action, no more reflective propaganda, no more assemblies, rallies, literary competitions, newspapers, journals, leaflets, or books. Daily riots and skirmishes every instant, revolutionary chatter in fashion, defiance and threats under full sail, shouting loudly and acting foolishly without limit were the content of our work.

A few impotent stoics remained scattered throughout Catalonia, and the hotheads without a bit of good judgment were the masters of the field.

What other thing did the organized proletariat do? It is true that it has had the boldness for virile uprisings, that it has maintained upright the flag of claims, and that it has set the tone for the social struggles of our times. But, as anarchism has entered into a period of dissolution, so too the worker movement is weakening, and it does not rise but for fleeting eruptions of

momentary violence. Persistent and sustained action is lacking. The proletariat falls down and gets up successively without the hope of a resurrection to full life.

In order for Catalonia to recover its lost vitality, it will have to propose to redo everything, sweeping without contemplation the Jacobin filth. It will have to raise the spirit and the morale of the crowds, beginning by renovating the propaganda and moralizing the propagandists. It will have to shut the charlatans' mouths, throw out the scoundrels, and clean the field of pests, closing the door to impudence and to exploitation, which seek shelter in ideals that stain. Even if one accuses my language of being bourgeois, I will say that a vigorous selection is imposed.

With regard to the Catalan proletariat, in general, it will have to recover by returning to the perseverance of better times, proceeding with moderation and good judgment, putting sights more on the long term than the short term, investing more in the continuous labor of every day than on the fireworks of one moment of exaltation. I am not speaking in the name of a spirit of meticulous moderation, of a possibilist tendency, of a desire for legalism and order. I am speaking in the name of good sense. The revolutionary act is not a charlatan act.

Is there any doubt that in Catalonia there are elements capable of this resurrection? Is there any doubt that it can recover its hegemony of workers' societies?

Wanting is power. But if no one wants to, the social movement of Catalonia will perish at the hands of ambitious politicians and socialist rascals. The two elements shake hands.

In these moments of decay of parties in Catalonia; in these moments in which the particularist spirit of the region seems to be running out, it would be opportune and sane to get to work and undertake the renovation campaign that I suggest.

Catalan comrades, think about it.

North and Northwest

After Catalonia and Andalusia, one can hardly find noteworthy aspects of any of the other regions of Spain. There was a time when Valencia strongly supported workers' societies. But, slowly, politics, and what is worse, personalist politics took possession of that region and currently it can be considered equally flattened in the social field as are the other regions.

Almost all of the remaining Spanish regions have had or currently have moments of strong workers' societies; but, as such, they are fleeting and without greater transcendence.

Upon engaging today with the North and Northwest of the peninsula, this light review will include Vizcaya, Asturias, and Galicia.

One can say that the whole workers' movement is reduced to La Coruña, Gijón, and Vizcaya, and in spite of the repeated Vizcayan miners' strikes, the movement of workers' societies is of short reach outside of the three above-mentioned cities in the three regions.

With regard to Vizcaya, monopolized by authoritarian socialism, it is noteworthy that labor action is much more intense than the organization. A little because of the constant movement of outsiders and also because of the unimaginative socialist tactics, associations are not very numerous and not very strong. Because of this, the latest formidable strikes have great importance and show what an excellent field of propaganda social ideas must find there if the particularisms of the regions accompany them and are applied to them.

Unlike Vizcaya, the mining population of Asturias is totally indigenous, formed mostly by villagers who have left the hoe. The Asturian miner is always the farmer without desires, the farmer who chews his misfortunes as well as his joys to the monotonous beat of his humdrum

existence. If he suffers any change, it is because of contact with the industrial worker. The main centers of organization are in the vicinities of La Felguera, Mieres, and so forth. In general, the labor movement is considerable in Asturias, given its small land area. Industrial and railway workers, and much of the miners live an intense life in workers' societies and even militate in large numbers, be it in the socialist ranks or in the libertarian ones. Socialism has its head in Oviedo; libertarianism has its greatest strength in Gijón. The struggle of the two tendencies in this region is cruder than in the rest of Spain. Perhaps it consists of the loss of tremendous battles given by workers to employers. Asturian unionism, especially in Gijón and La Felguera, is frankly revolutionary; socialism is dormant, more dormant than elsewhere. In addition, from what I could observe some years ago, the Asturian people revere personalities, despite the few merits that these personalities possess, and of course the one and the other coincide with the same objective to neutralize the workers' action. Libertarians and trade unionists tenaciously struggle against these evils, and while the labor forces are employed in such duties, they cannot engage in others. The frank predominance of one of the two tendencies would be preferable.

Vizcaya differs greatly from Galicia and Asturias. There is no mining or large industry. The workers' movement may be considered reduced to La Coruña and Vigo, possibly today to El Ferrol. Libertarians predominate in Coruña; in Vigo, almost entirely, socialists. History has not, so far, registered great things from the workers' movement in Vigo. That of La Coruña has given strong signs of its revolutionary vigor and seems to find itself now somewhat muffled.

Throughout the Galician countryside, farmers' societies have multiplied, but they do not have the characteristics of workers' societies. Formed by smallholders, they have as an objective rather the redemption of rents, the fight against caciquism, and so forth. More than a few of these societies are run by very ambitious men, lawyers without lawsuits, failed politicians, and aspiring speakers. More than any of the three regions, Galicia lacks an agricultural proletariat and there is no environment for socialism, generically speaking.

I return, then, to what I previously insinuated. A worker literature for industrial workers, propaganda made for them, some doctrines limited to the proletarian problem, between employers and laborers, that is reduced to proclaiming the community of the land, is a dead letter in regions where there are no farmers who do not have a piece of land and where many of them even ignore the global rumblings of workerism.

If socialism is gaining Asturias and Vizcaya, it is not so much because of propaganda as because of the continuous conversion of the farmer into industrial worker. Since in Galicia the villager remains a villager, the entire region is indifferent to the agitations of our day.

I am aware of how difficult it is to accommodate propaganda to the peculiar conditions of these regions, but it is quite true that it would be necessary to do something to win the popular will, at the mercy today, more than ideas, of the people.

The spread of the book, where all aspects of the social problem are undertaken, would probably be of good effect. The newspaper, obliged to maintain the battle, talks always for the workers of great centers and is unintelligible in small rural agglomerations.

And as for the organization, it would be essential to give it new means and very specific guidelines, because while the industrial worker, in addition to ideals, if he professes them, has the objective of better wages, shorter hours, and so forth, the farmworker, particularly if he is not proletariat, must simply be left with distant aspirations and this cannot satisfy him.

Like it or not, we must fight for something real even when it is transitory.

(*El Libertario*, numbers 13, 15, 16, and 23 of November and December 14, 1912.)

14 Representative Men

The Death of Pi y Margall

I was his disciple, still a child, in the hectic period of 73. My good father, federalist *enragé*, gave me all the newspapers, magazines, and books to read that, at the time, supported triumphant federalism. One can say that my mind was molded with the doctrines of Pi and with his translations of several of Proudhon's works.

I was not a federalist for very long, but I always kept and will keep respectful admiration for the man and his ideas. I believe that he has been the brain behind genuinely progressive ideas in Spain. His characteristic points of view are the following: Pi had such broad concepts, such clear and precise forms of thought, such completely formed and firm logic that no truly revolutionary man could ignore his justice, his probity, his noble and severe and quiet grandeur. Like it or not, his influence transcends party lines. Pi y Margall was a true genius of revolution. So he has had and has the applause of all revolutionaries; and those who are not revolutionaries bow their heads in humility, and rave about the personal qualities of the man, since they cannot, because of a remainder of shame, revere his ideas.

But, why ponder what is outside the scope of this discussion?

His death was as modest as his life. If Bonafoux, with real pain, did not find in the Paris press, with regard to Pi, what was lavished on Cánovas, who cares? With all the wagonloads of fine print that exist for one day, everyone who owes Cánovas' renown to governmental success will soon pass forgotten by the world. Pi y Margall will remain like a light that never goes out. Pi's conditions—his quiet but stubborn work, his tenacious struggle for ideals, without vanity, without noise, without apparatus—are those that teach people and train them in the very difficult art of being worthy of themselves.

His philosophical ideas, more than political, will last in the Spanish people as a verb of the coming revolution. Without party commitments, Pi had been the man of all revolutionaries.

His death will produce in the heart of Spanish politics a great decline. The voice of the righteous person does not fade in vain.

Pi kept the federalist party free of political greed with his example, with his firmness, with his simple and clear reasoning, with his great consequence and tenacious character. He kept it at a height worthy of him, the only hope, in the political world, for the country's redemption.

But, and forgive me sincere federalists, will the party continue the traditions of that great man?

I have heard various times the affirmation that the death of Pi would be the death of the federalist party.

I believe, indeed, that federalism will no longer be what it was in Spain. There are too many political concomitances around the federalist idea, and too much confusion in the field of democracy, of self-governing communities, of regionalism, for the philosophical ideal par excellence to be kept pure at the heights to which he who just died took it. There are also few men of

courage and faith and perseverance like Pi y Margall, few of that great spirit of justice who will be encouraged to continue offering up federalism as the champion of the future.

What is more, I believe that the death of Pi y Margall will also influence the other advanced parties, including socialism and anarchism. A very strong ring of the revolutionary chain has broken. Pi had socialist and anarchist ideas. Despite seekers of trivialities, despite short-witted and short-sighted spirits, Pi did not do party work, much less sectarian work. And if his ideal did not crystallize in a closed form like the several forms that serve as a weak excuse to save the trouble of studying and thinking for oneself, he, on the other hand, spread his vigorous roots all over the field of the revolutionary movement. That is why he was the verb and substance of new ideas although not yet administering them, with the corresponding limitation.

Was he the head of a party and did he proceed in that way? In a thousand issues he was not party head nor party man. His best works are works of purely revolutionary philosophy, without dogmas, without conventionalisms, of a truly exemplary sincerity.

Without thinking that no man is indispensable, I cannot nor want to ignore the consideration that men are the instrument at least and often actors in the unfolding of human evolution. Product of the world in which they live, they are, at the same time, factors of the coming world. The dogmatism of the environment is as repulsive to me as any other.

And here is why I believe that the death of Pi y Margall will alter the country's political situation affecting the most advanced parties.

The disintegration of the federalist party is inevitable in the short or the long run. The ranks of socialism and anarchism were nourished from it. They will feed on it now because Pi's philosophical work will remain, and his party work will perish. The sincere federalists who learned from Pi generous ideas about human redemption will detach from political federalism as the ripe fruit detaches from the tree. The *political* federalists who take from federalism nothing more than the exterior forms and the *mechanical* thought of its functionalism may go on to form new groups with the decentralizing democrats and the regionalists. They will make the party *bourgeois*, and we will have another core of candidates aspiring to make us happy through legislative and governmental panacea.

This decomposition began a while ago in the federalist party. Only Pi's great moral authority has been able to contain it. Now it will surface without anything or anyone able to contain it.

The result will not be harmful to revolutionary ideas. The affinities of old revealed among certain federalist elements and anarchists will now strengthen the most radical trend of socialism. Welcome are those who, inspired by the master, come to us sincerely, nobly, persevering for the fight.

From Pi y Margall many have learned, and not a few will learn and should learn to be worthy revolutionaries, and above all fair spirits without pride, without pomp, without vanity. And this should happen in all the parties of the revolution, socialist or anarchist. Because of these conditions, these revolutionaries are hardly known. They do not occupy even the third of a newspaper column. They do not deafen people with praise without measure and applause without limitation. They do not torment generations with verbosity, fastidious and weary of the eloquence of the town square. Because of these conditions, I say, they are indeed men who devote their lives to the welfare of others.

(*La Revista Blanca*, number 84, Madrid, December 15, 1901.)

Costa

Costa has died. We must talk about Costa. The general chorus of praise wants it this way.

I confess, grieving reader, that I am on the verge of the greatest admiration for what I see, read, and hear.

Yesterday, Costa was in his corner of Graus, left alone and forgotten. Suddenly, journalists, writers, doctors, and politicians rise up in a clamorous uproar over the health, seriously weakened, of the pessimistic patriot. There are no distinctions. Republicans and monarchists compete for the record of praise, magnanimity, and selflessness. Any offer, however large, is estimated as little. All praise, applause, or encumbrance seems insignificant. In the dithyrambic height, there was someone who has called him a monster. The dictionary of loftiness was exhausted.

This sad, disgusting spectacle has been staged precisely by those who, calling themselves intellectuals, do not have the slightest idea of intellectual integrity. Costa whipped them cruelly in life; and they, little lapdogs, do what they can and what they know licking his hands in death.

They are a corrupted pack of dogs for which contempt is not enough. It is necessary to take up the whip.

Whether the enthusiasts of his talent like it or not, Costa has not been popular, has not been esteemed by the people until very late because his work was also not, until very late, of public interest and of public domain. Engrossed, too engrossed in the thousand and one entanglements of the law, of jurisprudence; prisoner in the thick network of the legislated and that which can be legislated, his work was work of a technician, if one wants and as great as one wants; but not work of a leader of crowds, work of an idealist who looks into the distant future almost forgetting ambient reality. When Costa rises thundering and roars, as it is said that the lion of Graus used to roar, it is the hour of national debacle, when everything dies in us. Then and only then he talks for the people and the people listen to him. The people listen and do not follow him because they are incapable of any action or they go in another direction. Those who are deaf and blind are the directors of public affairs and journalists and politicians. So blind and so deaf that even his own friends, the republicans, placed him, not long ago, in the most complete vacuum, responding with an icy and cruel silence to the exaltations of *El País* for him to be chosen representative again of the nation in the Courts.

Do you want the people to follow him? Those who had to follow him, first of all, were the ones who at the time of death go too far with the praise, and they did not follow him. Even now they do not follow him. They cry out so that the country, while they revile him, stands up resolved to the boldest political enterprises, and they roam, meanwhile, forgetting that Costa's work is proper of legislators, educators, intellectuals, lawyers, and government officials and is knocking with bangs at their own doors. Why do they not *act* instead of talk? If there is something to regenerate here, it is all that now bustles and gesticulates on the occasion of Costa's death. The revolution, for what? Its only result would be to elevate cliques of inept and incapable people who deliver speeches without good judgment and act foolishly without measure. The intellectuals, journalists, politicians, leaders, and administrators and managers of crowds should revolutionize themselves. They really need it.

Costa is dead. Forgotten in life, people discuss him in death. Without a doubt his flesh is worth more than his thought, his materiality more than his idea. It is the last thing that could happen to the pessimistic patriot who did not judge the dead.

Perhaps he was right because we seem to be determined to show that the decaying carcass lasts a long time in us.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 13, Gijón, March 10, 1911.)

Anselmo Lorenzo: A Young Old Man

When I had barely entered in social struggles, they always talked about him. Serrano y Oteiza, Francisco Tomás, Ruiz, dead now, and others who are still alive praised that propagandist of good stock.

I met him personally in a worker conference in Madrid. I did not see him again until much later during my stint in Barcelona. My affection and my admiration for him lead me today to consecrate these lines.

In one of his books, his life as a propagandist is considered. His enormous work as a publicist, as a lecturer, and as a contemporary is present in the minds of most militant workers, and therefore, in mine. He is already old and sick. He works, however, like a vigorous young person. He is like a young man whose over-activity has no equal. Pain does not dominate him. The years do not exhaust him. He has a strong head, saturated with logic, and a virile pen in the service of truth.

It was said of Pi y Margall that he was a young old man, the youngest of the young. Singular case: the same can be said of he who has not missed a propitious moment or circumstance without exposing, with severe criticism, the political contradictions of the great thinker. They are similar, like a drop of water is to another drop of water, in their lives and in their struggles for the ideals of justice. The worker does not have much to envy of he who was ruler; national glory, profound philosopher, and man honored to an exaggeration.

Now, in the last years of his existence, he produces more clearly, with more energy, if possible, than in the days of his youth. The precision of his style and his reasoning is overwhelming. His activity, insuperable. His original works, his translations, his conferences occur almost uninterruptedly. One does not know where this singular man finds the time for so much.

Whatever his points of view may be, and, of course, I do not share all his opinions, they have particular merit. That is to say, they are always expounded without coarse words of bad taste. His work invariably leads to reason. It does not want to harm but to convince.

If as a writer, as a propagandist he is worth a great deal, as a man he is worth more. For whoever comes into contact with him or meets him, it is impossible not to be inspired by him. His life is in only one piece, life of a puritan.

Excuse me if I publicly praise a colleague. I am breaking something that is common among anarchists; something that is an essential part of my own ideas. It does not matter. It is about a young old man, young among young people, whose work is well worth the justice that I do him. This young old man, friend barely treated, with whom I spoke no more than two times, is called—and the mere enunciation of his name will explain my behavior—I say, Anselmo Lorenzo.

I hope he forgives me the bad treatment that I give him.

(*Almanac of La Revista Blanca*, for 1904, Madrid.)

An Exemplary Life

In the peaceful silence of his modest home, at once nest and laboratory, a man died whose virtues and talents taught legions of freedom fighters.

In life, he was not seen loudly applauded by the crowds. Honors and flowers did not follow him to the grave. Anselmo Lorenzo had something better than the banal and fickle manifestations of the idolatrous crowd. He had the sharpness of an existence consecrated entirely to truth and justice. He had his own merit and his own applause in the placidity of his character, in the simplicity of his modesty, and in his great tranquility of a fighter, compendium and summary of an inflexible conscience and a mind full of balance and clarity.

We will not sing the praises of the man. He was a tireless propagandist with the word and the pen from the early days of the International. He was a very correct writer with an easy and authentic style in the manner of the unforgettable Pi y Margall. He was in love with the great ideal of liberation and surrendered in old age as in youth to the imperative of conscience. We could write in his honor all the eulogistic adjectives with the confidence of not overdoing it, pondering the man who, without abandoning his status as worker, figured out for himself how to rise to the spheres of knowledge, standing out vigorously among the mediocre crowd, and transcending the flock while at the same time living like a sheep.

But that is not what matters. What matters is the representative meaning of this simple, honest, and quiet life. Anselmo Lorenzo embodied ideas and feelings that at this time are out of circulation impregnated with low philistinism. He represented the kind of exceptional man, hardly understood by more than a handful of contumacious ideologues. Fortitude, strength of spirit, behavioral inflexibility, ideal fervor, consistency of thought and action; everything, in short, that falls outside of human trifles, all that lived and endured in Anselmo Lorenzo until the last moment of his both idyllic and tragic existence.

In the current bankruptcy of all idealities, men like Anselmo Lorenzo are top men. They remain as a promise of future restorations of the philosophical meaning of life in front of vile deeds, of miserable actions that cast doubt on humanity and justice, on everything great and everything noble that had been preached to civilized man and promised to the man of the future. These men beyond common feeling and thinking, standing out like bright lights in the wearisome hustle of the social world, have the sovereign power to guide progress in the direction of indefinite moral and material improvements above all metaphysical fallacies, all political and religious lies and all cold scientific strictness.

Anselmo Lorenzo, modest worker of the press, leader of proletarian crowds, irreducible anarchist of the good stock of Reclus and Kropotkin, almost ignored by the intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie for a long time, absolutely unknown to political professionals, has died as a man. He lives and will live as vigorous representation of a high sense of existence that, continuously rising from the depths of the social conglomerate, will put an end one day to everything in the present life that is tortuous, petty, and ignoble.

(El Motín, January 7, 1915.)

15 Polemical Works

One Opinion and Another

On the subject of the Austro-Hungarian problem and with regard to the inchoate process against Serbian nationalists, *Le Currier Européé* opened in its columns information of which *La Publicidad* of Barcelona reproduced the following words written by Kropotkin:

All my sympathies are with nationalities fighting for their independence. There is no nationality, no matter how small—numerically speaking—that does not embody some human character traits that are better developed and have greater ease of developing by themselves than not in coexistence with other nationalities.

And the complete, free development of its characteristic traits, institutions, and national traditions as well as the complete development of its poetry, literature, music, and way of expressing the impressions of nature, etc., always offers new elements, which contribute to the variety and the plenitude of human thought and action, necessary elements for humanity.

I have here why, to my mind, progress certainly does not lie in the absorption of the small nationalities by the big ones—and to contribute to it is a crime of warped humanity—but in the free and complete development of the character of institutions, of the language of each nationality big or small, especially if it is small and in danger of being absorbed. And only when this full freedom of development is conquered will we be able to arrive at true international progress through the federation of free national unities, of free municipalities, of free groupings within these unities and of the individuals in the human beehive's primary cells.

It is difficult for us to believe that in this way, without any reservation, our companion pronounces in favor of a tendency that, in general, does not cover those traits of universality, which are the root of our ideals, but that, on the contrary, is the expression of a retrograde particularism or of an atavistic feeling as unlikeable as the absorbent centralization to which he is opposed.

Of course, we are resolutely—needless to say—in favor of all autonomies. We sympathize with those struggling for their independence and even more if they also struggle for the independence of others. We think that progress does not lie in the absorption of the small nationalities by the large ones, even though one cannot deny that the formation of these states leads to some progress in the spread of knowledge and the conditions of the struggle for human emancipation. And we do not hesitate to affirm and reaffirm that true international progress will be obtained through the free federation of individuals, municipalities, and nationalities or whatever group that is formed, changing and extending, intentionally, the terms with which Kropotkin expresses for this purpose. All this is nothing more than the cursory summary of anarchist philosophy.

Is there something more in the words of Kropotkin that will make the Catalanists boast of such a valuable opinion? Without a doubt. And that something is precisely what motivates this article.

We also have a little bit of logic to reason on our own and to alert those who do not realize that the dialectical rigor of certain principles would take them much further than they wanted, even if they were in Kropotkin's very good company.

Would the autonomy, or if you like, the independence of Hungary, Serbia, Ireland, and Catalonia (or of any nation, region, area, or whatever seems best to call it) create something more than a change of central power, of rulers and officials? When that question is affirmatively answered and we are told the when and how, we will talk. For now, focusing on the undisputed terms of the question, it is simply about establishing independent or autonomous nations with, more or less, therefore, their own governments, officials, and so forth. Municipal autonomy of individuals remains at the mercy, in the future, of new masters. The great questions of property and the emancipation of laborers are not even superficially considered. It is, therefore, a purely *patriotic* problem whose solution would enhance the autonomy or independence for a single class, that of the capitalists; zero, for the rest of the country. What can move, in this case, the feeling and thoughts of a Kropotkin to sympathy? It is difficult for us to assume that a revolutionary of good stock believes that we will reach the emancipation of humanity, the true goal of his aspirations, along a similar path.

The recognition of the personality or nationality of Catalonia, Ireland, and so forth is a matter of tradition and history in whose particular analysis we do not need to dwell. The freedom to form fully free personalities for any objective, that of production and exchange and consumption, or simply artistic and scientific or of pure sympathy or affinity matters much more than can matter the definite establishment of those historical personalities, whose origin, together with that of great nationalities, is at the very root of privilege. And since one cannot get to this freedom and this recognition of formed or to be formed collectivities but through individual freedom—*alma mater* of all freedoms—, and since individual autonomy is impossible without prior equality of economic, political, and social conditions, it immediately turns out that, despite our sympathies for the small, rebellious nationalities, they do not work for anything other than for a simple change of masters, rulers, and owners in a single move.

Moreover, under the political and social point of view, the autonomy or independence of those small historic nationalities almost always involves revival of traditions and old ways that have nothing in common with progress. And if, on the other hand, centralism has tried and tries to erase with its huge sponge all that was and is characteristic of those nationalities, and against violence and injustice and the trampling of a dying privilege, what can men of progressive ideas do? Opt for one of the two evils? Our attitude is always defined. It is of resolved rebellion against all despotisms.

How one should establish the right to autonomy or to independence is not through history, through tradition, through particular qualities and conditions of each personality. To place oneself in this terrain is to pass to the enemy's side, to fall head-long in the field of the adversary, of men of tradition, defenders of past, present, and future privileges in the political, economic, and social realm.

Autonomy, freedom to govern oneself, or better said, to settle one's own affairs, be it the autonomy of individuals or of collectivities, is a natural, primitive right, anterior and superior to all law. So, any restriction of said freedom completely annuls that right. To reduce the right to the

existence of small nationalities is to remove with a stroke of a pen all progress and to completely forget the universal problem of human emancipation.

Is not this resurgence of particularisms that divide men of radical ideas, while reactionary elements huddle around the flag of patriotic tradition, already a serious evil in itself? Is it not saying out loud that patriotism triumphs over the cosmopolitan trend?

We are not of those who declaim against the feeling of homeland as the expression of affection to places and things we have lived. We are deeply moved by the distant echo of the humming of childhood, the language in which we stammer our first words, and the music and poetry in which our spirit was educated. The murmur of other music, of other languages, of other songs of other lands in which, as men, we have lived and enjoyed and ... suffered also reverberates there. Why bathe passionately in the narrow stone container having at our side the lake, the river, and the wide sea where all languages, all music, all poetry, all harmonious rumors of nature and life, and also all its turmoil can be found?

And even then, do we want to build a state of law on top of shifting states of affections and passions, of memories and yearnings?

Rebellion against all oppression is good. But while the political world and the world of interests fight for home town and country, we want to fight for the homeland of all and for all, for the country for the millions of slaves who populate all directed and exploited lands, the big and the small, by the holders and hoarders of wealth. We want to fight on the side of and for the emancipation of those millions of men who have no homeland because they lack bread and freedom.

And as long as those dispossessed multitudes have no bread, no shelter, and no freedom, it will be ridiculous to speak to them of countries, of poetry, of literature, of music, and of institutions and songs that they cannot feel, understand, or enjoy, and that if they felt them, understood them, and enjoyed them, it would be so that, among brothers in servitude, new and insurmountable barriers were lifted.

Thus, compared to an opinion as respectable as you want, we reaffirm once again the broad sense of anarchist philosophy that, if it has not fallen out with the particular characteristics of individual and collective personalities, nor is it opposed to the free expansion of all modes of spiritual community, whether by word, by brush, by sound, nor does it even deny the possibility of every conceivable method of practical and material life, it always affirms and always proclaims the universality of its aspirations for human emancipation and cosmopolitanism necessary and indispensable to the good harmony and peace among all men.

Opposed to capitalism and governmentalism (capitalism's expression), we are anarchists. The anarchist affirmation also rises strong and triumphant against the narrowly patriotic spirit. No sympathy will be strong enough to twist us or force us to compromise.

(Acción Libertaria, number 4, Gijón, December 9, 1910.)

Two Speeches: Maeztu and Alomar

Maeztu spoke loud and tough at the Madrid Athenaeum. His lecture "Revolution and Intellectuals" is a political event worthy of all attention.

Alomar, in the Barcelonan Circle, has developed the theme of his lecture “Denials and Affirmations of Catalanism” with that special emotion that distinguishes him according to his devotees and admirers. This is also a political event that deserves to fix public attention.

The two speakers have lashed out strongly against intellectuals, and want to take us on different paths, apparently, but it is only one actually, in harmony with civilized countries of Europe. They want to *make us European*, in short, as Costa tried some time ago.

Maeztu attempts the formation of a disciplined intellectual aristocracy that leads us and governs us. Alomar hoists the flag of a new socialist and Catalanist party. Both call for the speedy recovery of the country’s ills. Both rummage furiously in the great problem of culture.

In order to be modern, the two of them want to translate English and German cultural practices into Castilian and Catalan ones. They ignorantly establish a strong dividing line between the intellectual, political, and bourgeois classes on one side, and the proletarian class on the other. All social work is the work of politicians and intellectuals. Spain is Spain and Catalonia is Catalonia for its capitalists, for its legislators, and for its advertisers. The common people are like servants and slaves who are beckoned and dismissed at will. The multitude lacks the right of citizenship and does not form the nation. Those who want to be modern still remain in the antiquated concept of Roman law. They do not say it clearly, but it is visible in all their words, in their reasoning. If they wanted to speak with absolute and noble frankness, a resounding affirmation of class would come out of their lips.

The criticism that they make of intellectualism and of politics is bitter and deserved. But are there not more factors in the life of a people? Is there not a direct social action with its own evolution in step with or opposite to the evolution of public affairs? It seems incredible that such simple evidence escapes the perspicacity of those superiorly gifted, top minds!

Maeztu evokes the work of Fichte with his *Addresses to the German Nation* and belittles the universal action of philosophism made fashionable by Goethe, Hegel, Kant, Schiller, and so forth. He wants undoubtedly a similar work for Spain and seems to believe that there already exists an intellectual youth capable of being taught, of doing *Kantianism*, of going beyond the smallness and pettiness of current horizons. It is painful to admit that the people are not morally with them, and he sees clearly that, parallel to the supposed movement of reform entrusted *exclusively* to the intellectuals, a movement of revolution is operating in the inaccessible, mysterious, and anonymous people. He even fears that the revolution may reach reform and that the people may violently rebel against the intellectuals.

And like Maeztu, Alomar also sees that the people have eluded them, and he attempts to carry out in Catalonia a meritorious work, in the words of *La Publicidad*, which consists of ripping the working classes from the clutches of political opportunists, from the idols that the people’s unconsciousness has elevated; of educating the proletarian masses, organizing them for the legal fight for rights, removing them from anarchy and indirect exploitation of their ignorance for what he has described as fomentism ... And as Maeztu wants an intellectual ruling class that does *Kantianism*, Alomar wants a socialist Catalanist left that does *futurism* and *pan-politics*, the first consisting of accommodating the soul to future times that will soon come and the second to seeing the life of every city from the place of Catalonia, launching the spirit beyond borders in an insatiable greed of civilization; *pan-politics* coming to be to space what futurism is to time.

Verily I say to one person that Lazarus will not leave his grave. And I say to another that this is not the right time for philosophy. Sorry, above all, for this deadly jump from those ideological heights to the vulgarity of my plebian intellect.

Doing Kantianism! But, from where does Maeztu come that he ignores that doing Kantianism happened long ago, that it is absolutely antiquated? There is no more German philosophism, sociologicalism of Marx, Bakunin, Kropotkin, and so forth, a very topical subject yesterday, is passing into history at this moment. People take the word and, in complete social practicality, launches itself into action at its own risk. All current theories have no more value than that which springs from deeds. With acts, one propagates, demonstrates, convinces. They are your own lessons. What will we have to do to the people if verbalism scandalously breaks? And how delayed the radicalism that believes to invent new things with its future and its Catalanist and socialist pan-politics at the same time!

If these men who have privileged intelligence did not think about the problems of concern to the Spanish nation, as if they had fallen from the moon last night on Castilian lands or Catalanian lands, they would realize that the proletariat has gotten older, has thrown off its harness and is beginning to lead the life of the country on their own. They would realize that direct social action surpasses political action, and so, instead of their attempts to aristocratic and managerial creations, they would simply propose to integrate this real evolution joining the action of the people as one more certainly indispensable factor. Acting otherwise, they run the risk that the people may not see them as anything but ambitious with unspeakable yearnings, and the people will proceed accordingly.

It is good that, from the bourgeois point of view, the intellectual and moral level of the governing element is instituted, but do not deny or muffle the reality that presently demonstrates the moral and intellectual superiority of the militant proletariat above political anxiety. It is good that, attentive to the interests of the bourgeoisie, the Catalan homeland and the Spanish country want to be Europeanized, but, for God's sake, do not forget that the Catalan proletariat has been Europeanized before and exceeds, by its power of initiative and action, other proletariats who fight for more substantial things than those offered to us by those two innovators of rancid things called Maeztu and Alomar.

Violent revolution does not come before reform because there is no daring and there are no ideas in the intellectual and political realms. The inaccessible, mysterious, and anonymous people, the other says, have something better to think about and to engage with than in bloody episodes of killing. It is already proving it with deeds, not because it moves without organization and by anonymous agencies, by more or less unknown men, perfectly substitutable for one another, as stated Maeztu, but because it acts consciously and by itself, without guardianships, political or intellectual generalships; and this lesson is that which all the Maeztus and Alomars that have been and will be should learn well before attempting reforms and innovations forgotten for being well known.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 6, Gijón, December 23, 1910.)

Hunger and Lasciviousness

The life of man develops under the domination of the same instincts that govern animal life: hunger and lasciviousness. In this way, Ramiro de Maeztu reveals in a favorable article Anatole France's conservative condition.

If this article were not pure logomachy, it would be a beautiful and finished work. But too much literary play is an abundant source of absurdities, and so Maeztu pitifully confuses the need for nutrition and the need for procreation.

Hunger and lust do not rule nor the life of man nor that of other animals. Rather, they involve the destruction of species.

The thesis that hunger is instigator, agent, or factor of great deeds is absolutely inconsistent and false. Momentary hunger, in an otherwise satisfied creature, is stimulus to obtain the necessary ration, and even the immediately superfluous one. Dosed and methodized hunger in the habitually starving animal is paralyzing and annihilating. Animal species that do not find necessary food inevitably die. Man is no exception. Through permanent hunger, men lack the strength to react, and the rule of the satisfied is affirmed. What can be expected from squalid crowds and from shaky legs? Where physical strength is lacking, intellectual and passionate vigor is impossible. No man nor beast, when weak, has the necessary drive to seize what it needs nor feels the impulses of procreation, much less of lasciviousness, in order to consume the last remains of life in a final ecstasy of pleasure.

The animal will have a languid look of infinite and untranslatable pain. Man will implore with outstretched hand in a spasm of humiliation.

Men who are capable of great deeds, of redemptive rebellions, and of revolutions that transform the world are vigorous men or semi-vigorous men who nourish themselves well and want to nourish themselves better, and who have begun to like a fulfilled life and want to conquer it completely.

No, the power of life is not hunger and lasciviousness. With less wordplay, one would have reached this common and scientific truth. The need to feed and procreate is the great engine of existence. Without nutrition and procreation, there is no individual, there is no species. Everything else—love, art, knowledge—springs from the well-fed and fruitful. And everything is necessary, and everything is indispensable.

And we aim to conquer everything, so that, on top of the wobbly legs of the famished, the satiated and the lascivious do not rise up.

(*El Libertario*, number 4, Gijón, August 31, 1912.)

Fictions and Realities

Such things I read and see that at times I ask myself if, in effect, we will be outside the world of the real as people imagine it to be.

I read and see things in that famous and unmatched Barcelona magazine called *Ciencia Social* that bring to mind the good times in which Corominas, Unamuno, Ruiz Martinez, and Dorado collaborated. What a profound open abyss between that spirit of personal independence and of wistful research and this mean spirit of accommodation to the vulgarities cataloged in party programs! Sonorous men parade through my brief meditations. They are brilliant intellectual stars who, at the present time, guide or want to guide crowds. But I do not see, rising above the common leveler of mortals, a strong and firm head or a great and magnanimous heart capable of leading the crowds to the summits of dignity and justice.

Because the atmosphere is saturated with poetic verbalisms, empty literary pieces, and philosophical vague remarks that transcend shameful ignorance, the alleged spiritual directors move

in a plain not higher than that in which impotent mediocrity is discussed. I hope that those who have an air of superiority forgive the rebellious audacity of this insignificant comment.

The reading of an article that Gabriel Alomar has published about the last Spanish Socialist Congress suggests it to me.

Poet more than a thinker, writer more than philosopher, rhetorical before accurate and fair in the expression of ideas, restless in the political grid, regionalist at times, republican one moment, socialist another, even though cased always in the leftism that aims to look to the future and is too conservative, promoting routines sent to be withdrawn from circulation like counterfeit coins, the almost Catalan oracle has, without being himself Catalan, the happy aptitude to write beautiful things and the unfortunate luck to ramble logically. They say that he plays with ideas forced by the necessity of the consonant. The consonant is in this occasion the obligatory pet word of politicism, now triumphant of the doctrine that defends the primacy of economic factors over any others.

Alomar sings songs of glory to the determined intonation, or better said, to the decided entrance of Spanish socialism in the political fold. Idealist and dreamer of sweet vague remarks, economic socialism compared with political socialism does not personally interest him a great deal, and so he shouts his first recommendation to the proletarians: "Be politicians above all else!"

The few or many thousands of socialists who are in Spain would respond to him in the following way: if we are political socialists, it is because we are mainly economic socialists. The root of all socialism is more or less determined *economic* factors. Political action can certainly be estimated as a necessary instrument but in a secondary condition. As soon as it is considered a primary condition, it is no longer socialism. There is between the two terms the same relationship that exists between the real and the fictional, the essential and the accessory. Only venality or ideal deviation can disrupt these terms. Socialism either looks to the complete emancipation of men or it stops being socialism. The doctrine that defends the primacy of economic factors over any others is its first condition, but not in the sense that perhaps Alomar attributes to it, which is the simple reduction of hours and the improvement of wages with which no socialist complies.

But I warn you that I am not the one to make the defense of socialism. Let the wise men of historical materialism work it out for themselves with the poet.

For my part, I would just like Alomar's fluid prose to be in tune with plain reason, without nebulous literary references, and to show how human ideality is enclosed in the fragile walls of politicism, how the scaffolding is superior to the building in the same way that experience and reality teach us that we are essentially formed of economic relations, of social creations, of artistic conceptions, and of scientific marvels.

The very poor mentality of the professional politician is necessary, and Alomar does not lack intellectual wealth, to forget and ignore, under the domination of a fascinating fiction, that real life is something more, much more than political artifice.

The market mechanism itself, the very industrial structure of the civilized world, the organization of property and its correlative, the regime of work, are prodigious creations of human genius and social activity, despite its roots of injustice and privilege. And they are such creations precisely outside and even in opposition to political artifice and prove, incidentally, the possibility and practicability of every imaginable organic idealism.

Is there, however, anything less artistic, less witty, less ideal than the flock of voters, than parliamentary competition, than governmental routine? Is there anything more insignificant than bureaucracy, than technique, than official art and science?

The praise of the illustrious function of the citizen who votes or who legislates or who governs, what a paradox!

Neither creative spontaneity nor ideal concurrence, but monotony and constantly repeated forcing, is the core of the political body. Imperialism and dictatorship, even with Alomar's label, mean the subordination of the real to the fictitious. They are also a corollary of servitude. From where, oh souls of socialism, will come the puppets' dignity and justice that poetry exalts, and reality subjugates?

Radically human struggles have not been, are not, and will not be for political reasons. Alomar is deceived. The doctrine that defends the primacy of economic factors over any others is pervasive. The great currents of thought, the exaltation of noble passions, the highest aspirations, and heroic deeds of humanity always move through wider horizons. They begin from profound reasons, from the very core of life, which is not of a vile political sort; which is physiology, economics, social dynamics, and crystallizes in ethical aspirations and in generous idealities of infinite greatness. How otherwise? Despite all the fevered imaginations of the mystics of the left, we are, above all, stomachs and intestines, to the point that the most brilliant ideas and the subtlest psychic suggestions have ingestion and evacuation of food for prosaic steppingstones. What an obnoxious premise for rhymesters of stanzas to spiritual beauty!

And because we are, above all, animals with nutritional and reproductive needs, what other metaphysics could overtake the pressing economic issue from where human struggles begin and through which they endure?

No matter how much the mind gets lost in the vision of beauty, it will never be able to do without this flesh, these bones, this blood and these muscles and these organs, all impoverished, macerated, and reviled by the worshipers of mysticism, ripped to pieces by neurasthenia, and by servile, base servants of the earth's powerful. Politics! That is fiction for idiots, trap for innocents, and sport for slackers. It is the prison that the rascals impose on honest men.

Real life is work, is exchange, is consumption; it is art, enjoyment, science; it is liberating economy in whose orbit gravitate infinite worlds that populate it.

That is reality, poet Alomar, and the rest is artifice and music and shoulder-hanging weapons. (*El Libertario*, number 12, Gijón, October 26, 1912.)

The Anarchist Danger

Emilio Sánchez Pastor, in Barcelona's *La Vanguardia* dated February 27 allows himself to talk nonsense about the anarchist danger with the motive of "the famous process of the society of bandits" of which Bonnot was the leader.¹

It does not matter to us that Pastor talked nonsense. But it has to do with fabricating a sad legend about anarchism, sowing errors, falsehoods, and lies. So that such a legend does not prosper, even while it disgusts us to enter into a terrain that can be construed as one of justification, as quite unnecessary, we take up the pen to point out again our attitude toward all inevitable violence that dishonors and annihilates humanity.

¹ Jules Bonnot (1876–1912) was the leader of the Bonnot Gang, a French anarchist group active from 1911 to 1912 that embraced violence as a means to an end.

One can tolerate the slander and insults of the mob that shouts in a moment of exaltation. Christian forgiveness in great souls is not an extraordinary virtue for these ravings of small souls.

But one cannot tolerate people who are deemed educated, who are thought perhaps to be inspirers of crowds to spread conscious falsehood that has now moved from contraband to legal weapon. For this boldness of literary and journalistic self-importance, the whip would be too soft of an artifact; contempt, too Olympian in modest people like us. We will summon up reason and patience, and we will seek to do harm in the very heart of the golden evil that shelters crimes and protects unspeakable outrages. From accused, we will become accusers.

And let fall what may.

Sanchez Pastor sustains that the perpetrators of robberies and murders call themselves anarchists. He argues that murder and theft are elevated to dogma of a political or social school; that crime appears for the first time, as an obligation of a sect, as part of a doctrine. “What criminals have said”—he adds—“about this point is of little importance. But the fact that anarchist newspapers have welcomed them with open arms has a great deal of importance, accepting them as distinguished members and judging their actions as good and holy within their school.”

We are unaware if there has been any anarchist newspaper that has said and done what Pastor affirms. Of what we are sure is that *the country's anarchist newspapers*, clearly, have not done it or said it. Of what we are also certain is that no one has tried, from our field, to make murder and theft a part of the anarchist doctrine or a requirement of anarchism. Those things are lies of commonplace journalists *to scare* the simple bourgeois who pay up. Or Mauraist² platitudes that allow Pastor to prepare a stammering mix of anarchism, conjunctionism, and even monarchism, “as in the case of the Ferrer trial,³” and offer it to the shrewd Count of Romanones,⁴ current and pre-eminent guardian of social order.

There is no right to such extremes. Thieves and murderers are not more than that: murderers and thieves, the same here as in China. With all due respect to irresponsibility and to the theory of social causes of crime, that we ourselves are maintainers, violence, inside or outside the law, is violence, and therefore is unjust, inhuman, and barbaric. We repudiate it. All anarchists repudiate it. Robbery with a gun is no less wrong than robbery with cunning. Killing, whatever the final purpose may be, is always killing. There is no flag that can shelter such iniquities. Because, ultimately, to explain certain deeds is not exactly to justify them.

It is possible that there are murderers and thieves who call themselves and even that really are anarchists. But it is absolutely certain that there are thieves and murderers who call themselves and who are fervent monarchists, enthusiastic republicans, and confirmed Catholics, especially.

There is no famous bandit who does not wear scapulars on the chest. There is no wicked person who does not die repentant, embracing the faith of Christ between two thieves. Almost all outlaws are believers, respectful of hierarchies, and worshipers of everything high, human, or divine.

Without going too far, among the millions of men of order and lavish landed owners of large estates, housing districts, enormous factories, and rich mines, how many truly honorable, honest

² Antonio Maura was the conservative leader of Spain from 1907 to 1909.

³ Francisco Ferrer Guardia, founder of La Escola Moderna, was accused of instigating the 1909 Tragic Week in Barcelona, and was executed on October 13, 1909, at Montjuïc Fortress.

⁴ Álvaro Figueroa y Torres Mendieta (1863–1950) was the President of the Council of Ministers in 1913 and Count of Romanones.

men could Pastor count? Surely this meticulous citizen sits every day, wherever he goes, very quietly among a dozen respectable and respectful thieves, estimable murderers who never dared defy the law and customs.

The Bonnots and companions of tragic misdeeds, as the newspapers say, are birds of feather, only reversed, and therein lies their main offense. Nicholas Estévez⁵ has said of them that “not being anything more than some worthy characters in this society of murders and thieves, they are unjustly called anarchists.”

Who protects them, who welcomes them, who justifies them? The others are protected, justified, even glorified by the entire society. There is, on the other hand, no horror, baseness, or vileness that cannot be attributed to all parties, and that is not sanctioned by history. Anarchist horrors, even charging us with all that people like Sánchez of the satiated bourgeoisie want to charge us, are cakes and bread compared with the glorious pages of the Church, of all the Churches and the State, of all States. History is an endless procession of bloody and gruesome slaughters.

This language will seem quite harsh, brusque, and rude to Sanchez Pastor. It does not enter into the delicate molds of literary euphemism, of the mental idiocy of our writers, of our despicable journalists with superficial understanding, to call things by their name. Thief, Mr. What’s his name! Murderer, Mr. So-and-so! What impudence!

Another environment is necessary. Estévez tells great truths from Paris. From the same capital of France, the brilliant Bonafoux⁶ fairly compares the ragged band that risks its life outside the law with the neat and decent band that earns its living, under the protection of the law, in financial combinations that ruin thousands of modest citizens who have the nasty habit of saving. From Paris also, Gómez Carrillo⁷ writes for *El Liberal* his beautiful chronicle “Four sentenced to death,” which is a formidable requisition for a jury that condemns by evidence and condemns proven innocent people. “To save a guilty person”—he says— “in the majority of the cases, is to be fair.” “When a man proclaims his innocence, there is nothing sufficient to answer: He is guilty.” A person like Sánchez does not write these things.

After all, it is much more dangerous for society to convert robbery and murder in a customary practice than to infuse them in a philosophy for the use and abuse of those who are unfortunate enough to need to justify themselves. Thieves and murderers who are not in prison nor work for someone else’s dreams get on well without philosophies and without justifications. And they succeed.

So clear and evident is all of this that Pastor himself confesses it unconsciously. According to him, it is about putting a new name to old things, to crimes that have existed since organized humanity (What is that, Pastor?) and that has its sanction in all codes. The word anarchist is to be substituted by those of thief and murderer. There is confusion between social doctrine and common crime. Always, always, Sanchez Pastor.

But, why, then, is it said at the same time that some anarchists’ propaganda by the deed⁸—almost justifiable for Pastor—follows the propaganda that has as its aim the seizing of other people’s money through murder and that in Spain, a while ago, a sad display of this doctrine was

⁵ Nicolás Estévez Murphy (1838–1914) was a Spanish military officer, politician, and poet.

⁶ Luis Bonafoux Quintero (1855–1918) was a Spanish journalist.

⁷ Enrique Gómez Carrillo (1873–1927) was a Guatemalan journalist who wrote for a Spanish newspaper in France.

⁸ A form of direct action that was often violent, but not always.

carried out with the *Mano Negra* of Jerez? What legend is that of propaganda that does not exist and of super-proven examples that have not existed? In what puddle does Pastor wet his pen?

This good man's rash talking of nonsense brings to memory the sly coincidence that makes the police, as soon as any political attack occurs, stumble with anarchist scammers, counterfeiters, petty thieves, and so forth. And after the raid, anarchist criminals disappear and even the thieves, counterfeiters, and scammers without political adjective vanish by magic.

Those who you, Sánchez, call the founders of theoretical anarchism would not repent if they could resuscitate and see the disciples that they have taken because anarchism has as much to do with the Bonnot gang as with the other gangs whose leaders occupy prominent positions in society. Anarchism knows well that all of that and other violence to come are the forced result of a social organization of spoliation and death, of methodized banditry.

If we have a resolute condemnation of all violence, why should we have a tougher condemnation of the violence enacted by the defeated of life, by those cornered in despair? Public vengeance is inexorable for the miserable, too lenient for the powerful. Not us, we do not have two weights and two measures. And if there are, among the suffering, movements of sympathy for the rebellious delinquency of those below, will it not be as a reflection of those others who, from above, protect all infamies? The rage of the loser is no less justifiable than that of the victors!

At any rate, thieves and murderers, of whatever stripe, are still thieves and murderers because it does not have to do with the fact that the goods of the earth go to these or other hands, but that everyone can enjoy them. That is why we call ourselves socialists (anarchism is socialism); that is why we go against all spoliation, against all privileges, against all injustices. Anarchism is freedom and is solidarity and is justice. No more, no less.

What are we going to do if the realization of this supreme ideal is to come inevitably on the shoulders of horrors and violence caused and excited by inhuman resistances? What are we going to do if the terms of the struggle are exacerbated to the point that bestial instincts obscure reason and erase the feeling of human solidarity?

The few who live to exploit and tyrannize the people, who lead the people to fierce wars, and who daily will coach them in the barbarity of killing and robbery cannot speak out with justice against all the violence attributable to anarchism. Right now, civilized nations are giving bloody, wild, horrible shows. There are no words energetic enough to label them or to condemn them.

From where, then, does the example come?

I wish the salaried spokesmen of the triumphant bourgeoisie might respond.

Our answer is already given. It comes from the thieves and murderers who are a danger to us because they steal and kill without taking any risk and with prize. It does not come from anarchism, which is the strict condemnation of all robberies and killings.

(El Libertario, number 31, Gijón, March 15, 1913.)

Brain and Brawn

So, is the function of the sewer man less important than that of the scholar who researches?

It seems to me that you confuse the important with the necessary. The function of the intellect is that which is important; the mechanism that executes it is that which is necessary. (An anarchist's reply)

I stated, with the motive of popular idolatries, in one of the numbers of *El Libertario*, more or less the following:

I am among the first to revere the outstanding qualities of men. I am among the first to reject any preponderance even though it takes on the best methods. Nobody above anybody else. If there were firsts and lasts among men, the last of the producers would be valued as much as the first of the geniuses. The drainage of a sewer is not less important than the most brilliant of artistic creations. And if we descend a little, the sewer man who cleans sewers is worth much more than the few who, from the heights of power and glory, deceive humanity with their beautiful lies.

Nature does not distinguish between the wise and the ignorant, between the refined and the uncouth. All of us, equally, are animals who eat and defecate. Intellectual and emotional development can constitute a personal advantage and lead to the common good, never to establish a privilege over others.

Such words I uttered, without suspecting that an anarchist comrade would believe in the need to reproach them. My words seemed to me to be couched in reason. I am now proud of having written them.

This good friend, who writes me a wad of pages to point out my mistakes, thinks perhaps that life will become a mental effluvium purged of the vulgarities of the flesh, and in this hypothesis, not at all scientific, despite the science in which it takes pride, he does not find anything that seems important if it does not have to do with intelligence. The sewer man, the shoemaker, the tailor, the bricklayer, and so forth are, at best, necessary mechanisms so that the others—the wise and the artists—can eat and get great satisfaction.

All of this seems to me a lack of education, a strange prejudice in an anarchist, and, even more, an excess of reverence for the products of the human brain. We are so saturated with idolatry that we cannot take a quick look at the gates of knowledge and art without remaining static. Humbling ourselves before the genius and still recognizing ourselves superior beings, we barely have managed to understand four foretelling, explanatory words of certain phenomena of nature. Where we read the word science, faith prostrates before the new idol.

But if we transpose the threshold of the temple, if in our longing for wisdom we manage to penetrate analytically the bowels of the strongest knowledge, how our dreams, our houses of cards then collapse! Faith will waver before patent artifice, before false hypocrisy, before the provisional solution that does not solve anything. In science, there are more agreements and more accommodations than conquered truths. Perhaps heresy springs from my very modest pen. Forgive me, then, oh souls who ignore nothing!

But the truth is that life is not composed of wisdoms but needs and satisfaction of needs. Labor is necessary and important, so important that without it we would perish. Without wise people, no. The appreciation of necessary mechanisms is a philistine vulgarity that should not stain the lips of anarchists. The distinction between brawn and brain is a weak excuse of the bourgeoisie to furtively keep in perpetual servitude those who work. There is no confusion, on my part, between that which is important and that which is necessary. There is, if anything, failure of expression, because the work of the sewer man, of the tailor, of the mechanic, and so forth is both necessary and important. From hard, physical labor we all live, the ignorant and the wise. From the comfortable work of the wise, live those who can. The fruits of their science do

not reach the uneducated and boorish crowd. Their splendid lights do not reach the bottom of the mineshaft, or the industrial antrum, or the miserable shanty of the employee. The necessary and the important is to produce and consume, that is, to live. Nature does not distinguish the wise from the ignorant. Before her, there is nothing more than animals who eat and defecate. How crass, how anti-artistic, what a lack of high metaphysical science is all this! Right, my dear?

Do not think that, because of that, I despise art and science, that I disregard creative ability, that I renounce intelligence. Brawn and brain, I fail to see them split. Where one works, one thinks. We will say with Proudhon: he who works philosophizes. There are not separate, contradictory functions, but one single function, which is translated in thought and deed. Routine wants us to see some men as privileged beings, and we have invented the wise like we have invented the sorcerer, the augur, and the priest. The unfortunate sewer man is still, for this anarchist comrade, nothing more than necessary mechanism.

The wise, if he is wise, and precisely for being wise, does not think himself more important than the sewer man. We are the ones who endeavor to put him on a pedestal! The more we move into the labyrinth of knowledge, the more and better do we realize our insufficiency. Atavistic idolatry is needed. Sometimes the mere title of a book subjugates us, and we do not delay in rendering fervent cult to the author. Idolatrous, idolatrous, and nothing more than idolatrous. We look at everything through this prism. How would we be able to consider that the work of millions of men who clean sewers, sweep chimneys, make shoes, style stones, and pierce mountains is more important than that of a core of fortunate ones who, in exchange for a few truths, have given us all the great lies that all human misfortunes have cultivated, cultivate, and will continue cultivating for some time?

Man is his own function and his own mechanism. In what capacity should some be the brawn and others the brain?

Brawn and brain are parts of a harmonious whole that we call man. In the realm of nature, all men are equal, regardless of the organic differences that distinguish them. From inequality the principle of social equality is precisely born: that everyone can, according to their skills of development, develop without hindrance or restrictions. To attach greater importance to the brain than to brawn is to recognize a privilege like any other. Anarchy repudiates them all.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 8, Madrid, July 11, 1913.)

The Drawbacks of Cheap Philosophy

If Cristóbal de Castro, who cultivates cheap philosophy in *Heraldo de Madrid*, were something more than a panderer of trivial things, surely, he would not have written the handful of stupid remarks about irresponsibility like he has done in the number corresponding to the 14th of the current month.⁹

It takes more than the offensive and vulgar literature of a journalist and also the simple reading, *out of curiosity*, of a couple of books to philosophize about arduous matters. The cultivator of cheap philosophy could have consulted hundreds of books, though perhaps the outcome would have been of the same negative effectiveness, because there is no power sufficient enough to offset the effects of routine, commonplace, and clumsy mental education.

⁹ Cristóbal de Castro (1874–1953) was a Spanish journalist and writer.

One can understand the surprise of these ruminators of invalid things when science placed a veto on the confabulation of laws, magistrates, witnesses, evidence, and rebuttals. It is understandable precisely because of the obvious lack of culture and also because of the servile observance of all that is decreed by those who are in the world for the pleasure of messing things up for their neighbors who are not of part of those who are consecrated by the prejudices of class, doctrine, and conduct.

Science does not condemn or absolve. Cristóbal de Castro talks nonsense when he affirms science's power to acquit and assumes that the declaration of irresponsibility puts the offender on the street and free to continue harming his fellow citizens. He talks greater nonsense when he establishes the helplessness of society.

Determinism is so established and confirmed, not only in the science of today but also in the science of yesterday, that to put it in doubt is equivalent to declaring oneself incapable of science and knowledge. There is no determinism in nature and physical laws. There cannot be more than actions resulting from an equation between half-social and half-individual factors, between everything that constitutes man and the universe. Everything happens for reasons that are in the subject and around the subject. There is no fatalism, but concurrence of causes. There is no determinism, but an infinite multiplicity of motives. Everything is happening at all times. To speak of punishment and penalty is an anachronism much to the liking of shysters and Philistines.

But, how does cheap philosophy arrive at the conclusion that, by virtue of determinism, it should absolve all who steal and kill, leaving society defenseless?

Socially, every man works as if he were the master of his actions. In this way, he is accountable to his peers. At least, societies have the right to be on their guard and defend themselves from anything that harms them. And when science teaches that the freedom of our actions is an illusion, society is obliged to preserve itself from the atavistic retaliation, from the application of penalties and punishments involving voluntary evil, even when, naturally, it continues defending itself of all kinds of anti-social acts. The how and when of this defense is not that which is essential here.

While society is a convention contrary to nature, as Cristóbal de Castro himself acknowledges, science is a convention, or rather it is based on conventions in accordance with nature. Determinism is, therefore, part of the natural order. It is in all things, in the great and in the small. Will one claim that the Law, with its unknown categories in nature, is something more than a forcing, than an imposition, than a violence against the natural order of all things? By living outside of the natural order, social convention is abusive and the Law an arbitrary discipline that the powerful impose on the disinherited.

After all, there still is a social morality on the part of determinism that escapes the penetration of lawyers. The morality of codes and laws is a morality of evil. It supposes and recognizes the greatest voluntary monstrosities. Free will, on which it is based, makes us think ourselves capable of the greatest horrors. Each man thinks of the other as a beast. Everyone is soon to be one. Heritage, education, social environment, everything contributes to this end. We have a morality of bandits.

Determinism implies involuntary evil. Each social monstrosity corresponds to a physical or psychic monstrosity. Anyone can think that one's neighbor is misshapen, sick, crazy, whatever, but not evil. So, everyone learns to cherish the others, their equals; to pity them if they are inferior because of physical or mental deformities. Each is inclined to good, to noble sentiments.

Inheritance, education, social environment should and could attend to this purpose. We would have a morality of men.

But, how to put these things in the cramped, obstinate minds of the creators of codes, laws, regulations, for whom it is sufficient to quote Lombroso routinely and read a couple of books out of curiosity? It would be a contradiction with the determinism that they detest and of which they are slaves without possible redemption. From birth, they are condemned to ruminate perishable things and to mumble barbaric songs. And to hate everything that is science, humanity, love, because they are, on the inside, the beast of the centuries, while on the outside they wear the veneer of civilized man.

Among the drawbacks of cheap philosophy, the least is not that of rashly talking nonsense. Barricaded in all the prejudices of class, in all the insipidity of the university, cheap philosophy not even hypothetically admits the possibility of redemption for mankind. The voices of science are voices in the desert. Humanitarian appeals are ennobling, generous, utopian delusions. The man-beast is the obsession of the legalistic and sinister beast; it is scholastic prejudice; it is historical heritage; it is the curse that haunts the species and degrades and dishonors it.

Beyond that rancidity, whether expensive or cheap philosophy likes it or not, there is reason, there is feeling, there is logic, there is science. And all that says something very simple: that there is no effect without cause.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 10, Madrid, July 25, 1913.)

16 Readings

Two Books

In an unfriendly corner of Asturias, two books reached my rugged retreat because of the kindness of their authors, Sánchez Díaz¹ and Ciges Aparicio.²

Odios (1903) [Hatred] has already roamed for some time the window cases of bookstores. *Del cautiverio* (1903) [On Captivity] begins now its pilgrimage in search of readers. Readers! That is one of the many things lacking in Spain. Even though, for the books like the two that I mention, the lack of readers will not be in the lamentable proportion that is typical of this poor land of bullfighters and friars. Not because of the one nor of the other am I trying to lay bare the Mediterranean.

I am not going to talk about those two works in a critical tone. It is an easy task for those who possess a certain dose of superficial erudition and a good pair of scissors to cut someone down. However, it is an enormous undertaking for those who do not possess those things, like me. I also declare, in advance, that in literature I am completely like a fish out of water and I refuse, as a result, in a well-meditated flash of generosity, the hand of Dulcinea.

However overdue is my description of Sánchez Díaz's book, it has left a profound mark in my soul whose intensity neither time nor distance can lessen.

Sánchez Díaz is an artist of merit, who feels and thinks deeply, who knows how to penetrate the difficulties of life. He is, in addition, a calm soul well suited for the vibrations of kindness and always open to justice.

Lif, the noble Lif, worries and howls because, in the middle of a nocturnal storm, a little dog barks at a closed door. Lif's master, painter, and poet surrounded by flowers and wealth exclaims: "It's O.K. Lif, the door will soon open!" As Sánchez Díaz comments, Lif possesses a conscience that many men, who do not deserve to live or be saved, lack.

"Entre lobos" [Among Wolves] is a dramatic episode that is strongly felt and beautifully described. There, in the chapter, our entire time of social struggles vibrates. It contains the following: the strike that spontaneously arises caused by, rather than the harshness of winter, by the barbarous cruelty of the factory manager who clutches the arm of a weak laborer and violently throws her out of the workshop; the son who, angered, brandishes the igneous iron over the head of the boss; the very women who stop him; and that terrible voice that dominates the crowd shouting, "Let him; he is right!" Hurricane waves grow in the chest. They inflame the blood and raise vehement desires of reparation and justice. The episode also includes the galley slave who sets upon the woman and the son, and follows them, corners them, and annihilates them; the reaction of poverty that bites into the starving flesh of two unlucky beings; and the grisly work of good people, joining the rich mob, good people who live *the horror of their immense work*

¹ Ramón Sánchez Díaz (1869–1960) was the author of several novels including *Odios* (1903).

² Manuel Ciges Aparicio (1873–1936) published in 1903 *Del cautiverio*, the first of four autobiographical texts.

and of the injustice of poverty. The final blow of the strikers themselves who curse the victim and deride the heroic son, because hunger pokes them in the stomach, is a picture of overwhelming reality that highlights hate, destruction, and annihilation... The poor mother touches the boundaries of tragic despair: "Everyone, everyone is a pig ..." But the next morning, the factory's siren sounds, and the hungry go there in flocks to surrender themselves as slaves. The poor woman also joyfully goes, because she thinks she has reached the end of her martyrdom. But the last torture is missing, the iniquitous crucifixion. She, she alone, cannot pass. There is no work for her or for her child without first imploring the forgiveness of Don Antonio. Forgiveness? Fire that consumes triumphant iniquity in the horrific flames of social justice.

Like Lif, like "Entre lobos," the following chapters stand out: "El héroe" [The Hero] who goes straight to misery because he does not want to, because he cannot vote; "Rodríguez," the unhappy, drunk employee, made crazy because of office-related stupidity, who kills in an explosion of terrible pent-up hate; "El rancor" [Resentment], a beautifully and bravely written chapter in which is narrated the crushing slavery of a farmer submitted to a parish priest who has the freedom to condemn himself and go to hell, but does neither; the whole book is read and reread in one go because the author put in it life, soul, fire, and formidable claims for justice, for tremendous justice.

I am not strong in amorous adventures. My life has slipped far from the irruption of hasty passions and so, upon remembering the book *Odios* I did not make a special mention of the pages that Sánchez Díaz dedicates to them. I believe, nevertheless, that there is fine psychological penetration, much art in the feeling and the saying in "En juez" [As Judge], "Los ojos" [Eyes], "Mal agüero" [Bad Omen] and I do not say more in order to not cite all the parts of the book, and that, above all, a vigorous reality interpreted by the soul of an artist and the head of a thinker abounds.

Odios has my very humble applause, like it has when it makes me feel and love the good and abhor the bad. I am not very good at art as well as many other things. And I believe that there is too much overconfidence, which is the enemy of clear thinking and hard work.

And we now consider the other book. *Del cautiverio* tells us many things that we know, that is, that we can imagine. It is a difficult task to talk about what everyone knows! Circulating like legends, the horrors of jail, of prison, and of other dumps acquire in this book the rigor of truth told without beating about the bush, of the dreadful truth in the middle of which one has lived tormented, tortured, close to moral annulment and physical death.

He who has doubts about Montjuich and *Mano Negra*, about all the horrors of our sad history and of our sad correctional system, about the iniquities of organized justice, about the vengeance of politics; he who has doubts about the abominations of jail, of prejudices, of our governmental domination of the island of Cuba, and so forth should read this book, which pours blood and pus on the whole wicked social organization in which we live.

Del cautiverio is the palpitating story of two long years lived in middle of horrors and cruelties. There is no novel, no legend, and no fantasy. There is reality and formidable and terrifying truth that sprout from the concise paragraphs. I am not overstating it. Sometimes the author lacks adequate words for the tremendous abominations that he witnessed. It occurs to him to let the reader imagine things that resist written figuration. And why not, if the deeds exceed any conceivable crudeness of the pen?

Do not believe, then, that there are euphemisms, vague words, and cowardly obscurities in Ciges Aparicio's book. On the contrary, there is clarity, precision. It is a rectilinear work that

lends a great service to the cause of justice with straightforward evidence of evil. The anarchist or prison legend becomes, through this book, history.

I would like to give the reader an idea, a brief summary of what Aparicio's book contains. Impossible. Imagine a black well, overflowing with filth, which bursts, which explodes like a bomb full of mud; consider all the bestialities of the flesh, all the mental and emotional dislocations; add something apocalyptic, beyond imaginable absurdity, and you still will not have a rough idea of this book.

I do not know if there is someone who can read it calmly. So strong and so painful and so irritating is the sensation of evil that its reading produces. *Del cautiverio* is, because of this, a revolutionary work that one should read and that I recommend to the pure souls who live in the limbo of political, juridical, and governmental prosperity. Ah! And I also recommend it to the illustrious geniuses who were saved from the failure of Ciges Aparicio's faith, to those who perpetually live in the puerility of academic distinction or in the coaxing innocence of astounding the respectable public with their literary and philosophical devices.

Let it be clearly understood, if it were necessary, which it is not, that I do not know Sánchez Díaz or Ciges Aparicio, that I have never spoken with them or written them. If perhaps I will be accused of being exaggerated in the applause. Know that if that had occurred, perhaps my pen would not have meditated on the two books. Friendship makes me miserly in simple approbation.

And having said this because I needed to, I now stop.
(*Natura*, number 3, Barcelona, November 1, 1903.)

***César o nada*, Novel by Pio Baroja**

There is a prologue and in this prologue, the author reflects on his hero's character. It is an audacious move that I like.

Let us see if the hero responds to the prologue or the prologue translates to the hero.

Pio Baroja thinks that "the individual is the only reality in nature and in life." The rest is composed of artifices, of abstractions, of useful, but not absolutely exact syntheses. The relativity of ethics, of logic, of justice, of good and evil remains firmly established. It does not show, it affirms. This is sufficient for his aims.

Without a doubt, because of this, he clean forgets that the life of social relations, which is from where good and evil, ethics, justice, and logic sprout, is as much reality as the individual; so much so that without the life of social relations, we would not realize the existence of the individual.

Let us not think of this small flaw and follow Baroja: "From a human standpoint"—he says—"a perfect society would be one that knew how to defend the general interests and, at the same time, knew how to understand the individual; that gave the individual the benefits of working together and the most absolute freedom; that multiplied his labor and allowed him isolation. This would be fair and good." And immediately afterward he establishes that the current egalitarian democracy does the opposite and that the spirit of the times levels all that is vulgar, general, and routine.

Baroja talks like an anarchist, knowing it or not, first with a nod to Nietzsche, Stirner,³ and the few who have dedicated themselves to inflating the individualist dog; and after ... with a nod to common sense.

Well, we already know what César will be: a strong individual with a revolutionary ideal because if this were not the case, what to do with this prologue, which seems like a declaration of principles?

Let us continue, nevertheless, carefully because “everything that has to do with the individual is always presented mixed with absurdities of perspective and picturesque contradictions,” and these novelist mischief-makers are capable of deceiving the best of us.

With these antecedents, let us move to the action. Action is precisely César’s pet word.

César is an imperious, absolute boy worried about the problem of life, and fairly sickly. What he says or thinks does not admit opposition; what he does ... no, what he does not do is completely indisputable. Still a student, he is offered to us as a promise of an outstanding personality. He makes plans, outlines projects, invents philosophies, and dreams successes.

We do not know why nor for what reason the author leads us from one place to another in a tireless parade of common people and aristocrats. We travel without rest and we catch such indigestion from Rome, from the Vatican, and from tourism that there is no purgative that can free us from the obstruction. If at least we were given an impression of what is Rome and the human gang that constantly flows to the city of Caesars and Popes! But not even that.

What Baroja does make us see very well is that his hero deceives us villainously. César spends half of the novel, which is like half of his life, sprawled lengthwise on the train, in the hotel, reading and rereading Proudhon’s *The Manual of the Stock Exchange Speculator*, and singing infecund hymns to action, always inactive, always lacking resolution and a plan and even health and strength.

With the first possibilities for change, the hero is no longer a hero; he is a poor neurasthenic who appears with the face of a dead person the day after having been enjoying a beautiful countess and who, as a pure barbarian, does not find better praise of his beautiful sister than the justification of incest.

It is true that our man says very great things; it is also true that there are more silly things that come out of his mouth. The great things are what Baroja thinks; the silly ones are what his hero believes. Whose hero, after going from friar to priest and from convent to church hunting cooperators for his financial purposes, forgotten by his great uncle the Cardinal, who could open all the doors for him, he surrenders himself to chance and ends up recruiting a poor devil, a powerful chief of a village in the province of Zamora, who makes him a conservative representative and frees us, oh, luck, of the Roman and Vatican annoyance.

César, the hero, is at most an ambitious man who Baroja mistakenly makes speak occasionally like he makes speak men of whole body. César does not dream about anything else but official gambling dens, and the moves of the stock market. When he fails with the traffickers of Catholicism, he jumps into politics and explores, until he finds the chance to swindle and make a lot of money under the protection of one of those common political ploys that enrich a few and impoverish very many. César is rich.

³ Max Stirner (1806–1856) was a nineteenth-century existentialist philosopher who developed his own brand of egoist anarchism.

Then precisely he proposes to carry out his great work, but greatness does not appear anywhere. He calls himself liberal, gets in deals and contracts with a strange worker center in his district, an impossible mix of republicans, socialists, and anarchists, and naturally, he begins to subtract elements and procure enemies. He boasts of having killed caciquism but does not notice that he has set himself up as a great despot. His claims are nothing less than the re-emergence of the country through a minimum enterprise of local industrialism, and he sterilely agitates the crowd without ideas and with little more than nothing.

What is to happen? César is defeated in new elections; the ambush in the form of guards and police take the worker center, the school founded by César and a few more other things.

But all this is no longer the hero's fault. It is Baroja's fault. The author forces him to represent a role that is neither in the model of the prologue nor in that of César's own character.

Baroja is a good storyteller, a novelist of substance, as they say; but he is as bad a politician as he is a terrible intellectual. How far is the novelist from a median description of the conflict in Castro-Duro!⁴ Baroja certainly has not lived these fights, these struggles of public affairs.

In the end, the hero, married to a singular woman as beautiful as his beautiful and unique sister, remains a prisoner of these two much more logical beings who live longer than him with far fewer philosophies; and ends up leaving politics, compromising with the artistic enervation against which he so ranted, and chatting amiably with his fierce adversary, Father Martin, prior of a convent of Franciscans.

And the novel concludes in this way:

And you, César, do you think about returning to politics?

No, no; for what? I am nothing, nothing.

That is right: nothing, but he was nothing before politics and is nothing after politics.

As a result, I ask Baroja, author of the prologue, to give me back the cash that the prologue cost me.

Because the hero is neither a hero nor he responds to the prologue; the prologue does not translate the hero because it cannot translate what does not exist.

Great mistake of the storyteller who promises us a strong individual of flesh and bone and gives us a puppet full of straw.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 11, Gijón, January 27, 1911.)

***The Future of Latin America* by M. Ugarte**

This book is a call made by an Argentinian to all the South American republics to equip themselves against the imperialist and invading policy of North America, whose industrial, political, and cultural superiority is indisputable.

The author studies the subject with a politician's mentality, which essentially destroys his socialist faith. The issues of race, territorial and moral integrity, and public organization are treated differently in the book than they would be by a typical socialist.

Everyone has a right to existence: Anglo-Saxons, Latinos, or whatever the race may be. Everyone will do well to defend themselves from any attack or threat to said existence. But, is there

⁴ Castro-Duro is an imaginary city in Spain.

a race problem? Will it be convenient to oppose the predominance of the conditions of one determined race only because they are opposed to those of another? Will we provoke interminable fights because we want a particular way of being to prevail? We only know one sure road in order to not go astray: that everyone, individual, group or nation, tries to overcome through knowledge, through work, through culture, and through art the current conditions of life. And in this development, those conditions that ought to perish, will necessarily perish, with or against the Anglo-American imperialism today and perhaps with or against the Latin American one tomorrow.

If Ugarte had made a book of true methodical and unadorned study without pretensions of literature, which it does not achieve, perhaps he would have reached less ordinary and more scientific and human conclusions.

But there are in his book too many words and too many things that make it difficult for the reader to be able to follow him with interest in his dissertations.

The North American danger will certainly not make South America crystallize in forms and essences of which it lacks before the dispute arises definitively between the two worlds. Even if Latin America carried out all of Ugarte's diffuse federalist program, the danger would not dissipate as a result. More than a problem of political organization, there is for South America a problem of social biology, a problem of ethics, and a problem of nature. First of all, it is necessary *to exist*.

From Ugarte's own book it is implied that the future of Latin America is the least given to predictions and the most open to all kinds of foreign influences. In constant formation, intervened by alluvium of people from the four cardinal points, the final constitution of the South American population is seen as taking place in the very distant future. And Ugarte makes this statement without taking account of race atavisms and flaws, which, indeed, do not induce optimism.

The strongly mercantilist and vacuous mentality of those latitudes is like a Chinese wall in which all higher ideality crashes. It is in vain that people like Ugarte strive to give their compatriots dishes that are too strong for weak stomachs.

The hopes that the author of *The Future of Latin America* places in the budding youth of today remain well-battered because, presently, Argentina and Uruguay, and a few lesser important republics, continue their pugilism of tyranny, or, in other words, their political banditry with their barbaric laws of exception, their pursuit of suspicious emigrants, and their deportations.

With institutions, ways, and customs of that sort, if we had to decide on a problem of races, we would vote without hesitation for those that at least have a concept of existence superior to the ridiculous tendency of the South to believe something because so-and-so said it.

Apart from that, Latinos or Anglo-Saxons, what they need, as much in America as in Europe, is to sweep with a vigorous hand all the authoritarian and parasitic anxiety that maintains the working and underprivileged multitude in hard servitude.

(*Acción Libertaria*, number 16, Gijón, March 31, 1911.)

Works of Auguste Dide

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Protestantism and the French Revolution

Two centuries ago, the great supernumerary actor of demagoguery was born. He was eloquent, a prolific writer, and full of genius. He was also evil. Narrowly sectarian and domineering, he gave

his name (the adjective *Jacobin* is derived from Jacques) to the dictatorial spirit of the crowds. The guillotine did not slake its thirst for blood until the Jacobins themselves fell into it with Robespierre at the head, the most vacuous and proudest man of the Revolution, deified shyster, and all powerful at the most tragic moment of that great revolt.

France has just paid Jean-Jacques its fervent homage. The very president of the Republic has gone to inaugurate in the Parthenon the famous Genevan's tomb made of artistic marble. Writers have also made their offerings to the genius. The ladies have cried because he knew how to love, to love much, to love tenderly. They have forgotten that the good Jean-Jacques successively threw to the foundling home five children he had with his unfaithful housekeeper, Teresa.

Auguste Dide's book is very timely. There, in the book, is the authentic Jean-Jacques. Alternatively Catholic and Protestant, friend and foe of the encyclopedists, democrat by birth and aristocrat by vocation, vain and garrulous, a brainless man of letters, in perpetual concubinage, neurasthenic, and finally crazy. The life of this man is an epic and a tragedy, genius and dementia, as was also that terribly bloody period of the great Revolution, saturated with Calvinist, sectarian, inquisitorial, and evil spirit.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau is not dead. Democracy and even socialism are Jacobin. Every present-day radical idea is imbued with Jacobinism. The gods are still thirsty. Perhaps another tragedy is not far away. Anatole France, with his magical description of the finished drama, initiates us in the drama that perhaps is beginning. The gods are thirsty, and people are imprisoned, and spied upon and hanged, and shot, and democracy also threatens future rebels with prison, with banishment and with death, especially for the health of the people, the health of nations, for the good of humanity. Jean-Jacques still presides over our destinies.

Read, democrats, radicals, socialists, libertarians, read this good book by Dide, which is a well-worn lesson, and you will see how from the great, from the incomparable French Revolution only the Jacobin plague remains, the inquisitorial plague translated into revolutionary language. Read, and erase from your spirit the last vestiges of this nefarious heritage in which genius and evil have come together to torment humanity.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau has been nothing more than the adequate expression of all corruptions, of all villainy, of all the golden deceptions with which humanity has sealed its legacy of servitude and misery.

(*El Libertario*, number 1, Gijón, August 10, 1912.)

The Christian Legend

Religious things seem so outdated to me, so distant from world history that it is difficult for me to read a book on the subject even if its purpose is to repudiate it.

I situate not only the Christian legend, but also every religious legend at an enormous distance from my mental state. It is difficult for me to accept that a few million men, who say they are civilized, continue to worship idols, to swallow mythologies, and to devotedly foment ridiculous cults.

Reality tells me, nevertheless, that man ought to be a great theological beast when he so stupidly submits himself to the greatest absurdities and the crudest mockeries. The truth is that legends triumph and that the Christian legend continues to be the inspirer and the regulator of life in the civilized world. Thinking in this way, I opened Dide's book, superfluous for a few,

indispensably necessary for many, above all in a country like Spain, which boasts and takes pride in believing in impossible things.

The book *The Christian legend* is written in plain and simple, clear and precise language. In it, without passion or exaggerations, it is shown how the prevailing religion, like all its peers, is an intricate web of novels, contradictions, and falsehoods. In the course of centuries, the artifice of the Christian legend has arisen around the most stupendous ramblings. One can hardly tell if Christ existed, and if there were apostles. The books that hold the doctrine are contradictory and of unknown origin. Probably they are reduced to a superposition of legends required by the theological needs of the times.

In the end, the only reality is the concretion of a depressing doctrine and of an overwhelming power weighing down on pained humanity. And for this doctrine and for this power, calm reason flows from Dide's book showing step by step their absurdity and their nefarious influence. Papist or Protestant, Christianity has made its way in the world shedding human blood in torrents, cruelly torturing and exterminating thousands of irascible men and women. The alleged religion of love has been at all times the scourge of humanity.

For the free spirits of religious concern, Dide's book is a good arsenal of facts, motives, and reasons that conclusively prove that Christianity is a legend. For believers and vacillators, it will be, at least, the impartial judgment of a man who pays fervent attention to reason.

In it, the partisan does not speak; the critic speaks, the man of study. Better yet, the facts themselves are the ones that speak with indisputable eloquence.

Our friend Prat has lent a good service to free thought by translating *The Christian Legend*. (*El Libertario*, number 19, Gijón, December 14, 1912.)

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Ricardo Mella
Ideario
1926

Anarchist Socialism in Early Twentieth-Century Spain: A Ricardo Mella Anthology (edited by Stephen Luis Vilaseca, published by Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 1-265,

DOI:10.1007/978-3-030-44677-2

Collected articles (1895-1915) from the anarchist press by Ricardo Mella (1861-1925), originally published under the title *Ideario* by Imprenta “La Victoria” in Gijón, 1926 (Spanish original available online at www.libertarian-labyrinth.org). Translation by Stephen Luis Vilaseca, 2020 (published under the title *Anarchist Socialism in Early Twentieth-Century Spain: A Ricardo Mella Anthology*).

theanarchistlibrary.org