

Against ignorance

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The Rational Culture Society of Pueblo Nuevo, Barcelona, in view of my response to a query from the Workers' Culture Centre of Ferrol, published in *Tierra y Libertad*, asked me for an extended conference.

With this work I satisfy the request, using that writing as an introduction.

The Workers' Cultural Centre of Ferrol asks me for my opinion about the work of the workers' cultural institutions.

I cannot respond categorically; I do not know the importance of that work, because I lack data on the organization, extension and performance of such institutions, in my opinion very scarce and lacking in the necessary solidarity for the principles, subsistence and the ideal.

The only thing I can say, and I will say taking advantage of the opportunity, as a proof of affection for the comrades who form the corporation that honours me with its request and my desire to contribute to the enlightenment of the workers, is what in my opinion they should do.

In that embryo of the proletarian organization called The International, international congresses were instituted for the advancement of understanding and thought, founded on the previous study of the sections that were named by the delegates who constituted those congresses of good memory.

But those sections were shapeless groups with a primitive organization, which lived on the enthusiasm of the masses and the extreme activity of some individuals, of which unfortunately many vestiges still remain, and what they did least was to cultivate intelligence. Intellectual efforts were reduced to propaganda in meetings and in workers' newspapers, and the work of the congresses was almost exclusively the product of the delegates.

Some national groups, among them the Spanish Regional Federation of Workers, thought of standardizing the study for the agenda of their national and international congresses, by means of discussions in assemblies of their trade sections and local federations; but, on closer inspection, the thing did not go beyond an attempt or a trial, very far from reaching a positive fact.

It could not be otherwise; there was no environment for intellectual work. With illiterate workers and those who, even though they knew the letters, lacked sufficient culture and were not accustomed to societal practices, little could be done in the sense of collecting, synthesizing and spreading knowledge.

What could not be done then is attempted and is being done now by the workers' press and by the different cultural centers: workers' associations, social studies centers and syndicalist

associations, with autonomy, but disaggregated, without taking advantage of the force resulting from a pact of commonwealth.

Modern syndicalism represents an advance on the International; it is the conscious proletariat carrying out its natural evolution, which, like the bourgeoisie that preceded the revolution, is preparing to elaborate its Encyclopedia. Not satisfied with having proclaimed that the workers must emancipate themselves, it wants to individually train everyone for this purpose.

But in contrast to privilege and its main manifestations, power, property and capitalism, the proletariat is still dominated by atavistic combativeness, and in its organization it pays preference to the idea of struggle, without yet giving due importance to education and instruction, great forces that can form those reserves so important, so necessary and always decisive in the final battle.

This deficiency can and must be made up for by workers' cultural institutions by establishing rationalist schools for children of both sexes, and courses, conferences, discussions and collective readings for adults.

Every union, and better still, every local federation of unions must establish at least one school and one college; and regional colleges can enter into solidarity pacts that could extraordinarily increase their power and effectiveness.

Consider that if ordinary education is traditional in the first level, and with an exclusivist individual tendency in the higher levels, since the one transmits from generation to generation the respect and compliance with archaic doctrines, institutions and hierarchies, and the other is a weapon for the struggle to achieve and maintain privilege, - education and instruction by and for workers must be essentially human and progressive.

To give this character to education, or, better said, to strip it of heavy and atavistic accessories, it is necessary for all workers' cultural institutions to unite in a common objective, which union can be established by the adoption of a broad and rational program, adopted by all, and by the adoption of bases of solidarity and mutual support.

Without reciprocal relations, without a program and without joint action, traditional schools will follow the routine impulse, domesticating rebellions rather than cultivating intelligence, and the so-called secular and the improperly called modern schools will serve as preparation for individual struggle rather than for generalized and altruistic action, and study centers and athenaeums will be nothing more than tournaments for vanity with little benefit for the generality.

Therefore, a common action must be established on the autonomy of each workers' teaching center, which strengthens and multiplies the educational and instructive power of each one and of all until there is no worker who does not know how to read and write and who ignores that in society all, without privileged distinction, must be free and share in the universal heritage.

Once this commonality is achieved, all workers must be interested in it, showing them that it is as important and necessary for the struggle against privilege as resistance to capital.

It should be noted that there should be no dissent between those who are dedicated to resistance and those dedicated to popular culture, and if hostile tendencies should be expressed on the part of some individuals, they must be stifled as harmful atavistic remnants. The only thing admissible in this case is the preference of each person to work in a resistant or instructive sense, according to his special vocation.

In short: in today's society the worker is destined to exploitation and ignorance, because privilege can only live on ignorant people.

It is not enough that the exploited, out of a feeling of dignified rebellion, want to emancipate themselves if they continue in ignorance, because the ignorant can be easily deceived by any ambitious person who presents them with eloquent sophisms, as unfortunately has happened and still happens with deviants of all kinds, especially politicians, who have separated so many workers from the purely emancipatory movement to leave them later plunged into the abyss of the most desperate skepticism, and at the same time delaying the longed-for moment of the justification of society and human fraternity.

This is the end of my response to the Ferrolano Cultural Center. Here is the extension requested by the Rational Culture Society of Pueblo Nuevo.

The great historical human selection crystallized in the castes of India, produced later the theocratic-scientific monopoly of Egypt, flourished in the artistic-philosophical splendor of Greece and bore fruit in the great world hegemony that conquering and authoritarian Rome exercised during its lifetime over the ancient nations subjugated by arms, and the traditional and constitutional influence that it continued to exercise later through its legal legacy on modern nations. This hegemony over the then known world created the antagonism between the man-person, the patrician, and the man-thing, the slave and even the plebeian, through its concept of property, thus fixed in our Civil Code:

The owner of a piece of land is the owner of its surface and of what is beneath it, and may carry out on it the works, plantations and excavations that suit him... The ownership of the goods gives the right by accession to everything that they produce, or that is joined to them and incorporated into them, naturally or artificially... The natural fruits, the industrial fruits and the civil fruits belong to the owner... All works, sowings and plantations are presumed to have been carried out by the owner.

Monism or the idea of unity, which encompasses the entire human race and serves as the foundation for the great solidarity, which survives, although diminished in its greatness, despite all the obstacles that oppose individual life, in compliance with the vital laws, where mortality was enormous due to misery or disagreement, a relative normality was established, susceptible to progressive improvements, or ended by those great historical tragedies of the peoples who disappeared, leaving their intellectual heritage as a legacy to their successors.

The unity having been broken, or rather, perhaps, the antagonistic dualism having been established because of the lack of knowledge of perfectly solidary social principles in primitive ignorance, the antagonism has come down to us after a long series of centuries of domination, after having caused tremendous catastrophes under the pretexts of race, religion, patriotism, class, politics, and having exerted on human nature that great moral depression that atavism produces after so many centuries of living without reaching the rational channel through which future regenerated humanity will achieve the beautiful and perfect harmony of life.

Not race, not religion, not conquering patriotism will always corner and divide humanity; not the monopoly of social wealth and the vileness of plunder will also subdivide those cornered at the borders into rich and poor: the proletariat, that sixth social class that the Romans devised and that, if not with that order number, exists as a lower class, one day conceived the idea of its emancipation, ideally emancipating itself and organizing itself to conquer its material emancipation.

It is admirable, it is comforting, it gives positive consistency to the ideal, constituting it in a promise of infallible fulfillment, to see that the historical cycle of struggles for the partial objec-

tives of the peoples ends with the summary in a single international aspiration accepted by the disinherited, while the privileged, owners of power and usurpers of wealth, have closed the way with an absorbing and unsustainable militarism.

If the privileged mandarins forged their national States as fortresses defending their privileges against external invasions and against internal protests and rebellions, the disinherited workers one day sketched a society that is superior to all States, that contains them all within itself and that will prevail over all.

I wish to give the enunciation of this idea all possible guarantees of plausibility and security, and for this it is enough for me to state that, since progress towards the repair of social errors and injustices is inevitable, following the path of partial improvements and perfections inspired by the idea of absolute perfection by law of progress, while the privileged have reached the absurd, the impossible of armed peace and the war budget in each nation, in all nations, the workers with the International united in a fraternal bond without distinction of race or nationality in a single nation, overcoming all traditions and all obstacles of today. To the *si vis pacem, para bellum* (if you want peace, prepare for war) of the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, Italy) and the Triple Entente (England, France, Russia), which will consume a budget of ten billion in pure losses this year, not counting the militaristic waste of the other European states and of China, Japan, the United States and the Latin American republics, which will also represent an enormous sum, the proletariat invariably responds: there are no rights without duties nor duties without rights, and declares with libertarian nobility: we do not want privilege, not even for our own benefit.

Persisting in their error, the privileged accumulated forces in their nations, not only in defense of their national and particular privileges, but with a view to colonial conquests or of countries of inferior civilization, or of enemy States in the struggle for preponderance or hegemony, confirming the thought of a famous publicist, who affirmed that the relations of State with State are enmity and distrust, and to this effect they have quartered many millions of unproductive men, they have accumulated formidable armaments, they have invaded with destructive devices the bottom of the seas and the heights of the atmosphere, while the disinherited, poor, ignorant and deprived of any saving resource if they were to continue unsolidary and apathetic, by the conquest of solidarity and with the commitment to their emancipation are strong, they are powerful, they are invincible, they are future winners. They have no armies, no generals, no navy, no castles, no batteries, no submarines, no flying boats; but their practical technicality is production and transport, it is ammunition and provision, it is the daily supply of the village and the great city, it is the work on which human life depends at every moment, and this production can be paralyzed one day at an agreed signal, shown from any point in the world of wage-earning production, to impose a just reparation as a prior, convenient resolution adopted and extensive intellectual elaboration; moreover, as the only means of opening the way to the necessary and indispensable progressive advance held back by the stagnation of privilege.

Today, privilege can do everything, and yet it fears and hesitates; the disinherited are today materially impotent, like their historical predecessors, and yet the proletariat conceives an ideal, trusts and hopes.

With the monopoly of wealth, science and command, the privileged have closed the way with injustice; Through the longing for freedom, strengthened by solidarity, the proletariat will break the retaining wall, the only way for humanity not to succumb.

It has been said: "where there is a will, there is a way"; I do not deny it; but I prefer this other determining formula for action: "knowing is power." And I prefer it because wanting, the product

of desire driven by unsatisfied need, when the subject is immersed in ignorance, crashes in the face of difficulty and falls into the despair of impotence.

That, apart from the fact that the desires of the ignorant, as a result of their limited mentality, are reduced to what is indispensable to animal life, without rising to the height of science and art, due to an absolute lack of determining motives.

When the ignorant want something outside the narrow circle of routine and what constitutes their own experience, due to ignorance of the idea of the relationship between cause and effect, they often fall into the madness of wanting the impossible, or if not, wanting it by inappropriate means. On the contrary, when what is desired is within the realm of possibility, if the necessary and rational means are used to achieve it, it will be achieved without fail. In such a case, failure is impossible. It is as clear as daylight that if a given resisting force is attacked by an equal or greater force, the resistance must yield, leaving the way clear for the victor.

The disinherited, deprived of knowledge, with his brain full of legends, mysteries, superstitions and miracles, exercising faith and leaving reason inactive, if he individually aspires to free himself from his miserable state, thinks of fortune; If he joins the collective aspiration and has not fully understood that emancipation must be the work of himself and of all, he will give credit to bad shepherds and will give himself over to political-socialist organizations or bourgeois-democratic parties, he will trust in revolutionary parliamentarism or in parliamentary revolution, two phases of the same error, if not the same deception, and it will turn out that he will speak of revolution with the idea of violence, believing that historical revolutions originated only in acts of rebellion, ignoring the previous and determining causes of those acts, and without explaining the reactions resulting from failed revolutionary victories, or he will believe in the democratic theory of popular sovereignty, voting for candidates who promise cheap emancipation, and finally he will fall into pessimistic disillusionment.

As a result of this deficient intellectual state, the remnant of centuries of systematic ignorance, ambitious deviants have emerged, intelligent people lacking the necessary self-denial to continue the saving work of popular education, who, fleeing the dangers of the apostolate, preferred to abuse ignorance by promising unrealizable advantages to attract supporters.

It is therefore necessary that the convinced, the truly initiated, those exempted from atavistic networks, those who live as precursors of the future society, without neglecting the syndicalist action that interposes its influence on the development of events and the course of economic affairs, devote to popular culture the attention corresponding to its necessity and importance, because the first emancipatory step consists in the emancipation of ignorance.

A collective like the proletariat, which attributes to itself the high mission of rationally re-constituting human society so that the reciprocity of right and duty may be established in the world, must divest itself as far as humanly possible of the character of a collective mass in order to achieve that of a totality of equivalent units, and to this end it must try, by all means at its disposal, to educate and instruct individuals. It must be ensured at all costs, as an essential, most essential condition, without which it will never be emancipated and will be a vile wage earner forever, that the proletariat has free judgment and dispassionate reason, so that the determining volitions of the will have the necessary conditions of consciousness and energy. According to the phrase of the martyr of the Modern School, the illustrious Ferrer, "it is necessary that each brain be the motor of a will."

There is no worse tyranny than that which the ignorant carry within themselves: wrapped in the darkness of ignorance, they do not know how to please their desires, satisfy their needs,

govern their will and, guided by simple routine, which I dare to assure is inferior to the instinct of animals, they walk blindly without avoiding dangers and extending their hand in demand of protection to their exploiters and tyrants.

Necessity, urgency, the impetuosity of desire and impulsive thoughtlessness gave material force undue preponderance in the concept of many workers. Hence the present form of the workers' organisation and also all its failures or the relative smallness of its successes.

Trade unionism, in order to convert all its theoretical strength into positive results, must split into intellectual organisation and fighting organisation, into brain and arm, into thought and will, into knowledge and action. Otherwise, with the force of reason and numbers we will continue indefinitely dominated by the relatively small number of privileged dominators.

Many millions of illiterate or barely literate wage workers, reduced to perpetual ignorance, must necessarily be servants of the monopolists of science.

And it must not be said that there are ignorant rich people, because the possessor of money buys everything, because everything is sold in the proprietary-capitalist regime, from earthly pleasures to the bull that promises eternal happiness. For money, the rich man has in his palace a doctor and a pharmacy, a clown and a dancer, a cook and a pastry chef, a lawyer and a notary, a chaplain and a chapel with a manifesto and everything when health or business needs the intervention of the supernatural.

A good contrast is provided by those good Andalusian peasants who, sensing the merit of knowledge, gather in the farmhouse, during the hours of rest, around the companion who knows how to read and who reads to them with difficulty by the light of the candle the newspaper or the emancipatory pamphlet, which speaks to them of the class struggle, of the power of the workers' association and of the future revolutionary triumph that gives everyone the due share in the universal heritage.

That is why I affirm, consequently, that the proletariat on the march must not leave behind, and they are the stragglers, who impede the advance and who can become enemies, the unfortunate comrades who, due to ignorance of letters, lack of intellectual background, difficulty and even impossibility of judgment and reasoning, lend themselves to serve as scabs, either individually driven by hunger, or maliciously entangled in those patronages that collect filth that is not adaptable to solidarity and inspire in the scabs a misoneism or hatred of everything new that leads them to fratricide. Also lagging behind, to be clear and honest, are all those workers who, abandoning the pure ideal of emancipation, join bourgeois or bourgeois political parties that are agitated by petty interests, forgetting that the political problem of the world was resolved in 1789 in France with its great Revolution, and that if it did not result in the solution of the social problem that is now posed with terrifying urgency in all nations, it was because of the bourgeoisie's treacherous renunciation of progress once the political revolution had been accomplished for its exclusive benefit.

The traditional school and even the French-style secular school tend to form believers and subjects, good Christians, good citizens, good workers, good parents, submissive to the laws and ready to defend the country, for which purpose they teach dogmas and impose whatever may be useful to the Church and the State, to which entities they sacrifice the individual. From the school, both secular and traditional, the child submits to belief, obedience and discipline, and acquires the customs proper to the believer, the soldier and the wage earner. He learns to read and write words that do not inspire ideas in him, he learns arithmetic with demonstrations or bourgeois profiteering calculations, grammar by heart without any basis in understanding or mastery of

the analysis and synthesis of the language, and so on, some other notions in an irrational way, because the teacher wants to obtain visible results in the examination ceremony, he needs to ingratiate himself with his hierarchical superiors or to prove his establishment, and he cultivates almost exclusively the child's memory at the expense of reason. Nor can he do anything else; in charge of numerous pupils he cannot adapt his teaching to the intelligence of each one; he speaks to all; the rule is the same for all temperaments and for all intelligences, and for this reason it can be said that the school, which should be the rational initiator of individual and social life, kills the germs of personality and initiative.

This is the ideal of the privileged: the unity of the masses, the disappearance of the whole, the confusion of the lowest mediocrity as an indispensable condition for the unalterability of the order, that is, the unalterable stability of the bourgeois order, of the usurpation of common property and social wealth, of the reign of privilege.

The worker is trained mechanically: far from being initiated into the general principles and secrets of industry, the path to any other profession is closed to him; after mutilating his intelligence, he is petrified, his understanding is paralyzed like his arms. The one who handles the saw is useless for the composer, the house painter is inaccessible to the handling of the brush, the one who digs the chisel slips from his fingers: in the same way the one who discourses with legendary notions or is guided by technical routines is incapable of forming his own judgments, of adapting to other people's thoughts and of discovering new scientific-industrial procedures.

If during the first years after learning he may nourish some illusion, the hardness of social life and the monotony of work plunge him into the awareness of his degradation, seeing himself reduced to being a vile cog, without his own personality, and then he falls into despair.

If it is true that man is born with senses and faculties, but without ideas, he comes into the world with atavistic inclinations, and by atavism the son of the poor is humble and even servile, and the son of the rich is proud and domineering.

The atavistic inclination, together with ignorance, reinforces the plebeian mass subject to the domination of the patricians and serves as a pedestal for the ambitious.

In short: both in the traditional religious school, as in the civic school, which under the name of secular supports or tries to support the liberal or democratic bourgeoisie, passive beings are formed in whom critical judgment is not developed, because the school dogmas constitute the only object, ignoring the environment and not taking into account the life of the child at all. Both schools start from the principle that the individual must adapt to society, not society to the individual, and they create the abominable symbol of the Procrustean bed, in which the faculties are stretched or shrunk and even cut off, to reduce them to the measure of morality and the capacity that privilege demands, in order to avoid any manifestation of noble and dignified rebellion.

To counteract the effects of these schools, rationalist teaching emerged, with which popular esotericism was abandoned and privileged esotericism was destroyed, in order to establish the universality of knowledge, founded on the great principle that the truth belongs to everyone and is owed to everyone.

Rationalist teaching is a total renewal of the old and new methods of transmitting knowledge. It does not represent another step in the scale of pedagogical advances, but rather, to use a vulgar phrase, it is a revolution that breaks the old molds of servile and conventional pedagogy and takes possession of the truth that surrounds us, that touches us everywhere and that would get into

our eyes if we did not have them closed by the error in which we have been raised and in which we have developed and live.

In the Modern School conceived by Ferrer, the new generation, girls and boys without distinction, attend a kind of baccalaureate without useless classicism but with a perfectly scientific orientation.

A rationally educated childhood, which establishes a prudent relationship between what is known and what is believed, that is, between the discoveries of scientific specialists and the adaptation of those who cannot personally rise to such specialties, carries the accomplished and triumphant social renewal in its heart and in its head; it will propagate it with the suggestive prestige of sincerity, conviction and evidence, and will take its share of possession in the universal heritage with admirable ease, without trusting in false redeemers, without the need for terrifying plots, without waiting for imaginary catastrophes, as a logical and natural result of a completed evolution, in the way that Zola conceived that Crecherie of Labor, in which the social revolution was nothing more than a detachment and a collapse of the old and obsolete, which stripped of obstacles the beautiful organization that already functioned with elegance and grandeur resulting from all the wills rationally determined for the good.

Let us ask ourselves: Who and what will contain the new rationally educated and instructed generation in the servile and miserable straits of wages? Where will the privileged draw prestige and strength to continue the usurpation of natural goods and the products of labor, since that prestige and strength have as their only foundation popular ignorance?

For the realization of the emancipatory ideal of the proletariat, rationalist education is a powerful element; moreover, it is indispensable; it is the necessary complement of Trade Unionism; I dare to maintain that it must be its inspiration and its guide, in the same way that intelligence inspires action in the individual.

Children who, in the rationalist school, in the Modern School—a historical name written with the blood of a martyr—learn the unity and eternity of matter, who acquire positive notions about the constitution of the universe, the formation of organisms, the laws of evolution, who know the origin of man and, in positive synthesis, the constitution of society and the course of history, all stripped of mysticism, metaphysics and legend, cannot be passive individuals subject to traditional absurdity. They must necessarily give new impetus to the world on their own initiative, ignoring all suggestion, firm against all arriviste attempts to divert and ready at all times to put into practice in the world the truth that their understanding treasures.

Rationalist teaching had in Ferrer a revealer and a martyr, now known, it only needs enthusiastic and determined propagators, and no one is more obliged than us, the workers, interested in removing our children from the harmful influence of that doctrine that teaches submission to superiors, non-resistance to evil, impotent charity against dominant injustice, grace as a substitute for justice and the arbitrary lie of the miracle against the inflexibility of natural laws.

Reading the statistics of emigration, those of the seizure of small property by administrative thieves, the news of the demonstrations of workers who ask the authorities for bread and work, those of the humiliations imposed on the hungry by official or private charity, it is overwhelming to consider the depth of inertia in which so many thousands of individuals find themselves, each of whom, duly educated and instructed, could have contributed to the treasure of science, wealth and happiness that constitutes the heritage of humanity.

Scientific truth is in conflict with the particular interests of every religious denomination, every political group and every privileged class.

This is how the modern proletariat must understand it, not limiting itself to the purpose of socializing the land and the instruments of work, but must also socialize science by universalizing the university, that is, putting science within the reach of everyone instead of allowing it to be a special school for the privileged where they are taught to fight with trickery and with advantage in the so-called struggle for existence.

In some ancient countries, says Carnegie, whoever taught a slave to read was condemned to death. By keeping their slaves in ignorance, the masters acted out of an instinct for self-preservation, because instructing a slave is breaking his chains.

Let us take advantage of this historical lesson and consider as a scab, not to treat him as an enemy but to elevate him to the dignity of a fighter for the ideal, not only the unfortunate man who occupies the position of a striker, but also the one who, by not mastering letters, is deprived of the best means of knowledge and is reduced to believing, the one who, by not being able to nourish his understanding with reading, finds himself plunged into belief.

To live reduced to the impossibility of adapting, with rational criteria through reading, to the thoughts of others, and not being able to transmit one's own thoughts through writing, incapacitates the illiterate for the ideal; to accept the ideal out of belief, finding oneself incapable of criticism and reasoning because one does not know how to read or write, or because one knows and does not practice rationally, is to fall into fanaticism or enlightenment, with no other guide than the uncultivated imagination or the blind faith that drives one to cheer on one's tyrants and to persecute men of saving thought and altruistic feeling. Let us remember with horror that in Spain people have gone so far as to shout in barbaric language appropriate to the case: "Long live the chains!" And let us not forget that Ferrer, the illustrious martyr of the Modern School, before being an apostle of rationalist teaching, was and continued to be an ardent revolutionary, who became disillusioned with the idea of achieving the ideal through mutinies and barracks in view of the dubious morality of the leaders and the stupidity of the partisans, and thought of the absolute necessity of rationally preparing the generations in view of the revolutionary triumph and the renewal of the ultra-revolutionary society.

Here is what Ferrer himself wrote in his posthumous work *The Modern School*:

"The experience acquired during my fifteen years of residence in Paris, when I witnessed the crises of Boulangism, Dreyfusism and nationalism, which constituted a danger for the Republic, convinced me that the problem of popular education had not been resolved, and that since it was not in France, I could not expect Spanish republicanism to resolve it, since it had always shown a deplorable lack of knowledge of the capital importance that the education system has for a people.

Imagine what the present generation would be like if the Spanish Republican Party, after the exile of Ruiz Zorrilla, had dedicated itself to founding rationalist schools alongside each committee, each free-thinking nucleus or each Masonic lodge; if instead of worrying about the presidents, secretaries and members of the employment committees that they would occupy in the future republic had worked actively for popular education; how much progress would have been made during thirty years in day schools for children and in night schools for adults.

Would the people then be content to send deputies to Parliament who would accept a law on associations presented by the monarchists?

Would the people limit themselves to stirring up riots over the rise in the price of bread, without rebelling against the privations imposed on the worker because of the abundance of superfluous goods enjoyed by those enriched by the work of others?

Would the people create puny riots against consumption instead of organizing themselves for the suppression of all tyrannical privileges?

We have in society tremendous and odious manifestations of inequality, the worst of which is not the generally known one, that of the millionaire and the beggar; there is another, more serious one, because in addition to being an effect it is also a great part of the cause or the fault, that of the wise and the ignorant. If there are those who can say: "I do not need the hypothesis of God," there are many who have been hurled this insult: "A God is needed for the rabble."

If we are exploited as workers, if work is cursed in the society of privilege, it is not only due to our lack of energetic rebellion, but also to our ignorance. Materially strong during the short peak of their life are our companions who cultivate the land, who ferret in the mine, who modify the fiber, the wood or the metals, who transport the products by sea and by land; but if with the strength of their muscles they have a brain full of superstitions and prejudices, if they only use their strength to earn their salary, they will be left with the most absolute weakness for their emancipation.

First of all, we cannot forget that our children, like ourselves, are subject to systematic ignorance, either do not receive any instruction, remaining to form units in the horrible number of illiterates, or receive primary instruction that is ineffective, if not counterproductive; they are also subject to the ignorance of our comrades, as we have been to that of our mothers, and with such elements they come indolent and weary to unionism, or they remain behind forming the black legion of scabs, or they are easily seduced by the bourgeois deviations with which so many comrades are led astray by cooperation, radical politics, regionalism, Catholic patronage and the thousand frivolities with which our exploiters come to distract us when they do not threaten us and persecute us to annihilate us.

We need to educate ourselves and educate our children, considering this instruction and education as a worthy complement to our union organization and a sure guarantee of the triumph of our ideal.

Just as the Trade Union and the Federation and Confederation of Trade Unions are needed, the Athenaeum is needed for adults and the School for children.

It is certain that the bourgeoisie achieved its emancipation when its philosophers were able to conceive, write and publish the Encyclopedia. It is probable that the proletariat will not achieve the realization of its aspirations until the black stain of illiteracy disappears from its midst.

Let us, then, open schools where instruction is encouraged; let us give our children a rationalist education, and we will thus have achieved a first moral victory, and then, after our future material victory, the firmest guarantee of their stability.

The workers must free their children from the pernicious teachings of our masters, and we will achieve this by replacing the bourgeois municipal schools with trade union schools. Let us prevent our children from being unconsciously resigned, in order to save ourselves the work of later making them conscious and worthy; it is more methodical and safer; It is to realize the long-cherished hope of an education for freedom, of learning about life. Consider that it is not the education given by the State, through its officials, that can prepare men capable of making a society viable. Nor is it the official school where freedom can be taught. Even less so is illiteracy,

which isolates man like a brute, ignorant of the past, isolated in the present, unforeseen of the future, depriving him of that great community of thought that is brilliantly sustained and preserved by the two great and unsurpassable discoveries of human ingenuity: the alphabet and the printing press.

It is clear that all dogmas having been rejected, union dogmas must not be drawn up for the use of the children of the working class; but they must be taught to live in the integrity of life, warning them against the hierarchy and tyranny of owners and capitalists, arousing in them a horror of the fraud that wages represent, the love of useful activity, of freedom and of harmony.

The rising generation, which will form the proletariat of tomorrow, needs a higher mentality than the present one; not an education that produces shepherds and flocks, but an education that forms individuals who want and know how to be free, who are capable of elevating mutual aid over the struggle for existence and who come to want and be able to abolish patronage and wage labor.

Let it be noted, then, that just as the child should not be physically subjected to a corporal regimen that atrophies his organs, neither should he be subjected to a deceptive teaching that incapacitates him for the knowledge of truth and for the practice of morality.

Rational pedagogy, which takes children without distinction of sex to support their natural evolution, constitutes one of the most powerful elements for the positive and definitive solution of the social problem.

Boys and girls leaving school, with their thoughts fixed on their future, suddenly find themselves at the crossroads of life, hesitant and not knowing which way to take, also influenced by the heralds of the systems, who with exaggerated speeches praise their advantages, while those who are routinely educated will follow those who agree with their concerns, those who have received the rational education and scientific instruction of the syndicalist school will easily determine their will by their good judgment and by their own initiative, without danger of making a mistake and with all their natural energy.

I wish to draw the attention of emancipatory workers to this consideration, inducing them to think especially about the education and instruction of women in relation to their own right, as a conscious and free person and also as a preserver, educator and teacher of their children.

It is evident that in order to fulfill the social ends that correspond to them, women must be educated. All reformist projects are of little use if women, by uncorrected atavism, have religious tradition as their only source of inspiration.

Today's society continues to uphold the moral and legal inferiority of women in all social classes, just as it holds the worker to the systematic deprivation of his share in social wealth; but if the privileged, taking into account the conveniences in the possession and transmission of property, are in favor of female inferiority, we, the disinherited, must grant, or rather, recognize women's faculties and rights to the fullest extent of their recognition, for what is just and also for what is useful.

Women think, feel and work like men, and, according to the most sound philosophy, they participate in those rights inherent to human personality.

By ignoring these rights, if the proletariat were to commit such a vile error, it would close the path to its own emancipation, it would tighten its chains and, it is hard to say, but I think and say it, it would deserve its slavery.

Despite male tyranny, women have excelled in science, in the arts and in all manifestations of knowledge and power, and their capacity and rights must be recognized.

Generally speaking, and excluding exceptions, she is our companion, she who encourages us in our hesitations, she who helps us in our failures, she who advises us in our doubts, she who applauds us in our successes, the mother of our children, she who completes our personality morally and materially; she is, therefore, our equal, even if the sacred books teach something else and the legal books prescribe something else.

We have left woman to superstition and ignorance, and it follows that, although she is our companion, she is not our collaborator.

Let us correct our error, first in the rational school, then in our unions. Let us always keep in mind this thought of Condorcet: "When you instruct a boy, you prepare an educated man, but when you instruct a girl, you prepare the instruction of a family."

Be assured that the regenerated society we long for cannot exist in all its magnificence and justice until social equality between man and woman has overcome the dualism between the owner and the worker.

Arouse in women the desire for knowledge, inspire in them a love of justice, interest them in the struggle for the ideal, make them understand that the happiness of the man they love and of the children they give birth to depends on it, and you will have transformed them in a rationally progressive sense, and they will be your companion, not only in the home, but in the union, in the athenaeum and even on the barricade.

Speaking of education and teaching, we must not refer exclusively to the school and the teaching staff; there is a school larger than all schools and even all universities. That school is life, in which we all act as good or bad teachers, through the influence of example, and in which we are all students through the tendency to imitate and the need to adapt.

Normal and conscientious people will give good examples to their children and will exercise an exemplary influence among their companions, friends and neighbours; but the child who is born into a family in which the parents have descended a few degrees on the scale of normality; if the father is an alcoholic and the mother careless and dirty and their relations are at the same intellectual level, they will create together an environment of ignorance and vice appropriate for that degenerate offspring that serves as a hindrance to all progress if not the cause of all stagnation and even of all regression.

There is a social inequality against which we all protest, because we are innocent victims of it; but there is a part of this inequality that we can be the cause of and to which I call your attention, because it is necessary that we all free ourselves from such a grave responsibility.

See what it consists of:

Let us draw a parallel between the child born to parents, not only rich or poor but educated, instructed and conscious of their parental duties, and the child born to ignorant and vicious parents; Let us suppose that two procreative couples are in identical social conditions, poor or rich, and let us see the consequences: one will develop rationally among servants, if he is rich, or in abandonment if he is poor, or relatively well cared for according to the paternal resources, and the mark of education will remain perennial in those individuals; some will fulfill their purpose in the course of their lives by giving impetus to the sciences or to the redemptive ideal, and the others will be casino or tavern Apaches.

It is necessary that everyone, but especially the workers, propose not to give birth to degenerate beings, not to be the cause of such and such serious inequality, and considering that a degenerate offspring renews and reinforces the social mass from which we draw for the recruitment of executioners of all kinds, of strikebreakers, of swindlers, of knife-and-gun wielding men

at the service of exploiters and usurers and of all those who live outside of rational morality, we repress the sexual beast and give body and life only to offspring that we can shelter under our worthy responsibility, either counting on our individual power, or feeling supported by the great power of institutions created by solidarity.

Here I would end my work, if not because of my exhaustion, because I have exhausted the subject; but I want to pay here the homage of a respectful memory to the founder of the Modern School, to the martyr of rationalist teaching, to the one who gave his life for the universalization of science, with the intention of emancipating the proletariat and definitively establishing social equality in the world.

To this end, I will read the end of my preface to the book *The Modern School, posthumous explanation and scope of rationalist teaching*, by Francisco Ferrer Guardia, published by his successor.

“In June 1908, when Ferrer was resting in Amelie-les-Bains, he invited me to accompany him, which I gladly agreed to do, and in the tranquility of that beautiful corner of the Pyrenees, in the rest required after many years of incessant activity and one of deprivation of liberty and terrible danger, he recalled the steps taken on the progressive path, and we agreed on plans to continue taking advantage of the lessons of experience.

There, Ferrer, in consideration of what had been fantasized by friends and adversaries about the meaning of the Modern School during the campaign for its liberation, formed the purpose of writing an explanatory Memoir of its significance, which would be published in the Spanish and French press and would clearly and definitively establish the concept, application and extension of rationalist teaching.

To carry out his purpose he required my collaboration, and in that beautiful oasis and enjoying a brief respite in the struggle for progress, for good, for justice, in the calm of a splendid landscape, enjoying aromatic breezes and the harmonious murmur of birds and insects on the banks of a stream, he wrote the present explanation which, because it was his and because it was ratified and confirmed in a tragic and solemn hour in Monjuich before the firing squad, rectifies errors, ratifies truths and can serve as a guide to the successors of an initiative to save, emancipate and liberate humanity.

In that environment, in the presence of Ferrer and listening to his words inspired by the most generous altruism, I felt those emotions that exalt feeling and thought, and while he was outlining his Memoir, I wrote the following lines, which I could not presume would be included in the preface to Ferrer’s posthumous work.

The Modern School

There is a natural treasure, in the formation of which men have not intervened, and another artificial treasure, agglomerated with the help of observers, thinkers and workers of all times and all countries.

Men live by the existence of this natural treasure, and humanity lives by the agglomeration of this artificial treasure; because it is evident that without conditions of necessary and even surplus vitality, the lower species would not have evolved to form the human organism, nor would the use of the surplus have created science,

art and industry, uniting the knowledge, the will and the power of all in such a way that humanity would be founded by the adoption of solidarity.

If these treasures have no creator in our species or in the living generation, it is clear that individual appropriation, hereditary transmission and the enjoyment of all the consequent advantages by a certain number of privileged people, to the exclusion of another infinitely greater number who remain miserable and ignorant disinherited, have no reason to exist, are an absurdity, constitute a usurpation.

This is so: let us not look for those responsible and those responsible; let us not give vain satisfaction to the feeling by looking for the enemy whom we would like to overwhelm with our complaints or destroy with our anger, but let us recognize the fact in all its simplicity: the great natural wealth and the no less great social wealth, which together form the heritage of that great united agglomeration called humanity, are held in the world by a relatively small number of privileged people, from the Brahmin to the bourgeois, to the detriment of all the exploited and oppressed of the world, from the pariah to the day laborer, taking the name of these historical classes as a representation of all the more or less known inequalities that have existed among men.

Human work is the dualism that harms us so much, human work must be the restorative monism that must favor us.

Before the legislators codified injustice by legalizing the usurpation of property and the dispossession of the lowest classes, the priests had sanctified ignorance with esotericism, reserving for themselves the privilege of knowledge, and thus the anti-solidarity absurdity represented by the dualism that divides us was created, causing the antagonism of interests that corrodes Society.

Science, always a precursor, as thought necessarily precedes action as a determinant of the will, surpassed by its own power the reserves and secrets of initiation, passing from the temple, where it was usurped by the priests, to the university, where it is usurped by the bourgeoisie; But once the symbol has been interpreted, the myth has vanished and the idol, the last refuge of exoteric injustice, has been overthrown, it does not even stop at the university, and moves on to the rational school, the true and positive university where the science of life is taught to all, turning nature in all its immense breadth into a children's classroom, and taking as its teaching objective all the manifestations of knowledge and the power of men.

In order to condense into a starting point the new free path undertaken by humanity, the Modern School emerged."

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Anselmo Lorenzo
Against ignorance
1913

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Sociological lecture, read in Pueblo Nuevo on April 20, 1913, under the auspices of the Society of Rational Culture.

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