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The Rising Anarchism

Ricardo Mella

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Sequels are never good. But dear friends who, judging the first installment good, decided to publish it as a pamphlet, ask me to expand the material a few more pages, and I cannot and do not wish to refuse.

I wrote “The Bankruptcy of Beliefs” in a painful moment, impressed by the collapse of something that lives in illusion, but not in reality, which sometimes plays with ideas and with affections, to torment us with our own impotence and our avowed errors.

The truth does not give way before ideological conventions, and those of us who profess to worship it, must not, even through feelings of solidarity, much less through party spirit, sacrifice even the smallest portion of what we understand to be above all doctrines.

Whoever has followed the gradual development of revolutionary ideas, and of anarchism above all, will have seen that in the course of time certain principles began to crystallize in minds as infallible conditions of absolute truth. They will have seen how small dogmas have been elaborated and how, through the influence of a strange mysticism, narrow creeds were finally asserted, claiming nothing less than the possession of the whole truth, truth for today and tomorrow, truth for always. And they will have seen how,

after our metaphysical drifts, we have been left with words and names, but completely bereft of ideas. To the worship of truth was succeeded by the idolization of sonorous nomenclature, the magic of sensationalism, almost a faith in the fortuitous combination of letters.

It is the evolutionary process of all beliefs. Anarchism, which was born as a critique, is transformed into an affirmation that borders on dogma and sect. Believers, fanatics and followers of men arise. And there are also the theorists who make of ANARCHY an individualistic or socialist, collectivist or communist, atheistic or materialistic creed, of this or that philosophical school. Finally, in the heart of Anarchism, particularisms are born regarding life, art, beauty, the superman or irreducible egoistic personal independence. The ideal synthesis is thus parceled out, and little by little there are as many chapels as propagandists, as many doctrines as writers. The result is inevitable: we fall into all the vulgarities of party spirit, into all the passions of personalism, into all the baseness of ambition and vanity.

How do we uncover the sore without touching the people, without turning the subject into a source of scandal, into the material of new accusations and insults?

For many, Anarchism has become a belief or a faith. Who would deny it? Because this has become so, passionate quarrels, unjustified divisions and dogmatic exclusivisms have been provoked. That is why, when the evolution has been completed, the bankruptcy of beliefs, a reality in fact, must be proclaimed frankly by all who love the truth.

When Anarchism has gained more ground, the crisis must necessarily arise. Iniquity manifests itself everywhere. Books, magazines, newspapers, meetings reflect the effects of the rare contrast produced by the clash of so many opinions that have sneaked into the anarchist camp. In open competition, doctrinal particularisms fall one by one in the battle of beliefs. None are firm, and they cannot be, without denying themselves.

The illusion of a closed, compact, uniform, pure and fixed Anarchism, like the immaculate faith in the absolute, could live within the enthusiasms of the moment, in febrile imaginations, anxious for goodness and justice, but it is exhausted by truth and reason. It dies fatally when the understanding is clarified and analysis breaks down the heart of the ideality. And the supreme moment comes to shatter our beliefs, to break up the ideological clutter acquired from this or that author, in love with one or another social or philosophical thesis. Why hide it? Why continue to fight in the name of pseudo-scientific and semiological puerilities? Truth is not enclosed in an exclusive point of view. It is not guarded in an ark of fragile planks. It is not there at hand or at the reach of the first daring soul who decides to discover it. As the sciences, as everything human is in formation, it will be perpetually in formation. We are and will always be forced to follow after it through successive trials; in that no other way is the flow of knowledge formed and certainty established.

This is how Anarchism will be surpassed. And when I speak of Anarchism and I say that in minds something stirs that is incomprehensible to the dying world, and that we sense beyond the ANARCHY a sun, which is born because in the succession of time there is no sunset without orthography, I speak of Doctrinal Anarchism, which forms schools, raises chapels and builds altars. Yes; beyond this necessary moment of the bankruptcy of beliefs, is the broad anarchist synthesis that gathers from all the particularisms that are maintained, from all philosophical theses, and from all the formidable advances of the common intellectual work, the established and well-checked truths, whose demonstration every struggle is already impossible. This vast synthesis, a complete expression of Anarchism that opens its doors to everything that comes from tomorrow and everything that remains firm and strong from yesterday and is reaffirmed in today's clash that scrutinizes the unknown,—this synthesis is the complete denial of all belief.

There is no need to shout: Down with the beliefs! They perish by their own hands. Belief, like faith, is an obstacle to knowledge. And in the restless stirring of so many anarchists speaking, beliefs fail. We will not hide it. Let every one of us throw away the old dogmatism of their opinions, the loves of their philosophical predilections, and launching the mind on the broad paths of unrestricted inquiry, reach as far as the conception of a conscious, virile, generous Anarchism, that has no quarrel except with conventionalism and error, and has tolerance for all ideas, but does not accept, even on a provisional basis, anything except what is well proven.

This Anarchism is the one that is quietly forming. It is the one that is elaborated slowly in the beliefs able to feel the pressure of the atavisms that appear everywhere. It is the one that made me write "The Bankruptcy of Beliefs:" a cry of protest against the reality of the anarchist herd; a cry of encouragement for personal independence; a call for the expansion of the ideal that every day lives stronger in me and encourages me to fight for a future that I will not enjoy, but which will be an era of justice, well-being and love for the men of tomorrow. This Anarchism is the rising Anarchism, capable of collecting within its breast all libertarian tendencies, capable of encouraging all noble rebellions and of impressing on generous spirits the impulse of freedom in all directions, without hindrance and without prejudice, with the sole condition that exclusivism does not raise Chinese walls and that the understanding is delivered entirely and unreservedly to the truth that beats vigorously in the most diverse modalities of the new ideal.

It will no longer be said in the name of Anarchism: No further! Absolute justice, revived in the dogma that now dies, will be but the indeterminate goal that changes as human mentality unfolds. And we will not fall into the strange and singular error of setting a limit, however distant, to the progress of ideas and forms of social benefit.

The rising Anarchism proclaims the beyond endless, after having knocked down all the barriers raised by the age-old intellectual absolutism of men.

Don't you believe that all the particularisms, all the theories, are now failing, that all the factories of rubble, awkwardly raised for the glory of new dogmas, are collapsing? Don't you believe that the bankruptcy of beliefs is the last link in the human chain that breaks down and offers us the full breadth the anarchist ideal, pure and without blemish?

Faith will have blinded you. And you would do well to renounce the word freedom; that can be a herd even in the midst of the most radical ideas.

For our part we limit ourselves to record a fact: anarchists of all tendencies resolutely walk towards the affirmation of a great social synthesis that encompasses all the various manifestations of the ideal. The walking is silent; soon will come the noisy break, if there is anyone who insists on remaining bound to the spirit of clique and sect.

Whoever has not emancipated himself will be left behind with the current movement and will seek redemption in vain. He will die a slave.

Ricardo Mella

Sources:

La bancarrota de las creencias, by Ricardo Mella, «La Revista Blanca», 107, Madrid, December 1, 1902.

El Anarquismo naciente was published as a continuation of *La bancarrota de las creencias*, in a pamphlet published in Valencia, in 1903, by Ediciones El Corsario.

[Working translation by Shawn P. Wilbur]