

The Private Preserves

Ricardo Mella

1911

At the margins of truth, things are not as they are, but as we wish they would be. To reason is often to engage in a dazzling gymnastics; to philosophize, a wonderful art that enchants; to theorize, a thaumaturgy that seduces, deludes and hypnotizes. And reasoning, philosophizing and theorizing, we raise up sumptuous buildings—with such fragile, crumbling foundations that the softest breeze knocks them down.

Behold, men dig furrows in the earth, place sturdy masonry in them and build solid walls on them. Each one closes off his preserve. And the wonderful work of art begins. Here, in glowing characters, the word *idealism*. There, in iron signs, the word *materialism*. Everywhere words and words. Deism, pantheism; aristocracy, democracy; authority, freedom; creation, evolution. There are frameworks for all tastes. The artificers bear glorious names: Plato and Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Spencer. Let us doff our caps in reverence before such greatness.

We are already separated into sects, schools and parties. A thousand bifurcations, a thousand branches, a thousand more nuances carve in history as many imperishable names. Each chooses their own preserve and there that lock ourselves away with a logic of their own, with a peculiar philosophy, with a thesis that excludes, breaks up and separates. Thought remains a slave to its own work.

To systematize is the work of science and in systematizing we close off science: we dogmatize. That is the reason for every private preserve.

Let us rejoice that the walls are demolished; that the palaces are coming down. There is art and beauty and science in everyone, and none is the art, the beauty or the science. The work of the centuries that have been and of those that are to come will never be concluded.

But where a new scaffolding is to be erected, where new furrows will be opened and new walls will be built, appear with your pickaxes and do not leave a single stone on stone! Thought requires space without limits, time without end and freedom without boundary markers. There can be no finished theories, complete systematizations, unique philosophies, because there is no absolute, immutable truth. There are truths and truths, acquired or to be acquired. To philosophize and reason is to accept the former, to investigate the latter. Nothing more. Let's analyze, investigate, and let us take care not to limit our own understanding. On this condition, gymnastics, art and intellectual thaumaturgy have a wide field of action and expansion.

And if you find anyone in your path of action who tries to bring you to a halt before the magic of the ideal, the reality of matter or the impulses of passion, consider walking on.

The Ideal, yes—the noble aspirations of the human intellect, which flies towards Beauty, towards Justice, towards Love—greet it with the emotion of the divinely human, great above all greatness.

Matter, yes—the objective reality of all that exists, which supports all that is past, all that is present and all that is to come; the mystery within which the idea forges the future, summarizes Nature and shapes the laws of universal existence—embrace it with the love of self, of one's own flesh and bones, of one's own substance and one's own strength, which it is a complete and clearly defined likeness of that which has no beginning or end, neither in time nor in space.

Passion, yes—the powerful flow, the irresistible magnetism of substance and force; the grandiose motor of action and life; impulse and attraction, love and hate—revere it as the inexhaustible soul of all art and feeling, all reason and ideality.

Without passion, man is like a granite block, indifferent as inert matter. Without the ideal, he is like the pig that splashes in the slop that fattens him. Without matter, viscera, organs, arteries, limbs, he would be like those hallucinations of the demented creators of spirits, who forge realities where there is nothing but delusions.

Dream as much as you want, be as passionate as you like, but reflect as you walk that they are real bodies with real organs and needs; that the idea is a great, magnificent thing; that feeling is a beautiful, ideal thing; and that the stomach a viscera that requires food, the brain an organ that demands waves of rich blood, the body a wonderful organism that feeds on cereals and meats and also on ideas. A good piece of bread carries within its atoms the most pleasing creations of the Platos, the Aristotles, the Kants and the Spencers.

So conquer bread and also the ideal. Everything, in short, bread for the body, bread for the soul, bread for the mind. And let the architects of the private preserves remain in the solitude of their hoary palaces.

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