

The writings of Josep Torras i Bages (1846-1916) on Francesc Xavier Llorens i Barba (1820-1872)

The beginnings of contemporary political Catalanism were marked by the appearance of two notable literary works: *Lo catalanisme*, by Valentí Almirall i Llozer, and *La tradició catalana*, by the cleric Josep Torras i Bages. The former, first published in 1886, established the principles of progressive Catalanism, which was republican and federalist; the latter, published in 1892 and written as a reaction to the former, laid the ideological foundations of conservative Catalanism, with a traditionalist and markedly clerical tendency. Almirall based most of his arguments on the interpretation of events of political history; in contrast, Torras i Bages gave a leading role to the history of ideas, to which he devoted the second of the two books that make up the work, entitled “Rational Value of Catalan Regionalism.”

The synthesis created by Torras i Bages, who a few years later would become the Bishop of Vic, started with the theological speculations of Ramon de Penyafort and finished, at the very beginning of the 19th century, in the departments of the University of Cervera. This synthesis excluded the currents of 19th-century thought, with the exception of a few paragraphs dedicated to Jaume Balmes at the end of the work and a footnote on the professor of philosophy Francesc Xavier Llorens i Barba, prompted by certain criticisms expressed by Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo.

Torras i Bages had been a student of Llorens i Barba from 1863 to 1865, while studying Letters at the University of Barcelona. It has always been agreed that, through his readings, Llorens followed the authors of the Scottish School of Common Sense. He defended, in the only text he published, the need to renew philosophical studies, opening the country up to the influence of the various systems of thought that were then circulating through Europe. At the same time, Julián Sanz del Río, in Madrid, was also propounding renewal, but with a pre-established orientation: the rusty Scholasticism of the universities and their innumerable seminars had to be replaced by the idealist philosophy of Krause. In the second half of the 19th century, Krausism was the more or less diffuse

philosophy of Spanish progressivism. The influence, always relative, that Llorens had during his twenty-five years as a professor of the University of Barcelona quickly evaporated after he died, with no published work and with no faithful followers in prominent academic positions.

However, both Torras i Bages and Menéndez y Pelayo championed, against Krausism, the figure of Llorens –a figure, as will be understood, that is to some extent empty and therefore susceptible to a wide variety of manipulations. Menéndez y Pelayo presented Llorens as one of the representatives of an intermediate option between two equally noxious extremes: rancid Scholasticism and the muddle of Krausist progressivism. Torras, always obedient to Papal directives and therefore in favour of the restoration of Thomism promoted by Leo XIII, used his occasional writings on Llorens to ridicule Sanz del Río. But he also asserted in these writings –both before and after the dispute maintained on this point with Menéndez y Pelayo– that he had witnessed a progressive move towards Scholasticism on Llorens' part.

The Editors

Memoirs of a Catalan philosopher¹

Et qui vidit testimonium perhibuit

Since it has always been desirable for the Republic not to lose the maxims and examples of the true philosophers who teach other men right and reasonable conduct, we believe that the faithful readers of *La Veu del Montserrat*, on the occasion of the anniversary of his lamented decease, will not be averse to reading a few lines referring to the most notable philosopher Catalonia has had in recent years, who was the teacher of a large proportion of our most learned people, and who, due to having taken Philosophy not as a means of gaining splendour or winning praise but as a noble spouse, to which friendship and company he dedicated all his life, is worthy of being imitated by anyone wishing to embrace the profession of philosopher. I am speaking of Mr. Francesc Xavier Llorens i Barba, in whose shade I received my first philosophical instruction, who showed me so much affection from the moment when I left behind my childhood, and who related his life to me with such warmth, as the discourse of the present article will demonstrate.

I

He used to tell me that one of the first sparks that ignited in his soul, demonstrating that the fire of philosophy illuminated his understanding, was that when he was a boy of tender age he had to make long discourses and reflections to understand how the first carpenter's plane could have been made, since every new plane has to be smoothed down by another plane. This even cost him hours of sleep. But although this symptom of a philosophical soul did not cease to grow, the thirst for examination and rational inquiry remained very moderate in him, so that the distinctive mark of his character as a philosopher was prudence, and we could perhaps even say that he was a philosopher who, made wary by the multitude of errors and aberrations of the false cultivators of philosophy, was excessively timid, which, in combination with his natural modesty, led a wise and venerable provincial of an illustrious religious order, a friend of the late professor, to say that if Llorens' philosophy had any failing it was that of saying little. He feared the immense constructions of the philosophers, believing them unfounded, as in reality they are in any system not born of the pure and sublime marriage between faith and reason; as a result, he became so enamoured of the observation and analysis of the soul that he spent his time journeying within it, reaching the point of disassociating himself, member by member, from his body until arriving at the conception of himself as a pure spirit.

Consequently, he used to say that anyone who followed him in these journeys through the interior of the soul could not possibly be a materialist. And indeed, in manifesting and highlighting its operations, in portraying the 'affects'² and feelings, in classifying them according to their quality and subdividing them by their various nuances, in decomposing the compositions of the imagination, in describing the east and west of memories, in disentangling long series of them and explaining how to make them emerge from a clear consciousness, commenting admirably on a text by the great St. Augustine, how they are conserved and stored in the repository they come from and where they return after having performed their function, the deceptions of memory (*simulacrum in se; simulacrum in alio*); the birth of desires, how they grow into passions, the will struggling with them and mastering them; the formation of concepts, the rhythm of understanding, which constitutes the faculty of discourse; in analysing, in brief, all kinds of interior occurrences, he was exceptional, and this was the realm in which he was a true prince. The aptness of his language, the vividness and richness of the images he used, produced in his audience such in-

2 In the edition of the *Complete Works* (Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1984-1994) he says "effects."

tense concentration that very often the dedicated student, on leaving the classroom and returning to the hustle of everyday life, discovered that he had made a picturesque journey inside himself, having seen perspectives and operations that are not seen with the eyes, and heard rumblings and howls of passions that are not heard with the ears; with the result that it can be said that this philosophy was primarily contemplative.

This is why some people found him largely lacking in the sphere of metaphysics, since being so reluctant to move out of the field of observation and feeling such horror for all constructions, being so fond of the *limited* –as he used to say, playing with the English word, and as is still amusingly recalled by his great and very dear colleague Mr. Manuel Milà i Fontanals– he did not come to form a true system, which demonstrates his great wisdom; since, having embraced in his youth a philosophy that was the most judicious then in circulation but was not founded on that supreme union between Faith and Reason, he found himself obliged to walk at snail's pace and only on a level path, although in the final years of his life –working only, as he told me more than once, to marry his philosophy with Scholasticism– he entered into this latter field and masterfully set out his theories: for example, I remember hearing him expound magnificently on the knowledge of God *per remotionem*, in St. Thomas' words, or more poetically as St. John of the Cross says *by a bolt of darkness*, that is, by the successive removal from the idea of Being of all imperfection until there remains only a luminous darkness, an absolutely real Being or a pure act.

But if, perhaps, with the exception of observation, his philosophical speculation fell short, due to the special terrain in which the circumstances obliged him to situate himself, he had no such failings in the use of the powerful weapons it provided him for the fight against the enemies of the truth; and it is noteworthy that he brandished them against fashionable errors, and that it might have seemed to some people that this showed little respect for free examination, even when it does not step outside of its legitimate field.

And the fact is that our master, being a true philosopher and no sophist, was intolerant and implacable with error, but much more considerate with those who erred; since, as he himself said, the maid who washes the pots is the person who breaks them, and the philosopher, immersing himself in speculation, is sometimes exposed, losing sight of the true path, to the danger of falling into error; however, all those who studied in his classroom will recall more than once having heard him argue against the false philosophers the *fustibus sunt arguendi*, with which the ancient rational wisdom threatened those who drift from the straight road of reason, scorning the laws with which God has laid it out; and for this reason he was distinguished by a special antipathy against the modern sophists, falsifiers of human understanding, since every one of Llorens' followers remembers how much he appreciated a clear 'yes' or 'no' from a stu-

dent –for how could he not be angry with those who say ‘yes’ and ‘no’ at the same time, or say neither ‘yes’ nor ‘no’? In his classroom he dedicated exquisitely eloquent lessons to destroying the systems of absolute identity, as he put it; and I still remember that on his return from Madrid, where he had met the late Sanz del Río, he told us the following: “I had recently lost my brother-in-law and I went to the Court with a heavy soul; on meeting Sanz del Río, we spoke of our studies, and I said to him, ‘Mr. Sanz, I inform you that one of the purposes of my philosophical work is to combat the ideas that you uphold; to which he replied, ‘What does that matter? What could be more antithetical than man and woman, and yet they are reconciled in the higher union of matrimony?’ Then, Llorens said, he would have lost his patience, and had he not heeded the conviction that with certain minds all discussion is useless, he would have answered him: ‘Well, if you believe that opposites reconcile themselves in this way, do you think that I, who am grieving the loss of my brother-in-law, should just pick up a tambourine and start dancing?’”

One of the most interesting parts of his explanations was that in which, making an analysis of a fact of consciousness, clearly demonstrated to his listeners how the anatomy of knowledge resulted in an antithesis in existences, and when explaining the principle of contradiction he again applied himself to the destruction of the systems that today, sadly, are fashionable in this homeland of ours that is too lazy to think; so that our philosopher, although he did not found or establish a complete metaphysics, was on the other hand an athlete of reason and good sense who, with the grave words in which he clothed his energetic thought, destroyed in a large part of the youth of Catalonia the possibility of falling victim to the superciliousness of the prevailing trend of philosophism centred in Madrid.

Some people, especially those who never heard him in the classroom, are very unhappy with that sympathy he briefly felt for Kant; but it must be borne in mind that a man like Llorens, who is not inebriated by systems but always balances the pros and cons, is unlikely to be surprised; as a result, although he explained the concept of the categorical imperative with a certain enthusiasm, he remained a long way from denying to the existence of the Sovereign Being any other certainty than what derives from a postulate of practical reason –because even though in the classroom he explained, with great emphasis, an abundance of realities that are observed in the human spirit and suppose the existence of God, such as the instinct for prayer or the feeling of shame and remorse for our offences– he also directly made use of the principle of causality to arrive at the *Causa causarum*, and he took the principle of final causes as his basis for determining that this First Cause was endowed with supreme intelligence and will.

As for Kant's phenomenalism, we heard him battle it victoriously in the classroom; and if he displayed a certain subjectivism that might give a negative impression, how can we fail to recall that, on the other hand, he established, or rather, eloquently proved, the existence of the outside world? The natural certainty of the outside world that our senses bring us was explored by Llorens with more delight and tenacity than a miser dedicates to a goldmine; and after one of those excursions through the interior of the soul, of its spirituality, his students left the classroom satisfied and indestructibly convinced and free of doubt on this matter. In brief, Llorens' philosophy may have had its weaker part, like all purely human works, but we owe him true gratitude, since he showed us the way to the school of the Angelic Doctor, and we are not the only ones who have followed this road; and a philosophy that leads naturally to the Master to whom Leo XIII is now redirecting our attention had to be a true and correct philosophy.

II

Just as the teacher and philosopher Justin did not cast off his philosopher's gown on becoming a Christian, so our dear master did not cease to be a true Catholic however deep his devotion to philosophy, since although he was familiar with the different orders of Faith and Reason, and how the latter and the science produced by it are insufficient for attaining the former, and although he often fled from certain demonstrations and preferred the act of faith to a thousand incompetent ratiocinations, he was nevertheless convinced that science, in the learned man, was one of the means that opened the gates to Faith, that prepared the ground (*preambula ad articulos*) to remove all opposition or conflict between Faith and Reason, as every sincere Catholic is obliged to affirm, since they are daughters of the same Father; so that in the classroom he gave marvellous explanations of how natural philosophy accompanies understanding to the boundary of its domain, from which point on, closing its eyes, it must irremediably embrace Faith. And so certain was he of the supernatural lineage of Faith, that it was impossible for it to have been engendered by science (*si prius cognoscere et deinde credere vellem, nec cognoscere nec credere valerem*, says St. Augustine, *super Ioan.*, tract. XXVII), that I clearly recall him having told us, "Philosophy may allow me to overcome certain vices with a great effort, but not the haughtiness that tends to accompany the exercise of the rational faculties; but philosophy has no chance with my housemaid, and in contrast Faith and Religion have more effect for her and for me insofar as they have the power to make us both equally perfect." And it should be noted that his housemaid, who he greatly appreciated for her virtues, became a nun shortly before dying, to her master's great satisfaction.

Particularly during the final years of his life, Llorens was a philosopher who had no other aim in his philosophy than that which any man illuminated by Faith must have, that is, a more perfect knowledge of God; and if the venerable master Brother Louis of Granada speaks of Religion as a divine philosophy, Llorens spoke of philosophy as a natural Religion; and consequently, in the classroom he spoke with holy reverence of that pure act or eminently real Being, as he most often said, with a tremulous voice, since it was an extraordinary and almost tangible respect that he felt towards the First Truth. This meant that impiety affected him to the point of suffering, as all those who knew him will recall, having especially shown signs of this during the lamentable 'September Revolution.' I would like to cite one case in particular, which occurred to him after Sunyer, who had made himself sadly famous by declaring himself an atheist, had scandalised every believer in Christ with his blustering tirades. One day Llorens went (as he sometimes did, and the author of these lines, then a student of Law, accompanied him more than once) to have coffee at an establishment full of village folk, and at another table he heard an argument about the Sunyer affair, to which the café owner put an end with these words: "Don't talk to me about that man, for he's worse than a dog; I'm fond of dogs, and I see that they always recognise their master, and this man does not recognise his Master." Llorens was inspired by these words spoken by the landlord: he congratulated him and said he was sorry not to have been at his table to shake his hand with all his heart. As a true philosopher who made the First Cause the be-all and end-all of his philosophy, he sought learning even *ex ore infantium et lactentium*; and with genuine pleasure I remember that, walking by Sarrià station one day, he spoke to me of the need to broaden my studies in order to oppose the dominance of impiety, to which I spontaneously replied that I wanted to start reading the Acts of the Martyrs. The impression that these simple words caused in that wise mind was such that he told me more than once that at that moment he had understood in all clarity how, having reached the extreme of negation, decisive and absolute affirmation was fitting and the most eloquent. He was always faithful to the truth, which he loved like the most beautiful of wives, for which reason he never sought another, remaining a bachelor all his life, since, as Theophrastus proved, says St. Thomas, *sapienti non expedit nubere*.

The day arrived for him to set off on the great journey, as he used to say, and assisted by a number of priests, followers of his, who comforted his spirit either with the passionate words of the psalms, to which he was very devoted, or with the simple acts of faith, hope and charity, through which both the wise and the ignorant are joined with God, he was able to say with confidence and strength, "So far we have laid down the premisses: now we will see the consequence," and his soul entered the realm of truth, to extending which he had devoted every moment of his existence.

The death of this philosopher prompted great mourning, distinguished by an authentic wealth of feelings; more external signs of sorrow were not given, at the deceased's request, but this could not prevent an outpouring from the tender heart of his fraternal friend Marià Aguiló, mingled with tears, of the exquisite verses that the readers of *La Veu del Montserrat* already know.

Perhaps if he had known that I would be asked to write something to commemorate him he would have been annoyed, since he was bitterly opposed to appearing in the newspapers; but while such a wish was admirable on his part, on mine I feel justified in not honouring it, for it is written: *Luceat lux vestra coram hominibus*.

Xavier Llorens i Barba (private notes)³

Religious character. — The profound conviction he had of the limitation of human understanding was the distinctive character of his philosophical being; and this was the source of the great importance he gave to distinguishing the states of understanding and believing. *Radix cognitionis sit fides*. A clarity with which he proved that there must be something incomprehensible, because the workings of the understanding are limited. As St. Thomas, without having seen Him, affirmed the knowledge of God *per viam remotivam*.

He read to me with singular pleasure a passage by ... which resembles an epistle of St. Paul, *nec vana fides*.

Philosophical humility. — He was an enemy of all construction, a danger he saw in attempting certain demonstrations. On this point he feared that some might believe him to be a fideist; but he was not, since his judgment went no further than to state that even in the evident and first principles, their plain truth, the obviousness of their terms, must be admitted with no ulterior proof. However, this was one of the points he wanted to consult. He often quoted Kempis, or, in the words of St. John of the Cross: God communicates with his creatures by means of a bolt of darkness. — He saw the Kingdom of God in the soul, even in the physical world. Certain events that God works in the physical world. Certain events that God works in the soul, and that cannot be explained by this alone. The shame over the criminal acts that have not left our conscience. The remorse that is no more or less than the impression caused us by a threat. Nature of *real* mandate of the moral law. It cannot be a product of our under-

3 These notes, included in the edition of the *Obres Completes* (*Complete Works*, volume III, pp. 569-572), appeared among Josep Torras i Bages' handwritten documents.

standing, since at times it struggles to destroy it; it must be considered a constant and immediate revelation. — Categorical imperative. Feeling of adoration that appears in dangers. Instinct of prayer. Four or five years ago, strolling with him in Vilafranca, he said to me: “Until now I didn’t understand the excellence of the Rosary.”

He was perfectly aware that all the moral law could not be obeyed with our own strength alone. He recognised the need for grace. Humility cannot be achieved; the philosophers did not have it. Philosophy can produce certain natural virtues thanks to constant effort, but religion produces them in the common of men. “My housemaid and I have an equally powerful medium in religion.” Christianity has filled the convents with virgins. He referred to Codina, who had told him, “For me, the best proof, which no-one can destroy for me, of the supernatural character of religion is that when I follow its advice I do not stumble; but if I once forget it, then I fall.” So that, taking the psychological phenomena as his basis for the proof of the existence of God, he gave a new endorsement to those words of St. Paul: *Invisibilia Dei per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur*.

“The greatest happiness I could have in this world would be Mansel’s conversion to Catholicism.” He was grateful to Philosophy because it has brought him close to God. In the classroom, when speaking of the Supreme Being, his voice would tremble. The infinite Majesty of God and the baseness of man, of which he was fully convinced from internal observation, made him often repeat that verse: *Si iniquitates observaveris, Domine, Domine, quis sustinebit?*

This religious respect was not purely speculative. Even in his youth he had had a particular respect for a church building, and when inside one he rejected outright any unnecessary question. His horror of blasphemy had led him to reprehend it several times in public, even with unknown persons.

He told me with particular enthusiasm, shortly after Suñer had scandalised the faithful with his infamous, crass stupidities, that, having entered a village café to have a drink, he heard an argument in which some were defending and others were attacking the atheist politician, but the owner of the establishment startled the former by saying, “I can’t abide what this man says; I’ve always been very fond of dogs, and once I’ve given them some bread, they’ve all recognised me; people who deny God are inferior to these animals.” Llorens congratulated the modest apologist, and told me “I was sorry not to be close to him to be able to shake his hand.”

Whenever he gave alms to a beggar and was thanked, he would reply, “You must give thanks to God.”

In similar circumstances to these, he forcefully and valiantly spoke out against a conversation in which some people were upholding the dispossession of the Pope.

These facts have a special value because it was not a trait of his character to be a propagandist, in part perhaps due to his natural temperament, and in part a result of the method followed in his philosophical investigations, which somewhat distanced him from dealings with society. However, he was a propagandist at heart, and that heart went out especially to those who dedicated themselves to religious dissemination. He was thinking of devoting himself in later life to teaching in popular schools.

He was as frugal in practice as in speculation, in word as in thought; and just as he preached the doctrine of limitation and taught that understanding must not overstep its limits (*non plus sapere quam oportet sapere*), he particularly loved simple expression and cordially hated verbosity. There can be few who have attacked more severely than he this vice that is now so predominant. Among his students he had a predilection for those who answered most simply, and more than once I heard him say in the classroom that a brief affirmation or negation was worth more than a speech.

He believed, above all, in the effectiveness for others of the firmness of our conviction, and he never forgot what I said to him one day while walking by Sarrià station in a conversation on the religious preaching that our country was a victim to. I said, not meaning it to have any particular effect on him, that I was thinking of not studying any more of what I had studied until then, in order to rid myself of the sophisms of the impious, and was going to begin to read more reflectively the Acts of the Martyrs. He repeated this to me many times afterwards.

Fragment of *La tradició catalana*⁴

Book Two. Rational value of Catalan regionalism. Preliminary dissertation, II:

“[...]

Philosophy, in Catalonia as in Rome, has lacked originality. The spirit of our people has no love for that kind of mental gymnastics that has no other goal than a daring show of strength for others to admire; if we set aside the grandiose exception of Lull and the Lullians, the others who have cultivated this branch

of human wisdom have followed the noble current of the *Perennis Philosophia* that springs from the plentiful founts of immortal Greece. When Scholasticism ended in narrow and ridiculous conventionalism, our great thinker Lluís Vives, confessing the grandeur and utility of Aristotle as the hero of paganism, believed that to gather forces philosophy had to plant its feet on the ground, so that its useful wisdom would feed strongly from human observation, ridding itself of the excesses of the revolutionary Renaissance.

“And on reaching our times, with all philosophical tradition lost or scorned by an unhealthy fashion, almost all Spanish minds followed the fantastical and corrosive Germanic philosophy, but our masters taught us a philosophy of common sense – a stream, the unforgettable Llorens said, that flowed into the general current of the traditional philosophy of the School, but so clearly dressed in Catalan garb that it is a well-known fact that this philosopher has been one of the men of our Renaissance who have had the most effective Catalanising influence⁵.

5 When this book was being prepared for publication, I read the entrance speech into the Royal Academy of Moral and Political Sciences of Madrid made by Mr. Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, entitled *On the Origins of Criticism and Scepticism, and Especially of the Spanish Precursors of Kant*. In a note, the admirable Cantabrian writer speaks about the man who was my master and made me a close confidant from my early youth until the day of his much lamented death, the head of the metaphysics department of the University of Barcelona, Mr. Xavier Llorens i Barba. Menéndez y Pelayo says that some of the professor’s followers, with more zeal than discretion, have attempted to confer on him the posthumous honour of having bowed to *Neo-Scholasticism* towards the end of his life, something that he denies. One thing I can assure him of is that more than once Llorens told me that all his work was addressed to marrying his doctrine with that of the School. I freely accept that Llorens’ preferred, constant but not exclusive method was internal observation, and I agree with the illustrious academic that it was impossible for a man who had lived all his life enclosed in the inner chambers of his soul, as if in a classroom of spiritual anatomy, to change his way of thinking. But there is no doubt that although Llorens considered this system of inquisition of the truth to have certain results for attaining the fundamental truths of the spirituality of the soul, the existence of God and the material world when used by a man of good intentions, he nevertheless recognised that it was not sufficient for discussion, and he never made it the only *organum* for catching the truth. That is to say, he gave capital importance to the first principles of logic and metaphysics, and to what he called contingent primary truths, as analysed by Reid, which refer to the identity of the *I*, the existence of the external world, and so on, and often appealed to the scholastic principle *prima principia negantes fustibus sunt arguendi*. Because observation did not exclude from his teaching method scholastic formalism, which is insuperable; this is why the Scholastic forms abound in the *Notes* which still exist and of which I possess a copy with comments written in his own hand, and while it is true that the consciousness was his workroom, in order to define and characterise it he made use of the Scholastic formula *non sentimus nisi sentiamus nos sentire*. He loved and advised the study of Aristotle’s commentators; and when one of his students, the late priest Pere Garriga i Marill, asked him to lend him the works of Plato to study, he declined to do so, saying that he would lend him those of Aristotle, which were more suitable for him. Using a canonical term, it can be said that Llorens, if not *de corpore*, was however *de anima Scholae*. He admitted the truth by virtue of its evidence and dreaded the thought of being regarded as a fideist; this was how he characterised the logical and metaphysical principles, saying that it was impossible to think the contrary

[...]"

to them, even if one wanted to; and as for the first truth, that is, the *Ens realissimum*, he did not admit it as a revelation or a postulate of practical consciousness, but, as he says literally in his *Notes*, "as the supreme law of human knowledge. This law makes it impossible for us to conceive a plurality of causes for any length of time, and we find ourselves forced to rise to the conception of a single cause." He completed his doctrine on this point with the teleological principle, or that of final causes, which he formulated as follows: "The order and finality of the effects presuppose intelligence and intention of the cause." In addition, he insinuated the proof of rational necessity, of the unconditioned and absolute: that is to say, he used the same arguments that have been used by the staunchest Scholastics from St. Thomas onwards, although with that philosophical grace typical of Llorens, which made man enter inside himself, each listener solving the difficulty with the light of his own consciousness, which constituted our philosopher's most eminent merit. It is true that he established that *the absolute lies outside of the domain of incomprehensible reality and that on this matter belief must complete knowledge*; but even in this he agreed with the Scholastics, who say that of God we have knowledge but not understanding, that is to say, that man knows the *an sit*, but he knows the *quid sit* only imperfectly, by *viam remotionis*, in St. Thomas' words, the natural philosophy being, according to the holy Doctor, *praeambulum ad articulos*. He gave the summary solution of the problem of knowledge in this maxim: *nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu, nisi intellectus ipse*, which demonstrates that he did not differ substantially from the Scholastics in such an important matter. I must add, however, that he did differ from them on the point of explaining how we gain knowledge of the outside or material world, since he did not admit the theory or hypothesis of the School for overcoming the difficulty of communication or union of the understanding with the thing, that is, the theory of intelligible species, instead always defending Reid's principle of immediate knowledge, which I clearly recall him saying had antecedents in one of the Scholastics, although I cannot now determine to whom he referred; even in this matter the difference between our philosopher and the Scholastics is minuscule, coming down to the fact that Llorens accepted the mystery of the knowledge of the world *as a mystery* and was satisfied with the innate certainty that man derives from the testimony of the senses, a certainty that is also accepted by the philosophers of the School, but seeking to clarify the mystery by means of the theory of intelligible species. Llorens felt a great love for his doctrine on this point, which he developed with philosophical magnificence, and it was truly the archetypical doctrine of his teaching, giving him the opportunity to carry out exquisite analyses of the facts of knowledge, writing the following lines in his *Notes*: "We give the name of natural realism to the doctrine that unreservedly accepts the facts of consciousness that assure us of the reality of the outside world and its distinction from the internal realm" – which has perhaps prompted the illustrious professor of the Central University to write that Llorens' doctrine was "natural realism, the distinction between subject and object, the affirmation of the contingent and conditioned, and the revelation of the absolute and unconditioned, not in the sphere of knowledge but in that of belief, and all enveloped in the primitive act of the complete consciousness. Whether or not he was right in this is not a matter for debate here, but this and nothing else is what he thought, and this is what Luis Vives had also thought." These words have to be understood as *cum distinctione*, because they demonstrate that Llorens' thought was clearly removed from fideism, as we heard him state explicitly both inside and outside the classroom, and he never wanted to be a heretic of the *Perennis Philosophia*, so admirably condensed by the great St. Thomas, but mentally communicated with it. And indeed, when on entering the ecclesiastical state I took up Aquinas' *Summa*, the grandeur and splendour of this scientific monument struck me to the very depths of my mental faculties, and when I expressed our impressions to him he applauded them; and when one day I showed him article 3, question 22, part 1, in which the holy Doctor explains how the Creator wanted "the dignity of causality to be imparted even to creatures," he told me that it had delighted him more than an ode by Horace, and he asked me whenever I found in the *Summa* an article of

Xavier Llorens i Barba. Intimate recollections of a philosophy⁶

At the insistent urging of my dear friend Ramon d'Abadal to write something about Llorens for the magazine of the *Estudis Universitaris Catalans*, of which he is the editor, I have only yielded to the influence of the love for my former master and friend, since many years have passed since I closed my investigation of technical philosophy and moved into the region of a more sublime philosophy; however, I will gather together a number of recollections that have remained deeply engraved in my mind and stored away for many years in the dusty archive of memory, so that the intellectual youth of Catalonia, born so many years later than the illustrious thinker, may have an idea of that doctrine that has undoubtedly exercised a profound influence on the literary generation that is gradually disappearing, and the principles of which are the starting point of the intellectual activity of the majority of those who in our country represent the fertility and justice of culture.

But my philosophical miniature of Llorens must necessarily be defective, since I am writing in between the naturally intense concerns of episcopal responsibility, and with real and perhaps even imprudent haste when dealing with such delicate and transcendental matters, since I am about to depart on an apostolic expedition and have little spare time for writing; but my love for my master and for our intellectual youth illuminates my thought and stimulates my memory, and it will bring those intimate recollections of Llorens' teaching into clear consciousness to describe them briefly in this text.



This Catalan philosopher, who still occupies a prominent place in the soul of all those who had the fortune of having him as master, was a kind of Socrates. His mission was to make men, not books; to make thinkers, more than writers;

special interest for him to show it to him. Perhaps the reader may find this *Note* too personal, but there is no alternative when speaking of, as Menéndez so elegantly says, “a powerful educator of intelligences whose influence, like that of Socrates, was not archived in books but in human spirits, and these explanations are necessary to prevent Menéndez’s words from being interpreted in a way that is contrary to the truth. In addition, I am happy to pay this small tribute to the memory of the man who was my master, mentor and *quasi-parens* in the intellectual order; and moreover, Llorens possessed a Catalanesque spirit so pure, classical and powerful that his mere name cheers the hearts of all lovers of Catalanism who had the good fortune to know him, and so this recollection of him is by no means out of place in this book.

6 First published in the magazine *Estudis Universitaris Catalans*, March–April 1907.

discreet and observant minds, more than the minds of those who believe they have to renew everything in existence, because his attention and investigation were addressed especially to studying the laws of reality, both in thought and in existence. For this reason he was an enemy of constructions *a priori*, of the invention of systems, not only in the sphere of philosophy but also, and even more so, in the practical and social order. In the very first lesson of the course, he told his students with severe eloquence that those who intended to shine, those who wanted to obtain admiration and praise at little cost, could withdraw there and then, for there they would not learn the pomp of discourse, since true philosophy preferred a concise *yes* or *no* to a fervent peroration. "If those are your ambitions," he said, "go in for literature and history, where you will be able to realise them more easily." No doubt following this criterion, one day when the vice-chancellor of the University visited his classroom, the learned professor asked a question to a student who suffered from a stammer.

Llorens was primarily a psychologist, a man of internal observation, who lived perennially in the cell of his own consciousness, who read with admirable ease human manifestations within the horizon of the intimate consciousness, as in a mysterious book full of enlightening intimations; and he used to enjoy repeating that saying that the two most magnificent spectacles that man can contemplate are the starry dome of the sky and his own moral conscience: there is nothing more wondrous within the creation that is accessible to us in our present state. For this reason, his philosophy came down to a wide-reaching psychology, and he wanted this to be the principal, but not the sole, basis of the transcendental, that is to say, of metaphysics.

This explains why his doctrine was so evocative and always had an aesthetic element, even in the most abstract questions; it may have had its shortcomings regarding the needs of discussion or controversy, but it was eminently suitable for the personal edification of the student, to introduce the young person into the realm of love for wisdom or truth, thus corresponding to the fundamental, traditional and eternal goal of philosophy.

For this reason, responding to the objection made to him concerning the deficiencies of his doctrine, he used to say that his intention was for his doctrine to be like a stream contributing to the majestic river of the *Philosophia perennis*, since this, the mother of all the sciences, destined to fecundate the intelligence of all the regions of the Earth, had to feed from different tributaries, leaving on its banks the impurities, depositing in the depths of its bed the turgidity of false and vain ideas, and continuing its course solely with the flow of pure water of the truth.

And it is clear that psychological observation enriches the *Philosophia perennis*. He did not claim that psychological observation was a new develop-

ment in the history of philosophy; on the contrary, he asserted, like everyone, that the source and principle of philosophy has always been observation; he proclaimed Aristotle the prince of observers, recommended the study of his works, made us read his great Scholastic commentators, and said, in the final years of his teaching career, that all his work was addressed to marrying his own philosophy with the Scholastic, and he sowed with the insuperable formulas of the latter, which contain the great truths of philosophy, the brief remarks he dictated to his students and that he called, very aptly and in accordance with his system for educating the mind, themes for meditation.

When, while still very young, I dedicated myself to the study of the texts of St. Thomas, Llorens asked me, if I were to find an article that could be of interest to him, to show it to him; and indeed, one day I showed him the simple and sublime manner in which the Angelic Doctor explains the connection between the first cause and the rational agent, and reading it caused him such intense pleasure that he told me it had delighted him more than reading an ode by Horace.



Now, at an advanced age and approaching the sunset of life, I recognise the gift that Providence gave me by bringing me into close contact, into an almost continual communication of minds, virtually from my childhood until the hour of his death, with that truly superior man who navigated, with the precision and skill of a expert pilot, the vast sea of my own spiritual world. That “Rise up!” of the Gospel was the constant rhythm of his investigation, which produced a religious effect in his follower.

Since I have been in Vic, I have read in the *Revue Thomiste* an interesting study by an American Dominican friar, whose name I do not now have time to search for, on philosophy in the USA, from which it is concluded that practically all those who cultivated philosophy from the beginning in that so powerful nation were, like Llorens, disciples of internal observation, and the author attributes to this the religious character that has predominated to date in the United States in the majority of the writers who, directly or indirectly, have dealt with the great transcendental problems that concern mankind.

And the truth is that psychological events, more than the phenomena of nature, possess the virtue of elevating the observer to the most sublime realms of intelligence, and this is why Llorens easily passed from philosopher to mystic in his explanations, like St. Augustine and St. Thomas, and like our illustrious St. Theresa of Jesus. To the dreamy eyes of his students, of young people naturally absorbed in the external life, he revealed the vast panorama of the life of the

rational mind and soul with all the richness of its elements, with the variety and contrasts of its manifestations: an intimate, personal life that man leads inside himself and is not aware of, the complete picture of the sensations, feelings, thoughts, memories and volitions, of the first principles, the source and origin of the rational life; and as a result, the young person given to speculation found himself in a case similar to that of St. Augustine, which the great bishop of Hippo expressed by saying that he was searching for God without and found him within.



One of the bases of his studies was the Aristotelian principle enlarged upon by Leibniz: *Nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu, nisi intellectus ipse*. And, as a medium of communication between the mind and the outside world, as an instrument of stimulation for perfecting the soul, which is *tamquam tabula rasa in qua nihil est depictum*, he studied the senses in their affective and cognisable elements, primitive and derived knowledge, and then passed to the imagination, to the faculty of understanding and the memory, with an immensely rich variety of spontaneous occurrences of these faculties, and he made us read Themistus, a classical commentator of Aristotle, a pre-eminent investigator of the process of memory and of its interesting workings that can and do give rise to deceits, taking as a composition created by our imagination what is no more than a subconscious memory (*simulacrum in se*), that is, a recollection from time past, an apparition in our imagination of something that entered our mind through the senses but that we believe the imagination has invented – just as on other occasions we spontaneously create an imaginary composition and have the sensation that it is a reminiscence, or an apparition in our consciousness, of a recollection that was kept in the darkness of our potential memory (*simulacrum in alio*). And Llorens, who possessed a great treasure trove of his own psychological observation, told us that these workings of the imagination and the memory were frequent, especially in the musical imagination. To test our faculty of understanding, he encouraged us to analyse our dreams, composed of real elements, which he corroborated with the doctrine on this matter expounded by Aristotle, who with observation demonstrated the origin of dreams, of sensations, of impressions, of prior recollections.

And when he explained the associations of memory, he quoted the interesting passage from St. Augustine's *Confessions* in which the great Doctor expounds with such truth and simplicity the evocation he made of recollections and ideas, the way he stirred up the different series of ideas, concepts and images, how sometimes the ones he was not searching for appeared to his clear consciousness and he made them return to their place because he did not need

them, and kept calling on those he was searching for until they appeared, stimulated and attracted by other similar ones he already had in his consciousness.

And in the affective and intellectual orders, he continued advancing in the study of man, studying the process proper to our nature, which ascends from the material and tangible to the intellectual sphere by extremely fine degrees and with admirable harmony. And in this way he studied the development of feelings and the formation of concepts.



The study of feelings was one of our master's favourite pursuits. This matter *mixti fori*, part sensorial and part intellectual, this fascinating boundary between the spirit and the flesh, which is the sphere of Art and the most interesting human relationships, was treated by him with special love and particular philosophical eloquence. And to explain the generation of feelings he turned to Plato and Aristotle, although he preferred the latter's explanation when analysing man and all his passions, stating that they derive from the concupiscible and irascible appetites, although strictly speaking the concupiscible is the sole principle; an explanation of admirable reality adopted by Scholasticism and brought to evidence by its prince, our master St. Thomas Aquinas. Llorens, as an artist of philosophy, classified, characterised and explained the distinct quality of the feelings and their bond with desire, and how they swell and rise up until they reach paroxysm and passion. And, even though he distinguished between the affective and volitive faculties, he studied the former as a precedent and stimulant of the latter, and also regarded them as organs, or members, or instruments, according to St. Thomas' beautiful and precise explanation of the will, since the concupiscible and irascible, under the orders of the rational appetite, are what excite the activity of human life.

And speaking of free will, or the '*franc voler*' using the typically splendid expression of the lay brother Ramon Llull, it was very useful to him for championing his favourite method of investigation, psychological observation, that is, his own consciousness; since, as *a priori* demonstration is problematical and many philosophers of merit have been unable to discern it clearly, human freedom, free will, on the other hand, analysed in the crucible of consciousness itself, our internal life being subject to immediate observation, is a level road, no-one can doubt the freedom of their resolutions, since our soul, on taking a resolution, could just as well take the contrary; and the common sense of mankind and all the legal systems, spontaneously and not due to the effect of philosophical or scientific demonstrations, have operated under the influence of the indestructible conviction, held by all the individuals of our race, of the freedom of their actions and determinations. Because the state of certainty, he

used to say, that direct and immediate observation of our own consciousness produces in our soul, is one of complete satisfaction and full affirmation, and therefore of an indestructible conviction.



But, like the true philosopher he was, he gave priority to psychological doctrine in the study of human thought and the critique of its value.

The formation of concepts, the way our mind processes the materials supplied to it by the senses and classifies them into certain categories, the soul storing the typical example applicable to all – Llorens explained all this with crystalline clarity, and it seemed that he made us touch with our hands these intimate operations of our mental faculties.

And the analysis of judgments, the connection between them and the formation of reasoning, induction and deduction and our intellectual law which governs the internal laboratory of human thought, led him to explain noetics and dianoetics, as he said, that is, the faculty of the first principles, the source of human intellectuality, principles common to all men, outside of which understanding is impossible, for which reason Llorens, on this point, recalled and praised, as a manifestation of a great truth, that Scholastic maxim that says *Prima principia negantes fustibus sunt arguendi*: which is to say that those who do not understand each other with reasons must do so with sticks and stones, because it is impossible to deny those principles, since they are self-evident, and the mind, even if it wants to, cannot think the opposite to them, and without the light that they reflect, human rationality disappears; because these undeniable and evident first principles serve as the basis for human discourse, and reasoning is a derivation from them, having its explicit and adequate form in syllogism – a knowledge that is therefore not immediate but requires a medium or process (dianoetic faculty), and whose conclusions therefore do not have the solid guarantee of the truths contained in the intuitive first principles, the source of rationality, the negation of which entails the annihilation of human intelligence.

Accordingly, he argued with great force, on the basis of experience and reason, against the philosophers who negated the principle of contradiction and affirmed the identity of opposites; in particular he battled against Krausism, which at that time was the latest fashion among the philosophers of the Court, and which never succeeded in penetrating into Catalonia, perhaps in part due to the practical, common-sense character that generally predominates here, due to the lack of inclination towards mental constructions, and due to the innate propensity to search for the realities of life; but without doubt also largely due to the light of evidence that Llorens irradiated.

At first sight it may have seemed that a doctrine that gave so much importance to psychology, and that used internal observation as one of its principal instruments of investigation, would lack strength in affirming objective truth; but in our master's explanations, and without abandoning his procedure of psychological observation, external realities proved to be evident by virtue of the same light of observation of the fact of knowledge. According to his customary formula, the analysis of the fact of knowledge, which consisted in a relationship between the mind and the known thing, resulted in a synthesis and an antithesis; the mind and the known thing were the two terms of the relationship that united in the intellectual order, a synthesis, but in existence they were necessarily opposed and constituted an antithesis, therefore producing a true opposition, of which our consciousness itself gives eloquent testimony: *I and Not-I*. And he found this truth contained in the ancient formula that defines subjective truth: *Adequatio intellectus et rei secundum quam intellectus dicit esse quod est et non esse quod non est*.

Some people thought they found in our philosopher's doctrine a resonance of Kant's subjectivism, but there is no doubt that this suspicion originated from the fact that they did not embrace all of Llorens' doctrine and did not understand the direction of his mind, which arrived at the same conclusions as Scholasticism, although, without disdaining them, he used with great devotion the medium of observation that admirably suited his intellectual temperament, and for which he had an exquisite aptitude; however, he never failed to make use of dialectic discourse if it served his purpose, as is demonstrated by the great importance he gave to the study of the first principles of logic.

Similarly, as Llorens preached so constantly the limitation of human faculties, some people believed that his intellectual system lacked the force to bring mankind knowledge of the superior and sublime truths; but he distinguished very cogently between the regions of the cognisable and the demonstrable, and strongly rebutted those who refused to admit the existence of what cannot be demonstrated, not due to the workings of the Supreme Being but due to the deficiencies of our faculties, because there are things that can be proved but not demonstrated; and here he joined reason with faith within a single intellectual process with much more precision than Balfour and Brunetière himself have done in the present day; because Llorens shunned fideism and avoided falling into it, and clearly distinguished our inclinations towards belief from the reasonable authority which is the bedrock of faith. Faith for him, in the philosophical order, was not a necessary instinct resulting from the natural constitution of our being, but a reasonable act of the mind and the will that is perfectly aligned with our rational nature. And yet, like all great thinkers, he found a perfect adaptation between the demands of the human spirit, between all of our noble powers and directions and supernatural faith, and, like St. Augustine, he recognised and demonstrated that the man created by God finds no rest except in God.



It is clear that Llorens' intellectual system, if considered as a path for reaching the first philosophy, the great truths that most powerfully concern the human soul, is a path for few minds. Of Maine de Biran, with whom he had certain sympathies and a similarity of procedures, it has recently been said, and very truly, that to arrive at the possession of the truth he needed a very long life and great refinement of understanding, and therefore there can be no doubt that the method of observation, although extremely useful, needs to be completed by rational philosophy, which is an instrument better suited to human relationships, a currency that better facilitates the commerce of men in the order of intellectual life.

No doubt because the eminent philosopher was aware of this deficiency, he once told me in private that his doctrine served those men who had to direct others, politicians and mystics, since it provided a very complete knowledge of man, and he quoted to me some of the great contemporary English politicians who, being disciples of the same philosophical school as himself, had for many years governed the British people and directed its vast empire with great ability. And in regard to the basis which the doctrine of psychological observation and intimate reflection provide for the spiritual government of men, I believe this is demonstrated by the status enjoyed by Newman, the illustrious convert, anointed as cardinal by Leo XIII, who was and is still, even after his death, the spiritual oracle of all the Anglo-Saxon peoples, and whose intellectual procedure I believe coincides notably with that of the master Llorens: observation, comparison and reflection.

And there is no doubt that Llorens, while always a practising Catholic believer, owed to the practice of observation and to the fulfilment of the Socratic precept *nosce te ipsum*, which was the fundamental canon of his philosophical life, an elevation of spirit, a dignity of customs, a nobility of feelings, a respect and love for God, which having illuminated his life dignified even more manifestly his death. He prepared himself for the final journey with great serenity of spirit; he received the Sacraments with devout fortitude, he lovingly repeated the verses of the psalms suggested to him, as he was very fond of them and more than once, when in good health, had recited them alternatively with me; and in those hours that precede the solemnity of death, something occurred that strongly characterised him and shows that, in Llorens, man and philosopher were a single piece. There was present a humble priest for whom Llorens felt great appreciation and who was his habitual confessor. As he was comforting himself spiritually with pious maxims expressed in philosophical formulae, the priest told him to try to use simpler expressions, and the philosopher, with one

of his last breaths, answered him: "Do you think there is no more?" He could not cease to be a philosopher to the very last.

A philosophical life had to end with a philosophical death, however much a Christian he might be. St. Justin wore the distinctive gown of the philosophers of imperial Rome until the moment he was martyred. Llorens, in the semi-delirium that tends to foreshadow death, said: "So far we have laid down the premisses: now we will see the consequence." And I, filled with bitterness and fear, since I had only been ordained a few months earlier, answered him: "—which has to be the possession of Truth and eternal Beauty."



This article is addressed to the intellectual youth of Catalonia. Llorens' exemplarity as a thinker has an undying effect. Thirty-five years have now passed since his death; and, as the world is made up of a continual variety, things have changed a lot since then; but observation and reflection will always be indispensable conditions of fecundity and strength, in the orders of both thought and action. The dizzying activity of our century, the multitude of stimulants of our society, the struggles between ideas and classes, the opposition of interests, call for great serenity of spirit and firmly-grounded minds.

There is no doubt that our time enjoys a highly varied state of enlightenment and that work is being done in all branches of knowledge, and it can even be said that a scientific dogma of the superexcellence of positive studies has been created; and yet it is a fact that the concept of Utopia has rarely been cultivated as extensively as it is now. In the social, political, literary and artistic orders, there have been few times in history when reality has been further overstepped and common sense more offended, and it is often true that he who makes the most provocative utterances receives the greatest applause. And this is the very reason why I call on our youth to reflect.

There is a lot of truth in the maxim that there is no piece of nonsense that has not been spoken by a philosopher; but equally, there is no doubt that the sincere study of philosophy is a necessary basis for general enlightenment, public culture, to be solid and truly human, and for civilisation as a whole to have that unity that the nature of our race clamours for. The *Philosophia perennis*, standing alongside Religion, is a unifying link between the intellectual world and the immensely rich and varied order of ideas. A cosmopolitan civilisation needs strong sinews and nerves to bind together all the members and organs to form a complete body. The great Pope Leo XIII, in restoring the study of Thomist philosophy, declared that he was doing it for the good of the human race, not simply as an introduction to Theology; because Philosophy is what serves

to certify truth or falsehood in all branches of knowledge, and brings together the sciences, arts, disciplines and even systems of government of peoples in the love for truth. It is, so to speak, the human law that comes closest to divine law, and consequently is of most value for the ordering, coordination and harmony of human affairs, and is therefore a great force for preventing social anarchy.

For all these reasons, it is to be hoped that that the intellectual youth of Catalonia will give due honour and importance to the study of Philosophy, in order to obtain a solid and fertile culture for our beloved land: and I, having been invited to express a few words in the *Estudis Universitaris Catalans*, have concluded, in agreement with Abadal, that the best way of stimulating the speculative activity of our young countrymen was to evoke before them the prodigious but always esteemed and harmonious shadow of the pre-eminent Catalan philosopher of the 19th century, which, despite having had to rely solely on my memory, I believe I have done with accuracy, albeit insufficiently and without doing adequate justice to the importance of the subject.