

Bertrand Russell and Catalan Literature: In Praise of Idleness and Other Essays *and* Dictionary for the Idle¹

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Abstract. Joan Fuster (Sueca, 1922–1992) was one of the most important essayists of Catalan literature. *Diccionari per a ociosos* (*Dictionary for the Idle*), published in 1964, has been widely seen as one of his masterpieces, not only because of the wide range of topics he deals with, but also because of his witty and contemporary insight. Despite this critical acclaim, many aspects of this book still deserve further research. In this article we try to study more deeply the sources of *Dictionary for the Idle*, focusing on Bertrand Russell's *In Praise of Idleness and Other Essays* (1935). Beyond the similar titles, we think that Joan Fuster could have been inspired by Russell's literary style and intellectual attitude, not only because of stylistic and thematic similarities, but also because of the attested references (among which we will comment on which of Russell's books are kept in Fuster's personal library). A direct rewriting between *In Praise of Idleness...* and *Diccionari per a ociosos* must be dismissed due to lack of written proof, as well as direct allusions, which do not appear whatsoever. However, our aim is to trace the link between these two authors and the influence that the former had on the latter, in the context of his general influence on both Spanish and Catalan contemporary essay.

Keywords: essay; Joan Fuster; Bertrand Russell; comparative literature; rewriting; hypertextuality

1. The hypothesis of a direct relationship

Joan Fuster's *Diccionari per a ociosos* (*Dictionary for the Idle*) appeared in 1964, published by the small publishing house A.C., at which Fuster worked as literary director. About thirty years earlier, Bertrand Russell had published *In Praise of Idleness...* (1935), an essay whose title invites us to establish a connection

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between both books. Here is the premise of this article: can we think that Russell's book directly influenced Fuster's, to the point that the title of the latter might be an allusion to the former, to put it in terms of Gérard Genette (1982: 8)?

As Francesco Ardolino (2000: 378) wisely pointed out about Joan Maragall and Giacomo Leopardi, "sarebbe senz'altro affascinante l'idea d'una rielaborazione personalizzata di alcune annotazioni dello *Zibaldone*", but "la conoscenza diretta dell'opera da parte de Maragall non è verificabile".² Keeping this caution in mind, Joan Fuster undoubtedly knew part of Bertrand Russell's oeuvre, which he praised in a famous aphorism: "Creieu-me, que és una recomanació feta de tot cor. Llegiu Bertrand Russell. No és un filòsof, és un desinfectant".³ This aphorism is often quoted in *Converses filosòfiques* ('Philosophical conversations') a book that gathered several discussions on philosophy between Joan Fuster and the siblings and philosophers Júlia and Josep Lluís Blasco Estellés. Júlia Blasco (2002) was responsible for the posthumous publication, which included not only transcription of the interviews, but also an interesting study in which she explained how Fuster disliked metaphysics and preferred authors like Bertrand Russell – or to be more precise like some of Russell's books. Fuster pointed this out in one of the conversations (Blasco 2002: 104):

Aleshores, la importància del senyor Russell. Jo dic que els llibres, tècnicament filosòfics o tècnicament lògics, o de teoria del coneixement, anem a deixar-los ara a una banda. [...] Quan escriu per a profans, el que diu el senyor Russell és efectivament un detergent, un desinfectant, és una lluita contra la metafísica.⁴

Nevertheless, in this book we cannot find any direct evidence to confirm the link between *In Praise of Idleness...* and *Dictionary for the Idle*. Apart from this, in 1975 Fuster published two articles (very similar to each other), in which he expressed his surprise at the suicide of Russell's daughter, a tragic gesture that opposed the vitalism of her father's works (both were published in Spanish in the cultural magazine *Tele/Expres*; the first was titled "Un discurso póstumo

² "The idea of a personalised reworking of some of *Zibaldone*'s notes would certainly be fascinating" but "Maragall's direct knowledge of the work is not verifiable" (the translation is ours).

³ "Believe me, it is a recommendation made wholeheartedly. Read Bertrand Russell. He's not a philosopher, he's a disinfectant" (the translation is ours).

⁴ "Then, the importance of Mr Russell. Now, let's put aside those books that are technically philosophical or technically logical, or on the theory of knowledge.... When he writes for the layman, what Mr Russell says is indeed a detergent, a disinfectant, it is a fight against metaphysics" (the translation is ours).

para Lord Russell” and the second – a continuation of the former – “La imagen final de Russell”). These articles, in our opinion, are minor pieces, and beyond proving his interest in Bertrand Russell, we consider that they do not provide significant data for our study. What is remarkable, however, is the fact that these are the only references to Russell that we have found in the online archive of the Joan Fuster Centre, in which a good part of his journalistic work is digitised.⁵ Considering the conclusions we reach at the end of this study, it is at least shocking that we could not find more similar references in this archive.

Regarding the direct relationship between *Diccionari per a ociosos* and *In Praise of Idleness...*, we have not found any document that proves that Joan Fuster did indeed read Russell’s book, either in the original English version, or in the Spanish translation by Juan Novella Domingo,⁶ published by Aguilar in 1953, one of the most important publishing houses of that period, based in Madrid. This does not prove, either, that Fuster ignored that book; in fact, as we will see throughout the article, it is very likely that he knew it, since there are numerous coincidences, beyond the use of *idleness/ociosos* in the title. Although he might have read or even have the book, we cannot prove it either. According to the data available in Joan Fuster’s archive in Sueca (his birthplace), there are 22 books by Bertrand Russell in his personal library.⁷ Most of them were published after *Diccionari per a ociosos*, which forces us to dismiss them from our analysis. The only ones published before 1964 are *Vieja y nueva moral sexual* (Madrid, Editorial España, 1930), *La sabiduría de Occidente* (Madrid, Aguilar, 1962) and *El conflicto entre la técnica i la natura humana* (Barcelona, Rafael Dalmau, 1963). It should be noted that no reading notes are kept from these books, although the first contains Fuster’s underlinings. In short – let’s paraphrase Francesco Ardolino –, the idea that Fuster somehow rewrote some fragments of *In Praise of Idleness...* would be fascinating, but the absence of conclusive evidence compels us to be cautious in the analysis. One must remember that, to date, Joan Fuster’s personal library has not been completely catalogued; consequently, it could be the case that the original English book or the Spanish translation were in this percentage not yet classified, although it seems unlikely.

⁵ <https://espaijoanfuster.org/articles-de-premsa-digitalitzats/>.

⁶ Juan Novella Domingo (Valencia, 1913 – Madrid, 2002) belongs to one of the youngest generations that fought in the Spanish Civil War. His life passed between Valencia and Madrid, until, due to various vicissitudes, he settled in the Spanish capital to work in the publishing house of Manuel Aguilar (also a Valencian). In this company he translated many books from English, including six essays by Bertrand Russell. We do not have any data to suggest that Novella and Fuster knew each other, but it cannot be ruled out.

⁷ We want to thank Enric Alforja, the archivist, who kindly offered us this information.

Dismissing, for lack of evidence, a direct and causal relationship, there is also no kind of textual evidence that allows us to establish Russell's book as a partial *hypotext* of Fuster's (again, we are using Genette's terms). And yet, it is undeniable that there are a series of coincidences that are not random, but due to similar vital and cultural circumstances. To develop this idea, we will point out three aspects: 1) intellectual attitude and choice of essay as a literary genre; 2) method of composition; 3) themes and style.

Before going further, however, it is interesting to present the list (in order of publication) of all those books by Bertrand Russell (published in Catalan or Spanish after 1964) that are kept in the archive of the Joan Fuster Centre in Sueca. This small sample not only shows the particular attention that Joan Fuster devoted to Russell, but also attests to the editorial interest aroused by Russell's work in Spain from early on and throughout the 20th century. There was a special thrust in Catalan from the 1960s, when new publishing houses, such as Edicions 62, created important essay collections, which tried to contribute to the climate of opposition to Francisco Franco's regime and, thus, break the ideological schemes of the regime.

- *Iniciació a la filosofia*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1965.
- *Assaigs impopulars*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1965.
- *Assaigs escèptics*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1966.
- *Història social de la filosofia*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1967.
- *Noves esperances per a un món que canvia*, Barcelona, Selecta, 1968.
- *Misticisme i lògica*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1969.
- *La perspectiva científica*, Barcelona, Ariel, 1969.
- *La meva concepció del món*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1969 (the 1974 edition of this book is also kept in the archive; the former was published in a series called L'Escopí, while the latter appeared in El Cangur).
- *L'impacte de la ciència en la societat*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1970.
- *Bertrand Russell responde*, Buenos Aires, Granica, 1971.
- *La conquista de la felicidad*, Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1973.
- *Retratos de memoria y otros ensayos*, Madrid, Alianza, 1976.
- *La evolución de mi pensamiento científico*, Madrid, Alianza, 1976.
- *La América de Bertrand Russell: sus viajes y escritos trasatlánticos (1896-1945)*, Madrid, Taurus, 1976.
- *Debate sobre la existencia de Dios*, Valencia, Revista Teorema, 1978
- *El coneixement humà: el seu abast i els seus límits*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1985.
- *Lògica i coneixement: tres assaigs*, Barcelona, Laia, 1985.

2. Intellectual attitude and choice of essay

Both Bertrand Russell's and Joan Fuster's oeuvres are directly connected with the tradition of essay as a literary genre as was inaugurated by Michel de Montaigne. To provide a proper description of the genre, we consider that there are five basic characteristics (López-Pampló 2023b): it is written in prose; argumentation and persuasiveness predominate; the autobiographical pact is instituted (the author speaks on his or her own behalf and assumes responsibility for what is said); the paratexts (those that belong to the author as well as those that belong to the publisher) reinforce this interpretation; and, finally, the essay develops a social function of intellectual orientation.

These features are to be found both in *In Praise of Idleness...* and *Diccionari per a ociosos*, but analysing them would exceed the limits of this article. Therefore, we will focus now on the notion of social function. This is based on a kind of writing that codifies the possibility of this intellectual debate between writer and reader, regardless of whether or not this is likely to take place as a real encounter. Moreover, reflection has no specific purpose, at least in broad terms. The position of the essayist and his or her readers, if we can say so, is *intransitive*, far from that obsession denounced by Russell (1935: 24): "The modern man thinks that everything ought to be done for the sake of something else, and never for its own sake".

In addition, these two books have a brief preface in which the author, as usually happens in essay books, sets out the intention of the work and explains its origin. As for the literary genre, Joan Fuster (1982: 8) – in a typical *captatio benevolentiae* – belittles the book: "són 'assaigs', poca cosa".⁸ In this short prologue, he makes a few brushstrokes on a genre to which he dedicated many pages of reflection. Russell (1935: 5), on the other hand, does not offer any digression about the nature of the work. Instead, he identifies the literary genre of the book and its main theme in the very first line of the Preface: "This book contains essays on such aspects of social questions as tend to be ignored in the clash of politicians". The statement could not be more explicit. At this point, faced with Russell's forcefulness, the more elusive nature of Fuster's words makes us think about the conditions of publication: while Fuster had to deal with a dictatorship, Russell could speak more frankly, given that the book and the previous articles that are collected in it appeared in a democratic context with freedom of speech.

⁸ "What I include here are essays: nothing much, really" (Fuster 2006: 14).

3. The method of composition

As we go further in our general research about essay as a literary genre, we realise that, as a wide-scope hypothesis, essay books are usually the result of rewriting processes. It can be partial and limited, such as the selection of journal or magazine articles that acquire a new meaning when the author brings them together in a book, with new and specific paratexts, such as the title or the preface. As for *In Praise of Idleness...*, the title has a metonymic value in that the first chapter gives its name and summarises its main theses.

This procedure can involve a rewriting of the whole text that goes beyond the addition of new paratexts to turn the selection into a book. Even more, new texts can be added, which involves a deeper transformation. These can be brand new, but they are rather likely to come from other sources, usually private papers of the author. These *quarries* – let’s use this metaphor – function as an authorial hypotext from which material can be extracted that can become either articles or books. For instance, the chapter “Amor” (‘Love’) in *Diccionari per a ociosos*, must derive directly from the author’s diary. Shortly before the publication of the book, Joan Fuster published two articles about the same topic with very similar ideas, sentences, and paragraphs. Instead of thinking that the primary source of the book are these articles, we must consider that they also come from the same diary (López-Pampló 2023a). In short, *Diccionari per a ociosos* was set up with relative freedom, although it was not written *ex professo*. In the Preface, Joan Fuster (1982: 7) does not reveal the origin of the texts, although he makes explicit that it was heterogeneous and prior to the date of publication (the italics are ours, but Fuster’s inverted commas disappear in the English translation):

La meva pretensió no ha estat [...] de confeccionar un «diccionari». *Com en altres ocasions*, em limito a reunir en un volum una sèrie incoherent d’escrits, diversos en el tema i d’extensió desigual, catalogables dins el gènere elàstic i modest de l’«assaig». [...] Els textos ací recollits *daten d’èpoques molt disperses*, i només a força de molta violència haurien tolerat una classificació per l’afinitat dels assumptes que hi tracto. Per això, doncs [...], m’he decidit per una tercera solució, ben còmoda: la d’encapçalar cada nota amb una paraula clau, i disposar-les segons la gradació alfabètica.⁹

⁹ “It was not my intention ... to compile a dictionary. *As on other occasions*, I am merely gathering in one volume an incoherent series of writings, diverse in theme and unequal in length, which can be categorised within the modest yet elastic genre of the essay.... The texts grouped in this volume *date from many scattered periods* and only with some violence could they tolerate classification on the grounds of subject matter. It is for this reason, therefore ... I opted for a third, more comfortable solution: to title each entry with a key word and then arrange them all in alphabetical order” (Fuster 2006: 13).

What are these “other occasions”? On April 3, 1963, the date on which he signed the Preface, Joan Fuster was 40 years old. After a first stage as a poet, he had left poetry behind and had already published a few essay books, among which he points out, in the Prologue itself, *Figures de temps* / ‘*Figures of time*’ (Barcelona, Selecta, 1957), *Indagacions possibles* / ‘*Possible inquiries*’ (Palma, Moll, 1958) and *Judicis finals* / ‘*Final judgements*’ (Palma, Moll, 1960). The first two cases, as the author himself states, are public and partial versions of his diary, so he arranged the texts chronologically, “com a fulls de dietary, com de fet eren” (Fuster 1982: 7).¹⁰ In the third case, on the other hand, he collected “residus aforístics”¹¹ (which he would later expand on in another volume). Apart from these titles, what other essay books had published Fuster before *Diccionari per a ociosos*? If we use the distinction (López-Pampló 2023b) between *popular essay* (devoted to monographic issues) and *deliberative essay* (rather free, orientated towards the general opinions of the author), we can affirm that Fuster had published more popular essay books than deliberative. It is not surprising whatsoever, thus, that instead of mentioning those books, in the Preface to *Diccionari per a ociosos*, he refers to the three precedents that, with *Les originalitats* / ‘*On originality*’ (1956), constitute the backbone of his deliberative essay until 1964. In other words, he traces a kind of personal genealogy that excludes his first studies on language and literature, as well as his first essays on national issues, such as *Qüestió de noms* / ‘*A Question of Names*’, *Nosaltres, els valencians* / ‘*We, the Valencian*’ or, with the nuances imposed by the nature of a literary travel guide, *El País Valencià* / ‘*The Valencian Country*’ (all appeared in 1962, in Edicions d’Aportació Catalana, Edicions 62, and Destino, respectively). Nor does it seem by chance that Fuster draws an implicit distinction between the compositional mechanism of the three previous books he mentions and *Diccionari per a ociosos*. According to him, “ni l’un procediment [the chronological collection of diary entries] ni l’altre [gathering aphorisms] no m’eren ara permesos”.¹² Why? The logical inference is that the origin of the texts was different, something that might point to the journalistic articles published during the previous years, but above all to the diary as an essential source for *all* his writings (a diary, it should not be forgotten, that has been only partially published). We will not venture the exact reasons for the indefiniteness with which Fuster expresses himself, but it could be due to the fact that the diary notes underwent important

¹⁰ “as diary sheets, which in fact they were” (the Preface to the English version strikingly omits a paragraph of the original prologue, so the translation of this excerpt is ours).

¹¹ “aphoristic left-overs” (Fuster 2006: 13).

¹² “In this case, neither of the procedures was open to me” (Fuster 2006: 13).

transformations until they reached the book format, so that the result was *something else*, which did not require the attestation of the sources.

Bertrand Russell, in turn, presents the genesis of the book in similar terms, although he is much more precise. In fact, he gives the references in the preface, although he also adds footnotes to recall the date in which a few chapters were written. Although we do not intend to analyse a possible self-rewriting in the case of Russell, we think that he is so clear because, before gathering the essays in a single book, the intervention on the texts was minimal or non-existent. It goes without saying that, alongside the collected texts, Russell incorporated new ones. The preface does not make the novelties explicit, but the reader can easily deduce them: all those texts whose origin is not attested. The chapter that gives its name to the book, "In Praise of Idleness", appeared in *Harper's Magazine* in 1932. The same magazine published "The Modern Midas". The first essay opens the book, followed by another of very similar orientation (they could be considered a single argumentative sequence) entitled "'Useless' Knowledge", which, if we look at Russell's comments, must be one of the new texts, since its origin is not revealed. For the same reason, the third chapter, entitled "Architecture and Social Questions", is likely to be new. "The Modern Midas" is the fourth, followed by "The Ancestry of Fascism", a text that appeared in two magazines, one English (*The Political Quarterly*) and another American (*The Atlantic Monthly*). Russell points out that the title, however, was not the same, without revealing which option was chosen in each journal. "Scylla and Charybdis, or Communism and Fascism" was published in *The Modern Monthly* and "Modern Homogeneity" in *The Outlook (The New Outlook)*, at the time of the book's publication. Finally, "Education and Discipline" appeared in *The New Statesman and Nation*.

4. Themes and style

Of all the formal and content coincidences that we can point out, the clearest is the title, as we have previously posed. Nevertheless, while Fuster barely explains who those *idle* are, Russell devotes the two initial chapters of the book to this matter, which are central to the overall sense of the volume. In addition, the first part of the title of each book is noticeably different. Fuster acknowledges that the collection of diverse texts in the form of a dictionary is "un truc" that is "gens nou"; instead "més aviat compta amb alguns precedents il·lustres".¹³ Of all these precedents, the best known is Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1785),

¹³ "This trick is not, of course, new in any way; but rather boasts of some illustrious precedents" (Fuster 2006: 13).

which undoubtedly constitutes one of the models accessible to Joan Fuster when he was configuring the book we are analysing. The term *idle* is justified in the foreword with a consistency that could dissuade any further doubt about the choice:

[...] per matisar l'índole del «diccionari», i per reduir-ne tot presumpte ressò ambiciós, li arrodoneixo el nom amb una irònica indicació dels destinataris: «per a ociosos». Que el lector no s'ho prengui malament. Al capdavant, tampoc no serà cap mentida. Perquè ¿quan llegiria, sinó en una estona d'oci? [...] Espero que una cosa o altra li interessarà [to the reader]. Ja em dono per satisfet si no li frustro l'oci: si no l'hi frustro del tot.¹⁴

And yet, the coincidence with Russell is not just formal. Russell, as we have said, articulates in the first two chapters of the book one of its main theses: people work too many hours and do not devote enough attention, in the field of education, to “useless knowledge” – in short, that of a philosophical nature. From this perspective, the *idleness* that gives title to the volume is presented, with irony, as a kind of virtue, precisely opposed to the virtuous character of the work: “I think that there is far too much work done in the world, that immense harm is caused by the belief that work is virtuous, and that what needs to be preached”. Therefore, with an even greater dose of irony, he says: “I hope that, after reading the following pages, the leaders of the Y.M.C.A.¹⁵ will start a campaign to induce good young men to do nothing. If so, I shall not live in vain” (Russell 1935: 11–12). The leisure reader to whom Fuster appeals is someone who, in his or her own way, has the spare time that Russell claims. But at this point Russell's reflection acquires a great social dimension, given that he is committed to the reduction of the working day and proposes idleness as a way of distributing wealth and the workload, a debate that, after a century, continues to be extremely important, at least in many parts of Europe: “If the ordinary wage-earner worked four hours a day, there would be enough for everyone, and no unemployment – assuming a certain very moderate amount of sensible organization” (Russell 1935: 18).

¹⁴ “... to vary slightly the nature of the dictionary, and in order to reduce any supposed ambitious resonance I rounded off the name with an ironic indication of those for whom it is intended: the idle. The reader should not take this too badly for when all is said and done it isn't really a lie since when are we going to read, if not in a moment of idleness? ... I hope something or other will be of interest. I myself will be happy if I don't spoil your moment of leisure, or bother you in any significant way. (Fuster 2006: 13–14).

¹⁵ He refers to the Young Men's Christian Association, founded in London in 1844, which nowadays has a worldwide range.

There are other similarities that must be attributed to the awareness of essay as a literary genre, as we have described above. We refer, above all, to the predominance of argumentation and personal enunciation. It would also be necessary to underline the use of parenthetical remarks, which introduce nuances or explanations, often of an ironic nature. Finally, although it is more usual in Fuster, both authors often use inverted commas and emphatic italics, with an enormous semantic – and ironic – efficiency. We can observe this in this brief fragment of the entry “Home” (‘Man’), in which the repetition of the phrase “passió inútil” (a clear allusion to Jean Paul Sartre) changes its meaning thanks to the difference between the verbs ‘ser’ and ‘pensar’, marked in italics: “M’inclino a pensar que la vida deixa de *ser* ‘una passió inútil’, quan deixem de *pensar* que és ‘una passió inútil’” (Fuster 1982: 61).¹⁶ In the following example by Bertrand Russell (1935: 36), the initial inverted commas with which the word *useful* is framed have a metalinguistic value, while the italics that appear below serve to introduce an ironic nuance that unfolds in the subsequent argument:

... undoubtedly, “useful” knowledge is very *useful*. It has made the modern world. Without it, we should not have machines or motor-cars or railways or aeroplanes; it should be added that we should not have modern advertising or modern propaganda. Modern knowledge has brought about an immense improvement in average Health, and at the same time has discovered how to exterminate large cities by poison gas.

Another example would be Russell’s following statement, in which two almost identical words are pointed out, between which, however, there is a fundamental difference of meaning, which explains the degradation of thinking proper to totalitarianisms: “The revolt against *reason* began as a revolt against *reasoning*” (Russell 1935: 83).

Thematic coincidences also arise due to this essayistic dimension: the political point of view, explicitly declared by Russell at the beginning of his book, is nothing other than the concern for the so-called *res publica*, a concern completely shared by Joan Fuster. However, *Diccionari per a ociosos* has a much greater thematic scope. In *Praise of Idleness...*, except for a few chapters of more spiritual orientation, focuses on issues of a political and social nature, many of which had a tragic effect in the 1930s. Russell expresses his worries about the threat of communist and fascist totalitarianisms, which could lead to a new

¹⁶ “In any case I tend to imagine that life ceases being a useless passion when we cease believing it to be so” (Fuster 2006: 88). It must be pointed out that, again, italics are not used in the English translation, which, as far as we are concerned, causes an unjustifiable loss of sense.

world war (as happened). This reflection constitutes one of the main leitmotifs of the book, and Russell strives to find ways out of the apparent dead end of totalitarianism. Democratic socialism is, according to him, the best option to solve the underlying problems that lead to this scenario. In addition, education is an indispensable dimension of this project. As we have already seen, it must promote general reflection without obsessing over that “useful knowledge” that, already in the 1930s, dominated the university (in this sense, José Ortega y Gasset made a similar point in the essay *Misión de la Universidad* / “Mission of University”, published in 1930). Never naïve, Russell (1935: 37) concluded: “Utility and culture, when both are conceived broadly, are found to be less incompatible than they appear to the fanatical advocates of either”.

This relative thematic restriction gives Russell’s volume a unity of meaning that we do not find in *Diccionari per a ociosos*, no matter how much key entries such as “Intellectual” (‘Intellectual’) or “Llibertat” (‘Freedom’) deal with similar themes. The following excerpt, as a matter of fact, is very similar to Russell’s opinions:

[...] als ulls de l’humanista del XVI, com de l’escriptor occidental del XX, “barbàrie” és tot el que posa en perill el quadre de condicions dins el qual es produeix l’operació intel·lectual *tal com ells l’entenen que s’ha de produir*: en condicions, en un mot, de llibertat.¹⁷

Russell, instead, is clearer in his vindication of socialism, as he rejects any kind of totalitarianism. Fuster, of course, could not express himself in such straight terms in 1964. But the background of entries such as “Intellectual”, to which we have just referred, is the same: a rejection of any far-right or far-left position. During the 1960s, fascism seemed to have been defeated, but the counterpart of a runaway capitalism militarily opposed to the Soviet power was not raising hopes. Where Fuster had to speak between the lines, Russell was transparent, as in the chapter “The Ancestry of Fascism”. We cannot forget that these are texts written during the growth of totalitarianism in the 1930s, from Japanese imperialism to Soviet communism, passing through Italian fascism and Nazism. Of course, Fuster’s point of view, after the Allied victory in 1945 and the consolidation of the Cold War, had to be very different. And yet, some of the ideas expressed by Russell resonate, in some way, in Fuster’s approaches. Reason, according to Russell, has three dimensions: 1) “it relies upon persuasion rather

¹⁷ “For the sixteenth-century humanist, as for the twentieth-century writer of the western world, barbarism is whatever imperils the set of conditions within which intellectual processes occur *as they understand* them: in short, conditions of freedom” (Fuster 2006: 67).

than force" (1935: 86); 2) "it seeks to persuade by means of arguments which the man who uses them believes to be completely valid" (1935: 86–87); 3) in forming opinions, it uses observation and induction as much as possible and intuition as little as possible" (1935: 87). Like Fuster in "Intellectual", Russell dismisses a tragic choice between extremes:

It is said by many in the present day that Communism and Fascism are the only practical alternatives in politicians, and that whoever does not support the one in effect supports the other. I find myself in opposition to both, and I can no more accept either alternative than, if I had lived in the sixteenth century, I could have been either a Protestant or a Catholic (109).

Considering that "Intellectual" is a broad reflection on the figure of Erasmus, the appeal to the terrible religious conflict of the 16th century does not seem accidental, either because of a direct influence or because of a common interest in that period (the same background, let's not forget, as Montaigne). It is not the purpose of this article, but enquiring into the censorship reports and comparing them with the Spanish translation of *In Praise of Idleness...* (published in 1953) would indicate the extent to which Franco's authorities tolerated the explicit nature with which Russell defended socialism, even praising communism: "The purpose of the Communists is one with which, on the whole, I am in agreement; my disagreement is as to means rather than ends". Instead, regarding fascism, he affirmed: "I dislike the end as much as the means" (Russell 1935: 113).

In fact, the conclusion of the essay "In Praise of Idleness" combines a somehow naïve hope – at least seen from the present time – and a statement that is difficult to refute. Surely, Joan Fuster would agree, above all with the conviction that science and technology should make our lives easier:

Good nature is, of all moral qualities, the one that the world needs most, and good nature is the result of ease and security, not of a life of arduous struggle. Modern methods of production have given us the possibility of ease and security for all; we have chosen, instead, to have overwork for some and starvation for others. Hitherto we have continued to be as energetic as we were before there were machines; in this we have been foolish, but there is no reason to go on being foolish for ever (Russell 1935: 29).

Russell's reflections on a type of social urbanism, which would help to resolve certain tensions and problems, have an unequivocally socialist and almost utopian inspiration that probably does not link well with Fuster's scepticism, although he would probably share statements such as the following: "Hideousness, as much as worry and poverty, is part of the price we pay for our slavery to the

motive of private profit" (Russell 1935: 61). At the same time, Russell identifies the strength of feminism, as does Fuster in "Amor" ('Love'), although the former warns, in the specific context of the 1930s, of a possible "reaction", premonitory of our most immediate present, of which Fuster does not speak: "At present, feminism is still at an early stage of development among women of the wage-earning class, but it is likely to increase unless there is a Fascist reaction" (Russell 1935: 60). This is where we find the demand for communal structures (kitchens, nurseries, etc.) that would 'free' women from certain tasks, especially if, as Russell (1935: 60) ironically asserts, we consider that "[w]age-earning men, even when they are Socialists or Communists, seldom see any need for an alteration in the status of their wives".

In turn, there are probably some dissonant aspects between the two books. One of the most striking, on a superficial level, would be Russell's distrust of "the fever of nationalism which has been increasing ever since 1848", because he perceives it as "one form of the cult of unreason" (Russell 1935: 107). However, maybe this is a rather slight divergence. If we read carefully *Diccionari per a ociosos*, we realise that Fuster's opinion about nationalism is to be clarified. As a matter of fact, in the entry "Nacionalisme" ('Nationalism'), he states that "ser nacionalista, avui, també és un anacronisme".¹⁸ But Fuster immediately points out that (and we note again the use of quotes and italics): "només que, en el fons, hi ha 'pobles' que *encara* no poder ser res més que això. És absurd. Tristament absurd" (Fuster 1982: 121).¹⁹ At the same time, Russell (1935: 192) warns of the dangers of "Modern homogeneity" (as the homonymous chapter says), which leads to technological standardisation ("uniformity in the physical apparatus of life would be no grave matter") but also to a form of equalisation in forms of thought and opinion which, on the other hand, "is much more dangerous". With great sagacity, which somehow links with what Joan Fuster expresses in "Nacionalisme", Russell (1935: 194) states:

It must not be supposed that the tendency towards uniformity is either wholly good or wholly bad. It has great advantages and also great disadvantages: its chief advantage is, of course, that it produces a population capable of peaceable cooperation; its great disadvantage is that it produces a population prone to persecution of minorities.

¹⁸ "Nowadays, to be a nationalistic is also an anachronism" (Fuster 2006: 104).

¹⁹ "The only thing is that there are people who, deep down, can still be nothing except that. It is absurd. Pathetically absurd" (Fuster 2006: 104).

5. Conclusions

In this article we set out to analyse the possible direct influence of *In Praise of Idleness...*, by Bertrand Russell, on *Diccionari per a ociosos*, by Joan Fuster. Based on our research, we have been unable to find any documents to support this hypothesis. Russell's book does not appear in the catalogue of Fuster's personal library, either in English or in Spanish. Nor is there any handwritten note that could suggest that he had read the book, even if it is not recorded in the catalogue. However, since the inventory of Fuster's personal library is not complete, we cannot rule out the possibility that the volume is among the books that have not yet been classified. Apart from this, as we have seen, there are several of Russell's books in Fuster's archive, which proves the interest that the former aroused throughout the career of the latter. This interest is confirmed by the complimentary words that Fuster dedicated to Bertrand Russell several times, many of which are thoroughly explained in *Converses filosòfiques*. On the other hand, *Diccionari per a ociosos* contains no explicit reference to *In Praise of Idleness...* and, consequently, we cannot identify any textual link to justify the statement that Fuster borrowed Russell's main concept (*idleness/ociós*). Nor have we found any other clues in the author's correspondence around the creation of the A.C. publishing house and the foundation of Edicions 62 (which, as can be seen from Fuster's personal collection, rushed to translate Russell's books into Catalan).

However, the similarities between the two books are not coincidental. They can be attributed to the common practice of the essay, with similar topics and rhetorical strategies. We must also consider, despite the 30-year difference in publication, that some of the great debates of the first half of the 20th century are part of the intellectual background of both authors, such as the opposition between totalitarianism and democracy. The preference for moderation and restraint – in the most generous sense of these words – is well summarised in this excerpt from *In Praise of Idleness...*: “A habit of finding pleasure in thought rather than in action is a safeguard against unwisdom and excessive love of power, a means of preserving serenity in misfortune and peace of mind among worries” (Russell 1935: 42). If in Fuster we can identify ideas that had previously appeared in Bertrand Russell, in this praise of restraint we can find reflections with which Michel de Montaigne would probably agree. Rejection of any form of extremism would be among the most important.

Further study should incorporate parameters that we have barely outlined in this article. The first and most general would be the history of European thought and its relationship with essay as a form of literary expression. We cannot forget that Bertrand Russell received the Nobel Prize in literature in 1950, although he was often considered a ‘philosopher’. This is relevant, in the

matter at hand, because it not only tells us about the possible immediate references of Joan Fuster, but also about the cultural climate in which this author reached his intellectual maturity. Another parameter would be the difference between writing in a context of freedom of speech and one of dictatorship. In this sense, it would be wise to incorporate a third parameter about the history of publishing: Bertrand Russell had richer options than Joan Fuster, given the constraints of the literary system in Catalan at the beginning of the 1960s. This cultural context would give us a good idea of Bertrand Russell's reception in Spain and, more particularly, in Catalan. Analysing who published his books and who echoed them would help to clarify Russell's reception during the central part of the 20th century, which coincides with Fuster's period of greatest production. Moreover, we should thoroughly review Fuster's oeuvre, including his letters and uncollected articles, to record all the references to Bertrand Russell. Such an overview could reinforce the hypothesis of a direct influence or, on the contrary, dismiss it.

Last but not least, we should reflect on which debates are still in force. We have already pointed out the sagacity of both authors when talking about feminism, nationalism, and democracy, but the denunciation of the excesses of capitalism, for example, presaged the current debates about what has recently been called the Anthropocene. Regardless of direct influence, we consider that there are many points of contact between both authors, so the line of analysis suggested here might bear more fruit in subsequent work.

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