

Tradition and Anti-Tradition in Catalan Schools at the Start of the Twentieth Century

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This article analyses what tradition meant for the promoters of the educational transformations taking place a hundred years ago in Catalonia. For some, tradition was a concept that impeded progress and therefore ought to be pushed aside. For others, tradition was a kind of guide on this same course of advancing society through schools. It is concluded that tradition, whether attacked or defended, is a cultural artefact that is used in projects aiming to transform and advance society.

• **Keywords:** tradition, anti-tradition, educational renewal, Modern School, New Education movement

Članek prinaša analizo, kaj je pred stoletjem ideja tradicije pomenila nosilcem sprememb v izobraževanju v Kataloniji. Za nekatere je bila tradicija ovira napredku, zato jo je bilo treba odrivati na stran. Za druge je bila tradicija v šolah nekakšno vodilo na tej isti poti družbenega napredka. Avtor ugotavlja, da je tradicija, ne glede na to, ali jo napadajo ali branijo, kulturni artefakt, ki se uporablja v projektih za preoblikovanje in napredek družbe.

• **Ključne besede:** tradicija, antitradicija, prenova izobraževanja, Sodobna šola, gibanje Novo izobraževanje

Introduction

As in other places in Europe and the world, a strong educational movement emerged in the first decades of the 20th century in Catalonia and Spain. Its aim was to transform the educational landscape, up until then characterised by learning methods defined as rudimentary and mainly based on reading and handwriting (Vial, 1981: 219–240). There was a considerable lack of school infrastructure and teachers, leading to high illiteracy rates. In Spain around 60% of the population was illiterate in 1900 (Vilanova, Moreno, 1992).

Tradition, as a polysemic concept that refers to cultural inheritance through time (Pouillon, 2007; Noyes, 2009; Hrobat Virloget, 2012; Testa, Isnart, 2020), played an important role in this process of modernisation of the school model, but in two diametrically opposite directions. Some educators considered tradition inseparable from the educational project, while others saw tradition as an impediment that hindered the introduction of their programme; something that should be pushed aside or overcome as soon as possible. This latter group belonged to the rationalist movement – in fact, they called themselves the “rationalist educators”. One prime example is the free-thinking anarchist Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia (hereafter Ferrer) (1859–1909), founder of the Escuela Moderna (Modern School) in Barcelona in 1901. His rejection of tradition

fitted in with the ‘disenchantment’ discussed by Max Weber: modernity considered as a process of progressively moving away from the world of traditional beliefs to be able to reach scientific understanding (Jenkins, 2000). In contrast, educators associated with the ruling Catalan class promoted an ambitious programme of creation and renewal of state schools, inspired and advised by pre-eminent educators of the New Education movement (*Education Nouvelle* in French), such as Maria Montessori or John Dewey. For them, tradition was a fundamental tool in their project, a kind of flotation device in a turbulent social context, as will be seen later in this article.

In relation to ethnohistory, Richard Wilk (1987; 1988) indicated that at times of relative stability, little attention is paid to tradition. In contrast, when the social and economic order is threatened, tradition takes on more importance and new meanings. In the case studied in this article, a political and educational project of anarchist inspiration – that questioned the prevailing social and economic order – saw in tradition an obstacle to overcome. At the same time, a bourgeois political and educational project saw in tradition a tool for social transformation in the direction it considered correct, without altering the established social order. The aim of this article is to compare these two coetaneous visions of tradition, their rejection and their use. The end of the article addresses the possibility of now reconsidering tradition beyond a confrontation between revolutionaries and conservatives, or between anti-traditionalists and traditionalists.

Historians of education have defined these educational movements occurring in Spain at the start of the 20th century as “renewal movements” (Esteban, 2016: 263). From different perspectives, these movements had in common the project of transforming society through schools. They were violently interrupted by the dictatorship of General Franco in 1939–1975 (Caivano, Carbonell, 1979; Monés, 2011; Diez, 2018; Soler, Vilanou, 2018; Feu, Besalú, Paludàrias, 2021). The renewal movements were highly varied and included a range of theoretical perspectives and ideological positions. In this article, we focus on two paradigmatic and clearly distinguishable tendencies. The first are the rationalist schools promoted by anarchist intellectuals, as mentioned above. The second are state schools promoted by conservative politicians and intellectuals, based on the principles of the New Education movement established at the founding conference of the *Ligue internationale pour l’éducation nouvelle* (International League of New Education) held in Calais (France) in 1921. Although these projects are ideologically divergent, they share the aim of proposing a radical change in the educational landscape to transform and modernise society through schools. Notably, what historians call the “renewal movements” of this historical period included other aspects and prominent educators such as Pau Vila or Rosa Sensat, which would lead to other educational models that are not discussed in this article. The aim of this article is not to undertake a historical review of education in Catalonia and Spain in this period. Rather, it is to analyse the reasons for such a divergent interpretation of tradition in these projects, in their time designed to be groundbreaking and renewing.

At the methodological level, to undertake the comparative study presented here, two magazines were analysed that are representative of the two examined projects. The magazines were published successively in Barcelona between 1901 and 1923. First, I analyse the discourse on tradition in the magazine *Boletín de la Escuela Moderna* (Bulletin of the Modern School, hereafter BEM). This magazine, founded by Ferrer, was published between 1901 and 1906. In 1906 it was shut down by the government after a failed attack on the kings of Spain by anarchist Mateu Morral, who had been the librarian of the Modern School. The magazine had a second period of activity between 1908–1909, associated with the Ligue internationale pour l'éducation rationnelle de l'enfance (International League for the Rational Education of Children; Fidler, 1985), which was founded by Ferrer and led by Anatole France. However, this period ended abruptly when Ferrer was arrested and sentenced to death after the events of Tragic Week.¹ Notably, the rationalist education inspired by Ferrer survived after his death in the form of athenaeums, industrial schools, union schools and school colonies, which had a notable presence in the country's educational landscape until the end of the Spanish War in 1939.

The second focus is the discourse on tradition that was expressed in the magazine *Quaderns d'Estudi* (Study Notebooks, hereafter QdE), published by the Education Council of the Barcelona City Council and the Mancomunitat de Catalunya (regional government), between 1915 and 1923. As other contemporary examples in Europe (see e.g. Stevanović, 2010) the aim of this magazine was to transmit an official vision of education. The magazine was aimed at schools that had recently been created by Catalan public entities at the municipal and regional level. It reflected a Catalan nationalist and conservative political project, led by politicians and intellectuals such as Prat de la Riba, Eugeni d'Ors, or Alexandre Galí, and framed in the aesthetic movement of Noucentisme.² As we will see later, within this movement, education was considered a key element in the political and cultural project of national reconstruction and cultural regeneration. From the mid-19th century and based on Romanticism, a nationalist

¹ The Tragic Week of Barcelona was a working-class revolt that occurred in the summer of 1909, during which many religious buildings in the city were torched. This caused great shock among conservative social strata. The reason for the revolt was the Port of Barcelona embarkation of reservists for the colonial wars in Morocco, in a context of great tension between unions and employers. The image of the city in flames earned Barcelona the nickname Rose of Fire. The outcome of the clashes was 82 workers and 5 police dead, 56 religious buildings burnt, including 16 colleges, and 29 life sentences and 5 death sentences given. These included a death sentence for the educationalist Ferrer, which triggered a wave of international protests. In Paris, a defence committee was formed with anarchists such as Pyotr Kropotkin and socialists such as Jean Jaurès. However, this could not stop the shooting of Ferrer at Montjuïc Castle, Barcelona, on 13 October 1909 (see Termes, 2011).

² 'Noucentisme' is a term that plays with the homophony in Catalan of the adjective *nou* (new) and the number nine (also *nou*) of the century that had just begun. It was an aesthetic and philosophical movement present in Catalonia in the first two decades of the 1900s. It combined neoclassicism with avant-garde and had a strong ideological component of social modernisation and regeneration, led by Catalan politicians and intellectuals with the aim of putting Catalan culture on the same level with the rest of European cultures of the time (see Bilbeny, 1988).

movement began to form in Catalonia that would crystallise at the start of the 20th century with the creation of the Mancomunitat de Catalunya in 1914. This institution of regional self-government had limited competences and resources, but took on the task of modernising Catalonia. Its political action was mainly focused on the modernisation of cultural infrastructure and institutions, particularly in education, from primary schools to universities, and including schools of arts and trades, museums, and public libraries. The Mancomunitat de Catalunya was abolished in 1924 as a result of the coup and dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera (1923–1930). The magazine QdE aimed to spread to public schools in the Catalan territory the new ideas on pedagogy that were inspired by the international current of the New Education movement. It was published while the Mancomunitat de Catalunya existed. Unlike the rationalist schools, such as the Modern School and its bulletin inspired by principles of anarchism, this magazine was conservative, nationalist, and inspired by the values of Noucentisme. Below we will analyse separately how tradition was defined and presented in each of these two media for disseminating the new ideas of educational renewal at the start of the 20th century.

Modern School: Rejection of tradition in school

One of the first issues of the BEM called for the hiring of teachers who “are free of concerns, superstitions, and absurd traditional beliefs” (Ferrer, 1990: 56). Teachers who, as Paul Robin maintained in BEM, act differently from “educators of the old school, [who] on the basis of ideas founded a priori on tradition, on the supposed revelations of imaginary beings that are superior to man, believe they know everything.”³ Most of the scientific texts in the BEM are translations of works by well-known foreign authors.⁴ In response to an article published in the press of Barcelona on the Shroud of Turin, the editors of BEM – that is, mainly Ferrer i Guardia and Clémence Jacquinet – considered it vital to introduce the ideas of these foreign thinkers in a country like Spain “that barely participates in the progressive movement”, that is, in scientific development, “due to the traditional obstacles” maintained by those who are defined in the same text as “bourgeoisie with cassocks”.⁵ Which scientists spread their ideas through the BEM? A clear preference can be seen for authors who at the end of the nineteenth century had gained a certain amount of academic prestige with their theories of social evolution, such as Herni Thulié, Ernst Haeckel, Herbert Spencer, and some leaders of anarchist thought such as Élisée Reclus or the aforementioned Paul Robin.

³ Robin, P. 1901, December 31. Educación integral. *BEM* Year 1 (No. 3): 29–32.

⁴ On the influence of French and German philosophy on educational renewal in Catalonia, see Monés, 2010; Vilanou, Collelldemont, 2012.

⁵ Ferrer i Guardia, F. 1902, 31 May. Lo del Sudario de Turín. *BEM* Year 2 (No. 7): 83–85.

According to Pere Solà (1980: 86), Clémence Jacquinet was the person who marked the educational and ideological model in the Modern School during the first academic years. She showed great interest in Herbert Spencer. Spencer had published in 1861 ‘Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical’, a text that was adopted as a manual in almost all the teacher training schools in England (Acton, 2021). Spencer was the main representative of the sociopolitical movement known as social Darwinism, which was one of the theoretical bases of scientific racism. In this aspect, the BEM and the QdE were similar. In the QdE, one can also find articles praising social Darwinism, eugenics and the promoters of these ideas, such as Francis Galton.⁶ In their insistence on discrediting everything associated with tradition, some BEM contributors addressed with disdain and even contempt peoples who they called “primitives” or “savages” (in contrast to those they called “civilised”). According to them, the most rudimentary cultural forms and those most attached to tradition could be found among these peoples.

For example, the evolutionist doctor and anthropologist Henri Thulié presented in an article on the “origin of mysticism”⁷ a list of the beliefs of various non-Western societies about totemic beings and animist practices. In his opinion, these had survived within religion in Western societies and would have to be overcome through education. Thus, speaking of atmospheric phenomena such as thunder and lightning, he explained that North American Indians offer tobacco to supernatural forces to calm thunder. This would be equivalent to the practice of lighting altar candles or ringing bells among peoples “who are called civilised [...], and this even after having learnt at school that thunder is a natural phenomenon.” Another author, Ernst Haeckel, who along with Spencer was one of the main representatives of social Darwinism, wrote an article about “superstition”⁸ in which he proposed that the “traditional superstitions” that we find among “civilised peoples” are no more than vestiges of those that are observed “among the coarse primitive peoples” and are in turn a legacy of their primate ancestors. Here we have an example of the evolutionary paradigm of anthropology from the second half of the 19th century that was maintained at the start of the 20th century. In various issues of the BEM, we can find other articles by Haeckel that urge people to overcome, through scientific rationalism, beliefs described as absurd that are based on tradition. For example, in an article entitled ‘Conflicto entre la Razón y el Dogma’ (Conflict between Reason and Dogma), Haeckel maintained that tradition is synonymous with dogma and that there are influential sectors or parties in society that want to see us “under the yoke of traditional dogmas.”⁹

⁶ Galton, F. 1915, December. *QdE* Year 1 (No. 3): 23–25.

⁷ Thulié, H. 1902, 30 June. Origen del misticismo. *BEM* Year 1 (No. 8): 95–98.

⁸ Haeckel, E. 1902, 31 October. La superstición. *BEM* Year 2 (No. 1): 7–8.

⁹ Haeckel, E. 1903, 31 October. Conflicto entre la Razón y el Dogma. *BEM* Year 3 (No. 2): 24.

Some articles were published in BEM that described primitive societies with respect. Examples are pieces by Reclus about the indigenous people of the Tierra de Fuego, or the presentation of his masterpiece ‘The Earth and Its Inhabitants’, being the first article in the bulletin of March 1905 and defending the uniqueness of the human species – in contrast to what was maintained by the popularisers of scientific racism. Nevertheless, it can be asserted that the authors and publishers of these two magazines shared an attitude that was widespread at the time, one which undervalued peoples who were considered premodern. In the BEM, this served as a strategy to reinforce a line of argument against everything related to tradition.

The BEM wished to offer all students at the Modern School suitable textbooks that would serve to combat all the “beliefs”, “superstitions”, and “traditions”. As noted, these were considered vestiges of the practices of “primitive peoples” that persisted among “civilised peoples” and were maintained through religion. The back cover of the BEM showed advertisements for the Modern School’s publications aimed “at intellectuals”, with “a vehement call to writers who love science” encouraging them to write textbooks for the Modern School: “It is telling that you cannot find a book for schools that is not full of mystical errors, which propagate and promote religious tradition, and hinder the progress of science.”¹⁰ Therefore, in their opinion, the old education that they wanted to leave behind with the introduction of the Modern School perpetuated some premodern characteristics and beliefs. In a letter, Ferrer i Guardia wrote to Reclus to ask him for a geography manual for his school. Reclus replied that Ferrer should not use one, instead, the teachers should transmit orally their interest in geography to their students.¹¹

However, textbooks were used in the Modern School, such as the *Compendio de Historia Universal* (Compendium of Universal History) by Jacquinet, and the books on grammar, arithmetic, or geometry by Cels Gomis. Gomis (1841–1915) was an engineer, folklorist and author of school manuals whom anarchist educators particularly appreciated, as explained by Pere Solà (1980: 70). Gomis was an uncommon – if not exceptional – case of a folklorist who sympathised with the anarchist movement and was critical of contemporary folklorists, considering them reactionary (Samper, 2013: 109–111). Gomis is the author of a highly extensive folkloric work resulting from his journeys and long stays in various rural areas of Spain, where he worked as a civil engineer, particularly on railways and roads. He took advantage of his free time in contact with rural people to gather a large amount of folkloric material. Gomis does not present an essentialist vision of folklore, as was common among Spanish folklorists of the time (for a historical review of folklorism in Catalonia, see Roma, 1985; Juliano, 1986; Prats, 1988; Martí, 1996). Notably, the origin of folklorism was part of

¹⁰ Correspondencia administrativa. 1902, 30 April. *BEM* Year 1 (No. 6).

¹¹ Reclus, E. 1903, 31 March. Carta a Ferrer Guardia. *BEM* Year 2 (No. 6): 68.

the Romantic and Nationalist movement of the 19th century that was designed to gather and establish the essence and soul of the peoples expressed in customs and traditions. However, for the intellectuals who published in the BEM, these customs and traditions formed part of the cultural corpus that should be banished from education.

Gomis's intention in studying the traditions was not to gather folkloric material to establish the supposed real soul of the people. Instead, throughout his work, "he maintained a reformist attitude to popular culture, based on the conviction of the need to eradicate superstitions in the interest of progress" (Prats, 1991: 80). For example, in his treatise 'La lluna segons lo poble' (The Moon According to the People) published in 1912, he stated that his intention in writing about these cultural phenomena was not to perpetuate their beliefs, but rather to compile and invalidate them so that the future generations could see the backwardness of their ancestors' lives (Samper, 2013: 102). This was one of the objectives of the rationalist schools, as outlined earlier. In a school manual published in 1923, entitled *Lecturas instructivas* (Instructive Readings), Gomis maintained that intelligent young people should come out of schools – particularly rural ones – so that "If they find a stone axe tomorrow, when digging a furrow or vine hole, they recognize it as a tool made by man in the infancy of Humanity as opposed to believing, as they do today, that it is a bolt of lightning that, striking soil, had been buried seven yards underground so that it might resurface again after seven years" (Samper, 2013: 160). Therefore, education should correct and dispel ideas that are perpetuated by tradition and classified as erroneous from a scientific perspective. Gomis considered traditions an expression of the ignorance in which religion keeps the people. The aim, according to Bakunin's hypotheses in his book *God and the State*, is to ensure that the people are more easily subjected to the power of the state. Furthermore, he considers that education, and particularly teachers, are responsible for ending these traditional false conceptions of the world.

Years later, in his well-known text 'Observations on Folklore' in *Quaderni del carcere* (Prison Notebooks), Antonio Gramsci expressed this idea in a very similar way:¹²

For the teacher, then, to know "folklore" means to know what other conceptions of the world and life are actually active in the intellectual and moral formation of young people, in order to uproot them and replace them with conceptions deemed to be superior. In reality, from elementary schools to [...] chairs of agriculture, folklore was already systematically combatted and forced to retreat: the teaching of folklore to teachers should further reinforce this systematic task. (Gramsci, 1966: 275)

¹² Although Lombardi-Satriani explained that, apart from what was stated in his extremely well known 'Observations on Folklore', in other places Gramsci had underlined "the great variety in the conception of the world and life present in folklore, even if it is only found in a mutilated, contaminated way in folkloric documents" (Lombardi-Satriani, 1978: 35).

In relation to the popular beliefs about the moon discussed by Gomis, we will conclude this review of the BEM by referring to an article entitled ‘La influencia de la luna: Preocupaciones populares acerca de la misma en la vegetación’ (The Influence of the Moon: Popular Concerns Regarding Its Impact on Vegetation) by Ph. Cormerois. This article, originally published in the bulletin of the Normal School of Nice, maintained that, due to the progress of science, old superstitions that attributed to the moon an immense influence on vegetation and health had been abandoned. Despite this, many people still let themselves be swept away by an unthinking faith in these beliefs, defined therein as absurd. However, what is of interest to us now is to highlight that, according to this author, “teachers have the honour and the duty to shake the tree of old concerns and discredit these unhealthy products.”¹³

Therefore, teachers were responsible for impeding the continuing transmission of traditional knowledge to the next generations. Clémence Jacquinet, for example, stated clearly that popular proverbs and sayings should not be taught in school (Solà, 1980: 98). This was the opposite stance to that maintained by most folklorists of the period, except Cels Gomis. For example, Rossend Serra i Pagès (1863–1929), who was both a folklorist and a teacher trainer in the Escola d’Institutrius (School of Governesses), defined folklore as “a moralising element, an educational medium for children and entertainment for everyone” (Serra i Pagès, 1926: 9). As will be shown below, in contrast to the rationalist education of anarchists, the educational projects undertaken by the bourgeoisie in Catalonia at the start of the 20th century considered the dissemination of folklore and Catalan traditions as a fundamental element in schools, both at the methodological level to motivate students through sayings, fables, songs and dances, and at the level of instilling values in citizens, as will be analysed below. In contrast to the BEM, the magazine QdE held among its collaborators various notable folklorists of the time.

Education Council: The promotion of tradition in school

In 1915, the first issue of the magazine QdE was published. This was the main medium for disseminating the reformist educational principles that the Mancomunitat de Catalunya wished to promote through its Consell de Pedagogia (Education Council). In addition to this publication, the principles were promoted through teacher training in the Cursos de vespre (Evening courses) and the Escola d’estiu (Summer school). The Education Council was created by the Barcelona City Council in 1913. The following year, it was passed to the Mancomunitat de Catalunya, which was formed in 1914. The

¹³ Cormerois, Ph. 1902, 31 January. La influencia de la luna: Preocupaciones populares acerca de la misma respecto a la vegetación. *BEM* Year 1 (No. 5): 44–46.

Mancomunitat was presided by Prat de la Riba from 1914 to 1917, followed by Puig i Cadafal from 1917 to 1924. Both politicians were members of La Lliga Regionalista de Catalunya (The Regionalist League of Catalonia), a Catalan nationalist, conservative party that was in power in Catalonia in this period.

It is relevant that the Mancomunitat put Eugeni d'Ors at the head of State Education. Eugeni d'Ors was the most influential Catalan intellectual at the time and the ideologist behind the Noucentisme political and cultural project of regeneration of Catalan society (Billbeny, 1988). This already gives us an indication of the importance that this government wanted to give to the Catalan population's education. The magazine QdE was run by Eladi Homs (1886–1973), an educator trained in the United States thanks to a scholarship from Barcelona City Council. Homs was one of the first people to introduce the thinking of John Dewey in Catalonia. However, according to González-Agàpito, Marquès, Mayordomo, and Sureda (2002: 46), the “true organiser of educational renewal” in Catalonia was the educator Alexandre Galí (1886–1969), who “managed to offer Catalan teachers a doctrinal corpus that summarised the educational ideas of Noucentisme, the New Education movement, and nationalism.”

The first time the name Alexandre Galí appeared as an author in the QdE magazine was in the first issue, to present a section entitled ‘Ballets populars de Catalunya’ (Popular Dances in Catalonia). This section was the responsibility of Aureli Capmany (1868–1954), one of the most prominent Catalan folklorists at the time who specialised in popular music and dances, and in children's folklore. He was in contact with Italian educator Maria Montessori.¹⁴ In the 54 issues of the magazine that were published, one can find 8 long articles on popular dance and music by the folklorist Capmany. In his presentation, Galí stressed the importance of incorporating dance into schools. He stated that it formed part of what he called moral education: “Education in those activities of custom and recreation that the spirit also has, and that are the salt of life, that give the reason to live.”¹⁵ These are aspects that, according to him, had not been given sufficient attention by state education up to that point. Along with dance, Galí included elements such as play, outings, ceremony, and liturgy.

Unlike in the BEM, in the QdE magazine religion was not seen as opposing the task undertaken by the New Education movement. Instead, the Catholic religion occupied a predominant place in the configuration of this movement of educational renewal. In fact, the first long article in issue 1 of the magazine, published in November 1915, was entitled ‘Instruction and Preparation of the Faithful in Schools to Take Part in the Liturgy’. These were educational recommendations to instruct children in Catholicism. The article was by Anna Maccheroni, an Italian teacher and collaborator of Maria Montessori whom the Barcelona Provincial Council hired to apply the Montessori

¹⁴ On the relationship between Aureli Capmany and Maria Montessori, see Roma (2018) and Pujol (2018).

¹⁵ Galí, A. 1915, November. La dança a l'escola. *QdE* Year 1 (Vol. 1, No. 1): 31.

method in their schools. Indeed, the educational renewal movement represented by Dewey or Montessori did not see any disassociation between science and religion, in contrast to the postulates of rationalist education. In the QdE issue corresponding to December 1917, we can find ‘My Pedagogical Creed’ by John Dewey, which is an extensive compilation of the main points of his pedagogical thinking. The last point stated: “I believe that in this way the teacher always is the prophet of the true God and the usherer in of the true kingdom of God.”¹⁶ To give a final example of this, in the issue of February 1918 an article was published on the pedagogy of the *Old Testament* in which it was concluded that God, when He created the World, “moulded himself to the ways of speaking, thinking and feeling of men, and thus proceeded in a fully pedagogical manner.”¹⁷ The Lord is presented here as the first teacher, the model or the guide of the New Education movement.

Over the eight years of existence of this magazine, articles were published on children’s songs, dances, fables, almanacs and other expressions of traditional Catalan culture. Beyond enlightening the readers on certain themes, these articles transmitted a very specific idea of the culture and values they wanted to promote. For example, an article on the Colla castellera els Xiquets de Valls (a folkloric group dedicated to the construction of human towers) explained in detail the formation of human towers, the musical compositions that accompanied them, the specific vocabulary, the clothing, etc. The article was based on a speech by the president of the Mancomunitat de Catalunya, Prat de la Riba, according to which “individuals of different nationalities have different characteristics.” Then, it presented the tradition of building human towers or dancing *sardanas* (a traditional dance that is characteristic of the region) as an expression of the Catalan character: “These are the customs of peoples and also the product of the preferences of their inhabitants [...] and thus Aragón has ended up with the *jota* and Catalonia with the *sardana*.”¹⁸ Here we can see that certain elements were selected and others rejected to construct a “Catalan character”, to use Prat de la Riba’s terminology. Some forms of musical expression that were present in rural areas of Catalonia in the period were excluded. For example, the *jota* dance was systematically ignored by Catalan folklorists of this time, as they considered that it was from another place, alien to Catalan tradition (Flores, 2021). There was a preference for specific elements of folklore such as *sardanas* or human towers that, in accordance with the principles of Noucentisme, situated the distant origin of these traditions in Greek mythology when, according to the cited article, the Titans erected human towers to try to storm the palaces of the gods. Indeed, Classicism was one of the aesthetic pillars of Noucentisme.

¹⁶ Dewey, J. 1917, December. El meu credo pedagògic. *QdE* Year 3 (Vol. 1, No. 3): 252–259.

¹⁷ La pedagogía del Antiguo Testamento. 1918, December. *QdE* Year 3 (Vol. 1, No. 3): 252–259.

¹⁸ Ballester, F. 1920, January. Els xiquets de Valls. *QdE* Year 5 (Vol. 1, No. 2): 145–168.

One can also find in issues of QdE reviews of books on popular architecture or on children's stories, for example. These articles used an approach to tradition that was in full harmony with the phase of institutionalisation of folklore that took place in Catalonia during this period (Prats, Llopart, Prat, 1982: 60).

Among all the topics, that which recurred most regularly was folklorist Aureli Capmany's section on popular dances, which contained long articles accompanied by the corresponding harmonisation and illustrations. These were written by well-known folklorists of the period, such as Joan Llongueras and Apel·les Maestres. One of these articles shows photographs of 5- and 6-year-old students at a school of Barcelona in 1916, dancing *L'hereu Riera* (The Heir Riera). Capmany wrote about the piece: "This dance is a marvellous creation of our popular knowledge offered by Catalan folklore, as in it there are an unsurpassable number of educational elements, which are of great use for teaching rhythm, sound, and movement."¹⁹ In line with the aesthetic principles of Noucentisme, the origin of these popular Catalan dances is situated in Classical Greece. For example, the *Ballet de Déu* (Ballet of God) is executed "with an order of symmetry", where "we find the principle of aesthetics that was called *Orquestrica* by the Greek people."²⁰ The pedagogical importance attributed to traditional dances can also be seen in the teacher training courses organised by the Education Council. Along with the history of art, Latin, and geology, they included courses on traditional Catalan dances by the folklorist Capmany.

To summarize, the QdE magazine presents the formulation of an educational proposal in which the renewal of school practice involved incorporating Catalan culture focused on the tradition expressed in Catalan folklore, the principles of nationalism, and the aesthetic ideals of Noucentisme. As we can see, this pedagogical proposal is conceptually opposed to that formulated in the BEM in the way tradition is understood.

School and tradition, between agitation and redemption

The educational renewal that took place in the first third of the 20th century in Spain is a topic that has been studied extensively by authors such as Soler (2009), Pericacho (2014), or Esteban (2016), among others. All of them highlighted the structural shortfalls in the school environment at the start of the century, in particular in state schools due to the lack of educational infrastructure and the enormous limitations of an educational method that was basically authoritarian and based on rote learning. In addition, much has been said about the arrival in Spain of new educational trends from Europe thanks to the New Education movement, and how this represented a breath of fresh air. I have

¹⁹ Capmany, A. 1917, May. Ballet de l'Hereu Riera o dels Balls de Bastons. *QdE* Year 2 (Vol. 2, No. 4): 353–367.

²⁰ Capmany, A. 1917, March. El ballet de Déu. *QdE* Year 2 (Vol. 2, No. 2): 167–181.

focused on a specific aspect – the question of tradition, its rejection, and its utilisation – to understand the use and political significance of tradition in schools.

A comparison of articles published in the BEM and the QdE, two emblematic magazines from this episode in the history of education in Catalonia, revealed very few similarities. The exception is the negative opinion of non-Western cultures, called savage or primitive, that is found in both magazines. In addition, both show a fascination with social Darwinism, eugenics and authors who promote these theories. Apart from this point, the two publications contain a diametrically opposed view of tradition. What is the reason for this divergence?

The rationalist education promoted by Ferrer in the Modern School was in tune with the anticlerical sentiment that had been forged among the popular classes of Barcelona – at least since the Carlist Wars of the 19th century – and whose relationship with the educational world has not been studied extensively. Significantly, unease and popular revolt were aimed directly at religious schools on two very important occasions in historical terms. The first was the luddite revolt that took place in July 1835 in Barcelona. It went down in history because the Vapor Bonaplata, the most important textile factory in Spain in that period, was torched and destroyed. Prior to the fire in the factory, various convents in the city burned down. They had all been operating as primary schools in the previous years. After the Napoleonic occupation of Barcelona (1808–1814), the Spanish monarchy approved a Royal Decree that encouraged religious orders for men to create free schools to educate the children of Barcelona in the observance of Catholic faith. These orders were entrusted with tightening up customs that had been relaxed due to the French incursion, as stated in the Royal Decree. A clear relationship can be seen between the popular anticlerical wave and the educational activity of religious orders. As historians noted, “all the convents where classes had been given for free during the period after the Napoleonic war, were attacked on the night of 25 July 1835” (Roca, Miquel, 2021: 81).

Religious schools were again the main target of a popular revolt during the events of the Tragic Week in Barcelona (or the “Glorious Week”, according to the anarchist press of the period) in summer 1909. This revolt cost Ferrer his life. He was accused, with no evidence, of being the instigator and thus became a martyr of the international libertarian cause. During this week of protests against the sending of reservist troops to the War of Melilla (north of Morocco), 56 religious establishments were torched, of which 16 were schools (Termes, 2011: 222). Historian Xavier Diez maintains that among the originators of the fires of 1909 were many former pupils of these religious schools, who acted out of a desire for revenge for the violence, punishments and humiliations they had suffered during their childhood schooling there (Diez, 2010: 89). In addition, in the anarchist ideology, education and insurrection went hand in hand. As Ferran Aisa stated in his book on anarchist culture in Catalonia: “At the turn of the century, anarchism had two main concerns: education, which would enlighten the

workers, and general strike, with which emancipation would be achieved” (Aisa, 2006: 28). Notably, Ferrer was not only behind the *Boletín de la Escuela Moderna*. Between 1901 and 1903 he also funded and ran the newspaper *La Huelga General* (The General Strike; Marín, Martí, 2021: 64).

As is shown in this article, at the start of the 20th century two opposite ideologies coincided in Catalonia that considered education a key element in their respective projects. On the one hand, in 1910 the anarchist syndicate Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT; National Confederation of Labour) was founded in Barcelona. This was the result of decades of anarchist and syndicalist organisation and struggle, led by the working class. The CNT was the main union in Spain until the war of 1936–1939. On the other hand, in 1914 the Mancomunitat de Catalunya was created. This was also the culmination of decades of organisation of the Catalan nationalist movement, led by the bourgeoisie. In 1901, the same year that Ferrer opened the first Modern School, a Catalan nationalist, conservative party was founded, the Lliga Regionalista de Catalunya. This party was in power in Catalonia during the first two decades of the century and managed to force the Spanish Government to transfer a certain degree of political autonomy to Catalonia with the creation of the Mancomunitat. Therefore, the political context in which educational renewal took place in Catalonia was marked by two opposing ideological poles. One was led by the workers’ movement, in which anarchism was hegemonic. The other was driven by the bourgeoisie and led by the politicians and intellectuals of the Noucentisme.

At this point, it would be interesting to consider an idea proposed by the historians of education González-Agàpito, Marquès, Mayordomo, and Sureda (2002), according to which the events of the Tragic Week acted as a fuse for the Noucentisme project of educational renewal. These revolutionary events set off all alarms among the Catalan bourgeoisie and explain to a great extent the impetus received by the Mancomunitat’s educational programme. According to the cited authors:

The aim was to achieve a school that was effective in moral, civic, and democratic education. This need was accentuated after the Tragic Week. Indeed, the events of July 1909 were crucial to emphasise the educational aspect of the Noucentisme in general and of the bourgeoisie in particular, which would provide clear support for educational renewal. (González-Agàpito, Marquès, Mayordomo, Sureda, 2002: 40)

The aim of the Mancomunitat’s president Prat de la Riba was to use schools to transform society and the urban working class, to make them “good citizens” according to the terminology of the era, and to try to distance in this way the spectre of social revolution after the Tragic Week. In fact, the Mancomunitat’s political and cultural project was the culmination of a process that began in the 19th century, during which,

as shown by historian Josep M. Fradera, it began “to be defined what Catalan society was and what it should be, in accordance with, and in terms acceptable to, the bourgeois conscience” (Fradera, 1992: 125). This is where schools would play a fundamental role.

Conclusion

In this article, I have analysed two projects that were ambitious in their intent to renew the educational landscape of Catalonia. They shared the same general objective: to change society through schools. However, their aims were diametrically opposite: in one case the aim was to mobilise the working class, and in the other to redeem it through bourgeois education. This could explain the contrary use of the meaning given to tradition in both projects. For the rationalist educators, tradition was an impediment to implementing their project of creating a new society, one with no public presence of religion and without differentiation between social classes. In contrast, for the Education Council educators, tradition was a tool to create good citizens in accordance with a bourgeois, Christian view.

However, the fact that rationalist educators foreswore tradition, that the teacher Clémence Jacquinet said that they should not teach proverbs, or the folklorist Cels Gomis considered that young rural people should forget the magical stories of their grandparents, did not mean that elements of popular culture and tradition were absent from the daily life of teachers and students in rationalist schools. Some testimonies from rationalist schools of the period after the closure of the Modern School, following the death of Ferrer, attest to this. For example, the anarchist teacher Félix Carrasquer stated that in 1938, in the midst of the Spanish War, to overcome their fear during night bombardments, Republican children who were taken in at a school colony in Llançà (a small town on the Catalan coast) sang “songs of our folklore, particularly the very melodious ones of the Catalan region” (Carrasquer, 2015: 175). Or as Josep Peirats explained in his book on Emma Goldman,²¹ when she visited the school colony Món Nou (New World) in the Pyrenees close to the border with France, in autumn 1938, she was welcomed with a party in her honour, during which “*sardanas* and other classical dances of the region were played” (Peirats, 1978: 278). Given these examples, we should be able to distinguish between tradition as an element creating distance from modernity and rationalism, and tradition as an expression of living popular culture.

In fact, Ferrer and his Modern School soon became part of the revolutionary tradition. For example, during the Republican exile in France, the magazine *La Espagne*

²¹ This episode is described in Giacomoni (2018: 198). It was also referred to by Emma Goldman in her book on the Spanish War (2006: 117–118). Goldman was one of the people who introduced the legacy of Ferrer in the United States. Along with Dewey and others, she founded the Ferrer Association of New York in 1910 (Döllner, Nubiola, 2021).

republicaine (Republican Spain; 1945–1949) was published in Toulouse, when the hope of the liberation of fascist Spain by Western democratic powers and the return of the Republicans began to melt away. Aisa (2006: 202) noted that in issue 5 of this magazine there is an article by journalist Màrius Aguilar on the revolutionary tradition that reads: “One afternoon, in the dining rooms of Can Tunis I heard, in the distance, a traditional song dated thirty years ago but *made into tradition* [my italics]: In the tower of Montjuïc / is a black flag / with letters that read: / Long live the Modern School!” In this song, “made into tradition” refers to the episode of the execution of Ferrer at Montjuïc Castle in the autumn of 1909.

Throughout contemporary history, revolutionary movements have maintained a complex relationship with tradition, which is usually associated with conservative or reactionary ideologies. Marx’s opposition to embracing revolutionary tradition is known. He defined as oppressive the cult of past generations and their struggles (Straehle, 2020: 49). Nevertheless, revolutionary processes also create tradition for the coming generations. For example, the Paris Commune of 1871 generated tradition for all subsequent proletarian revolutions. According to anarchist leader and Minister of Health in the Spanish Republic, Frederica Montseny (2006: 25), it was a “symbol of eternity” in the midst of the social revolution and war in 1938. Some revolutionary processes have been carried out with a focus on tradition; revolutionary tradition, of course, but also tradition that is not so revolutionary. The most paradigmatic example is the French revolution, which was imbued with Greek-Roman myths and constantly used a traditional and sacralised language (Terradas, 1990). Revolutionary processes do not have an unambiguous, unequivocal position with respect to tradition. Sometimes they reject it. On other occasions they are reflected in it, and sometimes they even create new traditions.

In the case of the Modern School, its anti-tradition position should be attributed more to a question of disenchantment, in Max Weber’s terms, than an ideological animosity to tradition and folklore per se. In the case of the Educations Council schools, which in their way tried to modernise and revolutionise the educational landscape of the country, tradition was taken as a guide to follow in progressing the project of social regeneration through schools. All of these schools, of all types, would be taken as references in a new wave of educational renewal in Spain after the end of Franco’s dictatorship and during the Democratic Transition (1975–1978), which was known as the “second wave of educational renewal” (Pericacho, 2014). They are still taken as references today. They form part of a school tradition that seeks to change society by teaching in childhood some principles that do not differ much from those formulated by educators at the start of the 20th century. In this respect, we could consider tradition outside the traditionalist or conservative framework. Herein, I aimed to address the ambivalent, contradictory, conflictive relationship between tradition and the promoters of educational renewal in Catalonia at the start of the twentieth century, to show that even anti-traditionalism can form part of tradition.

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Tradicija in antitradicija v katalonskih šolah na začetku dvajsetega stoletja

Od začetka 20. stoletja, zlasti pa v medvojnem obdobju, se je v Evropi in Ameriki pojavilo izobraževalno gibanje, poznano kot Education nouvelle, Novo izobraževanje ali Nova šola, ki si je prizadevalo preseči staro avtoritarno šolstvo, ki je temeljilo na pifljanju. Med njegovimi najbolj znanimi predstavniki so bili Paul Robin v Franciji, Maria Montessori v Italiji, John Dewey v ZDA in Francesco Ferrer v Španiji. Ferrer je leta 1901 v Barceloni ustanovil Sodobno šolo (Escuela Moderna), ki je bila ena od paradigmatičnih šol tega

gibanja. Kakor je razvidno iz spisov Ferrerja in drugih učiteljev, je bila ena od značilnosti te šole zavračanje elementov tradicionalne kulture v šoli, saj je pri racionalnem izobraževanju otrok tradicija veljala za oviro napredku. Ta članek predstavlja analizo o vlogi tradicionalne kulture v gibanju prenove izobraževanja na začetku 20. stoletja v Kataloniji.

Sodobna šola ni bila edina pobuda tega gibanja v Kataloniji. Nasprotno, v Barceloni se je gibanju za novo izobraževanje rodilo več pedagoških predlogov, ki so se med seboj zelo razlikovali. Avtor se osredinja na dva paradigmatiska predloga katalonskega gibanja za novo izobraževanje, da bi preučil nasprotje v načinu pojmovanja tradicije v šolskem okolju. Na eni strani je omenjena Ferrerjeva Sodobna šola, na drugi pa šole, ki jih je spodbujala katalonska regionalna vlada pod vodstvom konservativnega in nacionalističnega meščanstva; to je v gibanju Novo izobraževanje videlo glavno orodje svojega političnega in kulturnega projekta. Delovalo je v okviru estetskega gibanja, poznanega kot Noucentisme, ki je temeljilo na načelih klasicizma, urbanosti in modernosti.

Da bi analizirali mesto tradicije v teh dveh izobraževalnih predlogih z začetka 20. stoletja, je avtor analiziral reviji, ki sta bili glasnika teh dveh gibanj: *Boletín de la Escuela de Moderna* (Bilten Sodobne šole) in *Quaderns d'Estudi* (Študijski zvezki). Analiza je pokazala, da je bila za vzgojitelje in učitelje, ki so objavljali v *Boletín de la Escuela Moderna*, tradicija breme, ki se ga je bilo treba znebiti, da bi lahko napredovali pri projektu uvajanja racionalnega izobraževanja. Nasprotno pa so vzgojitelji in učitelji, ki so objavljali v *Quaderns d'Estudi*, ki jo je izdajal Pedagoški svet katalonske vlade, v tradiciji videli instrument za vzgojo dobrih državljanov v skladu z meščansko moralo. Podrobnejša analiza razkriva ideološko razsežnost obeh izobraževalnih projektov. Medtem ko je bil namen prvega pristopa spodbujati revolucionarne družbene spremembe, je bil namen drugega omogočiti mestnemu delavstvu, da se odmakne od družbenih pretresov, ki so prežemali takratni zgodovinski trenutek. Od tod tudi različna vloga tradicije v obeh pedagoških projektih.

Namen članka je primerjati dve sočasni viziji tradicije, njuno uporabo in zavračanje. Na koncu je obravnavana možnost ponovnega premisleka tradicije onkraj spoprijema med revolucionarji in konservativci oziroma med antitradicionalisti in tradicionalisti.