

declare the said Francisco I. Madero unfit to carry out the promises of the Revolution of which he was the author. . . .

4. The Revolutionary Junta of the State of Morelos formally proclaims to the Mexican people:
5. That it endorses the *Plan of San Luis Potosí* with the additions stated below for the benefit of the oppressed peoples, and that it will defend its principles until victory or death. . . .
6. As an additional part of the plan we proclaim, be it known: that the lands, woods, and waters usurped by the *hacendados*, *científicos*, or *caciques* through tyranny and venal justice henceforth belong to the towns or citizens who have corresponding titles to these properties, of which they were despoiled by the bad faith of our oppressors. They shall retain possession of the said properties at all costs, arms in hand. The usurpers who think they have a right to the said lands may state their claims before special tribunals to be established upon the triumph of the Revolution. . . .
7. Since the immense majority of Mexican towns and citizens own nothing but the ground on which they stand and endure a miserable existence, denied the opportunity to improve their social condition or to devote themselves to industry or agriculture because a few individuals monopolize the lands, woods, and waters—for these reasons the great estates shall be expropriated, with indemnification to the owners of one third of such monopolies, in order that the towns and citizens of Mexico may obtain *ejidos*, colonies, town sites, and arable lands. Thus the welfare of the Mexican people shall be promoted in all respects.
8. The properties of those *hacendados*, *científicos*, or *caciques* who directly or indirectly oppose the present *Plan* shall be seized by the nation, and two thirds of their value shall be used for war indemnities and pensions for the widows and orphans of the soldiers who may perish in the struggle for this *Plan*.
9. In proceeding against the above properties there shall be applied the laws of disentail and nationalization, as may be convenient, using as our precept and example the laws enforced by the immortal [former President Benito] Juárez against Church property—laws that taught a painful lesson to the despots and conservatives who at all times have sought to fasten upon the people the yoke of oppression and backwardness.

2. THE INDIAN PROBLEM

Peruvian writer and thinker José Carlos Mariátegui (1894–1930) authored many influential essays diagnosing the problems of his society. Despite his background as a Marx-

ist intellectual—evident in his emphasis on economic explanations and periodization—Mariátegui identified the Indian (rather than the industrial worker) as the ultimate oppressed class in Peru. As the following excerpt shows, Mariátegui dismissed traditional ways of conceptualizing the “Indian problem,” pointing instead to *gamonalismo* (the web of local control that attached peons to large landed property) as the explanation. Only its abolition would permit the liberation of the Indian and the regeneration of Peruvian society.

All of the theses on the indigenous problem that ignore it or avoid it as a socioeconomic problem are merely sterile theoretical exercises. . . . Practically speaking, most of them have served only to hide or disfigure the reality of the problem. The socialist critique uncovers it and clarifies it, because it searches for its causes in the economy of the country rather than in its administrative, juridical, ecclesiastical mechanisms, or in the duality or plurality of races, or in its cultural or moral conditions. The Indian question begins with our economy. Its roots are to be found in the system of ownership of the land. Any attempt to solve it with administrative or police measures, with teaching methods or road works will be a superficial or secondary endeavor, as long as the feudal *gamonales* survive.

Gamonalismo inevitably invalidates any law or ordinance to protect the Indian. The landowner, the boss, is a feudal lord. Written law is powerless against his authority, supported by environment and custom. Unpaid work is prohibited by law, and yet, unpaid work (or even forced work) survives on the large property. The judge, the sub-prefect, the commissioner, the teacher, and the tax collector are all vassals to property. The law cannot prevail over *gamonales*. The functionary who insists on enforcing it would be abandoned and sacrificed by central power, around which the influences of *gamonalismo* are all-powerful, operating directly or by way of congress, either way being equally effective.

Thus, the new examination of the indigenous problem is much less concerned with the guidelines of tutelary legislation than it is with the consequences of the regime of agrarian property. . . .

This critique repudiates and disqualifies the various theses that consider the question by means of any of the following exclusive and unilateral criteria: administrative, juridical, ethnic, moral, educational or ecclesiastic.

The oldest and most obvious defeat is, no doubt, that of those who reduce the protection of Indians to a question of mere administration. Since the time of Spanish colonial legislation, the wise and tidy ordinances passed in answer to conscientious investigations have shown themselves to be totally fruitless.

José Carlos Mariátegui, “El problema del indio,” in *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* (Lima: Editorial Minerva, 1944), pp. 25–32. The text was originally published in 1928. Original footnotes have been removed. Excerpt translated by the editors.

Since the days of Independence, the copiousness of the Republic's attempts—by means of decrees, laws and provisions—to protect the Indians against exaction and abuse is not inconsiderable. Today's *gamonal*, like yesterday's *encomendero* has, however, little to fear from administrative theory. He knows that practice is another matter.

The individualistic nature of the Republic's legislation has favored, unquestionably, the absorption of indigenous property by *latifundismo* [the pattern of large land holdings]. In this respect, the situation of the Indian was more realistically contemplated by Spanish legislation. But juridical reform has no more practical value than administrative reform, faced with a feudalism intact in its economic structure. The appropriation of the greatest part of communal and individual Indian property has already been achieved. The experience of all countries that have emerged from their feudal era shows us, on the other hand, that no liberal law can function anywhere without the dissolution of feudalism.

The supposition that the Indian problem is an ethnic problem stems from the oldest repertoire of imperialist ideas. The concept of inferior races helped the white Occident in its project of expansion and conquest. Expecting Indian emancipation from an active mixing of the aboriginal race with white immigrants is an anti-sociological naïveté, only conceivable in the rudimentary mind of an importer of merino lambs. Asiatic peoples, to whom the Indian people are not inferior in the least, have admirably assimilated Western culture in its most dynamic or creative forms, without European blood transfusions. The degeneracy of the Indian is a cheap invention of feudal shysters.

The tendency to consider the indigenous problem as a moral problem embodies a liberal, humanistic, nineteenth-century, enlightenment conception—the very same that in the political order of the West sparks and motivates the “Leagues for the Rights of Man.” The conferences and anti-slavery societies that in Europe have denounced (more or less uselessly) the crimes of the colonizers, are born of this tendency, which has always placed too much trust in the moral sense of civilization. . . .

Centuries ago, religion (with great energy, or at least great authority) placed itself in the domain of reason and morality. This crusade, however, amounted to nothing but laws and wisely inspired measures. The fate of the Indians did not vary substantially. . . .

But today, the hope for an ecclesiastical solution is unquestionably the most backward and anti-historical of all. Those who represent it don't even worry, like their distant—how distant!—masters, about obtaining a new declaration of the rights of the Indian, with adequate authority and decrees, but rather about entrusting the missionaries with the function of mediating between the Indian and the *gamonal*. The works that the Church couldn't achieve when its spiritual and intellectual capacity could be measured in friars

like father [Bartolomé] las Casas, what elements would it count on to prosper today? The Adventist missions, in this respect, have won the leadership over the Catholic clergy, whose cloisters produce a smaller number of evangelists each day.

The concept that the problem of the Indian is one of education doesn't seem supported by even the most narrow and autonomously pedagogic criteria. Today more than ever, pedagogy takes into account social and economic factors. The modern pedagogue knows perfectly well that education is not merely a question of school and didactic methods. The economic and social milieu inevitably conditions the task of the teacher. *Gamonalismo* is fundamentally opposed to the education of the Indian: its very existence sees the same interest in maintaining his ignorance as it does in encouraging his alcoholism.

The modern school—assuming that within the current circumstances it might grow in proportion to the school-age peasant population—is incompatible with feudal *latifundio*. The mechanics of servitude would totally negate the purpose of the school, even if, by means of some inconceivable miracle in the social status quo, it were able to maintain in the atmosphere of feudalism, its purely pedagogical mission. The most efficient and grandiose school teaching couldn't perform these miracles. The school and the teacher are hopelessly condemned to denaturalize themselves under the pressure of the feudal environment, incompatible as it is with the most elemental progressive or evolutionist conception of things. A partial understanding of this truth leads one to search for the solution in indigenous boarding schools. But the glaring shortcomings of this formula become clear as soon as one considers the insignificant percentage of the Indian school population that can be housed in those schools.

The pedagogic solution, advanced by many in untainted good faith, is dismissed even on the official level. Educators are, I insist, those who can least consider independence from socioeconomic reality. It does not exist, thus, in actuality, but as a vague and amorphous suggestion, that no body and no doctrine claims to itself.

The new way of looking at the problem of the Indian is by searching for its roots in the problem of the land.

3. TEACHING AND TELLING STORIES

Gabriela Mistral (1889–1957), the first Latin American woman to win a Nobel Prize in Literature, was born in Vicuña, a small town in northern Chile. Her talent as a poet, writer, and speaker would turn her into Chile's representative abroad for almost twenty years, a role that included diplomatic missions to the League of Nations

NINTH EDITION

Keen's Latin American Civilization

History and Society, 1492 to the Present

Edited by

Robert Buffington
University of Colorado at Boulder

Lila Caimari
CONICET

2009



A Member of the Perseus Books Group