FOREWORD

INSTEAD OF A FOREWORD: A REQUEST TO READ

In one of his many memorable 'insights', the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset recommended not writing unnecessary books, as he even believed that this literary restraint was one of the works of mercy most urgently needed in the present day. A recommendation that, given the unchecked publishing frenzy of our times, whether in print media or digital channels, we could undoubtedly take to heart today as well.

In the face of this deluge of unnecessary works, however, we should interpret Ortega y Gasset's recommendation in a positive light and rephrase it as follows: one of the works of mercy that we most urgently need today, as men and women living in an age dominated by ideologies that constrain the human soul and the world, is precisely the publication of necessary books, books that, like a clear mirror, reflect the needy beings that we are, and tell us what we truly need in order to bear our condition as needy beings and thus establish forms of tender and supportive coexistence.

So let us ask: is this book, presented to us by the renowned editors María Pilar Aquino, Mónica A. Maher and María del Carmen Servitje Montull as the result of the collaborative work of a group of women, a necessary book?

My answer is yes, an unqualified yes.

I shall therefore confine myself in this foreword to asking you to read it, and I ask you to do so precisely because, as readers will see, this is a book that deals with a central theme (interculturality, interreligious dialogue, feminism and peace education) that is essential for understanding our conflict-ridden world today and, more specifically, for understanding *the* actual *state* of *humanity*—comprising both men and women—in contemporary societies.

This book, then, speaks of something we must know as human beings and as a world, and it speaks of this necessity not for reasons of academic vanity or to follow the logic of the rules of so-called criteria for university excellence, but for the sake of our coexistence and our way of inhabiting the world. Consequently, its contributions contain keys of fundamental importance for interpreting our current human coexistence and our hegemonic civilisation through life experiences, which in themselves carry the ethical and epistemological potentials that we must activate in order to lend breadth and depth to our own unique lives as human beings and to this 'common home' that the world ought to be. For us, therefore, this book is indispensable today on both a theoretical and a practical level.

But I also urge you to read this book because it is just as essential for us in a more specific, yet no less important, area: namely, the struggle for the recognition and balance of diversity in the world and among humanity.

I am referring to the testimony of intellectual work as committed and collaborative labour that this book conveys to us. It is necessary to reclaim this memory, and reading this book helps us to do so; at this level, it can be seen as a collective manifesto that makes it clear that 'another academic community is possible' – specifically as a community that asserts itself as a historical, *corporate* reality and counters the isolation, fragmentation and disembodiment of intellectual life that cognitive capitalism seeks to impose today.

It is only fitting to conclude this invitation to read the book with a word of thanks to its authors:

Thank you very much for the gift of this manifesto!

Raúl Fornet-Betancourt