

ARTICLES/ARTÍCULOS

Democratic Principles in the Thought of Blas Infante

Principios democráticos en el pensamiento de Blas Infante

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Received/Recibido: 20–10–2024

Accepted/Aceptado: 3–2–2025



ABSTRACT

The Andalusianist leader Blas Infante used the weekly *El Regionalista* between 1918 and 1919 to articulate and disseminate democratic principles. This study, based on a qualitative analysis of 28 articles authored by Infante, employs documentary and discourse analysis techniques, supported by NVivo software, which enabled the coding of key categories such as social justice, citizen participation and Andalusian autonomy. The findings demonstrate how Infante advanced a model of democracy that transcends the political sphere, incorporating proposals for agrarian reform, decentralisation of power and civic mobilisation. His critiques of centralism and his emphasis on historical consciousness reveal a conception of democracy as a transformative tool for building a more just and autonomous Andalusia. This approach, deeply rooted in Andalusian cultural identity, engages with contemporary debates on social justice and the significance of democratic values in regional contexts.

KEYWORDS: Blas Infante; Andalusianism; democracy; political thought; Andalusian regionalism; Andalusia; Andalusian nationalism.

HOW TO REFERENCE: Cataño–García, E. (2025). Principios democráticos en el pensamiento de Blas Infante. *Revista Centra de Ciencias Sociales*, 4(2), 35–56. <https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.112>

The Spanish (original) version can be read at <https://doi.org/10.54790/rccs.112>

RESUMEN

El líder andalucista Blas Infante utilizó el semanario *El Regionalista* entre 1918 y 1919 para articular y difundir principios democráticos. Este estudio, basado en el análisis cualitativo de 28 artículos escritos por él, implementa técnicas de análisis documental y discursivo con el apoyo del *software* NVivo, que permitió codificar categorías clave como justicia social, participación ciudadana y autonomía andaluza. Los resultados evidencian cómo Infante promovió un modelo democrático que trasciende lo político, integrando propuestas de reforma agraria, descentralización del poder y movilización ciudadana. Sus críticas al centralismo y su énfasis en la conciencia histórica revelan una concepción de la democracia como herramienta transformadora para construir una Andalucía más justa y autónoma. Este enfoque, profundamente arraigado en la identidad cultural andaluza, conecta con debates contemporáneos sobre justicia social y la relevancia de los valores democráticos en contextos regionales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Blas Infante; andalucismo; democracia; pensamiento político; regionalismo andaluz; Andalucía; nacionalismo andaluz.

1. Introduction

The central hypothesis of this paper is that Blas Infante developed a distinctive vision of regionalist democracy that prioritised social justice, citizen participation and Andalusian autonomy in response to the centralisation of power in Spain. Discourse analysis reveals how he used *El Regionalista* not merely as a medium of communication but as a tool to shape interpretations and articulate demands for democratisation in Andalusia. This process underscores the dynamic interaction between writers and readers – an exchange deeply influenced by the socio-economic and linguistic formations of the period (Beetham, 1996, pp. 5–6).

El Regionalista, founded in December 1917, served as a key publication of the Centro Andaluz in Seville and a crucial platform for the dissemination of Andalusian regionalism. Although its existence was short-lived, the weekly established itself as a polyphonic space for dialogue, where political tensions were interwoven and the future of Andalusia was actively contemplated. The articles published covered topics such as the protection of cork oak forests, the creation of markets to ensure food supply, the fight against *caciquismo* and the promotion of Andalusian autonomy. These writings not only document the concerns of Andalusian regionalists between 1917 and 1920, but also legitimise a narrative of social justice and citizen participation that lies at the heart of the Andalusian leader's political thought – a response to the demands of his time during a period marked by political and social unrest in Spain.

By chronicling the political and social debates of the era – from the First World War to the Bolshevik Triennium – *El Regionalista*, like other similar publications, became a key instrument for promoting the exchange of ideas and encouraging public accountability, thereby enriching the political and democratic fabric of society (Bürki and Partzsch, 2016, p. 2).

Infante's conception of democracy goes beyond its literal meaning ("power of the people") and embraces a social and participatory dimension that advocates equity and justice. In this sense, his ideas may be linked to those of Jane Addams (1899), who criticised militarism and championed a participatory and peaceful model of democracy, and to those of Hans Kelsen (1988), who emphasised the necessity of a legal framework to guarantee equitable participation in government. Although no specific study has been conducted on the ideological influences or contemporary thinkers who may have shaped Blas Infante's thought, his views on democracy reveal an affinity with approaches that advocate a model extending beyond formal institutions.

2. Methodology

To understand the concept of democracy within the framework of Infante's Andalusianist project, an exhaustive documentary analysis of both primary and secondary sources was conducted, complemented by advanced techniques of critical discourse analysis.

The primary sources examined include key works by the Andalusian thinker, such as *Ideal Andaluz* (1915), *La verdad sobre el complot de Tablada y el Estado Libre de Andalucía* (1931) and *Andalucía desconocida* (1934), selected for their relevance to the development of democratic ideas. Additionally, 28 articles published in *El Regionalista* between 1918 and 1919 were analysed, sourced from the Pascual Carrión archive in Sax (Alicante), offering a fresh perspective on Andalusian regionalism at a pivotal stage in its evolution.

Secondary sources have also been essential for contextualising and enriching the theoretical framework. Noteworthy among these are the successive contributions to the seventeen *Congresos sobre el Andalusismo Histórico* conferences (1983–2024), promoted by the Blas Infante Foundation, as well as the work of key scholars analysing Infante's intellectual legacy. Juan Antonio Lacomba, for example, has produced foundational studies on the origins of Andalusian regionalism and its connection with nationalist movements in Spain. Works such as *Teoría y Praxis del Andalusismo* (1988), *Regionalismo y Autonomía en la Andalucía Contemporánea (1835–1936)* (1988) and *Blas Infante y el despliegue del andalusismo* (2000) are essential references for understanding the historical development of regionalism in Spain.

Francisco Acosta (1987) examines how federalism and Krausism influenced the ideology of the notary from the town of Casares in the province of Málaga, highlighting the relationship between these intellectual traditions and his proposal for auto-

my. Similarly, José Aumente, in his analysis of the *Manifiesto Andalucista de Córdoba* (1979), offers a valuable perspective on the ideological debates that shaped Andalusianism at the time. These works provide a deeper understanding of the ideological and cultural foundations underpinning the thought of the Andalusianist leader.

Contemporary scholars such as Isidoro Moreno (1981, 1983, 1986, 1993) have continued this line of research, emphasising the concepts of ethnicity and identity consciousness as mobilising forces in Andalusia. More recent studies by Salvador Cruz Artacho (2016), Eva Cataño García (2023), Manuel Clavero (2010) and Manuel Ruiz Romero (2008, 2010) offer new interpretations of the Andalusian intellectual's impact on the processes of regional autonomy and his ongoing relevance in contemporary political discourse.

The documentary analysis was structured in several phases:

1. *Data collection*: Identification of documents based on thematic criteria (democracy, culture, identity), chronological criteria (1915–1934) and academic relevance. Although a representative sample of texts was included, it is important to acknowledge that documentary analysis is inherently shaped by the availability of sources and their interpretation.
2. *Preliminary analysis*: Exploratory reading to identify initial thematic patterns.
3. *Coding*: Use of NVivo software (version Release 1.7.1) to categorise the sources into themes such as “participation”, “autonomy”, “historical and cultural consciousness”, “regional identity” and “social transformation”.
4. *Critical analysis*: Application of critical discourse analysis to examine how the concept of democracy is articulated within Infante's ideological project.
5. *Interpretation of results*: Synthesis of coded data to identify relationships and patterns among the categories.

This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of Infante's thought, linking his ideas to the historical and cultural context of his time. It also provides a replicable methodology that could be applied to other authors or topics concerning political and cultural thought in Andalusia. The inclusion of digital tools such as NVivo enhances the precision of the analysis and supports a rigorous systematisation of findings.

The analysis structured Infante's conception of democracy around five key axes: a critique of the political and social system, calling for far-reaching reforms to address structural injustices; the promotion of social transformation and collective responsibility, with justice and equity as the pillars of genuine democracy; citizen mobilisation as the driving force of political change; the preservation of

historical and cultural consciousness as the foundation of a robust democracy; and the defence of regional identity and Andalusian autonomy. These pillars reflect his democratic model and highlight its significance in the history of Andalusian regionalism.

3. Criticism of the political and social system within the democratic model

Through his writings in *El Regionalista*, the Andalusianist leader presents a forceful critique of the political and social system prevailing in Spain at the time, positioning this critique as a core component of his democratic vision. His discourse does not constitute a superficial complaint; rather, it offers a deep and systemic diagnosis of the structural failings which, in his view, undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of government and perpetuate inequality and social injustice.

Infante identifies widespread disillusionment with the Spanish political system, rooted in its inability to take effective action or deliver tangible benefits for the people. In his view, government measures are not only ineffective but also serve to reproduce a cycle of structural injustice and inequality. In his texts, he consistently emphasises the need to dismantle centralism, which he sees as one of the primary obstacles to genuine democracy. This centralism, in his analysis, concentrates power in the hands of an elite, silences regional and local voices, and obstructs any meaningful and effective citizen participation.

The critique offered by the Father of the Andalusian Nation goes beyond denunciation, proposing deep reform to address the root causes of Spain's structural injustices. The notary from Casares identifies land concentration as one of the principal causes of poverty and inequality in Andalusia, arguing that its redistribution is essential not only for achieving social justice but also for consolidating an authentic democratic system. He accuses the government of protecting economic and political monopolies, allowing them to impose inflated prices on essential goods, export food during times of scarcity and neglect both the protection of farmers and the development of new industries. This conduct, according to the Andalusianist intellectual, reveals a clear disregard for the interests of the people and underscores the urgency of reform that prioritises the common good over private profit.

Infante not only criticises the actions of the government, but also its failure to address the underlying causes of social protests and strikes in a meaningful way. He argues that, rather than repressing demonstrators, the government should focus on identifying and holding accountable those truly responsible for the injustices that provoke such actions. This perspective reflects the conviction of the Father of the Andalusian Nation that genuine democracy must be rooted in justice and in a government that truly represents the interests of the people (Infante, 1918j).

Infante refers to the year 1898 – a pivotal moment in Spanish history marked by defeat in the war against the United States and the loss of its last colonies – to illustrate the profound national humiliation which, in his view, affected not only the generation of the time but also future generations (Infante, 1918a). He criticises the political and military leadership responsible for this outcome, attributing it to the corruption and inefficiency of the Spanish political system. By invoking this historical episode, he emphasises that the memory of defeat should serve as a warning to avoid repeating the same mistakes, highlighting the need for critical reflection on history as a basis for political and social renewal.

Infante underscores how the functions of government have been corrupted by the “rapacity” of political parties and their clientèle, who have turned these functions into instruments for personal gain rather than tools for promoting the common good. This critique exposes the lack of integrity and the abuse of power within government structures, stressing the urgent need for deep reform of the political system. He advocates the establishment of an authentic democracy, free from corruption and genuinely committed to the public good, proposing that such a transformation is not only a political imperative but also an act of justice and an affirmation of human dignity.

The task of caring for the Fatherland was regarded by Spaniards, whether in power or subordinate (the latter corrupted and degraded by the wickedness and example of the former), as a function of natural rapacity, in which the governing parties and their wretched clientèle alternated, pieces of a fatal mechanism designed to drain the nation’s lifeblood (Infante, 1918a, [translation]).

Ultimately, widespread discontent with the parliamentary system and the delegitimisation of existing institutions reveal the urgency of a democratic transformation capable of addressing the demands and aspirations of the people. For Infante, this transformation is not only a political necessity but also an act of justice and a reaffirmation of human dignity.

The Andalusianist leader denounces the government’s inaction and failure to produce concrete results in addressing Spain’s social and economic problems. He criticises the lack of positive outcomes from political debates, arguing that discussions of social and patriotic issues are used as a pretext for political posturing, rather than as genuine efforts to address underlying problems and seek effective solutions (Infante, 1918j).

His democratic proposals are grounded in a sharp critique of the ineffectiveness of Spain’s institutions, questioning both their structure and their functioning. Through pointed quotations, the Andalusianist intellectual lays bare the failings of the prevailing political system and underscores its inability to represent and serve the Spanish people effectively.

For Infante, Parliament symbolises the loss of legitimacy of existing institutions. He depicts it as a space in which personal passions prevail and political

debate becomes spectacle, diverting attention from the nation's most pressing concerns. He condemns Parliament's inertia and inefficacy in tackling social and political challenges, viewing it as an instrument of the oligarchy, incapable of enforcing the Constitution or defending the public interest. This absence of legitimacy and effectiveness leads him to question the usefulness of Parliament itself, pointing to the need for more effective alternatives for political representation and decision-making.

Infante suggests that the concepts of "revolution" and "democracy" have been emptied of meaning through superficial use, lacking genuine backing in concrete actions and proposals. He calls on the Spanish left to undertake a thorough study of the country's social problems and needs, emphasising the importance of an approach grounded in rational and in-depth analysis of social and economic realities. This focus on tangible action reflects his conviction that words must be accompanied by practical solutions capable of immediate implementation. He further warns that, without offering real solutions, the left risks losing the confidence of both the elite and the politically conscious public, thereby squandering valuable opportunities to advance the revolutionary cause (Infante, 1918q).

4. Social and political transformation and responsibility

In the democratic principles outlined by Casares-born notary, the social and political transformation of Andalusia – along with the responsibility it entails – is central to the construction of a just society. He conceives of legislation and the enforcement of laws not merely as instruments of order, but as essential pillars for ensuring justice and promoting the common good. In his thought, the transformation of Andalusia is a necessary process that must be accompanied by a firm commitment to social responsibility, both individual and collective.

A key example of this perspective appears in the actions of the Centro Andaluz, which Infante highlights in one of his articles, where it demands the enforcement of laws relating to the celebration of Arbor Day (Fiesta del Árbol) in all Andalusian municipalities. This initiative is far from merely symbolic; it seeks to protect vital natural resources such as cork oak forests, while also fostering community well-being and ensuring a sustainable future for the region. For the Andalusianist leader, such actions underscore the importance of legislation that is not only enacted but also effectively enforced as a means to achieve genuine and lasting social justice (Infante, 1918e).

Infante's critique of the government's neglect of Andalusia's real challenges is evident in his rejection of simplistic and repressive responses that focus on a supposed "terrorist threat" in the Andalusian countryside. In his view, a true democracy must be capable of confronting and resolving the fundamental problems facing society,

rather than evading or manipulating them to justify ineffective policies. Infante advocates the drafting of a legislative bill to address the agrarian question in Andalusia, thereby affirming his commitment to social and political transformation through legislative action. He argues that, instead of responding with fear – as the central government does – Andalusia should engage in serious research and analysis in order to offer practical and just solutions for both the peasantry and the state (Infante, 1919e).

The issue of land is a recurring theme in Infante's reflections, where he proposes concrete measures such as penalising those who leave their land uncultivated and expropriating such land for redistribution among the population. This proposal reflects his strong belief in the democratisation of resources and in the importance of transparency and accountability in the management of public assets. For Infante, land redistribution is a vital step towards more equitable socio-economic development, allowing all citizens to participate fully in the economic and political life of the region.

Beyond the borders of Andalusia, this pioneer of regionalism broadens his vision of political transformation to encompass both the national and international spheres. His position includes a clear focus on issues such as disarmament and international security, cooperation among nations and democratic governance at the global level. Infante criticises the superficial disarmament proposals put forward by the League of Nations, arguing that only absolute and universal disarmament could genuinely promote peace and justice on a global scale. For him, any other form of disarmament is incompatible with the principles of a truly democratic international order.

Wilson speaks, in his fourth point, of 'the reduction of armaments'. We understand this to mean both a nation with reduced armaments and a nation that remains armed. And this is an inconsistency on Wilson's part, incompatible with his earlier principles (Infante, 1918r, [translation]).

Regarding governance, he suggests that responsibility for disarmament should rest with a representative international body, whose decisions are made transparently and justly. This idea reflects his deep conviction that democratic governance must extend beyond national borders and that decisions affecting the security and well-being of people must be taken inclusively and equitably. In a genuine democracy, international institutions should operate with the same transparency and accountability expected of national governments.

Another crucial element of his proposal is his rejection of demagoguery and oligarchy, and his defence of a form of government based on what he terms "natural aristocracy". For the Andalusianist leader, true aristocracy is not defined by social status or inherited privilege, but by excellence in thought, feeling and action. This "natural aristocracy", in his view, represents the embodiment of a disciplined and effective

democracy, in which popular government is exercised by those most capable and most committed to the common good. Infante maintains that this ideal form of political organisation can only be realised within the framework of a republic, as monarchy perpetuates a system of privileges fundamentally at odds with the principles of a meritocratic democracy.

I believe in only one royalty. The only majesty I respect is the majesty of a natural royalty – the royalty of those superior in thought, in feeling, and in the energy and fruitfulness of action. The commanding individuals, best equipped to govern and lead the advancement of the people. These are the true kings: those who exercise their reign through the collective conscience (Infante, 1918i, [translation]).

In his view, the idea of “renewal” does not refer to superficial changes in personnel or discourse, but to a profound transformation of the institutions and social structures underpinning society. He argues that many existing bodies are obsolete and ineffective in meeting the needs of the Andalusian people, and must therefore be replaced or reformed to serve their true purpose: to promote the common good and uphold social justice (Infante, 1919h).

In summary, Infante’s thought on responsibility and political and political transformation in Andalusia is deeply rooted in his commitment to justice, freedom and equality. His vision appeals to reason and consensus, proposing concrete measures to improve the socio-economic conditions of the region, always with a strong emphasis on awakening regionalist consciousness and advocating for the freedom and dignity of all Andalusians. Transformation, in his view, is a comprehensive process requiring not only legislative change but also a profound renewal of social and political structures, with the aim of building a fairer, more equitable and democratic Andalusia.

5. Citizen mobilisation and participation

In his proposal, conscious and active participation is essential for the functioning of a genuine democracy, in which the individual is the central actor. He stresses that an effective democracy requires the direct involvement of citizens in decision-making and in building the common good, viewing this participation not only as a right but as a responsibility intrinsic to the exercise of popular sovereignty.

According to Infante, citizen mobilisation in Andalusia depends on personal variables such as individual interest, access to information and a sense of political efficacy, as well as collective variables like the existence of organisational networks and community stability. These factors are interwoven to form the foundation of an active and committed citizenry. Infante questions whether a stable community exists in Andalusia, whether Andalusians are integrated into networks that foster participation, and whether there are parties or movements capable of effectively mobilising

the most disadvantaged sectors. These reflections suggest that class or status consciousness may be key to mobilisation, in line with Pizzorno's argument that "class consciousness promotes political participation, and in its turn political participation increases class consciousness" (1975, p. 49).

For the Andalusian thinker, local commitment is crucial for generating authenticity and a rooted connection with Andalusia, which in turn lends legitimacy and strength to the regionalist movement. Infante highlights the importance of balancing representation and participation in a genuine democracy, where citizens do not merely delegate power but are actively involved in decision-making. This idea resonates with Bernard Manin (1998), who argues that a fully realised democracy requires not only representation but also the direct participation of citizens. This commitment is embodied in the altruistic actions of the Centro Andaluz, which the notary from Casares describes as a work of "conscious and serious redemption", aimed at establishing a democratic and representative form of regionalism (Infante, 1918c).

Infante harshly criticises passivity and resignation in the face of injustice, accusing those who consider themselves neutral of apathy and small-mindedness for failing to engage in political life and limiting themselves to fulfilling their individual responsibilities without regard for the common good. He underscores the importance of every person assuming their responsibility as a citizen and contributing actively to collective well-being (Infante, 1918k). This critique is amplified in his proposal to organise an assembly on the Guadalquivir River navigation project, where he stresses the need to become involved in initiatives that directly benefit Andalusian territory (Infante, 1918l).

Andalusian regionalism has raised in the city the banner of rebellion, and the wind now carries its vindicating anger – purifying love – through the mountains and valleys. Our clarion call will echo in the hollows of every rock. Many voices already join its call, whether heard or not by the deaf of spirit. It will cry out desperately to the rough shepherds of the sierras, to form armies with the famished peasants of the plains (Infante, 1918d, [translation]).

The Father of the Andalusian Nation also emphasises the importance of committed and responsible participation in public affairs, asserting that democracy is a system in which sovereignty resides with the people and is exercised through their direct involvement in decision-making. In his discourse, he poses the dilemma of "free land or revolution", arguing that the only path to freedom and justice is through collective mobilisation and direct action (Infante, 1918f). This call to action is not simply an exhortation to protest, but an invitation to a profound transformation of the political and social structure of Andalusia – one that can only be achieved through the sustained and collective effort of those who uphold the democratic ideal.

A staunch critic of civic passivity and social conformity, Infante incites rebellion grounded in the struggle for life and liberty as the driving forces of change and progress. He particularly stresses the need for this committed and persistent activism

to overthrow the *caciques* and establish a political system based on democracy and citizen participation. According to him, only through the continuous, united effort of those who defend the democratic ideal can meaningful change be brought about in Andalusia's political and social structure.

The *cacique* exists for the weeping multitudes who do not revolt against the lashes they receive. The *cacique* is created by that amorphous, unconscious crowd. To bring down the *cacique*, we need a wandering apostleship of the ideal (Infante, 1918m, [translation]).

His criticism of those who remain passive and conformist underscores the importance of active citizenship in a democracy. Democracy requires civic engagement and a constant drive to improve society.

Repugnant old men, bitter and selfish, trapped in young bodies: despicable asexuals; neutral in thought and action; vile prostitutes of conscience and faith – you who form the youth of this era, whom virile Andalusia endures, ashamed, on our behalf... Andalusia and Spain cannot be renewed because the young are old, and the old young men are dying... [...] For every lip that is silenced, a hundred lips open to free from the chest the eternal voice that commands life and its perfection – for individuals, for peoples and for worlds (Infante, 1918p, [translation]).

For the notary from Casares, democracy entails not only the election of leaders, but also active and ongoing participation in policymaking and decision-making processes that affect the community. This is made evident in his *Manifiesto de los Regionalistas* of January 1919, where he calls on all social classes, including workers, to unite in the struggle for Andalusia's autonomy and freedom. This manifesto reflects his vision of a participatory democracy, in which citizen engagement is essential to the democratic process and to the attainment of a fairer society (Infante, 1919c).

The youth also plays a central role in his proposal. The Andalusianist leader appeals to young Andalusians to serve as the vanguard of the struggle for renewal and change. He underscores the importance of young people uniting and committing to the regionalist cause – not only as a means of challenging the *status quo*, but also as a way to safeguard Andalusia's future in the hands of those willing to fight for its dignity and freedom (Infante, 1919d).

Despite opposition and attempts to discredit him, the Andalusianist leader demonstrates a remarkable ability to adapt strategically to changing circumstances, maintaining both his leadership and his unwavering commitment to the regionalist cause. As he himself notes:

Despite the manoeuvres carried out by the *caciques*, who sought to incite the disruptive elements against me, common sense has prevailed. The sensible opinion of each town has understood that the *caciques* see in the new candidate an irreconcilable enemy (Infante, 1919g, [translation]).

Following the Regionalist Assembly in Córdoba in 1919, the notary from Casares initially announced his withdrawal in order to resume his studies. However, he later reconsidered this decision, arguing that it would be more prudent to wait until the general situation had become clearer before reaching a definitive conclusion (Infante, 1919f). This change of stance reflects both his steadfast commitment to the regionalist cause and his capacity to respond strategically to unfolding events. His return to leadership not only reinforced his central role as a political figure, but also revealed the fragility of the movement's structures, within which his presence proved vital to maintaining cohesion and directing collective efforts towards democratic objectives.

Moreover, the notary calls for popular mobilisation as a form of peaceful resistance in the face of oppression and arbitrary authority. He underscores the importance of community solidarity and unity in the struggle for fundamental rights (Infante, 1919i).

In conclusion, for the Father of the Andalusian Nation, citizen mobilisation and participation are the foundations upon which a true democracy must be built. Infante regards popular mobilisation not merely as a means to achieve political transformation, but as an end in itself – where citizen engagement becomes the very essence of a living and effective democracy.

6. Historical and cultural consciousness

In Infante's democratic vision, historical and cultural consciousness is not merely an abstract notion but a critical tool for reconstructing collective identity and driving political transformation in Andalusia. Infante does not simply acknowledge the importance of history and culture; rather, he places them at the heart of his efforts to challenge hegemonic narratives and articulate an emancipatory project for his people. The pluralism of values and the moral irrationality present in his thought reflect his concern with the tensions between competing conceptions of the good within a democratic society.

In this sense, Infante stresses the need to investigate and recover the forgotten history of Andalusia – not only to recover the key milestones and figures of its past, but also to reclaim the region's collective memory and restore its lost identity (Infante, 1918c).

He starts from the premise that official history, written by the victors, has marginalised and distorted the true history of Andalusia, stripping the Andalusian people of their dignity and obscuring their legacy of civilisation and peace. In his writings, he offers a sharp critique of how dominant forces have instrumentalised history to reinforce inaction and subjugation, describing how Andalusians have been ridiculed and despised, reduced to the figure of a “loafer” in the eyes of Spain and the wider world (Infante, 1918f). In his view, this manipulation of cultural identity is not mere–

ly an act of oppression but a deliberate strategy to retain control over a region rich in resources and human potential.

Accordingly, he advocates not only for a “recovery” of Andalusian history, but insists on the need for a critical “rescue” of its collective memory. This act of rescue is not simply about remembering the past – it involves unearthing and reclaiming those aspects of history that have been systematically silenced or distorted. His critique of Spain’s belligerent and centralist historiography is particularly relevant in this regard. By contrasting it with the rich cultural and civilisational heritage of Andalusia, he challenges the very foundations of official history and proposes a new reading that foregrounds the values of peace, culture and creativity which he associates with the *genio andaluz* (Infante, 1918h). He calls on all Andalusians to remember their history and to contribute to the construction of a future rooted in the aspiration to live a distinct and dignified life, underpinned by freedom and justice (Infante, 1919b).

Infante also develops a critical theory concerning the relationship between history, culture and power. He recognises that history is not a neutral sequence of events but an ideological construct that reflects the dynamics of power in society. From this perspective, history becomes a contested space in which the struggle for cultural hegemony takes place. Infante draws on this critical understanding to emphasise the importance of Andalusians not only remembering their past, but also reinterpreting it and using it as a foundation upon which to build a more just future. For him, this process of historical reinterpretation constitutes an act of resistance against cultural and political domination.

Within Infante’s critique, cultural consciousness emerges as a process of awakening that involves both reflection on the past and commitment to the present and future. He describes this process as the awakening of the *genio andaluz*, which entails recognising and valuing the unique traits of Andalusian culture – its creativity, ingenuity and communal spirit. This awakening is seen as a prerequisite for any process of social transformation, as it equips the community with the symbolic resources necessary to resist oppression and forge its own path towards freedom and justice.

In his critique of *caciquismo* and the authoritarianism that has shaped Spain’s recent history, the Andalusianist leader underscores the importance of a well-informed collective consciousness as the foundation of genuine democracy. He argues that the manipulation of history and culture by the elites has obstructed the development of a critical and active citizenry, thereby enabling the persistence of unjust power structures. Infante laments that many Spaniards are more prepared to become *caciques* than democrats – a criticism that reflects his conviction that without a critical understanding of history and culture, democracy remains shallow and vulnerable to manipulation by the powerful (Infante, 1918i).

His proposal for a new Spain, built from the “homes of the people”, emphasises the importance of civic engagement at the local and regional levels in the construction of authentic democracy. This decentralised political vision reflects his critique of the

Spanish state's centralist structure, which has long ignored and marginalised the cultural and historical specificities of its regions. Infante advocates a form of democracy that not only respects but celebrates cultural diversity, and that grants regions genuine control over their own affairs. This critical approach to political and cultural decentralisation is key to understanding Infante's conception of the relationship between power, culture and democracy (Infante, 1918t).

He also connects historical consciousness with political empowerment, arguing that a citizenry informed and aware of its history is essential to the defence of democracy. Civic education and political empowerment, according to the notary from Casares, are indispensable tools through which citizens become agents of change, capable of challenging oppression and building a more equitable society. In this context, collective consciousness becomes a mobilising force, enabling a people not only to remember their past but to use it as a resource for transforming their present reality (Infante, 1919b).

Finally, Infante's defence of Andalusia's regional identity involves a critical rejection of the homogenising narratives imposed by the central state. He sees Andalusian history and culture as a source of resistance against oppression and a foundation for emancipation and self-determination.

It was the soul of Andalusia – wounded, drained of life, tormented in its towns and villages by the political regime imposed upon it by the spirit of foreign powers (*caciquismo* being the heir of feudalism, and Andalusia, throughout its history, having never known a feudal regime); it was Andalusia – hungry and faltering, its bare fields overgrown with scrub, imprisoned by feudal barbarism – that cried out in two voices: Freedom for my people! Freedom for my land! (Infante, 1918s, [translation]).

This approach underscores the importance of recognising and valuing the cultural and historical particularities of each region as a way of enriching cultural diversity within a state that respects the autonomy and participation of its peoples (Infante, 1918t).

The author of *Ideal Andaluz* declares that Andalusia constitutes a nationality by virtue of a “common need” that calls upon its inhabitants to fight for their collective emancipation. He emphasises that both nature and history have endowed Andalusia with a distinctive character – within the Iberian Peninsula and beyond (Infante, 1919b). This thesis highlights the singularity and differentiated identity of Andalusia as an entity with unique characteristics, both within Spain and in the international arena.

In conclusion, historical and cultural consciousness in Infante's thought not only redefines the identity of Andalusia, but also provides a critical foundation for its social and political regeneration. He invokes history and culture not merely as a legacy to be preserved, but as a source of inspiration and as critical tools for challenging

oppressive power structures. His approach underscores the importance of a critical rereading of history as an act of resistance and as a means of building a freer, fairer and more democratic Andalusia.

7. Andalusian regional identity and autonomy

The analysis of Andalusian regional identity and autonomy in Infante's thought reveals a sophisticated and multifaceted understanding of how cultural identity becomes a central axis for political and social transformation. Infante conceives of Andalusian identity not merely as a cultural assertion, but as a vital political force for the emancipation of Andalusia. This approach is relevant for understanding how tensions between centre and periphery – described by Rokkan (1982) as *social cleavages* – manifest in the struggle for regional autonomy.

Infante presents Andalusia not only as a geographical entity, but as a living reality shaped by a shared history, a rich cultural heritage and a collective project for the future (Infante, 1918h). Such a vision is essential for the construction of a regional identity that does not dwell in nostalgia for a glorious past but looks ahead to the creation of a fairer and more autonomous future for all its people. In this regard, autonomy is not simply a political objective but an intrinsic necessity – one that enables Andalusians to define their own destiny, make decisions about their immediate reality and shape a development model aligned with their values and traditions. This perspective is firmly rooted in the democratic principles of citizen participation and the decentralisation of power, both of which are central to the Andalusianist leader's political vision.

The reaffirmation of Andalusian identity is interpreted as an act of resistance to historical domination and to the denial of Andalusia's distinctiveness within a plural Spain (Infante, 1919b). Infante mobilises regional identity not only as a tool for promoting social cohesion but also as a means of contesting the centralised power structures that have sought to homogenise the diverse identities coexisting within the Spanish state. This defence of Andalusian identity thus becomes a form of cultural resistance aimed at safeguarding and promoting diversity within the state, in defiance of the homogenising pressures imposed by central authority.

The personality of Andalusia, despite the denial imposed upon it by barbaric domination, now stands out more powerfully than that of any other Hispanic nationality (Infante, 1918s, [translation]).

According to Infante, the role of regionalists is crucial in advancing autonomy. Regionalists act as catalysts of the movement and as bearers of the doctrine and programme capable of addressing Spain's reform needs. Infante stresses that the regionalist organisation and programme are not merely responses to immediate

demands, but a framework of substance and action capable of effecting profound and lasting transformation. This transformation involves not only changes in public policy, but also a reconfiguration of power relations between centre and periphery (Infante, 1918q). Thus, Infante understood democracy as a space in which the tension between consensus and conflict is fundamental – particularly in the struggle for Andalusian autonomy. This vision aligns with Chantal Mouffe’s (2005) claim that “democratic politics must be seen as an agonistic space where adversaries recognise the legitimacy of each other’s demands”.

In his view, promoting regional autonomy serves to strengthen democracy. He emphasises that the awakening of patriotic feeling and regional identity is essential to empowering local communities. Such autonomy not only encourages citizen participation but also enables the emergence of a conscious people capable of self-government (Infante, 1918i). Infante argues that strengthening democracy in Spain depends largely on the recognition and valuation of regional identities, as well as on promoting political decentralisation processes that grant greater autonomy and participation to the regions.

In defending Andalusia’s regional identity, the Andalusianist leader echoes Isaiah Berlin’s concept of positive liberty, which emphasises self-determination and control over one’s own destiny. Infante rejects the homogenising narratives imposed by the central state, viewing Andalusian history and culture as a source of active resistance and a path to emancipation. According to Berlin (2004), true liberty is not merely the absence of external interference (negative liberty), but the ability of a community to self-determine and exercise control over its own future – precisely what Infante demands for Andalusia.

He also underscores the historical and cultural plurality of the regions as an inherent trait, not one granted by social authorities but manifested throughout history. This recognition of diversity within a state is fundamental to the democratic ethos that Infante advocates. By drawing a parallel between the situations of Catalonia and Andalusia, he reaffirms his conviction that a region’s personality can neither be contested nor granted – it is a natural and historical fact (Infante, 1918t). This vision challenges traditional conceptions of a centralised state, instead proposing a more plural and democratic model that respects and celebrates cultural diversity.

Infante’s vision of national identity and regional autonomy reveals a deep understanding of the complexity of the relationship between power and society. By challenging the traditional conception of Spain as a static entity, he invites reflection on the dynamic and constructive nature of national identity, which emerges from the shared experiences and narratives of its people. A striking aspect of his approach is the way he locates the heart of the true Spain in the free municipalities and in the solidarity among regions that are conscious of their history and personality. This decentralised and participatory vision not only promotes local

empowerment but also fosters a deeper sense of belonging and solidarity among communities.

Official Spain is a people lying disoriented across the vast expanse of the ancient homeland. The new Spain must be sought in those homes of the people that are the free Municipalities, in the free fellowship of peoples and regions aware of their history and their personality (Infante, 1918t, [translation]).

The Andalusian intellectual's defence of municipal freedom and autonomy is presented as a push towards a more direct and participatory democracy. His proposal for each municipality to maintain an intermediary establishment for consumer goods – such as municipal cooperatives – is a concrete example of how Infante envisions autonomy not merely as a political ideal, but as a set of practical measures to improve citizens' daily lives. These economic and social initiatives are integral to his vision of sustainable and equitable local development for Andalusia (Infante, 1919b).

Finally, the Andalusian leader's proposal for regionalist unity and peninsular solidarity reflects the importance he places on collaboration and cohesion among the various regions and regionalist movements in the pursuit of shared goals. He does not view Andalusian autonomy in isolation, but as part of a broader movement for regional empowerment across the Iberian Peninsula. This joint action is seen as an effective strategy for strengthening the position of the regions vis-à-vis the central state and for advancing their demands for self-government and political recognition (Infante, 1919c).

In conclusion, for Infante, Andalusia's regional identity and autonomy are more than political aims; they constitute the pillars of a broader project of cultural and social regeneration that challenges centralised power. His vision redefines the relationship between centre and periphery, placing cultural diversity and decentralisation at the core of a more inclusive and just democracy. From this perspective, his regionalism becomes a means of combating *caciquismo* and other forms of oppression that obstruct the democratic and equitable development of the region.

8. Conclusions. A model of democracy

The analysis of the Andalusianist vision of the notary from Casares reveals a conception of democracy that transcends the traditional political sphere, becoming a cultural and moral project deeply rooted in Andalusian identity. Throughout his career, he draws key distinctions – such as that formulated in the *Carta Andalucista* (1935) – between the “Brotherhood”, understood as a spiritual and enduring unity, and political parties, which he criticises as temporary and opportunistic. This contrast reflects his view that a genuine democracy cannot rely solely on political structures but must be nourished by a collective cultural consciousness that serves as the basis for cohesion and social transformation.

From his early writings, such as *Ideal Andaluz* (1915), to his more mature work, Infante delves into the relationship between democracy and regionalism, arguing that Andalusian autonomy is not only a political claim but also an act of cultural justice. This evolving conception leads him to reject mass politics in favour of a more personalised and community-based approach, in which individuals and local communities play a central role in the democratic process.

His critique of traditional political structures, evident in works such as *La verdad sobre el complot de Tablada* (1931), underscores his scepticism towards the centralist system and the oligarchies that perpetuate social injustice. He advocates for a model of democracy based on the active participation of all social sectors, distancing himself from elitist approaches that prioritise state control over local dynamics. In this regard, his democratic model is resilient and adaptive, integrating values such as social justice, equity and respect for cultural particularities.

A multidimensional approach: culture, rationale and participation

The discursive analysis of these representations is complex, as the concept contains “many layers of overlapping meanings throughout its history, all of which remain present in current debate” (Abellán, 2013, 2020). Infante’s perspective highlights the importance of a transformative democracy that incorporates both conceptual and practical elements. Through his body of work and in the 28 articles analysed from *El Regionalista*, the Andalusian intellectual articulates a discourse in which culture and democracy serve as tools of resistance to centralism and as a foundation for constructing a strong regional identity. This approach leads him to challenge the vices of traditional political parties and to propose a “decent politics” grounded in the genuine representation of the interests of the Andalusian people.

In his view, social justice and land redistribution are essential pillars of genuine democracy. He denounces the concentration of resources as a barrier to Andalusia’s development, linking this issue to the need for a structural transformation that liberates the region from the oppressive dynamics imposed by the centralist system. This aspect underscores his commitment to citizen mobilisation as a driving force for political and social change, highlighting the importance of an active and conscious citizenry.

The contemporary relevance of Infante’s democratic model

From an interdisciplinary perspective that combines history, sociological discourse analysis and political theory, Infante’s democratic model emerges as a relevant contribution to current challenges. His vision resonates with Max Weber’s theory of social action (1922), particularly in its emphasis on the interplay between reflection and praxis as defining features of his leadership. The notary from Casares not only puts forward a theoretical framework, but also complements it with practical strategies that address the issues of his time from an ethical and cultural standpoint.

Finally, Infante's democratic thought – deeply rooted in the values of Andalusian identity – offers valuable insights for contemporary debates on social justice, community cohesion and self-determination. His model, in which culture acts as a transformative axis, not only responds to the problems of the past but also offers tools for addressing the challenges of modernity, reaffirming the ongoing relevance of his legacy in today's political and cultural landscape.

9. References

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Annex 1. Hemerographic resources

Infante, Blas:

- (1918a). Joaquín Costa. *El Regionalista*, 6 February (11).
- (1918b). Regionalismo catalán y regionalismo andaluz. *El Regionalista*, 6 March (15).
- (1918c). Carta al presidente del Círculo Andaluz de Buenos Aires. *El Regionalista*, 20 March (17).
- (1918d). Adelante. *El Regionalista*, 3 April (19).
- (1918e). ¡Quercus Suber! *El Regionalista*, 10 April (20).
- (1918f). Tierra libre o... Revolución por la libertad de la tierra. *El Regionalista*, 17 April (21).
- (1918g). Réplica. *El Regionalista*, 24 April (22).
- (1918h). Calma, regionalistas. *El Regionalista*, 15 May (25).
- (1918i). ¿Es usted monárquico o republicano? *El Regionalista*, 29 May (27).
- (1918j). Después de los debates políticos. *El Regionalista*, 12 June (29).
- (1918k). Labor del Centro. *El Regionalista*, 26 June (31).
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- (1918o). Ideal Andaluz. *El Regionalista*, 4 September (41).
- (1918p). Homenaje a los que murieron. *El Regionalista*, 11 September (42).
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- (1918r). La liga de las naciones. *El Regionalista*, 6 November (50).
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