

Humano, creativamente humano.

Filosofía & arte para la vida, y a ras de suelo.



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Nietzsche y Schopenhauer: la formación del verdadero filósofo, por Delia Aguiar Baixauli

(Este texto forma parte de una comunicación presentada en el III Congreso Internacional de la Sociedad Española de Estudios sobre F. Nietzsche -SEDEN-, celebrada en Madrid en el 2014, en la UCM).

Antes de comenzar este artículo debo advertir que yo no llegué a la tercera intempestiva nietzscheana buscando a F. Nietzsche, sino a A. Schopenhauer. Siguiendo las indicaciones que da este último en el prólogo de su obra capital, yo había leído previamente sus tres trabajos más significativos —*De la cuádruple raíz del principio de razón suficiente*, *Crítica de la filosofía kantiana* y *El mundo como voluntad y representación*— y, fascinada por su estilo y su filosofía, quise encontrar un aliado, alguien que compartiera la misma admiración y respeto que tenía por él. No fue fácil hallarlo entre profesores y amigos. Las alusiones al pesimismo y a un sistema ya superado eran continuas. Así, recordé que Nietzsche y Wagner habían sido sus grandes admiradores, y fue éste el camino por el que llegué a *Schopenhauer como educador*. Sin embargo, al leer esta obra, me di cuenta de que ella se parecía poco al estilo de las obras nietzscheanas posteriores que yo ya conocía, y el análisis de ese cambio se convirtió en la principal meta de mi estudio.

Schopenhauer como educador es un texto sumamente curioso. Por un lado, en distintos lugares de su obra posterior, Nietzsche señaló que, cuando escribié esta intempestiva, ya había desechado o superado el sistema de Schopenhauer, debido a los errores y paradojas que éste contiene¹. Sin embargo, en su intempestiva, al describir las cualidades del filósofo ideal, representado por Schopenhauer, como la sinceridad, la fortaleza o la entrega, parece situarse, no de forma inocente, en la posición de alguien que está aún vinculado de alguna manera a la noción de “cosa en sí”, aunque unos seis años antes, en el escrito a su camarada E. Rohde, que lleva por título “Sobre Schopenhauer” (fechado en las *Obras Completas* entre 1867 y 1868), Nietzsche ya había criticado duramente esta noción, como luego veremos.

¹ En el prólogo a *Humano, demasiado humano*, Nietzsche escribe que todas sus intempestivas “han de ser

Por otro lado, en la intempestiva de Nietzsche, no está presente Schopenhauer exclusivamente, sino también Goethe, Rousseau, o Heráclito, lo que da a la obra un carácter romántico que nos recuerda, en parte, a aquellos ideales del movimiento llamado "*Sturm und Drang*" iniciado en Alemania en 1770.

¿Dónde se manifiesta ese romanticismo y en qué aspectos se muestra Nietzsche cercano a Schopenhauer? Para analizarlo voy a establecer dos breves apartados:

- La exaltación de la libertad y el lema pindárico "sé tú mismo".
- Genio y naturaleza; la unión en un todo.

1. La exaltación de la libertad y el lema pindárico "sé tú mismo".

En este texto la libertad es para Nietzsche la cualidad esencial en la génesis del filósofo. Nietzsche insiste en muchos lugares de esta obra en que el filósofo como educador no puede añadir nada nuevo a su discípulo, y, graciosamente, subraya que no puede dar "ojos de cristal o narices de cera", sino que el verdadero papel del educador es ser un libertador, aquel que colabora con los jóvenes filósofos para que cumplan el lema pindárico de ser ellos mismos.

Esto implica que Nietzsche está admitiendo que existe una identidad propia de cada uno, un ser específico y originario, un ser esencial que se mantiene inalterable a través de una serie de cambios. Lo pone de manifiesto cuando nos dice: "De nuestro ser, todo da testimonio, nuestras amistades y enemistades, nuestra mirada y la forma de apretar al dar la mano, nuestra memoria y lo que olvidamos, nuestros libros y los rasgos de nuestra pluma"². Un poco más adelante, insta a "llegar al pozo del ser de cada cual", aunque, como advierte, probablemente nunca lleguemos a conocerlo del todo, por más que nos arranquemos las pieles, pues el ser humano es un asunto "oscuro y velado".

Nietzsche propone la sinceridad como una virtud originaria, como si nació con ella, casi de manera equivalente a lo que Rousseau apuntaba sobre el bien: que el ser humano era bueno por naturaleza y era la sociedad la que le había corrompido; también parece considerar que el hombre es sincero por naturaleza, y que el Cristianismo u otros factores, como el temor, la comodidad o la pereza, han hecho de él un ser que no es auténtico, que no dice lo que piensa, y que debería recuperar esa sinceridad inicial. Lo vemos cuando se refiere a las dificultades que tuvo él mismo cuando buscaba un

² Nietzsche, F., O.C., Tomo I, Ed. Tecnos, Madrid, 2011, p. 751.

maestro “que fuera capaz de elevarme por encima de la insuficiencia, de esa insuficiencia específica de nuestro tiempo, y un filósofo que me enseñara de nuevo a ser sencillo y sincero en el pensamiento y en la vida”³.

En definitiva, Nietzsche parece considerar aquí ciertas cualidades en cada ser humano como una unidad en sí, como si hubiera un ser en sí originario e inalterable, aunque, como decíamos, ya había criticado anteriormente el concepto de “cosa en sí”. En el escrito a su amigo Rohde, al que ya nos referimos, señala muy claramente como los tres predicados asignados a la voluntad del mundo, que era la cosa en sí para Schopenhauer (unidad, eternidad, libertad), están ligados a nuestro entendimiento, es decir, son tomados del mundo fenoménico. Nietzsche escribe: “Schopenhauer pretende que un objeto que no puede ser nunca objeto sea, no obstante, pensado objetivamente”⁴.

Años después, en *Más allá del bien y del mal*, por ejemplo, negará firmemente la cosa en sí, cuando, en el aforismo 16, nos previene contra la ingenuidad de pensar que existen “cosas en sí” o que son posibles las “certezas inmediatas”, del tipo, “yo pienso” o “yo quiero”, pues, cito textualmente, “esto presupone que comparo mi estado actual con otros estados que conozco porque ya se han dado en mí, para determinar así lo que es ese estado”. Creo que lo mismo sucedería con las certezas inmediatas del tipo “yo soy...” y lo que queramos añadir; como si hubiera una forma pura del sujeto, un “yo soy esto”, sin ningún falseamiento por parte del sujeto o del objeto. Como sabemos, en su época de madurez, Nietzsche va a transformar la noción clásica de sujeto, haciendo de él una pluralidad en devenir, una voluntad que actúa sobre otra voluntad.

Sin embargo, si bien Nietzsche parece aceptar la existencia de esas cualidades como algo originario en nosotros, en su tercera intempestiva está oponiéndose claramente a Schopenhauer, al defender la libertad de acción del ser humano, que es libre de dar la espalda al Estado y escapar a sus servidumbres, incluso que tiene libertad para elegir si quiere ser él mismo o no serlo. Ya sabemos que para Schopenhauer solo la voluntad del mundo era poseedora de libertad, y el hombre poseía una ilusión de libertad, creyendo que elige entre varias acciones, cuando “el entendimiento sólo averigua las resoluciones de la voluntad a posteriori y empíricamente”⁵.

La defensa de la libertad en Nietzsche se amplía a obras posteriores, hasta el punto de señalar en *La genealogía de la moral* que ella, la libertad, es la causante de que se hayan confundido los ideales del filósofo con los del

³ *Ibid.*, p. 775.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

⁵ Schopenhauer, A., *El mundo como voluntad y representación*, Tomo I, Ed. Alianza, Madrid, 2013, p. 522.

asceta. Porque bajo los tres ideales ascéticos que Nietzsche califica de “pomposos” —pobreza, humildad y castidad—, reconoce éste que se halla escondida la libertad, siempre que esos ideales no sean considerados como una meta o como un objetivo final, sino como el medio para lograr una vida creativa más fecunda. Por ejemplo, en la pobreza se halla la libertad —pues “quien posee es poseído”—, o en la castidad, simplemente porque la energía empleada en la sexualidad es energía que no se emplea en el arte: “Todo artista sabe que, en estados de gran tensión y preparación espiritual, el dormir con mujeres produce un efecto muy nocivo”⁶. Así, el artista elige que el instinto superior de crear domine al inferior, el de la sensualidad, pues todos los impulsos han de ser dominados o reorganizados.

2. Genio y naturaleza: la unión en un todo

En *Schopenhauer como educador* la naturaleza parece tener voluntad propia. Ella tiene ciertos proyectos y desea la aparición del genio, del filósofo y del artista; pero siente que en muchos casos su obra se malogra, pues el filósofo no surte los efectos esperados, se le aísla o se le ignora, mientras en otros aspectos ella cumple sus proyectos a la perfección. La naturaleza aparece como imperfecta, inexperta, despilfarradora y torpe, que dirige mal sus fuerzas: “La naturaleza dispara al filósofo como una flecha dirigida a los humanos, ella no apunta hacia un blanco, pero espera que la flecha quede clavada en alguna parte. No obstante, al disparar se equivoca innumerables veces y eso le disgusta”⁷. La tarea de los que conocen esta ineptitud de la naturaleza tenderá a corregir sus errores y dar a conocer al filósofo, a favorecer la aparición del genio. Por tanto, Naturaleza y ser humano están aliados.

Schopenhauer dedica muchas páginas a la naturaleza, y también nos habla del derroche de ésta, cuando apunta que ella, la naturaleza, abandona sin miramientos a cualquier organismo complejo y deja que cada día sea destruido por el azar, por otros animales o por las travesuras humanas. Sin embargo, señala que no hay ningún esfuerzo en su obrar, precisamente porque la voluntad de obrar es ya la obra misma, puesto que la esencia de todo ser de la naturaleza es la voluntad, que es una, aunque se manifieste en múltiples formas.

Sin embargo, la aparición del genio es un hecho antinatural en Schopenhauer, es algo contrario a la naturaleza y al destino del intelecto. El conocimiento está de forma natural subordinado a la voluntad (el ejercicio de conocer o de aplicar

⁶ Nietzsche, F., *La genealogía de la moral*, Ed. Alianza, Madrid., 1984, p., 129.

⁷ Nietzsche, F., *O.C.*, Tomo I, p. 792.

el principio de causalidad es voluntad objetivada). Pero en la contemplación la voluntad queda apartada, la cosa individual se convierte en idea y el sujeto se vuelve “puro sujeto del conocer”, se produce la contemplación carente de voluntad, la visión de la idea misma, en una especie de desobediencia que se da muy raras veces: “Sin duda, esto es contrario a la naturaleza del intelecto y al destino del intelecto, o sea, es antinatural y por añadidura se da raramente, pero en ello radica la esencia del genio, donde únicamente tiene lugar ese estado en alto grado y con persistencia”⁸.

Para Schopenhauer el genio está desligado de la voluntad. En el capítulo 31 del tomo 2 de *El mundo como voluntad y representación*, titulado así, “Del genio”, nos dice que el genio posee un anómalo exceso de intelecto, y que si el hombre normal tiene dos tercios de voluntad y un tercio de intelecto, por el contrario el genio tiene dos tercios de intelecto y un tercio de voluntad, es decir, hay un superhábit de capacidad cognoscitiva, lo que se traduce en que su interés no lo constituyen las cosas singulares, sino las ideas. De ahí se explica, para él, que en todo genio haya algo de niño, pues si algo caracteriza la infancia es un afán de conocer que, después, se diluye con la edad hacia el querer, lo que explicaría que, por ejemplo —también para él—, Goethe fuera siempre un niño grande.

Algo completamente opuesto a lo que piensa Nietzsche: entendimiento y voluntad, o entendimiento e interés, nunca pueden separarse, y la naturaleza misma proyecta la aparición del genio. El genio nunca puede ser un sujeto avolitivo, aunque su voluntad sea escapar del horror del mundo o evadirse. Si para Schopenhauer la belleza nos redimía de la voluntad, para Nietzsche hay una contradicción en ello, pues la naturaleza misma nos ofrece belleza. En *Cómo se filosofa a martillazos*, refiriéndose a Schopenhauer, dirá: “Alguien le contradice; temo que sea la Naturaleza. ¿Por qué hay belleza en sonido, color, fragancia y movimiento rítmico en la naturaleza? ¿Qué es lo que fuerza la manifestación de lo bello?”⁹ Es cierto, si la naturaleza nos ofrece objetos bellos, y si la esencia de los objetos naturales es la voluntad, la voluntad se estaría contradiciendo a sí misma, poniendo ante nuestros ojos elementos que faciliten su propia anulación. Schopenhauer buscó una alternativa en el arte para liberarse de su incansable querer, alternativa que Nietzsche no está dispuesto a aceptar.

En definitiva, y atendiendo a sus escritos anteriores y posteriores, Nietzsche se transforma en esta intempestiva, o vive algo así como una regresión, y se sirve de su maestro para mostrar el propio itinerario, la manera en que se sintió invitado por Schopenhauer, a través de la obra de éste, a conocerse a sí mismo, lo que le obliga de alguna manera a aceptar esa idea de un ser en sí,

⁸ Schopenhauer, A., *El mundo como voluntad y representación*, Tomo II, pp. 502, 503.

⁹ Nietzsche, F., *Cómo se filosofa a martillazos*, Ed. EDAF, Madrid, 1985, p. 181.

un sí mismo, al que el romanticismo y la exaltación de lo natural, que ya hemos visto, pero representada posteriormente por el Dionisio de *El nacimiento de la tragedia*, no puede mantener bajo el determinismo de Schopenhauer. La exaltación de la naturaleza, tan amiga del artista en este escrito, y tan enemiga en los escritos de Schopenhauer, comienza a prefigurar esa voluntad que será después la “voluntad de poder”.

Delia Aguiar Baixauli, Madrid, marzo 2014



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El perezoso famoso, por Juan Guillermo Tejeda

Comentaba Juan Tejeda que el ajedrez es un juego donde los tontos parecen inteligentes y los inteligentes se van poniendo tontos. Hay quienes lo ven como un deporte olímpico. Puede que lo sea. El aspecto de los grandes ajedrecistas suele ser casi más triste que el de los grandes tenistas, y es que concentrarse demasiado en un tablero o en una pelotita produce sin duda una compresión de las habilidades perceptivas y emotivas hasta que el entorno, eso donde vivimos, va desapareciendo, devorado por los gambitos y los errores no forzados.

Marcel Duchamp fue un, digamos, artista aunque sobre todo un ajedrecista. Llegó a participar en campeonatos mundiales en los que obtenía casi siempre los últimos lugares. A los 40 años declaró que dejaba el arte para concentrarse en el ajedrez.

En verdad lo que dejó fue poco, ya que su infinita pereza lo convirtió en el padre del arte conceptual, sirviendo de ejemplo a innumerables jóvenes que gracias a él han debido afrontar la desdicha de hacer un arte improductivo e inmaterial, huérfano de público.

La nada o casi nada de Duchamp alumbró en cambio el infatigable hacer de críticos, pensadores, filósofos, curadores, curadoras, instaladores, instaladoras, directores de museos, marchands, dealers, profesores, directores de departamentos universitarios, decanos y otros seres espectrales.

Duchamp es el célebre autor de un urinario que no hizo él, de pintarle bigotes a una foto de la Gioconda, de un cuadro único de tipo futurista que sin tener gran encanto ha sido reproducido o citado miles de veces y de hacerse una foto travestido en dama, la célebre Rose Sélavy y otra con una estrella rapada en el cráneo. Poca obra, en verdad, para una vida larga como la suya (murió en 1968 a los 81 años).

La pereza de Duchamp hace de él el reverso de Picasso, un monstruo devorador, autor de cientos de miles de obras (es una estimación) en todos los géneros y formatos, creador del cubismo, animador de ocho o diez estilos sucesivos a lo largo de su vida, un autor artesano que hizo siempre lo que quiso, y que también ha amargado la vida de tantos jóvenes artistas que comienzan a pintar sintiéndose como Picasso y terminan derrotados y

confusos.

Pues bien, viene todo a esto a colación porque en estos días hay una prolija exposición documental sobre Duchamp en el Museo de Arte Contemporáneo del Parque Forestal, en Santiago. La muestra está muy explicada y documentada, aunque carece de emoción y de obras contundentes, y uno puede mirar en cambio todo tipo de fotos y cartas vagamente relativas a Duchamp. Hay algunas obras menores de Man Ray y de Dalí.

La pereza, en todo caso, no es un vicio. Es un estado natural del ser humano cuando ha logrado encontrar cobijo, sustento y afecto. Duchamp es el raro y luminoso caso de un perezoso famoso.

Juan Guillermo Tejeda, Santiago de Chile, diciembre 2014

(Publicado en el diario *Las Últimas Noticias*, Santiago de Chile, el 17 de diciembre de 2014)



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Feuerbach: el hombre que empezó a matar a Dios, por Antonia Tejada Barros

Podría decirse que casi todo el mundo conoce a Marx, Nietzsche y Freud. No todos han leído sus obras, pero la mayoría conoce aunque sea la barba de Marx, el bigote de Nietzsche y el puro de Freud. Pero, ¿quién conoce a Feuerbach? Feuerbach fue el padre de los *maîtres du soupçon*¹⁰ y el genio que empezó a matar a Dios y empezó a devolverle la dignidad al hombre¹¹. Nació en Alemania en 1804 (14 años antes que Marx, 40 años antes que Nietzsche y 52 años antes que Freud) y murió en 1872, 29 años después de que Marx escribiera su famosa frase: "*Die Religion ... ist das Opium des Volks*"¹², y 11 años antes de que Nietzsche publicara sus Libros I y II de *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Feuerbach fue un hegeliano de izquierda (de 1824 a 1826 asistió en Berlín a todas las clases de Hegel –exceptuando las de estética y repitiendo las de lógica–). Fue materialista, liberal y humanista. Aunque suele definirse a Feuerbach, un poco a la ligera, como ateo, la verdad es que sus primeros

¹⁰ En *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Sigmund Freud*, Ricœur llama a Marx, Nietzsche y Freud "*les maîtres du soupçon*". Los tres consideran la conciencia como 'falsa': "... *l'école du soupçon ... Trois maîtres en apparence exclusifs l'un de l'autre la dominant, Marx, Nietzsche et Freud*", *De l'interprétation. Essai sur Sigmund Freud*, p. 42. Harvey aclara: "*The hermeneutics of suspicion ... assumes that there is no religious object and that the religious consciousness is bewitched by an illusion*", *Feuerbach and the interpretation of religion*, p. 1

¹¹ Feuerbach a menudo se considera "solamente" el precursor de los *maîtres du soupçon*, pero fue mucho más que eso. Su teoría de la religión es un todo en ella misma: "*Feuerbach is seen primarily as a precursor to the true 'masters of suspicion' in religious studies: Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud (...)* Feuerbach's philosophical development led him to a much more complex and interesting theory of religion", Harvey, *Feuerbach and the interpretation of religion*, p. i

¹² ("La religión ... es el opio del pueblo"). La cita es parte de *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie* y se publicó en 1844 en el *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*. El párrafo donde se halla la cita dice: "*Das religiöse Elend ist in einem der Ausdruck des wirklichen Elendes und in einem die Protestation gegen das wirkliche Elend. Die Religion ist der Seufzer der bedrängten Kreatur, das Gemüth einer herzlosen Welt, wie sie der Geist geistloser Zustände ist. Sie ist das Opium des Volks*" ("La miseria religiosa es a la vez la expresión de la miseria real y la protesta contra la miseria real. La religión es el suspiro de la criatura oprimida, el sentimiento de un mundo sin corazón, así como el espíritu de una situación sin alma. Es el opio del pueblo")

escritos¹³ son claramente panteístas. Su panteísmo evolucionará hacia un ateísmo humanista. Arvon define el humanismo de Feuerbach como "*ambigu, athée et religieux à la fois*"¹⁴. La genialidad de Feuerbach radica en que no niega la existencia de Dios, sino que defiende que Dios existe, pero puramente como sentimiento humano. La esencia de la religión es la esencia del hombre; ése es su brillante descubrimiento. Feuerbach interpreta la religión como proyección y como alienación. El hombre proyecta su esencia en Dios y se enajena al atribuir a Dios sus propias cualidades humanas. Harvey apunta que ya Jenófanes¹⁵ observó cínicamente que los dioses etíopes eran negros y de narices planas, y los dioses tracios, blancos, rubios y de ojos azules, y describió a los dioses como proyecciones humanas. Feuerbach, sin embargo, fue el primero que empleó la proyección y la alienación como base de su crítica de la religión¹⁶.

Feuerbach fue educado bajo el protestantismo. Pronto abandonó sus estudios de teología para estudiar filosofía: "¡No teología, sino filosofía ... no creer sino pensar!"¹⁷. Cuando tenía 21 años, escribió a su padre: "El alimento de la niñez se hace indigerible al hombre maduro"¹⁸. La preocupación que Feuerbach sintió por el hombre hizo que el hombre, con todos sus defectos y su mortalidad, desbancara a Dios: "Dios fue mi primer pensamiento; la razón, el segundo, y el hombre, mi tercero y último pensamiento"¹⁹. Feuerbach situará la antropología por encima de la teología, y al hombre por encima de Dios. Su mensaje es una elevación del hombre: "El propósito de mis escritos y ... de mis lecciones es convertir a los hombres de teólogos en antropólogos, de teófilos en filántropos (...) Mi propósito no es en modo alguno meramente negativo, sino positivo; yo niego únicamente para afirmar; yo niego únicamente la esencia aparente y fantástica de la teología y de la religión, para afirmar la esencia real del

¹³ Su tesis *De ratione una, universali, infinita* (1928) y *Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit* (1930)

¹⁴ Arvon, *Feuerbach*, p. 4

¹⁵ c. 570–c. 475

¹⁶ "*Feuerbach was the first to employ the concept [of projection] as the basis for a systematic critique of religion*", Harvey, *Feuerbach and the interpretation of religion*, p. 4

¹⁷ Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke*, IV, 417 (traducción al español de Manuel Cabada)

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, XII, 243

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 388

hombre"²⁰. Feuerbach denunció el empobrecimiento que el hombre sufre al elevar a Dios. Si Dios se eleva, el hombre se empequeñece: "Cuanto menos es Dios tanto más es el hombre; cuanto menos es el hombre tanto más es Dios"²¹. Arvon describe 3 períodos en la trayectoria de Feuerbach: el hegeliano (de 1828 a 1838), el humanista (de 1839 a 1844) y el materialista (de 1845 a 1866).

Feuerbach escribió obras profundas, minuciosas, elegantes y chispeantes. Entre mis preferidas se encuentran: *Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit* (1830), *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841²²) y sus ensayos cortos *Das Wesen des Glaubens im Sinne Luthers* (1844), *Merkwürdige Äußerungen Luthers nebst Glossen* (1846) y *Das Wesen der Religion* (1846). Muchos de sus escritos no han sido traducidos al español ni al inglés, y la mayoría de sus obras (exceptuando 4 ó 5 libros) no se ha editado separadamente. Existen varias ediciones de sus Obras Completas: *Sämtliche Werke* (10 tomos), edición de Wigand, 1846–66; *Sämtliche Werke* (10 tomos), edición de Bolin y Jodl, 1903–1911²³, y *Gesammelte Werke* (22 Tomos, de 300 a 650 páginas cada uno), edición de Schuffenhauer, 1967²⁴. La única edición que es posible comprar hoy (no todos los tomos, pero sí algunos) es la edición de Schuffenhauer. Los tomos son muy caros y algunos no se reeditan desde hace tiempo. Me pregunto cómo es posible que sea tan difícil encontrar (no ya traducidos, sino en alemán) los libros de un pensador tan crucial como Feuerbach...

En *Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit* (publicado anónimamente), Feuerbach afirma que la inmortalidad del hombre es una invención humana. Feuerbach describe la muerte como una negación que se niega a sí misma, y

²⁰ *Ibid.*, VIII, 28 s

²¹ Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1959, VII, 312

²² La obra fue un verdadero boom: "The book was a tour de force, it burst like a bombshell on the German intellectual scene", Harvey, *Feuerbach and the interpretation of religion*, p. 25. Hubo tres reediciones en vida de Feuerbach (1843, 1848 y 1849 -esta última como parte de sus *Sämtliche Werke*-). *Das Wesen des Christentums* influyó enormemente en la teoría de alienación de Marx

²³ Reedición de 1959–64

²⁴ Diferentes tomos se han reeditado en diferentes años. De los que he podido encontrar, las reediciones son de 1969, 1970, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1985, 1989, 1990, 1996, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2006 y 2014

la inmortalidad, como una afirmación irreal e indeterminada. La religión destruye todo lo real (la vida, la naturaleza, la historia) y en su lugar, presenta lo irreal (la inmortalidad): "... sobre las ruinas del mundo destruido, planta el individuo la bandera del profeta, la sagrada estafa de la creencia en su inmortalidad y en el loado más allá. Sobre las ruinas de la vida presente, al no ver nada, se le despierta el sentimiento de su propia nada interior, y en el sentimiento de esa doble nada le fluyen ... las compasivas perlas de lágrimas y las pompas de jabón del mundo futuro"²⁵. La inmortalidad, pues, es una farsa. El hombre muere, y muere completamente. Según Feuerbach, cuando el hombre sea capaz de aceptar su finitud, empezará a vivir su vida de una manera plena y consciente, sin fantasías ni engaños. A la falacia cristiana de la muerte del cuerpo y la inmortalidad del alma, Feuerbach responde: "No existe ninguna media muerte, ninguna muerte partida ni de sentido equívoco; en la naturaleza es todo verdad, entero, impartido, completo; en la naturaleza no hay sentidos dudosos ... sólo hay *una* clase de muerte, que es la muerte completa; la muerte no roe una parte del hombre y deja otra parte"²⁶. La negación de la inmortalidad del alma supone una afirmación de la única vida que existe: la de aquí y ahora: "la supresión de una vida mejor en el cielo incluye en sí la exigencia de mejorar la vida en la tierra"²⁷. ¿Existe el espíritu? Sí, el espíritu existe, pero sólo en vida. Según Feuerbach, morimos porque somos seres libres, pensantes y conscientes. La vida, y no la muerte, es la que nos muestra el espíritu del hombre. Feuerbach ridiculiza a aquéllos que creen alcanzar el espíritu solamente a través de la muerte: "Los necios presumen ilusamente que sólo después de la muerte y por ella llegarán al espíritu; que la vida espiritual

²⁵ Feuerbach, *Pensamientos sobre muerte e inmortalidad*, p. 70. Cita original más extensa: "Indem nun so alles wahrhaft Wirkliche, Allgemeine, Wesenhafte, aller Geist, Seele und Essenz aus dem wirklichen Leben, der Natur und Welt-geschichte, verschwunden ist, alles massakriert, in seine Teile aufgelöst, zertrennt, sein-, einheits-, geist-, seelenlos gemacht ist, so pflanzt nun das Individuum auf den Trümmern der zerstörten Welt die Fahne des Phopheten auf, das heilige Schandsacscherif des Glaubens an seine Unsterblichkeit und das gelobte Jenseits. Auf den Ruinen des gegenwärtigen Lebens, in dem es nichts sieht, erwacht ihm zugleich das Gefühl und Bewußtsein seines eignen, innerlichen Nichts, und in dem Gefühl diesen zweifachen Nichts entquillt ihm ... die barmherzige Tränenperle und Seifenblase der zukünftigen Welt", *Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit*, GW Band 1, Seiten 195, 196

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81. "Es gibt keinen halben, keinen zwiespältigen und zweideutigen Tod; in der Natur ist alles wahr, ganz, ungeteilt, vollständig; die Natur ist nicht zwiespältig ... es gibt nur einen Tod, der ganzer Tod ist, nicht etwas am Menschen abnagt, etwas übrigläßt", *Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit*, GW Band 1, S. 207

²⁷ Feuerbach, *SW*, VIII, 358

sólo puede producirse tras la muerte"²⁸.

De un modo parecido al genial Epicuro, Feuerbach sostiene que la muerte y el hombre nunca se encuentran. La filosofía de Epicuro (lo poco que sabemos de ella, puesto que de las 300 obras que Epicuro escribió, desgraciadamente, sólo se ha conservado una parte minúscula²⁹) está destinada a ahuyentar los terribles miedos del hombre (la muerte y los dioses) y a procurar una vida placentera y equilibrada. Según Epicuro, no hay que temerle a la muerte, puesto que la muerte no es nada para el hombre, ya que cuando existimos, la muerte no existe, y cuando morimos, ya no existimos: "la muerte nada es para nosotros. Porque todo bien y mal reside en la sensación, y la muerte es privación del sentir (...) Nada hay, pues, temible en el vivir para quien ha comprendido rectamente que nada temible hay en el no vivir (...) Así que el más espantoso de los males, la muerte, nada es para nosotros, puesto que mientras nosotros somos, la muerte no está presente, y, cuando la muerte se presenta, entonces no existimos. Conque ni afecta a los vivos ni a los muertos, porque para éstos no existe y los otros no existen ya"³⁰. Feuerbach recoge esta idea y afirma que la existencia de la muerte excluye la existencia del hombre: cuando la muerte llega, nosotros ya no existimos, así que la muerte no existe realmente para nosotros. El sentimiento terrible de la muerte existe sólo para los vivos, pero no para los muertos: "Sólo antes de la muerte, pero no en la muerte, es la muerte muerte y dolorosa ... la muerte es un ser espectral ... sólo es cuando no es, y ... sólo no es cuando es"³¹. La muerte, la finitud, no puede ser sentida por el hombre, puesto que cuando el hombre muere pierde toda su

²⁸ Feuerbach, *Pensamientos sobre muerte e inmortalidad*, p. 192. "Die Toren wähnen, daß sie erst nach dem Tode und durch ihn in den Geist kämen, daß geistiges Leben erst nach dem Tode entstände", *GW, Band 1*, S. 325

²⁹ Sus famosas tres cartas (la *Carta a Heródoto*, la *Carta a Pítocles* -que tal vez no fue escrita por Epicuro, sino por uno o varios discípulos suyos- y la *Carta a Meneceo*), sus *Máximas capitales* (40 aforismos), las Sentencias Vaticanas -*Gnomologium Vaticanum*- (81 aforismos descubiertos en 1888 en un manuscrito del siglo XIV) y algunos fragmentos

³⁰ Epicuro, Carta a Meneceo, en *Vida de los filósofos ilustres* de Diógenes Laercio, Libro X, 124, 125, pp. 560, 561

³¹ Feuerbach, *Pensamientos sobre muerte e inmortalidad*, p. 229. "Nur vor dem Tode, aber nicht im Tode ist der Tod Tod und schmerzlich; der Tod ist so ein gespenstisches Wesen, daß er nur ist, wenn er nicht ist, und daß er nicht ist, wenn er ist", *Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit*, *GW Band 1*, S. 394

sensación. El hombre tiene seguridad de su existencia sólo en su sensación, y sólo es real aquello que el hombre puede sentir. La muerte, pues, nada es para el hombre, puesto que el hombre existe y es sólo mientras siente. La muerte es sólo terrible cuando se imagina, cuando la muerte no es aún muerte. El horrible y angustiante pensamiento de la muerte sólo existe para el hombre que vive, no para el hombre muerto. ¿Existe, pues, la muerte? No, la muerte no existe para el hombre que muere; sólo existe para los demás. La muerte es una destrucción que se autodestruye a sí misma, es, al igual que la inmortalidad, pura apariencia. Feuerbach propone acabar con el conflicto entre esta vida y la vida eterna. La humanidad debe concentrarse sólo en ella misma. Concentrarse sobre el mundo real producirá nuevos grandes hombres y nuevas grandes acciones. La humanidad, según Feuerbach, no necesita hombres inmortales, sino hombres sanos de cuerpo y espíritu, porque la sanidad de cuerpo y espíritu es más valiosa que la inmortalidad.

A propósito de la inmortalidad, nunca me canso de citar estas brillantes palabras de Savater: "¿Cómo vivir del mejor modo posible? Esta pregunta me resulta mucho más sustanciosa que otras ... más tremendas: '¿Tiene sentido la vida? ¿Merece la pena vivir? ¿Hay vida después de la muerte?' Mira, la vida tiene sentido y tiene sentido único; va hacia delante (...) no se repiten las jugadas ni suelen poder corregirse. Por eso hay que reflexionar sobre lo que uno quiere y fijarse en lo que hace. Después ... guardar siempre el ánimo ante los fallos. ¿El sentido de la vida? Primero, procurar no fallar; luego, procurar fallar sin desfallecer (...) Lo que me interesa no es si hay vida 'después' de la muerte, sino que haya vida 'antes'. Y que esa vida sea buena, no simple supervivencia o miedo constante a morir"³². Sin inmortalidad, pues, tenemos que intentar hacer de esta vida, la nuestra, la única que tenemos, la mejor vida posible, porque, siguiendo a Feuerbach, no hay otra. Aunque *Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit* fue publicado anónimamente, pronto se supo que la autoría era de Feuerbach. El libro le valió a Feuerbach la condena del sector

³² Savater, *Ética para Amador*, pp. 126, 127

académico y no pudo volver a dar clases³³.

En *Das Wesen des Christentums*, su obra más famosa (considerada como la obra más importante del humanismo ateo³⁴), Feuerbach analiza las esencias del hombre y de la religión. Su lenguaje, aunque muy "a la alemana", no es aburrido como el de Kant (que me perdonen los fervientes kantianos), sino que se va aproximando a las *delicatessen* nietzscheanas. Según Feuerbach, la diferencia entre el hombre y el animal es la conciencia, o, lo que es lo mismo, la religión. El hombre es el único ser que es consciente de sí mismo como ser humano y como especie, y el único que entabla un diálogo consigo mismo y con la humanidad. La esencia del hombre es aquello que "constituye en el hombre el género de la humanidad propiamente dicha"³⁵. La esencia del hombre es la humanidad. Esta esencia está formada por la razón, el amor y la voluntad: "Razón, amor y voluntad ... constituyen la esencia absoluta del hombre en cuanto hombre y el fin de su existencia (...) El verdadero ser es el que piensa, ama, quiere"³⁶. Como la conciencia es "alegría de la propia perfección ... propiedad característica de un ser perfecto"³⁷, el hombre necesita una figura más elevada que el hombre, y por eso crea a Dios: "Todo ser ... tiene su Dios, su esencia más alta, en sí mismo"³⁸. Dios se encuentra en el sentimiento humano. Dios no es un objeto exterior al hombre como cree la religión cristiana, sino que se halla en el interior del hombre. La religión es puramente un sentimiento del hombre. La esencia de la religión es la esencia

³³ Feuerbach había sido *privat-dozent* de la Universidad de Erlangen de 1829 a 1832. Erlangen contaba en 1830 con tan sólo 9.800 habitantes, y el anonimato de *Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit* acabó descubriéndose

³⁴ Arvon, *Feuerbach*

³⁵ Feuerbach, *La esencia del cristianismo*, p. 54. "Aber was ist denn das Wesen des Menschen, dessen er sich bewußt ist, oder was macht die Gattung, die eigentliche Menschheit im Menschen aus?", *Das Wesen des Christentums*, S. 32

³⁶ Feuerbach, *La esencia del cristianismo*, p. 55. "Vernunft, Liebe, Willenskraft ... sind das absolute Wesen des Menschen als Menschen, und der Zweck seines Daseins (...) Wahres Wesen ist denkendes, liebendes, wollendes Wesen", *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Seiten. 32, 33

³⁷ Feuerbach, *La esencia del cristianismo*, p. 58. "Bewußtsein ist ... Freude an der eignen Vollkommenheit. Bewußtsein ist das charakteristische Kennzeichen eines vollkommenen Wesens", *Das Wesen des Christentums*, S. 36

³⁸ Feuerbach, *La esencia del cristianismo*, p. 59. "Jedes Wesen ... hat seinen Gott, sein höchstes Wesen in sich selbst", *Das Wesen des Christentums*, S. 38

del hombre: "El ser absoluto, el Dios del hombre, es su propia esencia"³⁹. El secreto de la teología es, pues, la antropología. Dios es puramente una proyección de los atributos humanos: "*the superhuman deities of religion are ... involuntary projections of the essential attributes of human nature, and this projection ... is explained by a theory of human consciousness (...) What is worshiped as divine is really a synthesis of the human perfections (...) divine is, in reality, profoundly human*"⁴⁰. Feuerbach apostará por la divinidad del hombre y no por la divinidad de Dios. La pregunta ¿Dios existe? no tiene sentido alguno, puesto que la esencia de la religión es sólo el sentimiento humano. Dios, pues, es tan sólo un sentimiento, y sólo existe como sentimiento, pensamiento e imaginación. El objeto y el contenido de la religión son puramente humanos, y Dios es solamente un reflejo del hombre: "Tal como el hombre piensa y siente, así es su Dios (...) Conoces el hombre por su Dios, y viceversa, conoces su Dios por el hombre; los dos son una misma cosa"⁴¹. Feuerbach reduce, como se había propuesto, la teología a la antropología, y afirma que "la contradicción entre lo divino y lo humano es ilusoria"⁴². El cristianismo (al igual que el judaísmo un poco antes y que el islam un poco después) ha hecho de Dios un ser ilimitado y sin determinaciones; esto, según Feuerbach, es una paradoja: "Negar las determinaciones es ... negar el ser mismo. Un ser sin determinaciones es un ser sin objetividad, y algo sin objetividad es una nada de ser (...) Quien teme ser finito, teme existir"⁴³. *Das Wesen des Christentums* consta de 2 partes, cuyos títulos describen perfectamente su contenido. La primera parte se titula "*Das Wahre, d.i. anthropologische Wesen der Religion*" ("La verdadera, es decir, antropológica, esencia de la religión"); la segunda se titula "*Das unwahre, d. i. theologische Wesen der Religion*" ("La falsa, es decir, teológica, esencia de la religión").

³⁹ Feuerbach, *La esencia del cristianismo*, p. 57. "*Das absolute Wesen, der Gott des Menschen ist sein eignes Wesen*", *Das Wesen des Christentums*, S. 35

⁴⁰ Harvey, *Feuerbach and the interpretation of religion*, pp. 25, 29

⁴¹ Feuerbach, *La esencia del cristianismo*, p. 65. "*Wie der Mensch denkt, wie er gesinnt ist, so ist sein Gott (...) Aus seinem Gotte erkennst du den Menschen, und wiederum aus dem Menschen seinen Gott; beides ist eins*", *Das Wesen des Christentums*, S. 43

⁴² Feuerbach, *La esencia del cristianismo*, p. 66. "*Und unsre Aufgabe ist es eben, nachzuweisen, daß der Gegensatz des Göttlichen uns Menschlichen ein illusorischer*", *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Seiten 44, 45

⁴³ Feuerbach, *La esencia del cristianismo*, pp. 66, 67. "*Alle Bestimmungen aufheben, ist soviel als das Wesen selbst aufheben. Ein bestimmungsloses Wesen ist ein ungegenständliches Wesen, ein ungegenständliches ein nichtiges Wesen (...) Wer sich scheut, endlich zu sein, scheut sich zu existieren*", *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Seiten 45, 46

Como muy bien apunta Cabada, la crítica esencial de Feuerbach "consistirá en ver la religión como un producto que emerge espontáneamente de la mente y del corazón del hombre"⁴⁴. En el Prólogo a la segunda edición (1843), Feuerbach se defiende contra los ataques recibidos de su "explosivo" libro, a la vez que hace una crítica magistral a la hipocresía de la época: "No me sorprendieron los juicios necios y pérfidos que se han manifestado sobre este libro desde la aparición de su primera edición: no esperaba otros, y no podía razonablemente esperarlos. Este libro me ha [enemistado] con Dios y con el mundo (...) La apariencia es la esencia de esta época: apariencia nuestra política, apariencia nuestra religión, apariencia nuestra ciencia. Hoy, quien dice la verdad es un impertinente, un 'maleducado', y quien es 'maleducado' es inmoral. La verdad en nuestro tiempo es la inmoralidad"⁴⁵. George Eliot⁴⁶ realizó la traducción inglesa de *Das Wesen des Christentums* en 1854 y omitió algunos pasajes del Prefacio a la segunda edición.

En *Das Wesen der Religion*, Feuerbach sitúa la fe en las antípodas de la realidad. Creer en la inmortalidad es imaginarse que existe lo que no existe. La realidad nos demuestra que el hombre es mortal, pero la fe hace creer al hombre algo falso y hace de la inmortalidad el objeto de la religión. Dios es el fruto del deseo humano, el fruto de la imaginación humana: "Dios mismo no es otra cosa que la esencia de la fantasía o de la imaginación del hombre, la esencia del corazón humano"⁴⁷. El hombre crea sus dioses de acuerdo con sus deseos. Freud recogerá este concepto en su brillante análisis de la religión como neurosis colectiva (*Die Zukunft einer Illusion*, 1927, y *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, 1930). Dios es, pues, para Feuerbach, un reflejo de los deseos del

⁴⁴ Cabada, "La autorrealización o liberación humana como crítica de la religión en Feuerbach" en *Filosofía de la religión*, p. 293

⁴⁵ Feuerbach, *La esencia del cristianismo*, pp. 35, 36. "Die albernen und perfiden Urteile, welche über diese Schrift seit ihrer Erscheinung in der ersten Auflage gefällt wurden, haben mich keineswehes befremdet, denn ich erwartete keine anderen und konnte auch rechtlicher- und vernünftigerweise keine anderen erwarten. Ich habe es durch diese Schrift mi Gott und Welt verdorben (...) Schein ist das Wesen der Zeit –Schein unsre Politik, Schein unsre Sittlichkeit, Schein unsre Religion, Schein unsre Wissenschaft. Wer jetzt die Wahrheit sagt, der ist impertinent, 'ungesittet', wer 'ungesittet', unsittlich. Wahrheit ist unsrer Zeit Unsittlichkeit", *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Seiten 11, 12

⁴⁶ Seudónimo de Mary Ann Evans (1819–1880), novelista y traductora británica

⁴⁷ Feuerbach, *La esencia de la religión*, p. 104. "[Gott] ist selbst nichts andres das Wesen der Phantasie oder Sinnbildungsfrage, das Wesen des menschlichen Herzens" (*Das Wesen der Religion*, S. 75)

hombre: "Como los deseos de los hombres, así son sus dioses"⁴⁸. Según Feuerbach, si el hombre consiguiera realizar sus deseos, no tendría ninguna necesidad de creer en Dios: el hombre sería dueño de lo que anhela y se convertiría en Dios: "Si el hombre fuera capaz de lo que quiere, nunca más creería en Dios, por la sencilla razón de que sería él mismo Dios y la realidad no es objeto de la fe"⁴⁹.

Según Feuerbach, la religión y Dios deben dar paso al amor. El amor es más elevado que Dios: "El amor supera a Dios (...) si no sacrificamos Dios al amor, sacrificamos el amor a Dios, y entonces tenemos ... a la esencia malvada del fanatismo religioso"⁵⁰. El amor, y no Dios, es el verdadero sentimiento de la infinitud. La ética y el hombre deben ser más elevados que la religión. Para Feuerbach, la verdadera religión del hombre es y debe ser la ética. *Ladies & gentlemen*: ¿Quién dijo que los ateos somos amorales?

En *Das Wesen des Glaubens im Sinne Luthers*, Feuerbach denuncia la denigración que sufre el hombre en el cristianismo, concretamente en el luteranismo. Lo que se le atribuye a Dios, se le niega al hombre. Lo que al hombre le falta, lo posee Dios. Feuerbach se propone alzar al hombre y escribe explosivamente: "La nulidad del hombre es el presupuesto de la esencialidad de Dios; afirmar a Dios significa negar al hombre, honrar a Dios, despreciar al hombre, alabar a Dios, denostar al hombre. La majestad de Dios se funda únicamente en la bajeza del hombre; la bienaventuranza divina, en la miseria humana; la sabiduría divina, solamente en la humana necedad; el poder divino, en la humana debilidad"⁵¹.

En *Merkwürdige Äußerungen Luthers nebst Glossen*, Feuerbach hace una crítica magistral al horror luterano. El ensayo acaba con las punzantes palabras: "¡Qué doctrina más atroz, que para curar un dolor agudo, lo

⁴⁸ Feuerbach, *La esencia de la religión*, p. 104. "Wie die Wünsche der Menschen, so sind ihre Götter", *Das Wesen der Religion*, S. 75

⁴⁹ Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1959, IX, 49

⁵⁰ Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1959, VI, 65 s

⁵¹ Feuerbach, "La esencia de la Fe según Lutero. Una contribución a *La esencia del cristianismo*", en *Escritos en torno a La esencia del cristianismo*, p. 5

transforma en crónico; que, para procurarnos en los últimos momentos de la vida un consuelo contra la muerte, nos mantiene durante toda la vida en el terror y el espanto ante la muerte!"⁵².

Feuerbach fue activo y comprometido, no un filósofo que se dedicó sólo a pensar, como insinuó Marx en sus *Tesis sobre Feuerbach*⁵³ (Marx critica la falta de acción de los filósofos en su famosa Tesis XI: "Los filósofos no han hecho más que *interpretar* de diversos modos el mundo, pero de lo que se trata es de *transformarlo*"⁵⁴). Feuerbach fue miembro del partido Socialdemócrata de Alemania (SPD) y fue también periodista. En sus *Tesis sobre Feuerbach*, Marx afirma que tanto el hombre como la religión son productos sociales, punto crucial, según él, que Feuerbach parece ignorar: "Feuerbach no ve ... que el 'sentimiento religioso' es también un *producto social* y que el individuo abstracto que él analiza pertenece, en realidad, a una determinada forma de sociedad"⁵⁵.

Feuerbach habla de Dios y la religión bajo la perspectiva del antropólogo. Aunque deje entrever que la muerte de Dios es requisito fundamental para que el hombre recupere su dignidad ("sólo cuando la tierra se desdiviniza ascienden los dioses al cielo y de entes verdaderos pasan a ser entes sólo representados; sólo una vez que los hombres cuenten con sitio y espacio para sí mismos podrán manifestarse y hacerse valer como tales hombres"⁵⁶), su mensaje no es violento ni insultante ni demasiado provocador. Como muy bien ha apuntado Arroyo, el ateísmo de Feuerbach "no es una simple negación de Dios, sino la pretensión de ser una defensa apasionada del hombre"⁵⁷. La obra de Feuerbach, elegante minuciosa y erudita, abrirá las puertas a ateísmos más

⁵² Feuerbach, "Afirmaciones notables de Lutero con glosas", en *Escritos en torno a La esencia del cristianismo*, p. 119

⁵³ Apuntes escritos en 1845 y publicados póstumamente en 1888 por Engels

⁵⁴ Marx, *Tesis sobre Feuerbach* (Tesis XI), p. 428. "*Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden interpretirt; es kommt aber darauf an, sie zu verändern*"

⁵⁵ Marx, *Tesis sobre Feuerbach*, (Tesis VII), p. 428. "*Feuerbach sieht ... nicht, daß das 'religiöse Gemüth' selbst ein gesellschaftliches Produkt ist, und dass das abstrakte Individuum, das er analysirt, in Wirklichkeit einer bestimmten Gesellschaftsform angehört*"

⁵⁶ Feuerbach, *La esencia de la religión*, p. 70. "*erst wo die Erde sich entgöttert, die Götter in den Himmel emporsteigen, aus wirklichen Wesen zu nur vorgestellten Wesen werden, erst da haben die Menschen Platz und Raum für sich, erst da können sie ungeniert als Menschen sich zeigen und geltend machen*", *Das Wesen der Religion*, S. 45

⁵⁷ Arroyo, Presentación de Feuerbach en *Escritos en torno a La esencia del cristianismo*

fuertes y radicales: el de Marx (un ateísmo brillante y despreciativo), el de Nietzsche (un ateísmo explosivo y demoledor) y el de Freud (un ateísmo elegante y magnífico), para dar paso a los ateísmos espléndidos de Russell, Sartre, Camus y Onfray (por citar algunos de mis preferidos).

Siguiendo a Feuerbach, yo me pregunto: ¿hasta cuándo se denigrará al hombre y se desvalorizará la vida, esta vida, la que vivimos, la vida de cada cual, como repetía Ortega, con promesas de una ilusoria inmortalidad? Cuando las religiones puedan reducirse a tradición, a legado cultural, y devengan un *problema* tan sólo privado (como muy bien apunta el gruñón Onfray en su genial *Traité d'athéologie*), la Humanidad habrá hecho un paso gigantesco. Lo primordial es la ética, la paz, la empatía, el valor de la vida, la dignidad y la libertad. Lo primordial, como dijo Feuerbach, es que el hombre sea libre y sano de pensamiento: "Demos al hombre lo que es del hombre; no se trata de si somos cristianos o paganos, teístas o ateos, sino de que seamos o nos hagamos hombres sanos de cuerpo y alma, libres, activos y vigorosos"⁵⁸.

Antonia Tejada Barros, Madrid, 7 de julio de 2012 & 21 de diciembre de 2014

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⁵⁸ Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke*, 1959, II, 410 s

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Nuestro Credo, por David Cerdá

Hay días en que a uno lo aplasta uno de esos tsunamis de mezquindad que de cuando en cuando se le escapa a los habitantes del planeta. Ya debería uno estar acostumbrado al hecho de que somos capaces de todo, de lo más sublime a lo más deplorable, junto a todo lo de en medio. Hay para todos los gustos; y lo más corriente es que casi cada semana toque menú degustación. Pero es verdad que a veces, de improviso, una tarde en la que se te han cruzado una decapitación del IS, el encorbatado pirata palopata de turno o el último desgraciado que le hace una pedorreta al Tribunal de la Haya, se te clava en el corazón la angustia terráquea de las narices, esa invitada cochambrosa que te hace perder toda esperanza en la Humanidad.

Estas cosas requieren terapia, y al punto, porque todo lo malo tiene querencia a enquistarse. La mala leche es pertinazmente pegadiza, y a poco que te entretienes en verle las costuras al cuadro, resulta que al rato ya te importa un pimiento *Maeda Primavesi*, *La chica del pendiente de perla*, y la madre que las parió. Qué demonios: hasta las *variaciones Goldberg* te parecen cargantes, hasta un trino de la Fitzgerald con su Louis Armstrong de sus entrañas se te queda en el ombligo como algo fútil, parduzco y francamente prescindible. Ante este panorama, y que me perdone el ramo, es poco lo que el psicólogo puede hacer, porque no se trata de tener las emociones escacharradas o alguna junta cognitiva pasada de rosca, sino de que el mundo es como es o por lo menos está como está. Así es que la única terapia posible, me parece, son unas convicciones sólidas, robustas, constructivas y audaces desde las que no limitarse a observar el dantesco espectáculo, sino atreverse a tomar las armas y lanzarse a dar batalla a tanta estulticia y tanta iniquidad.

Prefiero la palabra convicción a la palabra creencia, ambiguamente empleada como si fuera un sinónimo, porque me parece que “creencia” tiene cierta carga epistemológica que la hace más precaria. En todo caso, no me duelen prendas en admitir que las convicciones propias son siempre el fruto de una ensalada de argumentos y creencias. Creo que han sobrado dogmatismos ávidos de monopolizar el término “creencia”, cuando lo cierto es que esta, que no es más que la conformidad firme con alguna cosa que se desea tener por cierta (sin que tenga por qué serlo), es propia de todos los seres humanos. La humanidad no puede conocerlo todo y ha de seguir viviendo; de ahí que *apueste* por dar por ciertas serias cosas que no puede probar. La fe, por su parte, no es más que una creencia muy importante, y en modo alguno resulta privativa de la religión: fe en las instituciones, en Dios, en la justicia, en los milagros o en el futuro de la humanidad; todas esas son *fes*.

Las creencias *religiosas* tan sólo son unas más entre el conjunto de las creencias humanas. Todos somos creyentes, de modo que enfrentar, por ejemplo, “fe” a “ideología” (término que despide un inconfundible hedor a baratija deleznable), carece de sentido; es un juego de palabras que intenta, de forma más o menos disimulada, de crear *rangos de certeza* entre las distintas cosas en las que las personas pueden llegar a creer. Una idea es un acto más simple, algo así como la unidad mínima del entendimiento; y un argumento es un conjunto de ideas (premisas y conclusiones) engarzados entre sí.

Afortunadamente, Ortega y Gasset se ocupó hace mucho con extrema lucidez y simplicidad de este tema, distinguiendo claramente entre ideas y creencias. Las ideas se tienen; en las creencias se está. Las ideas las sostenemos nosotros; las creencias, justo al revés: son el marco que hace comprensible y viable nuestra vida. Cada uno tiene un esquema desde el que entender la vida, y cualquiera de estos esquemas tienen a priori el mismo rango. Otra cosa es su enjundia y eficacia, su *valor* en la contribución a la felicidad y la justicia. Las creencias, en suma, son las que mejor explican cómo somos, bajo que presupuestos vivimos, porque representan bloques con afán de perduración, frente al burbujear de las ideas.

¿Con qué convicciones —volvamos a la desazón de inicio— propongo encarar el presente? Lo expongo, por si a alguien le hace bien en situaciones parecidas, o por si a alguno le esclarece el panorama. Y lo hago tomando prestado lo que escribió Herman Hesse en un tratadito muy difícil de encontrar y que se titula, precisamente, *Mi Credo*. Su párrafo más sublime, que repite de paso las distinciones de Ortega, dice así:

Nuestra conducta en la vida no depende tanto de nuestros pensamientos como de nuestras creencias. Yo no creo en ningún dogmatismo religioso ni tampoco en un Dios que ha creado a los hombres y les ha capacitado para el progreso de matarse primero a golpes de hacha y después con armas atómicas, y ahora está orgulloso de ellos. Por lo tanto, no creo que esta sangrienta historia universal tenga un “sentido” a nivel de un superior regente divino, que nos prepare con ella algo incomprensible para nosotros, pero divino y sublime. Sin embargo, tengo una fe, una sabiduría o una intuición convertida en instinto, acerca del sentido de la vida. De la historia universal no puedo decidir que el hombre sea bueno, noble, pacífico y altruista, pero creo, y además, sé con certeza, que entre las posibilidades que tiene a su alcance se encuentran también esa noble y hermosa posibilidad, la tendencia hacia el bien, la paz y la belleza, que pueden florecer en circunstancias favorables, y si esta fe tuviera necesidad de una confirmación, la encontraría en la historia universal, junto a los conquistadores, dictadores, guerreros y lanzadores de bombas, en las apariciones de Buda, Sócrates, Jesús, los escritos sagrados de los hindúes, judíos, chinos y todas las maravillosas obras del espíritu humano en el mundo del arte. Una cabeza de profeta en el pórtico de una catedral, un par de acordes en la música de Monteverdi, Bach, Beethoven, un trozo de lienzo de Guardi o de Renoir, son suficientes para contradecir todo el terreno bélico de la brutal historia universal y presentar otro mundo espiritual y dichoso. Y por añadidura, las obras artísticas tienen una duración mucho más segura y prolongada que las obras de la violencia, a las que sobreviven muchos milenios.

Ya sé, ya sé. *Ojala fuese cierto*. Eso compensaría en cierto modo lo del terrorista, lo del genocida, lo del político ladrón. Pero puede que de lo que se trate sea de *querer que sea cierto*. Yo no solo quiero, sino que estoy dispuesto a persuadir a cuantas personas se me crucen en el camino para que crean también, porque es un afán

natural instalado en todo ser humano el tratar de empujar el mundo hacia el ideal que uno desearía ver realizado. Que es en lo que consiste la democracia: el intento intersubjetivo de convencer a los demás de cuál es el diseño social y los valores que más nos convienen, y hacerlo con métodos pacíficos, con la palabra, desechando la violencia y ateniéndose a la persuasión..

Bueno, o al menos eso *creo* yo.

David Cerdá, Sevilla, 4 de diciembre de 2014



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Juan Ramón y Brecht fantasean con el final, por Ángel Repáraz

Entre 1910 y 1913 publicó Juan Ramón Jiménez un mínimo de seis libros de poemas - cien años después no es siempre fácil la pesquisa con ediciones que a veces tenían un carácter casi privado-; el poema que nos interesa analizar, *Y yo me iré*, forma parte de *Poemas agrestes*, que recoge parte de su producción de 1910 y 1911. Es un JRJ que está entrando en los treinta, pero que ya se ha hecho un nombre en el Madrid literario, y que va camino de la inminente madurez, si consideramos sus muy precoces comienzos.

El viaje definitivo

*... Y yo me iré. Y se quedarán los pájaros
cantando;
y se quedará mi huerto, con su verde árbol,
y con su pozo blanco.*

*Todas las tardes, el cielo será azul y plácido;
y tocarán, como esta tarde están tocando,
las campanas del campanario.*

*Se morirán aquellos que me amaron;
y el pueblo se hará nuevo cada año;
y en el rincón aquel de mi huerto florido y encalado
mi espíritu errará, nostálgico...*

*Y yo me iré: y estaré solo, sin hogar, sin árbol
verde, sin pozo blanco,
sin cielo azul y plácido...
Y se quedarán los pájaros cantando.*

Con dos excepciones ('están' y 'amaron'), en todo el poema, de verso libre, se utiliza la forma del futuro gramatical (11 ocurrencias), como si se ensayara una presentización del escenario que seguirá a la desaparición de la voz poética (cuyo titular, no obstante, quedará entonces *solo*). Las escuelas del *close reading* han escrito mucho sobre la inanidad del biografismo, pero no se ve que tenga que resultar un obstáculo para la intelección del poema algún conocimiento de la muy crítica etapa que su autor dejaba entonces atrás. Han sido años de convalecencia de lo que entonces se llamaban “postraciones nerviosas” o “depresiones” -Freud acababa de darse a conocer al gran público centroeuropeo con la *Traumdeutung* (1900)-, acompañadas de temores a la propia desaparición claramente patológicos y de accesos de pánico de que, al parecer, no se libró nunca del todo (claro que en una carta a Guillermo de Torre de 1949 habla de “estas depresiones nutritivas tan frecuentes”). El año que vivió en un sanatorio de Francia en su primera juventud (1901), los casi dos en el sanatorio del Rosario, de Madrid (1901-1903), y los dos adicionales en casa del doctor Simarro (1903-1905) son parte del currículo de una prolongada inadaptación a su entorno social. En el que, por una paradoja poco explicada, sin embargo supo mantener muchas relaciones literarias, frecuentísimamente resueltas, hay que añadir, en choques, odios y rupturas.

Hay mucho en el poema del intimismo, o narcisismo ensimismado -la muerte afectará a los “que *me* amaron”-, que suele ser la marca de JRJ. Admitiendo que un estilo es un tipo particular de dialecto social, el estilo como idiolecto propio presente en nuestro poema -los estilemas, las palabras-clave típicas del autor- estará presumiblemente en función de la situación de comunicación que aquel presupone, que a su vez exige un destinatario, incluso en un poema como éste, una a modo de botella arrojada al mar por el naufrago que sabe que emprenderá “el viaje definitivo”. Y éste solo podría ser esa 'inmensa minoría' que el poeta deseaba como un *vosotros* colectivo -un ecumenismo selectivo. Y bien, a la postre, en el horizonte que crea aquí el poema *todos* se habrán ido, también quien habla, y por tanto entonces se habrá establecido la más absoluta desposesión (el hogar, el árbol, el pozo, el cielo, quedarán sin correlato humano). ¿Una desposesión sin protagonista, un atributo sin sujeto?

Es sencilla de detectar la fantasía que recorre el poema, de presencia nada rara en la obra juanramoniana: “Y sonará [...] / como en esta noche [...]”, se lee en otro poema, “Y me iré -aurora hermosa y triste-/ hacia más plenitudes”, en otro, o, en fin, “... un día/ que ya nunca se acabara...”, en otro. ¿Hablabamos de una actitud en la vida, de una invariancia en el carácter que opta por la aceptación resignada de los ciclos naturales, que incorporan el plazo de vencimiento de nuestra condición insalvablemente fugitiva? En el presente poema doliente, en cualquier caso -de 1911 son sus *Poemas májicos y dolientes*-, es tentador pensar en una vida en permanente autodiagnóstico por la vía del misterio del tiempo integrado y exorcizado en la ficción poética. Aquí con la epifanía anticipada, la ilusión si se quiere, de que a pesar de todo en ese marco natural tan plácido *algo* quedará del vaciado final de los protagonistas (“mi espíritu”). En sus *Apuntes* de 1902, JRJ tiene 21 años, había proclamado la poesía como nueva religión del presente, muy en sintonía por lo demás con ciertas poéticas francesas del momento, que Juan Ramón conocía bien; y en un poema de *Eternidades* (1918) el diapasón aumenta su frecuencia con un raptó muy nietzscheano que será prudente leer como flor de un día:

*Lo seré todo,
pues que mi alma es infinita;
y nunca moriré, pues que soy todo.*

El investido con la facultad poética según esto gozaría del privilegio de participar en algún tipo de trascendencia (no hay que pensar en el dios de la dogmática cristiana y menos en lo que Jankélévitch ha llamado “la esperanza mercenaria en el Paraíso”; el dios juanramoniano es, como mucho, el de Spinoza o los krausistas); inferir causalmente sin embargo de la quiebra ineludible de tal empresa la melancolía crónica del poeta le parecería excesivo al mismísimo Robert Burton. Es problemático establecer fechas para sus lecturas, pero en su biblioteca de Moguer están unos *Opúsculos filosóficos* de Leibniz; además, sabemos que tenía algún conocimiento de la revolución teórica de Einstein desde sus años en la Residencia de Estudiantes JRJ, donde también leyó con entusiasmo la *Ética* de Spinoza, un autor que admiró siempre. Todo un plexo de influjos, o de afinidades; en *Tiempo*, de su exilio final, es ya definitivamente personal en la postulación de ese dios que a ratos necesitaba: “No creo en el dios usual, pero pienso en el dios absoluto como si existiera, porque creo que debiera existir aunque yo no lo puedo concebir. Y si lo puedo concebir, ¿por qué no pensar en él aunque no exista?” Se advertirá que en dos frases admite el argumento ontológico para luego deconstruirlo.

El programa brechtiano de irritar a un cierto público literario culto podía acogerse a precedentes inmediatos en la propia Alemania; Gottfried Benn ya había sido piedra de escándalo poco antes de la guerra con el cinismo médico de sus poesías sobre los depósitos de cadáveres -*Morgue*, de 1912-. Originariamente Brecht pensó en el *Baal* como una pieza sobre François Villon, “que fue asesino, atracador de caminos y poeta de baladas en la Bretaña del siglo XV”; también le atraía la figura de Verlaine. Son trece las estrofas -o nueve, o dieciocho, según ediciones, y con variantes textuales que no considero; Brecht modificaba inacabablemente sus piezas- que componen el coral⁵⁹.

Als im weißen Mutterschoße aufwuchs Baal

War der Himmel schon so groß und still und fahl

Jung und nackt und ungeheuer wundersam

Wie ihn Baal dann liebte, als Baal kam.

[...]

Und wenn Baal nur Leichen um sich sah

⁵⁹ Vayan aquí mis disculpas al lector por el pecado mortal filológico cometido con la reproducción parcial del texto; para el objeto de estas notas, espero, bastan las estrofas elegidas.

War die Wollust immer doppelt groß.

Man hat Platz, sagte Baal, es sind nicht viele da,

Man hat Platz, sagte Baal, in dieses Weibes Schoß.

[...]

Alle Laster sind zu etwas gut

Und der Mann auch, sagt Baal, der sie tut.

Laster sind das, weiß man, was man will,

Sucht euch zwei aus, eins ist zuviel!

[...]

Als im dunklen Erdgeschoß faulte Baal

War der Himmel noch so groß und still und fahl,

Jung und nackt und ungeheuer wunderbar

Wie ihn Baal liebte, als Baal war.

[Cuando en el blanco seno materno crecía Baal/ ya era el cielo tan grande, tranquilo y pálido/ joven y desnudo e inmensamente caprichoso/ como lo amó Baal cuando Baal existía. [...] Y cuando Baal veía cadáveres en torno a sí/ su voluptuosidad era siempre doblemente grande./ Hay sitio, decía Baal, no hay muchos,/ hay sitio, decía Baal, en este seno de mujer. [...]. Todos los vicios son buenos para algo/ y también el hombre, decía Baal, que los tiene./ Los vicios son, ya se sabe, lo que se quiere,/ elegid dos, uno es demasiado. [...]. Cuando en el oscuro seno de la tierra se pudría Baal/ el cielo era tan grande y tranquilo y pálido,/ joven y desnudo e inmensamente maravilloso/ como lo amó Baal cuando Baal existía.]

Aunque Brecht es también representante del frecuente primitivismo formal del expresionismo, el presente poema delata un trabajo cuidadoso; el ritmo de los versos fluye con naturalidad y la rima, aunque se permite oscilaciones entre el patrón *abab* y *aabb*, es no menos pulcra (también están las concesiones del poeta a la lírica paisajística, que gradualmente abandonará). En la segunda edición del drama iba antepuesto el coral a la pieza, que de alguna forma queda en él resumida, si bien puede también ser considerado y leído como un poema independiente. El poema en su conjunto responde a una actitud vital que, por lo que sabemos, el jovencísimo Brecht de entonces (n. en 1898) no veía sin simpatía; como quiera, aquí el 'yo lírico' afirma abiertamente la vida en tanto que fuente de hedonismo, una actitud que recuerda viejas corrientes epicúreas. Ese vitalismo además admite alegremente lo irreparable de la muerte -la nada-, con ecos claros de Nietzsche. Baal es en suma alegoría de lo 'natural', lo 'animal' o 'instintivo': ya tenemos un primer contrapunto a JRJ.

Baal, el primer drama de Brecht que merece tal nombre, después de alguna tentativa frustrada con editores algo timoratos ve la luz en forma de libro con Kiepenheuer en 1922 (había sido escrito en pocas semanas en la primavera de 1918, pero luego fue objeto de las usuales reelaboraciones). Se acaba de aludir a lo 'animal' de Baal; ahora bien, con un sistema u otro de restricciones, toda cultura humana convencionaliza el trato entre sus miembros y los derechos de estos en el grupo. Pero Baal vulnera toda norma imaginable de respeto al otro y las más básicas marcas de la decencia, y todos los intentos de incorporarlo en el drama a la vida burguesa son contestados expeditivamente; él vive su vida y su arte meramente como posibilidad de placer inmediato (en el texto teatral acuchilla en una trifulca de borrachos al amigo al que antes había birlado la novia, embaraza a ésta y se desentiende de ella cuando la muchacha determina cometer suicidio, etc.). ¿Es posible vivir fuera de la reglamentación social sin sufrir alguna forma de exclusión inmediata? Aquí el expresionismo llega a sus límites en la impugnación de una burguesía que todavía no se había quitado de encima la sumisión guillermina.

La sorpresa es que todavía en 1953 su autor vuelve en unas notas sobre la asocialidad de Baal, y de algún modo lo disculpa porque éste vive en una “asoziale Gesellschaft” (por el diverso origen de ambas raíces, en la lengua alemana es posible el oxímoron 'sociedad asocial' sin que el compuesto chirríe chirríe; en una carta a Caspar Neher de junio de 1918 el propio Brecht se ve como un “konservativer Anarchist”, que, añade, puede ser “despiadado” o “sin miramientos”). Pero hasta admitiendo el supuesto, ¿ampara esa anomia social la continua cosificación de los otros por parte de Baal, su burla de cualquier conciencia cooperativa? Si la pregunta es contestada con un sí nos encontraríamos con una segunda sorpresa: Brecht como dostoyewskiano (“Si no hay Dios todo está permitido”). Nótese además que el mundo al que llega Baal es “ungeheuer wundersam” (primera estrofa), pero el que abandona es tras su muerte y putrefacción “ungeheuer wunderbar” (última estrofa): lo caprichoso, o fantástico, se celebra después como maravilloso (¿y por quién?, ¿por Baal, mágicamente, o por el 'yo lírico?', ¿o por Bertolt Brecht?).

Es ya comúnmente aceptada la condición abierta del objeto artístico –del texto poético–, su ambigüedad básica precisamente porque es abierto y polivalente; nos guardaremos pues de proponer *una* interpretación de uno u otro de los poemas o de atribuirles un modo de significación sobre cualesquiera otros. Ambos poemas participan sin duda de lo que Umberto Eco ha llamado “dignidad estilística”; sabemos además que el lenguaje poético está organizado y modelado en un grado elevado, muy en especial por las condiciones impuestas por la tradición de que viene (históricas, culturales o ideológicas, lingüísticas). Ambos poetas procedían de medios sociales, en Moguer/Huelva y en Augsburg, no tan diferentes: la familia de Juan Ramón, acomodada, poseía viñedos y varias bodegas, y hasta barcos para la exportación de sus vinos (luego las cosas cambiaron). El padre de Brecht, por su parte, un alto cargo técnico-administrativo de una fábrica, no tuvo inconveniente en pasar por encima de su extrañeza ante el texto del hijo y poner a su disposición una secretaria que lo pasara a máquina.

El poema brechtiano reacciona militantemente contra el primado entonces de Stefan George, su aristocratismo y su hermetismo, contra el clasicismo de los epígonos en

una Alemania cuya juventud superviviente vuelve horrorizada del prolongado baño de sangre de 1914/18. Aquí está la renuncia del joven poeta al mundo burgués en su totalidad, también al de Rilke, al patetismo, a la retórica; eso por no hablar del coqueteo con la muerte, tan alemán desde el romanticismo y con una representación importante entre sus contemporáneos (Th. Mann, Hofmannsthal). Él recusa irrespetuosamente todo eso: por eso es tanto más interesante su aproximación aquí a la finitud humana. Y si Baal como figura contiene elementos no tan imaginarios de su creador, el modernista JRJ en su poema y cada vez más parece haber descubierto un panteísmo cosmológico que de algún modo anularía la nihilización de la muerte. Y bien, a la deseada simbiosis, o fusión, entre la autoconciencia personal y ese universo algo leibniziano, el poeta le impone una cláusula de obligado cumplimiento: la tal conciencia de sí ha de seguir tal, continuar existiendo. El problema es que al término el hecho nudo del acabamiento total e inimaginable habrá vencido; entre tanto y a la espera del mismo, Juan Ramón se procura unamunianamente un consuelo que es sólo artístico, como, ya cercano al final, ha dejado escrito con golpeadora concisión en *Espacio*: “cáscara vana, un nombre nada más, cangrejo”. Brecht se le opone de nuevo, y la inclusión por su parte de elementos grotescos, en parte del arsenal del teatro popular alemán, subrayan lo social, o asocial, como horizonte único de la vida humana.

En fin, el diálogo que hemos urdido entre las dos piezas, por fuerza muy somero en razón del juego denso de significados de denotación y de connotación que actúa en cada una, ha puesto en claro cuando menos la disfunción entre ambos universos del discurso cuando enfrentan la experiencia de la muerte propia. Brecht, no tan intensamente político como en la madurez, parece desentenderse de lo irremediable, en tanto que en JRJ la idea, o el fantasma, de la muerte posee ya una intensidad que irá en aumento en el tramo final de su exilio americano, cuando ya parezcan fijos los contornos de la trascendencia que el poeta delegaba en esa *Obra* plena con que soñaba desde joven. En una carta escrita en Moguer en 1912, la época de *Y yo me iré*, leemos: “Mi preocupación -la muerte definitiva- es lo único que me detiene.” ¿Le detiene de qué?, ¿es posible discernir algún impulso intencional en tanta melancolía, en la constante *nostalgia*, en los déficits tan exhibidos? La visión juanramoniana de madurez del devenir y la divinidad desdibuja ya la angustia ante la muerte como cesura nihilizadora; y, a mi juicio, esa completa depuración del yo que, como concepto-límite, representarían el máximo de plenitud otorgado a los humanos, está ya *in nuce* en nuestro poema. Alcanzamos así la estación final: *and my ending is my beginning*. El arrobo ante la hermosura del cielo que ambos poetas invocan es reasignado a estrategias poéticas y vitales muy distintas. El descarnado, hedónico y fatalista materialismo de Brecht, más bien endeblemente anclado en la tradición marxista, hablaba otro lenguaje.

Ángel Repáraz, Madrid, diciembre 2014



HCH 2 / Enero 2015

Demagogia, mentiras y programas televisivos, por David Cerdá

En las diferentes tertulias televisivas en las que la formación política PODEMOS debate, a falta de presencia parlamentaria, con quienes parece serán sus rivales en las próximas elecciones generales, se ve expuesta a constantes acusaciones de connivencia con “aquellos que denigran a las mujeres y cuelgan a los homosexuales”. El hecho de que el programa de Pablo Iglesias, líder de Podemos, se vea en el *ayatolato* iraní, ha sido esgrimido por PSOE y PP como prueba fehaciente de los presuntos valores homófobos y machistas de esta formación, la cual, a falta de casos de corrupción propiamente dicha en su debe, ha debido escuchar que es culpable de *corrupción intelectual* por dicho motivo. En esta sección queremos preguntarnos si el reproche es justo y razonable.

El entramado de relaciones comerciales en los que un profesional puede verse inmiscuido es fácilmente confundible con los presupuestos ideológicos de quienes presentan programas televisivos o firman crónicas periodísticas, por ejemplo. Sobre esto puede adoptarse una ética de máximos, que fácilmente pondrá en situación de inmoralidad a la mayoría de los que firman artículos de opinión escritos o hablados, o una de mínimos, en las que, como ocurre en algunas películas norteamericanas, se admite que hay que distinguir los compromisos comerciales de un medio del mensaje de quien hace correr su voz en él. Este primer punto invita a la cautela a la hora de acusar a PODEMOS de según qué cosas.

Ocurre además que PODEMOS no es quien emite motu proprio en Irán, sino que el programa es vendido a una productora que después lo coloca donde quiere o donde puede. Ese es un hecho de mercado que, aunque a muchos no nos guste, no representa convalidación alguna de las tesis homófobas y machistas del país receptor, que a fin de cuentas, está dispuesto a escuchar a un tipo que probablemente dirá cosas que no serán de su agrado (y es seguro que eso pondrá en peligro futuras ediciones del programa). A fin de cuentas, no se trata de un país al que esté vetado vender nada, desde programas de televisión a melocotones. ¿Culparíamos a los agricultores exportadores españoles de connivencia con dichos valores? Cuesta pensar que algunos de los que afean lo antes dicho a PODEMOS fuesen a protestar por la exportación de otros productos españoles a zonas donde la libertad escasea y las minorías son denigradas y perseguidas.

Huelga decir que el concepto, de extenderse de este modo, deja en lugar precario a todos los militantes de PP y PSOE que sean simpatizantes de Real Madrid y Barcelona, cosa que debe ocurrir en una proporción considerable. Y ello porque uno y otro lucen en sus camisetas publicidad de Emiratos Árabes y Qatar, respectivamente, países donde la *Sharia* se cumple con la misma crueldad y ultranza que en Irán. Puede afirmarse incluso que las mujeres gozan de unos derechos y una participación política muy superior a la de saudís y catarís. Este tipo de argumento sesgado y de máximos tampoco deja en buen lugar al muy moderno y londinense y éticamente

indiscutido club inglés del Arsenal, cuyo estadio ha pasado a llamarse *Emirates Stadium*.

Hay que tener mucho cuidado con las acusaciones vertidas, que fácilmente se pueden volver en contra propia. Es por ello que Confucio advertía, a quienes señalasen con el dedo, que cuatro dedos de la misma mano les apuntaban a ellos mismos. Las acusaciones de PP y PSOE, seguidas de un silencio respecto a las prácticas publicitarias de los dos clubes más ricos de nuestro país, o por ejemplo, sobre las exportaciones de la industria armamentística española, solo por mencionar el caso más sangrante, delatan que no hay en sus puyas ánimo ético real de distinguir, sino un trivial intento de desestabilizar a quienes, al contrario que ellos, por falta de oportunidad o por principios (eso ya se verá), no tienen corruptos entre sus filas a los que disparar. Por lo demás, asimilar corrupción “intelectual” a corrupción “a secas”, resulta infantil, un truco retórico bastante viejo que consiste en tratar de despistar llevando el foco de la conversación hacia otro lado.

David Cerdá, Sevilla, 4 de diciembre de 2014



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La aparente sencillez de las horquillas, por Delia Aguiar Baixauli

(Este texto recibió la “mención especial” en el II Certamen María Zambrano de ensayo breve filosófico-literario organizado por la Universidad Complutense de Madrid en el año 2012).

He estado pensando en las horquillas. En las negras, en las de siempre. Creo que pueden llegar a ser tan sugerentes y reveladoras como un buen poema siempre que uno sepa mirarlas. Si sus dos partes se encuentran ligeramente separadas una de otra, como dadas de sí, la mente se dispersa pensando en una cabellera abundante, en que fue tal cabellera la responsable de tal forzamiento. De lo contrario, si están intactas, como salidas de fábrica, nos resulta más fácil abstraernos para pensar en el objeto tal cual y hacer un ejercicio que, en mi opinión, deberíamos hacer con todos los objetos y con cualquier idea que nos aparezca en la mente. Es necesario saber hasta qué punto llega nuestro conocimiento sobre ellos, que sin duda es bastante, seamos o no conscientes.

La horquilla viene a ser en el pelo lo que la pinza es en la ropa. Su función, en principio, parece básicamente la de sujetar. Pero, mientras que en la ropa la pinza se halla eternamente como castigada, con la abertura siempre hacia abajo, la horquilla goza de una libertad de movimiento de trescientos sesenta grados. En cualquier punto de la cabeza que se sitúe encuentra un horizonte abierto al que dirigirse; ligeramente hacia arriba, vertical por completo, en horizontal hacia la derecha o hacia la izquierda, etc. Todo este abanico de posibilidades hace pensar que no es entonces su única función la de la sujeción, sino que va mucho más allá. Tampoco sería exactamente la de adornar, ya que un adorno suele estar compuesto de más que un alambre

negro barnizado con dos puntas redondeadas. La función propia de la horquilla tradicional parece que fuera domar. Domar significa hacer dócil. Por tanto, al ver una horquilla, podrían aparecer en nuestra mente esos vaqueros que, echando el lazo, capturan el ganado y lo arrastran hacia ellos, pues hay rizos y mechones que son turbulentos como animales de granja. Las tradicionales crestas, cuernos o remolinos siempre se han solucionado con una horquilla en el caso de las mujeres.

En una melena alborotada las horquillas son indicio de domesticación; en una corta, cuando por ejemplo acompañan un recogido que a duras penas alcanza, son indicio de aspiración. Pero en un caso y en otro están obligando.

Apartadas ya de su terreno de mando, de su selva rebelde que es el pelo, cuando están fuera de él, en un estado que se podría llamar latente, de reposo hasta nuevo uso, nos damos cuenta de que la naturaleza tiene un comportamiento variado con ellas, con las horquillas. Abandonadas en la repisa de una ducha no surten los mismos efectos que perdidas entre unas sábanas blancas. En el primer caso, el vapor y la humedad actúan sobre ellas dejando en sus alrededores una huella anaranjada, como de óxido, que difícilmente se quita si se trata de baldosas. Pero entre las sábanas o en sus inmediaciones, caídas por el suelo, si se quiere, producen un complicado efecto cuando se hallan en el cuarto de unos amantes y ella no utiliza jamás este objeto, o lo utiliza, pero de un modelo distinto. Entonces, el insignificante alambre, recogido del suelo por la mujer y puesto sobre una colcha, sobre una mesa o simplemente sostenido en la palma de su mano, se convierte en una pregunta, en algo que interroga por sí solo. A lo que en un principio se le atribuyó la propiedad de domar, ahora se le atribuye la propiedad de increpar, de pedir una respuesta. Y, al no obtenerla, se convierte en causa de dolor, de duda, de incompreensión. Se convierte en un clavo que se instala en el corazón, que lo revuelve, lo agujerea. Se le atribuye la función de torturar.

Delia Aguiar Baixauli, Madrid, octubre 2011



HCH 2 / Enero 2015

Entrevista a Heidegger

Para nuestra entrevista destinada al segundo número de HCH, contamos con el enorme privilegio de poder entrevistar a Martin Heidegger, uno de los filósofos más influyentes del siglo XX.

Entrevistador: Buenos días, y gracias por atendernos, señor Heidegger. Para nosotros es una ocasión muy especial.

Heidegger: Me hago cargo.

Ent.: Háblenos un poco de su vida y orígenes.

Hei.: Nací en Messkirch, en Alemania, en un medio rural. Mis padres no tenían mucho, de modo que en principio no pude ir a la universidad. Fue gracias a la iglesia que lo conseguí, aunque pese a empezar estudiando teología, luego me alejé de todo eso.

Ent.: Luego llegó a ser profesor, durante muchos años.

Hei.: Sí, después de un breve tiempo como soldado. Me codeé con Bultmann y Hartmann, figúrese. Husserl fue mi mentor. Pero entre usted y yo, el viejo chocheaba. Todo ese asunto de la fenomenología... usted ya me entiende.

Ent.: Aun así, usted le dedicaría su *Ser y tiempo*.

Hei.: Soy un tipo magnánimo, ya me va conociendo.

Ent.: No obstante, en su quinta edición, de 1941, eliminó esa dedicatoria...

Hei.: ¿Vamos a estar toda la tarde hablando de ese judío? Disculpe el comentario *pacoubralesco*, pero yo he venido hoy aquí para hablar de mi libro.

Ent.: Vamos a ello, pues. Su idea más estruendosa (para las malas lenguas, casi la única) fue el *Dasein*. ¿Puede explicarnos, así como para que lo entendamos los mortales, en qué consiste este misterioso *Dasein*?

Hei.: Pues claro, en realidad está chupado. Resulta que el hombre es un Ser-Ahí porque se halla abocado al mundo; no es comprensible, como pretendían muchos filósofos antes de mí, concebirle como un cogito, en plan yo-conmigo-mismo. ¿Me sigue?

Ent.: Creo que sí.

Hei.: El mundo no está fuera del hombre; este último no es comprensible sin aquel, que es su extensión. Todo esto lo cuento fácil-fácil en mi obra capital.

Ent.: Su *Ser y tiempo* fue calificado por muchos como la obra filosófica más importante del siglo XX.

Hei.: ¡Por lo menos! Sin mí no hubieran existido el existencialismo ni la deconstrucción (no me refiero a la de Ferrán Adrià, ese tipo que te monta tortillas de papas en vasos de Martini; hablo de *la otra*). Allí cuento yo aspectos apasionantes de nuestra existencia, como nuestra facticidad, nuestra existencialidad, la temporalidad del Ser (y no esa mamarrachada de intencionalidad que se sacó de la manga Husserl), la preocupación y la angustia. En fin, cositas.

Ent.: Así a bocajarro suena todo horrible.

Hei.: En alemán mejora bastante. De hecho, a mí hay que leerme en alemán, comprenderme en alemán, adorarme en alemán. En *mi* alemán, para ser exactos.

Ent.: Se le ve a usted muy contento de haberse conocido. Se lo digo sin acritud.

Hei.: Pues no se crea: aunque todo lo estudié y lo entendí todo, tengo mi ramalazo campechano. Si consulta en google verá que a menudo, en las fotos, llevo boina.

Ent.: Un tipo cercano, sin duda. De hecho usted habló mucho de la vida.

Hei.: Pues sí, y dije que la vida inauténtica es la del *man* (en alemán, no en inglés, no se me pierda), esto es, el del “se dice, se comenta”. Ser un ente concreto es no ser (o sea); a eso lo llamo la caída.

Ent.: ¿Quiere decir en algún sentido moral o parecido?

Hei.: ¿Ve? ¡Ya se ha perdido! ¿Qué diantres tiene que ver la moral en este asunto?

Ent.: Disculpe.

Hei.: Disculpado. Prosigo: el hombre es también Ser-para-la-muerte. El *Dasein*, ese Ser-ahí que el hombre es, está vuelto hacia la muerte. Solo el *Dasein* propiamente hablando muere (no fenece, como los animales). Solo el hombre es mortal. Usted dirá que este es un pensamiento poco novedoso, que ya llevaba dos milenios sobre la tierra cuando yo llegué; pero usted dirá eso por ser un ser (ser-aquí, ser-allí o lo que usted quiera) romo, ajeno a los matices, incapaz de rastrear las profundidades de mi pensamiento...

Ent.: Oiga, que yo...

Hei.: ... no me interrumpa. El *dasein* sabe su fin y vive con un ojo puesto en dicho fin. De modo que la muerte ¡es una propiedad del *Dasein*! Ahí lo tiene usted, criatura; si es un león le come. Léame, léame: “Si la interpretación del ser del *Dasein*, como fundamento de la pregunta ontológica fundamental debe llegar a ser originaria, entonces ella tendrá primero que sacar existencialmente a luz el ser del *Dasein* en su posible propiedad e integridad”. ¡Ah! ¿No es prodigioso?

Ent.: Sin duda, sin duda. Pero deje que ordene mis pensamientos: entonces, ¿qué es para usted lo más importante en filosofía?

Hei.: Gran fallo. No es el qué, sino la *queidad* lo que importa. ¿Lo capta?

Ent.: No demasiado, si le soy sincero.

Hei.: Mire usted: la cuestión capital, en cuanto atañe al ser humano, es la nada. Ahí está todo. Porque además, no puedo dejar de señalar que *la nada nadea*. ¿Cómo lo ve? ¡No me dirá que no suena portentoso!

Ent.: Me deja usted de una pieza.

Hei.: No le culpo, no es para menos. Es por eso que se ha dicho hasta la saciedad que en la filosofía occidental hay un antes y un después de servidor.

Ent.: Creo que ahora sé por qué

Hei.: Lo peor que le ha ocurrido a la filosofía occidental es el descrédito de la metafísica, el olvido del Ser, ¿sabe usted? Ahí se fastidió todo; desde Platón —y hasta que llegué yo, obviamente—, solo se han escuchado boberías.

Ent.: ¿Y las preguntas por la justicia?

Hei.: Bagatelas

Ent.: ¿Cuestiones políticas?

Hei.: Paparruchas

Ent.: ¿La reflexión sobre la libertad, la vulnerabilidad de los humanos, la buena vida, el futuro de la especie y el planeta...?

Hei.: Bla-bla-bla. Oiga, ¿usted no se cansa de repetir clichés moribundos? ¡Madure, señor mío!

Ent.: Pero oiga, ¿a usted no le parece nada de lo anterior importante?

Hei.: No, mire usted: lo que realmente importa es el Ser, no los entes. Comprendo que le cueste entenderlo, pero con un poco de instrucción, llegará a captarlo.

Ent.: Pese a los títulos de sus obras, no es usted lo que se dice un humanista, ¿verdad?

Hei.: Pues no se crea: autores franceses como Derrida o Ricoeur destacaron mi aportación al debate humanístico. ¡Ah, *la France!* Simpáticos los gabachos. Ninguno me entendió (ninguno me ha entendido, ¿se lo he dicho ya?), pero me sacaban para dar conferencias y me convidaban a unas cenas pantagruélicas.

Ent.: Pero usted tuvo que preocuparse en algún momento por la forma de una sociedad justa y por cosas así.

Hei.: Vamos a ver: el hombre es el pastor del Ser, ¿comprende usted?

Ent.: ¿Y eso qué diablos...?

Hei.: Me impacienta su cerrazón. Léame un poco más, ande.

Ent.: Ya, pero es que entenderle a usted tiene tela. Se gasta usted un lenguaje que...

Hei.: Hablando del lenguaje, ¿le he comentado mi descubrimiento de que el lenguaje es *la casa del Ser*?

Ent.: No, pero lo suyo con el lenguaje merece una pregunta pertinente para nuestros lectores. Se ha dicho sobre su modo de escribir, y disculpe si me expreso en términos coloquiales y no académicos (nuestros amables lectores son personas normales y corrientes), que es “caótico, obscenamente ególatra y en general desquiciado”. ¿Qué tiene que decir sobre esto?

Hei.: Que son maledicentes infundios. Veamos: “El pensar no es solo l'engagement dans l'action para y mediante lo ente, en el sentido de lo real de la situación presente. El pensar es l'engagement mediante y para la verdad del ser” (*Carta sobre el humanismo*). ¿Me va usted a decir que eso no lo entiende hasta un niño de ocho años, que es claro y cristalino como agua que brota de manantial?

Ent.: Oh, cielos.

Hei.: Pues claro. La gente lo que es es muy inculta. Pero eso no es culpa mía.

Ent.: Hablando de culpa y de humanismo, ya que estamos. Se ha hablado mucho de su vinculación al partido nazi, de cómo continuó siendo hasta el final un admirador de Adolf Hitler, y de cómo no movió un dedo por sus compañeros y supuestos amigos represaliados por el régimen. ¿Qué tiene que decir sobre todo esto?

Hei.: Que en tanto no se refiera al Ser en tanto ser es un asunto menor y yo no me mancho las manos con minucias. Creí que eso le había quedado claro, vamos. Todo lo que queda fuera de la metafísica, a mí, plin.

Ent.: ¿No me diga?

Hei.: Usted, que es más ente que ser, está todavía enredado en esas tonterías. Pero yo sigo mi camino, voy flechado a la mismidad pura, o sea. Yo *ex-sisto*, en tanto que usted está por aquí porque tiene que haber de todo. En resumen: la pregunta por el sufrimiento del hombre es indigna, porque no hay dignidad fuera del Ser. Y vaya abreviando que se me hace tarde, joven.

Ent.: Ya veo.

Hei.: Por lo demás, el *Führer* era un tipo admirable, una personalidad magnética y un vegetariano ejemplar. Yo creo que él me apreciaba, ¿sabe? Pero como filósofo del movimiento, prefirió a Rosenberg, que se tomó todas las libertades posibles con el tema de los judíos. Un tipo mediocre, sin duda.

Ent.: En cambio usted, con los judíos...

Hei.: ¡Nada de nada! ¡Pero si hasta me hice amante de dos judías! Hannah Arendt y Elisabeth Blochmann; qué dos chicas tan simpáticas. En fin. No le entretengo con mis asuntos privados, que además son solo de mi incumbencia.

Ent.: En todo caso, en sus conferencias de 1933-1935, no dejó de referirse a la cuestión judía, a la superioridad de la raza aria, y llegó a escribir esto: “Un Estado es. ¿En qué consiste su ser? En que la policía de Estado arreste a un sospechoso”. También dijo que Alemania era “el pueblo metafísico”, el cual sería, y le sigo citando textualmente, “el único capaz de salvar a Occidente del aniquilamiento”.

Hei.: Siguiendo pregunta, si es tan amable.

Ent.: Mejor terminamos. Rudolph Carnap escribió, que su *Ser y Tiempo* podía resumirse en tres frases: “Un sándwich de jamón es mejor que nada; nada es mejor que Dios; por lo tanto, un sándwich de jamón es mejor que Dios”. ¿Qué tiene usted que decir a este respecto?

Hei.: Que ahí faltan pruebas. El argumento es débil, aunque da que pensar.

Ent.: Muchas gracias, señor Heidegger. No puedo decir que haya sido, estrictamente hablando, un placer. Pero curioso sí que ha sido.

Hei.: Pues nada, a mandar, Y hablando de la nada...

David Cerdá, Sevilla, 4 de diciembre de 2014



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A Matter of Life and Death

Brian Streett

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This is a work of fiction. Although some characterizations may be based in part on real people, details are the product of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real.

This is dedicated to the memory of Tova and Clara.

It is much easier to love after you have seen it done.

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- Part two: Though only one at a time *(To be published in HCH 3, March 2015)*
- Part three: Yet all together *(To be published in HCH 4, May 2015)*

Part one

There are many tales

1

Gradually I began to realize that something wasn't right. Instead of a cushion of love in the house, there was kind of a fog. My parents still loved me, and I still loved them, of course, in a one-year-old sort of way, but between them there was antagonism. This was frightening. Until then I had been a happy little boy. I didn't lose all of that happiness, but fear crept in. If my parents could stop loving each other, surely they could stop loving me also.

Of course, they had their faults, they were human. But so was I, and I needed them to transcend their fears and to reassure me that everything was fine. I guess this was beyond them, though. They each individually continued to show me love and affection, but that wasn't enough. I needed to take control and make sure that they would not stop loving me and taking care of me. I learned how to manipulate them really well, and could always get them to do what I wanted, but there was very little satisfaction in this, and I could never be sure that they would keep loving me.

In school and with friends I used the skills I had learned at home in order to manipulate teachers and the other kids, and I got away with doing a lot of things I shouldn't have done, and with not doing things I should have done.

Somehow I made it through high school, with a diploma and with my mind and body intact. And then I joined the army. I needed a complete break from everything and everybody, and the army seemed the best way to get one. For the first time since I was one I didn't really have to think about anything except doing what I was told. This was what life was about; this is what survival was about. I was a good soldier, and was liked both by my officers and by the other soldiers.

Our unit was sent into combat, and we got to use many of the things we learned. And they really did save our lives, on more than one occasion. This was a wonderful life, full of excitement and meaning. We all belonged and we all worked well together.

One day I had a pain in my chest. It felt like something was stuck in there. I did my best to ignore it, and eventually the feeling went away. Whenever it came back I knew that I could just ignore it, and it would eventually disappear. Then I started to have other complaints. I lost weight, I itched all over, I would sweat at night and wake up totally drenched when it wasn't even hot out. I ignored everything. I was a soldier, and all this stuff was totally irrelevant; I had more important things to deal with. Even when I had a fever and was so weak I felt like I could barely move, I kept the information to myself and tried to function normally. Some of the other soldiers noticed that I looked under the weather, but I just shrugged and told them that I was fine.

But the fact was that I couldn't function well, and while marching through the jungle, I collapsed and couldn't get up.

I was in a large hall, filled with people. I wouldn't have imagined that a field hospital looked like this, but what else could it have been? Still, there were some very strange looking individuals around, and some of them certainly didn't look like they belonged. There were some medics, or something, walking between groups of people. They looked like they knew what was going on. When one passed by I latched onto him and asked, "Hey, bud, what is this place? How did I get here? What are all these other people doing here?" He replied calmly that he would be back in a little while to talk with me, but that right now he was busy with people who needed him more than I did, would it be okay if I waited a few minutes until he was free? I assented.

And he did come back, after what seemed like a few minutes, and sat with me. He smiled and asked me where I thought I was. I told him that it must be a field hospital, though I didn't remember how I got there. He replied, "No. This is a reception hall for the newly dead. You died shortly after you passed out."

This was not what I expected to hear. I looked around. Some of the people were yelling and screaming at some imaginary disaster, others acted as though they were enjoying a swim or a picnic, others seemed quite calm and comfortable even though their faces were bashed in and blood was dripping all over them. What right did he have to bullshit me? "All right, cut the crap. I'm not really in the mood for comedy. What is this place? What am I doing here?"

He still sat there calmly, and he had the audacity to repeat what he said before, adding that he was serious. "And I suppose that makes you some kind of angel," I said. "We've been called that," he replied.

"I can think of better names to call you," I shot back, "and I'm about ready to start screaming them at you now."

"Look, don't get upset. Right now you're between lifetimes, just relax and choose where you want to go next," he said.

"I can tell you where you ought to go, you crazy son of a bitch. And don't pass go, don't collect \$200!" He stayed calm and spoke again, softly, "This is your chance to determine what you want your next life to be like. Tell me where you want to be sent, within reason, and you'll be sent there."

I screamed back, "Just get me ought of here – any place!"

2

I was an active little girl, always with something to do, someplace to run to. My parents thought I was cute, though I was very thin, and they didn't like that. They had a candy store, and saw to it that I got lots of things to eat which were supposed to fatten me up, but no matter how much I ate I didn't gain weight.

I fell in love with a wonderful man and brought him home to meet my parents. They liked him, but didn't like that he was 30 and I was 18. They made me promise not to commit myself to him until I was 21, and I agreed. Unfortunately, by that time both my parents had died, so they couldn't be at our wedding or get to meet their grandchildren. They would really have loved that, and so would I.

Times weren't always easy, but our love provided us with the strength we needed to go on. We had two wonderful sons, who we loved very much. As they started to grow up, they didn't need me around all day, and I took a job working for the state as a statistician. For some reason, people who heard what I did always asked if it was boring me to tears, but I found it interesting to record employment trends and to get a feel for the economy. And I also enjoyed the company of the other ladies in the office. We would celebrate each others' birthdays with a lunch and maybe a show, a tradition which we kept up even after retirement.

After the kids grew up and moved out, I had even more time available, and began to do volunteer work for several different organizations, local and national, where I felt I was able to do my part to help out in the community and in the country. I also made a lot of new friends among the volunteers.

When my husband died I was devastated. We had lived together for more than 40 years, and I had never thought about what would happen if that would no longer be possible. But one day, after he had been bothered for more than two years by digestive problems, it was discovered that he had pancreatic cancer. Two weeks later he was gone. I guess it was better that way; no long, drawn out period of suffering, and no time for me to think about what I would be losing. But I missed him, and couldn't really get over it. I went to visit my children, and play with my grandchildren a lot that first year; it gave me strength to go on. And I did even more volunteer work, serving on committees and spending I guess 20-30 hours a week on volunteering.

I started thinking about my own death. I didn't think I would mind it so much, but I sure as shootin' didn't want to be an invalid or live in a home and be a burden on anybody before my time came. I dreaded that possibility. As I became more forgetful and had to learn how to adjust to not remembering events or words, that was one thing I never forgot. And I almost got my wish.

One morning as I was putting in my contact lenses prior to going out to do some volunteer work, I keeled over. My younger son was in the habit of calling me every morning to see if I was all right. He rang several times, but I couldn't answer. Eventually he showed up and took me to the hospital. I had had a stroke. My older son flew in to be with me also. When it became clear that my days were limited, they looked for a hospice for me, and when they couldn't find one, they decided to bring me home and give me home hospice care. I preferred that anyway, being in my own house, although it bothered me that I was such a burden.

I regained some of my mental faculties, though I could hardly speak. I did get a chance to say goodbye to my children and to some of my grandchildren in person, and to the others on the phone, as well as to many other friends. Within two weeks my life was over.

There I was in a large hall, filled with people. I had no idea how I had gotten there, but it seemed that many others there, maybe most, didn't seem to realize they were in a hall at all. Some yelled and screamed at some imaginary disaster, others acted as though they were enjoying a swim or a picnic, others seemed quite calm and comfortable even though their faces were bashed in and blood was dripping all over them. And then to each individual or small group, somebody would come over and start talking. I couldn't hear what was said, but the reactions indicated that it must have been important.

After a while, somebody came over to talk to me, a nice looking young fellow. He smiled and asked if I knew where I was. I told him I didn't have a clue, nor did I have any idea how I got there. He said that we were in a reception hall for people who had just died. I don't get angry easily, but I must admit this got to me somewhat. "Aw, go ahead," I replied, "you shouldn't try to fool an old woman like that." He said he wasn't fooling, that I had died from the stroke and now I was being processed before being sent on to my next lifetime. I guess I believed him. "I never thought it would be like this," I said. "What am I supposed to do now?" He said I could "debrief" and clean away the residue that this lifetime had left behind, and then pick a new life and start over, that he would explain everything I needed to know. Then he asked me what I'd like to do in my next lifetime.

Well, I had certainly never thought about that, but I guess I had to now. After a while I told him that I had liked the volunteer work, it would be good if I could help people. And that what I most wanted was to be with my husband again, so we could regain what we had lost and live many happy years together. He said he would see what he could do, and sent me off for the "debriefing".

3

I think the most wonderful person in the world was my mother. Maybe all kids feel that way, but even so, I think my mother was really special. She was always there for me, no matter what, and without getting in the way. Even when my parents' marriage fell apart, she wouldn't let that affect our relationship. And she never said one nasty word to me about my father, regardless of what he did or said.

I probably wasn't all that easy a kid to bring up. I was very sensitive and not at all strong, both of these characteristics being unsatisfactory for boys. Even so, I was well liked by both the boys and the girls my age. Maybe this was partly due to the fact that my mother always had a large supply of goodies on hand for anybody who came to visit me, but also I think that my friends could tell that I really liked them, and that generated similar feelings for me. This was also true for all the animals in the neighborhood, whether cats and dogs, or snails and worms. My mother and grandmother were always shocked by the relationships I had with any of the animals I came across, whether they knew me or not, whether they were friendly to others or not. They were just "my" animals, and both they and I knew it.

Early on I decided that I wanted to be a veterinarian, though at first I thought this meant that I could fix anything wrong with any of the animals, even if they were already dead. At some point I realized that this wasn't the case; still, the animals were my friends and I wanted to do whatever possible to make them better. It didn't occur to me until much later, too late, that a large part of a veterinarian's job is to put animals to sleep. I doubt that I would have become a veterinarian if I had realized this at a young age, but as an adult it still seemed like this was a way to have the animals suffer less.

I also liked traveling a lot, meeting people (and animals, of course) in different places, with different ways of approaching life. But I had to stop traveling around after my mother got her stroke. She didn't want me to, of course, but how could I leave her on her own? She would never have left me. And even though it upset her that she was causing me to alter my lifestyle, I'm certain that she was happy to have me there for her.

The stroke left her paralyzed in most of her body and incapable of speech. She was also easily confused. At first she was very frustrated by all this, but over the years she adjusted to her condition, and to its effect on my life, and she grew to accept the situation. Or so it seemed to me; she couldn't really communicate anything beyond the basics, so maybe I was interpreting a loss of the will to live as acceptance. I hope not. I often thought that she would have had more enjoyment in life if there were grandchildren around, but I just couldn't take the step of finding a partner to share this life with. Don't misunderstand me, I loved my mother and didn't once consider putting

her in an institution or finding some other way to return to my previous life, but I wouldn't have felt right to invite someone else to join me in the life I was now leading.

After more than 30 years of living this way, my mother died. By now I was advanced in years myself, and quite set in my ways. It was difficult for me to fill my evenings with anything but reminiscences, which became quite boring. When death finally came, I think more than anything else I was relieved.

There I was in a large hall, filled with people. I had no idea how I had gotten there, but it seemed that many others there, maybe most, didn't seem to realize they were in a hall at all. Some yelled and screamed at some imaginary disaster, others acted as though they were enjoying a swim or a picnic, others seemed quite calm and comfortable even though their faces were bashed in and blood was dripping all over them. And then to each individual or small group, somebody would come over and start talking. I couldn't hear what was said, but the reactions indicated that it must have been important.

After a while, somebody came over to talk to me, a nice looking guy, clean cut. He smiled and asked if I knew where I was. I told him I didn't have a clue, nor did I have any idea how I got there. He said that we were in a reception hall for people who had just died. I was somewhat skeptical, but I hoped it was true. I had had enough of life. "So, what now," I asked, "where do we go from here?"

"Now there is the debriefing. After it's complete, you'll get a chance to go back for another lifetime. Is there anything in particular you'd like to set up for yourself for next time?"

In truth, I still wasn't sure I believed this, but I played along. "I seemed to miss out on a lot of the pleasures of adult life this time around; I'd like another chance to enjoy wine, women and song." He said he thought that could be arranged, and would I follow him please to the debriefing rooms.

4

Don't you just love babies? They act naturally, and everybody falls in love with all the cute things they do. Usually by the age of two this quality starts to disappear, though. As they get more of an understanding of their surroundings, they become less and less cute. In my case, though, I managed to hang onto the naturalness and the cuteness, and people just seemed to like me and wish me well all the way to adulthood, and even as an adult. This was a great feeling; I liked making people happy, and I liked the special way they treated me.

[I never learned about discipline or boundaries. I would go to parties and get totally wasted, and I didn't know there was another way to act. And my sexual exploits were the stuff of legends. You may think that this was wonderful; I did at the time, too. But the day came when it all caught up with me. My body wasn't strong enough to withstand the treatment it received, and my health began deteriorating years before it should have. And once the deterioration started, it advanced rapidly.

I was scared by the state of my health, and I began to diet and exercise, and of course to go to all sorts of specialists, who suggested various treatments. Unfortunately, as I hadn't learned discipline, the diet and exercise didn't last for long. I was dependent on the skill of my physicians. They eased my deterioration somewhat, but life became more and more sedentary.

After a while my lack of discipline kicked in here, too, and I started ignoring all the instructions, as well as the advice, given to me by my physicians, and I got to the point where I was bedridden and unable to derive any pleasure from life. I considered this a horrible punishment, and told myself that if I had known that it would come to this that I would never have done the things I did in my youth. This was a lie, of course, I would certainly have ignored any good advice I received which would have gotten in the way of my lifestyle, but it was good to be able to blame ignorance rather than a lack of discipline.

So, not with a bang but a whimper, aliveness, and finally life itself, oozed from my body.

I found myself in a large hall, filled with people. I had no idea how I had gotten there, but I found that I could get up and walk around. I joined a group and started talking to some of the people there. They totally ignored me, as though I didn't exist. This was disconcerting, to say the least. I walked over to talk to someone else, but he seemed totally in a daze and also unaware of my presence. I tried a few more times, but it

seemed like everybody was caught up in his or her own experience; they didn't even seem to realize they were in a hall with other people. Some yelled and screamed at some imaginary disaster, others acted as though they were enjoying a swim or a picnic, others seemed quite calm and comfortable even though their faces were bashed in and blood was dripping all over them. And then to each individual or small group, somebody would come over and start talking. I couldn't hear what was said, but the reactions indicated that it must have been important.

After a while, somebody came over to talk to me. Finally, someone who would relate to me! He asked if I knew where I was. "Some hall," I replied.

He continued, "All right then, this is a hall, a reception hall for the newly dead." Well, of course it was a shock to hear this, but I instantly knew that it was true, and that I had been here before.

"Go on," I said, "I'll need to know more than that, won't I?"

"Now there is the debriefing. After it's complete, you'll get a chance to go back for another lifetime. Is there anything in particular you'd like to set up for yourself for next time?"

This didn't make sense to me. I asked, "Have I been asked this question before? Is this the life I chose for myself this time around? I find that hard to believe." He said that it was very possible, and that the lives we chose didn't always play out the way we thought they would. I was in shock. If this was something I had chosen, it seemed to me that it wouldn't have been worse just to leave things to chance.

"So how can I choose better?" I asked.

"Apparently that's not so easy to do," he said. "You can defer your request until after the debriefing; maybe you'll have a better idea then." I agreed.

I don't know how long I was there, time had no meaning. But after my "debriefing", whatever that was, I met up again with the person who interviewed me. I told him, at least it seemed to me that the person was male, though I wasn't really sure, that I thought the most important thing was to have parents who loved me.

5

I guess the best place to start is when the radiologist said, "There's something in the chest area, you need to go to the emergency room and have it checked out." Maybe I could have started with when I first felt there was something there, or with all the stuff which probably caused it to be there in the first place; or later, when it finally sunk in that my life would no longer be what it had been. But for me, the point where I started to become someone else, something different, was when she said those words. And then when she followed them up by telling me there's no need to worry yet, though she looked like she was going to cry.

Of course I didn't go to the emergency room. I was a soldier, and the army doctor ordered me to return to the base with the x-ray, and for a soldier it's hard to disobey a direct order, even when in shock. Maybe, especially when in shock. So, I went back to the base, where the doctor called in another couple of doctors and they all debated whether to stick me in bed there or send me to the hospital emergency room, while they ignored me and the fact that I was sitting there suffering, and not far from panic. So I pulled out my cellphone and started calling friends. But that wasn't very helpful; they were more upset to hear the news than I was, and I had to console them.

Eventually the caucus of learned gentlemen came to the conclusion that I should go to the emergency room. And so the tests began, and instead of being a 20-year-old, soon to be a civilian, with my whole life in front of me, I metamorphosed into A Cancer Patient, the most dreaded of all humans – walking mortality. I know, everybody is always sympathetic, but what they're all thinking is, "My God, if it happened to her it could happen to anybody!" or, more precisely, "There but for fortune go !!" Don't misunderstand me, I know that my friends and family all loved me and their thoughts were all for me; but at the same time, I instantly looked different to them, a threat somehow.

So there I was, in shock and drowning, not knowing what to do and not being able to do anything anyway. The next bit is pretty much of a blur: The Almighty Doctors telling me what I Absolutely, Positively, Must have to do, as though I were a lab rat. Family and friends coming up with all sorts of Suggestions and Things People Told Them which maybe I should try. My constantly looking for Why Did This Happen to Me?

After a while a few things began filtering through: The doctors, with all their knowledge and certainty were killing a lot of people with similar conditions to mine, and healing a few. People's suggestions were sometimes good, sometimes not worth much, and it always took a lot of time and effort to find out which was true in any given case. Why Did This Happen was not so important; what was important was What could I do about it, what could I learn from this?

I'm not going to tell you about all the horrible and/or wonderful things that happened: all the expressions of love and support, all the fear and lack of understanding. Let's just say, people are caught in their own stuff, and when they can transcend it, it's great being around them; when they can't, it sucks. As for me, I had to find a way to keep my head above water. I had somebody paint pictures on my skull after my hair fell out, then after my hair grew back and before the next round of chemo I had it dyed shocking pink. I went to music therapy classes. I did a lot of Reiki and had a lot more done to me. I spent a lot of time with family and friends, and I let my doctors know that they were my employees, not my masters.

The doctors did their best, but chemo didn't heal me, a bone marrow self-transplant didn't heal me. The only thing left on their list was a bone marrow transplant from somebody else. I had befriended several young people on my visits to the hospital who had done this. All of them suffered, all of them died. I refused to subject myself to this torture, and decided the time had come to get on with my life.

I still visited the doctors occasionally for checkups and meds, and I continued with Reiki and other alternative treatments, but I changed my lifestyle completely. Stopped being Ms Patient and started living a "normal" life. I enrolled at the local university in the BA program for musicology. The other students and the teachers saw me as just another student. Okay, not too many girls my age were bald, but they assumed that this was my preferred hairstyle and not the result of illness. What a relief to be around people who didn't pity me or want me to try all sorts of treatments. On the other hand, I couldn't be completely at ease with them, because I had a secret. When people would talk about waiting a year or two before getting around to doing something, certain that they had many years of life in front of them, well, I just could not relate to that. But I loved being caught up in something which did not remind me of the growth in my body, and I loved spending my days feeling normal. During the winter break from studies, I went abroad and met up with my brothers and their wives and my nephew. We rented a villa and had an incredible time.

And that was my last vacation. Shortly thereafter things got worse, and I had to cut back on my activities. I continued to live my life as fully as I could, having friends over, playing with my nephew, telling jokes. But moving around became more and more difficult; even going to the bathroom was a major chore.

And then, poof, it was over. I still didn't know what it all meant, but with a loud sound of meshing gears, my existence shifted.

There I was in a large hall, filled with people. I had no idea how I had gotten there, but that seemed to leave me in better shape than most, who didn't seem to realize they were in a hall. Some yelled and screamed at some imaginary disaster, others acted as though they were enjoying a swim or a picnic, others seemed quite calm and comfortable even though their faces were bashed in and blood was dripping all over them. And then to each individual or small group, somebody would come over and start talking. I couldn't hear what was said, but the reactions indicated that it must have been important.

After a while, somebody came over to talk to me. He smiled and said I looked somehow more connected than most people, did I know where I was? "Some hall," I replied. "Yes, but anything more than that?" No, that was all I knew.

He continued, "All right then, this is a reception hall for the newly dead."

Well, of course it was a shock to hear this, but I instantly knew that it was true, and that I had been here before. Many times before. All of a sudden everything was familiar, and I recalled events from hundreds of diverse lives, all jumping out at me. In particular, I recalled the last hours of my most recent life – difficulty breathing, the need for quiet, the people around me, the entire lifetime passing in front of me – and the first minutes of my afterlife, when I was still sitting in that room, wearing that body. A great sadness followed by a great release, followed by a great amnesia. Followed by sitting here talking to my interviewer. Did any of this make any sense? What was the purpose? The interviewer had been through this countless times before and knew to let me just sit there and unwind my thoughts. Finally I was ready to listen to more.

"Now there is the debriefing. After it's complete, you'll get a chance to go back for another lifetime. Is there anything in particular you'd like to set up for yourself for next time?"

"I really loved my family and friends; I'd like to be around them some more," I replied. He said he thought that could be arranged, and would I follow him please to the debriefing rooms.

I don't know how long I was there, time had no meaning. But there I was after my "debriefing", whatever that was. To me it felt like a bubble bath of the soul; I guess that's the best way to describe it. Luxuriously allowing the dirt to dissolve and disappear. I was greeted by my interviewer, who told me that I was in luck, my brother and sister-in-law were moments from conception, did I want to go there? All of a sudden my consciousness returned to the hall before debriefing, and everything rushed in. "No," I replied, "I'm not ready yet. Nothing makes any sense to me. I've got to have some time to sort things out." The interviewer smiled, and led me to a lounge, where I could use the computer and stay as long as I wanted.

So far so good, right? But the fact is that I had no idea what I meant. Why did sense need to be made, and out of what? It was all very confusing, but somehow I knew that instead of just jumping back, there was something else I had to do first. And so I sat, manipulated the computer, meditated, relaxed, reflected on innumerable events from innumerable lifetimes, lost my concentration, and then started over. I understood nothing, and still don't understand anything from this time. But eventually something way below the level of consciousness told me that I'd done enough for now; it was time to move on.

My interviewer found a host for me. Both parents knew me in my previous existence, and we had been friendly, and many of their friends had also known me.

6

I was a cute little boy, no pretense, going where my emotions would take me. When I was happy, everybody around me was happy. When I was sad, everybody felt bad for me. Maybe I was too delicate, too afraid of everything. But my older brother helped with that, beating me up whenever he felt like it, so that I had to get stronger. People liked me, and I liked them, though sometimes I came on too strong for babies and pets, and sometimes people came on too strong for me. Still, there were a couple of people who I was really crazy about, though there was no reason for it. Unless of course you knew that they were close to me in my previous life, which I didn't know at the time.

I loved music. I loved to sing, to dance, to hear music. Music would always carry me away, to someplace wonderful, albeit indescribable. And so, as I grew up, I stayed with music more and more. I learned how to play a number of different instruments, wind, string and percussion, and got quite good. Mostly I liked keyboard instruments. I never got the chance to play one of those enormous church organs, but I dreamed about it a lot. All my friends were musicians, and as we got more experience playing together we formed a band and played at parties. Eventually someone offered us a recording contract, and we recorded several albums and spent most of our time touring. We never reached the upper echelons of the music business, but we loved what we were doing, or at least I did. For me the music was all I wanted, though of course I never turned down the alcohol, sex or drugs that came along with it. Then one day one of the guys in the band had this incredibly bad trip, which just kept coming and coming, and scared us all totally. We had to cancel a series of concerts, and we actually never quite recovered from the experience. We went our separate ways. By this point I had enough saved so that I could buy a little farm, far away from civilization, where I could walk around and watch things grow, and play music every evening. When I got bored or started feeling like the money was running out, I called my agent and got him to arrange me a couple of gigs. Sometimes I'd bring a woman or two home with me, but nothing serious.

Then one day I woke up. This was all fun, but I was missing something, something important. I didn't know what it was, but it was time to do something about it! I told the foreman that I was going away and he was in charge. And then I just left, driving west until I found someplace I liked. I got out of the car, found a small place to rent, bought some stuff, and sat down trying to figure out what I had done this for. I had a couple of insights, which seemed really important at the time, but the truth is I had no idea.

Eventually I had enough of sitting, so I decided to move around, traveling all over the world, coming across many beautiful and strange places and lifestyles, and feeling like maybe this was something I was supposed to be doing.

On a too warm, overcast afternoon halfway around the world, I crossed a street and got hit by a car.

There I was in a large hall, filled with people. I had no idea how I had gotten there. Some of the people yelled and screamed at some imaginary disaster, others acted as though they were enjoying a swim or a picnic, others seemed quite calm and comfortable even though their faces were bashed in and blood was dripping all over them. And then to each individual or small group, somebody would come over and start talking. I couldn't hear what was said, but the reactions indicated that it must have been important.

After a while, somebody came over to talk to me. She smiled and asked how I felt and if I knew where I was. I told her I felt strange and disconnected, and that I'd been in weirder places. She said, "You've just died and you're in a reception hall for the newly dead." Well, of course it was a shock to hear this, but I instantly knew that it was true, and that I had been here before. Many times before. All of a sudden everything was familiar, and I recalled events from hundreds of diverse lifetimes, all jumping out at me. In particular, I recalled my most recent lifetime, and the task I had set for myself. And failed. Sure the music had brought a kind of understanding, but when the music stopped the understanding stopped. There was a kind of memory of having understood, but that wasn't enough. I needed to be more focused and to come up with something which made sense ongoingly.

"All right," I told the interviewer, "I'm ready for debriefing, and after that I'm sure I'll need some more time in the lounge before deciding where to go next time." She smiled again, and I went off for my bubble bath. This time I went through the debriefing more in touch with who-I-am and my mission-in-lives, and afterwards, in the lounge, I had more connection to my purpose in being there, though I still didn't have all that much clarity. And then, after I began to feel like I was going around in circles, the time came to stop, and to move on.

I had a plan. I would lead the life of a holy man and understand "enlightenment."

7

My first memories were of the howling wind, which provided background music to everything. My father's monastery was on a mountaintop far away from civilization, and the winters were cold. This was a perfect place for me to grow into my task, once my teeth stopped chattering.

Conditions were stark, and this was somehow both meaningful and acceptable. My family and the resident monks were all very loving, and I was happy to be around them.

I began my studies, going slowly at first, not being rushed into anything, but having my questions answered honestly. Which led to more and more questions, and I gained some basic ground of understanding of how life made sense to these people, and it made the same sense to me also.

As the years went by I got quite an advanced education. Then, when I was 11, my father asked me to accompany him on a teaching tour throughout the country. The experience of even the big towns and the smaller cities, not to mention the larger ones, was more than I could handle. Somehow I was able to maintain some composure during the teachings and when I was asked questions by the students, but I was totally blown away by the totality of sensual experience, unlike anything I had ever imagined before. Sure, we had a computer at the monastery and I had been exposed to modern life, but in a trickle, not in such a raging, uncontrolled blast.

I sensed that I had to appear to have some control over my experiences or I would be sent back to the monastery, and it would be a long, long time until I got another chance to leave it. So even in my conversations with my father I held back, acting as though it were difficult for me to assimilate everything, but that I somehow managed to be in control of the situation. I wasn't, however. My senses kept screaming at me that what seemed so true in the world of the monastery didn't necessarily apply in this brave new world.

Instead of sleeping at night, I spent long hours debating with myself the philosophy of life in the big lake vis-à-vis life in the small pond, and was not able to resolve whether or not that which held in the micro also held in the macro. Of course, my father expected this confusion and was confident that eventually I would be clear that the rules still held, and stronger for having had the experience. I suppose he went through the same thing when he was growing up, and his confidence was based on his own experience. Unfortunately, this limited him somewhat in being able to see what I was going through. Or maybe fortunately, because after the tour was over and we were back home, he indicated that I had been successful in some rite of passage, and there was a clear implication that I would be accompanying him on future teaching tours.

I felt misunderstood, that there was no-one to talk to who was capable of understanding me. Maybe no such person existed anywhere, even in the enormous world outside the monastery. So I would have to work out my confusion on my own. I presented myself with several theories, attempting to test them on subsequent visits outside the monastery, testing them one by one, until I reached the point where I became clear that I was incapable of understanding life in the macro. Even so, given any specific problem I could apply the rules I had learned at the monastery and give assistance to whoever requested it. I did this so well that I was ready to head a monastery of my own, even though I was still quite young. A suitable place was found for me, and I thrived there, returning to see my parents and friends only occasionally. As I developed a name for myself, I was invited to teach at many places throughout the country, and sometimes even in other countries. My fascination with the juxtaposition of monastery life and city life never ended, and I eagerly accepted the invitations. After each travel session, when I returned to the monastery I went into a period of seclusion in which I attempted to get a new understanding, but never really succeeded in doing more than assimilating some of the experiences.

This went on for many years, and then in the fullness of time I could feel death coming on. I gathered my closest students around me, chose a successor, and bid them farewell.

There I was in a large hall, filled with people. I had no idea how I had gotten there. Some of the people yelled and screamed at some imaginary disaster, others acted as though they were enjoying a swim or a picnic, others seemed quite calm and comfortable even though their faces were bashed in and blood was dripping all over them. And then to each individual or small group, somebody would come over and start talking. I couldn't hear what was said, but the reactions indicated that it must have been important.

After a while, somebody came over to talk to me. He smiled and asked how I felt and if I knew where I was. I told him, "No, but I feel comfortable here somehow." He said, "You've just died and you're in a reception hall for the newly dead." Instantly I knew that this was true, and that I had been here before. Many times before. All of a sudden everything was familiar, and I recalled events from hundreds of diverse lives, all jumping out at me. In particular, I recalled my most recent lifetime, and the task I had set for myself. And failed. I had gained some understanding, enough to be of assistance to those who requested it, but surely there was a deeper understanding I could have attained. I needed to be more focused and to come up with something which made sense regardless of the conditions.

"All right," I told the interviewer, "I'm ready for debriefing, and after that I'm sure I'll need some more time in the lounge before deciding where to go next time." He smiled again, and I went off for my bubble bath. I was able to sort things out much more clearly than while wearing a body, but not nearly as clearly as I would have liked. Eventually a kind of understanding came to me, and I requested that in my next life I have a chance to devote myself to giving assistance to people.

8

I was the fifth of six children, and a girl at that. Who needed me? When I cried, I was smacked. When I annoyed my parents, I was smacked. When I spoke though not told to do so, I was smacked. When I didn't do my household chores properly or didn't take proper care of my younger brother, I was smacked.

I had a learning disability and didn't do well in school, so at the age of 16 my parents married me off to somebody. He was good enough to look at, and okay in bed, but he saw me as a maid and showpiece, not as a companion, in fact not really even as a human being.

This didn't change even after our kids were born, a boy and a girl. I took care of them, and of him, and he did whatever he wanted. What he wanted was to play cards and get drunk every night. He hardly noticed me except to have sex with me or to beat me. I didn't mind that so much, but it bothered me that not only didn't he help me with the kids, he never gave me any money to buy them things, nor did he buy them anything himself.

I was brought up to do what I was told, but eventually I figured out that this wasn't working. It seemed to me that it would be easier for me to take care of myself and the kids without him around. So I decided to get a divorce. Everybody opposed this – my husband and his family, of course, and also my family, not wanting a scandal. But I went through with it. I got no alimony, I got no severance pay after leaving the job at my ex-husband's family's business, and I didn't know how to make ends meet, but this was the right thing to do.

Still, I had to support us. So I started cleaning houses, but that didn't pay enough. I then also would make popcorn and go to the parks around town and sell it. This still wasn't enough, so I decided to apply for a job as an orderly at the hospital. I walked into the cancer ward and asked for the head nurse. I told her that I wanted to help people and asked if she had a job for me. Somehow, she was impressed enough to hire me.

I liked the job, chatting with the patients and their families and making them feel at least a little better, fighting the bureaucracy to get things done, and generally being helpful. And I was good at it. After a few years, not only the patients and their families, but also the nurses and doctors came to me to help get things done. I also learned a lot about what was going on medically. It got to the point where I could read the patients' files and understand what I read, and even catch mistakes, some of them quite serious.

Maybe I got a little out of hand, though. I got really upset when a doctor would order painful and complicated tests on patients who clearly had little time left, or when a course of treatment which would be debilitating was given to someone so fragile there was little chance the person would survive it, and every chance that the quality of life would suffer. It really bothered me that these things were the norm. In fact, on more than one occasion I got really angry and screamed at the doctor, "If she was your mother you would never order such a treatment!"

I got friendly with many of the patients and their supporters. When they had difficulties with the treatments, sometimes they would just want me to sit with them, which seemed to make them feel better. And when it was time for them to leave this life, they waited until I could be there with them. It sometimes happened that when I was on vacation they would remain alive, perhaps in a coma, until my vacation was over, and then die the first morning I was back.

And that wasn't the end of it. I would often walk the corridors and suddenly feel the presence of patients who had died in the past months or years, and would have imaginary conversations with them, asking how they were and what they needed from me.

This was all rather difficult for me, and I looked for someone who could make it easier. I read a lot of philosophy and psychology, and oriental religions. But it all sounded like a lot of words to me. I'm sure it was meaningful for some, but to me it spoke to the intellect, not to my experience.

There was a volunteer in the ward who seemed to have a similar relation to the patients that I did. We spent some time swapping stories and discussing the parts which were hardest for us. The relationship blossomed, and we got married and remained good companions, supporting each other with all the difficulties for many years. After he died it was hard for me to go on.

After seeing the suffering of all those patients for so many years, I was very clear that when it came time for me to die that I wanted to go in my sleep, with no warning and no pain. Fortunately, this is what happened.

There I was in a large hall, filled with people. I had no idea how I had gotten there. Some of the people yelled and screamed at some imaginary disaster, others acted as though they were enjoying a swim or a picnic, others seemed quite calm and comfortable even though their faces were bashed in and blood was dripping all over them. And then to each individual or small group, somebody would come over and start talking. I couldn't hear what was said, but the reactions indicated that it must have been important.

After a while, somebody came over to talk to me. He smiled and asked how I felt and if I knew where I was. I told him I didn't have a clue. He said, "You've just died and you're in a reception hall for the newly dead." Instantly I knew that this was true, and that I had been here before. Many times before. All of a sudden everything was familiar, and I recalled events from hundreds of diverse lives, all jumping out at me. In particular, I

recalled my most recent lifetime and the one that preceded it. I had set myself a task, and then forgotten it totally. I was in shock. I needed to weave together my two most recent lifetimes in order to make some sense out of them, and this wasn't easy. And it was harder still to understand how I had spent my entire previous lifetime totally without memory of what came before. I needed to work some things out.

"All right," I told the interviewer, "I'm ready for debriefing, and after that I'm sure I'll need some more time in the lounge before deciding where to go next time." He smiled again, and I went off, looking forward to my bubble bath. I was able to sort things out much more clearly than while wearing a body, but not nearly as clearly as I would have liked. It seemed so wasteful to me to have gone through an entire lifetime not remembering what I was there for. So what should I do next?

At first I couldn't think of any appropriate way to spend my next lifetime. I wanted understanding, but my experience told me that complete understanding was impossible, and that I'd gotten as close as I could get to it. I wanted to be helpful to others, so that they could live their lives to the fullest, be happy and have understanding for themselves; but my experience told me that there was no way to be totally helpful to others, there was no way anybody could be completely happy or have total understanding.

Then a crazy thought entered. I tried to push it out, but it wouldn't go. So I examined it, and it kept making more and more sense. I decided that this was what I wanted to do.

I sought out my interviewer and told him, "I want to work in this hall, interviewing the dead."

9

I wouldn't have thought it possible, but my interviewer looked shocked. He stammered, "No, no, you can't do that." I asked why. He took some time to get back his composure, then he answered: "People from your planet are not built to do this. You will go raving mad instantly and then you'll be put into another lifetime at random, and all the work you have put in, all the progress you've made, will be swept away."

I thought about that for a while, and then replied: "That may be so, but the progress has led me to a dead end, and an endless string of random lifetimes doesn't really seem to me to be substantially different from anything I could choose, so if there's any chance that I wouldn't go crazy, I still want to do it." He said that maybe there was the slimmest of chances, but practically none at all. I said that I still wanted to give it a try. He said he had to check with his superiors.

Eventually the reply came: I would be allowed to begin a training program. I could opt out at any point and then I could choose where to go next, but if I went mad I would be shipped off immediately to the next available lifetime. If somehow I completed the training, I would be an interviewer. I did some more soul searching and realized that this was indeed what I wanted, and I let them know that I was committed to go through the training and become an interviewer.

I was then warned again that the first step in the training process was likely to cause me to go mad. This step was to open up all my memories of all my lives simultaneously, so that in dealing with interviewees I would have every experience available for me to call upon. I could see that this would likely be difficult; certainly the cacophony of countless channels all playing at the same time would not be easy to deal with. Still, it seemed to me an exaggeration to say this would cause madness.

But I was wrong – it was no exaggeration. What happened was that when all the seals were broken, and the memories were released, those memories which raced to the forefront of my consciousness were all the ones I had suppressed most strenuously. So starting with my most recent lives and then moving back I was attacked on all fronts by all the pain, physical and emotional, that I ever had. If I hadn't been able to somehow hang on to the importance of my becoming an interviewer, I'd certainly have been a goner.

But I was able to hang in there, howling and sobbing through all the broken bones, lost lovers, dead babies. Through all the stupid things I'd done and hidden from everybody, through all the insults I'd received, through all the discoveries of having been deceived and lied to by people I loved and thought they loved me. Hardest of all was to face up to the lies I told and the acts of cruelty I committed, sometimes quite randomly, to people and animals.

I almost lost it pondering how horrible I had been. Even in my most recent lives there were instances of my having tortured siblings and kittens, acting irresponsibly, and quite horribly, in matters involving sex and money, and lying about all of it – to others and to myself. Of course I never mentioned any of this when I was telling you about some of those lives; I did my best not to think about it at all. But when this all hurled

itself into my consciousness now, I felt so evil, so unworthy of being an interviewer that I almost gave in to the madness.

What saved me was a strange thing – the suppressed memories of earlier lifetimes. As more and more lifetimes unfolded, and more and more suppressed memories hurled themselves into my consciousness, I began to see that although I had been looking at these things as being a part of Me, they were only a part of the particular me that was living that individual lifetime. How else could it make sense that in one lifetime I could be so ashamed that I killed someone, even justifiably, without feeling any remorse, while in a different lifetime I was ashamed that I felt remorse for killing, and in yet another lifetime I was ashamed that because I was "too soft" I didn't kill someone I should have killed?

I was able, slowly, to disassociate Me from the persona of any individual lifetime and to view even my deepest, darkest secrets as something apart from and not connected to Me. I should tell you, though, that even now these suppressed memories have some power over me; I still have to work to separate Myself from the intense outreaching of the person from whichever lifetime in which they occurred.

But I was able to do so, and, as a result, I gained a new clarity both as to who Me is, or at least who Me isn't, and to the interviewer's job. If I could neutralize all the poison being shot at me by my own suppressed memories, then I could also do the same for the memories of the interviewees.

I guess my training had begun in earnest.

10

Of course it wasn't quite as simple as that. There was an enormous distance between being able not to go mad when the memories come into my consciousness and being perfectly at ease when that happened. In fact even after I became an interviewer, I never lost the knee-jerk reactions to some of the memories. Fortunately I was able to hide this, because otherwise I could never have been an interviewer. There were times when I talked with one of my interviewees and I remembered some lifetime I had in which he or she played a significant role, either hero or villain, and I had to hold myself back and gain control.

How to do that was also a major part of my training. Interviewers all appear to the interviewees in familiar forms, suitable to the time, place and inclination of the interviewees. In fact, though, interviewers have no body of their own. The appearance is totally an energy creation of the interviewer. It was not too hard to learn how to do this for any given interviewee, but to appear simultaneously to each of the interviewees in the hall in a form conducive to their successful absorption, to project mannerisms appropriate to each, and to do all this at a subconscious level, so that I could focus on the interactions with the person I was dealing with at the time – this was far from easy. I needed a lot of teaching and a lot of practice before I felt I was making any progress at all. Then a good deal more of the same before I felt I was ready for a trial run.

My trainer, however, was not at all convinced that I was ready for a trial. My experience of nearly going mad previously had shown me that my trainer knew a lot more than I did about what was needed in the training process, but I still felt that it would further my education to get out of the classroom and do a simulation. Eventually my trainer agreed that this could benefit me, and I was put in a simulator where I would be the interviewer for a group of experienced interviewers acting as interviewees. They all both knew me well and knew what kinds of experiences could be most difficult to handle for an interviewer.

My impression is that I failed miserably to do the job; I was absolutely hopeless. My trainer said that he was pleased, that it was a successful exercise because he could see exactly where I needed further instruction and practice. All I saw was that I was a long, long way from being an interviewer, and that I had better keep quiet in the future if I ever felt ready to move ahead a notch, and leave that distinction to my trainer.

So when I was told that another simulation had been set up I was surprised, and felt that I probably would fail miserably this time, too. However, the interviewers taking part this time were much gentler, I suppose my trainer had asked them to be, and provided situations more similar to what I would normally find, rather than a series of particularly difficult situations.

This time I did pretty well and actually started feeling comfortable after a while. My trainer called a halt to the simulation, thanked the participants, and then explained to me that he had arranged the first simulation to show me how little I really knew, even though I thought I knew a lot. When he saw how downhearted I was at realizing how much I didn't know, he arranged the second simulation to let me see that I really had made some progress. The real state of my training lay somewhere in between.

At first I felt that I had been tricked, but before long I could see that I had been taught a first-rate lesson, and very clearly taught at that. My training continued with me totally trusting the trainer and clear that there would come a time when I would become a successful interviewer, able to ease the pains of the newly dead and to assist them to move forward in the direction most appropriate for them to go.

11

And so there came a point when I was ready to meet the interviewees as an assistant interviewer, together with my trainer. Maybe you would say that I was nervous, but to me it didn't seem nervousness so much as a need to be totally aware of everything that was going on all around me, especially the little things that were hardly noticeable – including observing someone a short distance away trying to overhear our conversation, as well as taking in every twitching of every muscle which could have been rooted in some sub-subconscious uncertainty, and any change in wording or tone that could indicate an emotional shift. Clearly my focus was more on doing the job right than on expressing my compassion for these people in the most effective way. My trainer said that this would certainly change, and ultimately the two things were the same anyway, but I was not convinced. I took another meditation break to look at what I was doing. What was so special about me that I was the right person to do this job? Wouldn't these people all be better off being interviewed by real interviewers?

I could see that at some future point when I would be comfortable as an interviewer there would still be a difference between the way the others all did the job and the way I did it. I had a background the same as all the interviewees and therefore was able to understand them in a way in which none of the other interviewers could. What I couldn't see was whether that was a positive or a negative quality. Would I be better as an interviewer because of having a similar background with the interviewees, or worse? If my objective was to assist these people in the most difficult part of their existence, wouldn't it be better for me to just leave the work to those who did it best?

I was confused. I discussed this all with my trainer, who laughed and said that at least I could be certain that my motivation was correct. Then we got into a discussion about differentiating between an understanding which would be so sympathetic as to have the interviewees feel justified when they made a mistake and an understanding which would cause the interviewees not to make mistakes. Theoretically the distinction was clear, but I was far from certain that I understood it practically. However, it did seem both to me and to my trainer that it was right for me to continue learning to be an interviewer.

And so we went back to work, sometimes just the two of us, sometimes with interviewees. There were occasions when I showed astounding stupidity, and then came close to despairing of ever doing this job properly; but these occasions became fewer, and my ability to interact with the interviewees improved considerably.

Eventually my trainer was satisfied that I could interview on my own, as long as the appropriate interviewees were picked for me. There were no major screw-ups, but I could feel the presence of my trainer always on the alert. We would then discuss the

interviews, and I would get pointers on where I still needed to improve, and then I would do another interview.

Gradually I became better at what I was doing and more types of interviewees were open to me. I would still make mistakes, but almost always would be able to correct them by myself seamlessly. As I continued to be more comfortable with what I was doing and better at it, my similar background to the interviewees became less and less something to worry about. Clearly, now that I knew more precisely what my job was, being able to empathize more with the interviewees made me a better interviewer than what I would have been otherwise. This was somewhat surprising to my trainer, and there were individuals we discussed more for him to learn than for me to learn, and he shared with the other interviewers this new-found knowledge. There were even cases when I was asked to interview someone, or to take part in an interview conducted by someone else, not because I needed to learn something, but because I could get results where others did not always succeed in doing so.

By this point my training had been completed; I was in no need of babying – I was totally an interviewer. True, sometimes I asked others for assistance when necessary, but sometimes I was also asked for assistance. This was the way we worked.

And I do believe that I was accomplishing my goal. The work I did with these interviewees was truly an act of compassion bestowed on them in their greatest hour of need.

12

Then one day there was a shift in the way my coworkers related to me, and I was asked to come to the office of my trainer. I felt a great deal of confusion. As you may have guessed I was pretty sensitive to the energy around me at this point, and it felt like I was an outsider being ostracized by those who had so recently seen me as one of their own. This made no sense.

Of course my trainer knew that I felt what was going on around me, and he attempted to put me at my ease. We talked about some of the training experiences I had and how I had evolved into an excellent interviewer. Then he dropped the bomb. "It's been decided to end activities on your planet, so you'll need to be retrained to work with different beings."

After all the training I had received and all the work I'd done, I thought that nothing could shock me, or if it did I could cover up the shock so that nobody could see it. But I was wrong. I sat there paralyzed and in total shock for quite some time, before replying, "Are you saying that there won't be any more Earth? Everything and everybody will just disappear?"

"That's about it," he replied. "Of course you are one of us now, and will continue to work with us."

As the shock subsided I was flooded with questions. "Why? Can't there just be some correction so that things can continue successfully? When? How?"

The trainer replied, "Relax, this happens all the time. There have been several corrections shifting the population in the desired direction, but now things have arrived at a dead end. The present-day population has been consistently resistant to any shift which would allow a healthy existence. People are far too caught up in their individual existences, their petty desires and goals, causing damage to their habitat. The damage has reached the point of no return, and before long the planet will cease to exist."

"How do you know that the point of no return has been reached, maybe there's still a chance to change things? How much time is there?"

"You're seeing this much too personally. Don't forget, you are an interviewer now. In your work with all the interviewees haven't you seen how different you are from them?"

"Yes, I'm different from them, but I'm also different from all the other interviewers. Don't forget my motivation in becoming an interviewer was to assist all these people. I guess this means that I've failed; now they certainly need more assistance than ever before."

"This is not your failure. You've performed excellently, and with a degree of compassion impossible for any of the others of us to have. These things happen; it's time to accept it and move on."

"No, I can't do that. Please answer my questions: Is this definitely irreversible? How much time is there before this happens?"

"All right. Critical mass has been reached. In all previous cases when this has happened no correction has ever been able to stop the destruction of the planet, or for that matter of the solar system it was in. Is it possible theoretically? I don't know, but I doubt it. The amount of time until destruction varies, there might be one or two more lifetimes before this happens, maybe less."

I sat for a while and digested the information. Then, "My goal was not to become an interviewer. My goal was to help these people. I'm going back."

"You can't do that! You're an interviewer. You've given these people everything you could give, there's nothing more to do. The time has come for you to express your compassion towards other beings."

"Maybe so, but I'm also one of them, and I'm not convinced that everything has been done to help them. You remember that before my training began I was told that I could opt out at any time and go back. I'm opting out."

"That's ridiculous. Your training has been completed for quite some time, the opting out was meant to be during your training period. Surely you can be more helpful to all beings by continuing as an interviewer than by perishing along with what was once your planet."

"It's still my planet, and even though there's hardly any chance, I need to try to save it. Please send me back."

13

I just got into the first available vehicle headed in the right direction, without paying any attention to the details. I suppose this was a silly thing to do, but I was caught up in a sense of urgency. While in the fetal state I became aware of my surroundings. My mother was a junkie and prostitute who had had five children already. My father was just a vague memory for her. Three of the children died from withdrawal shortly after birth and were wrapped up in newspapers and tossed out. The other two were sold to a baby broker. After all the work I had done as an interviewer, as I said, nothing shocked me, but quite frankly, the life my mother was leading was horrible. My heart went out to her. Even so, I considered whether it would be better for me to die and choose a host more wisely, but I kept coming back to the fact that any change that I could make had to occur at the grass roots level, so maybe there was something I could learn here that would increase my chances of success. And maybe my concern for her would make a difference to my mother's life.

I survived birth and withdrawal, trying not to cry too much, as this bothered my mother and sent her back to the needle more quickly. After a few days I was taken to someone who brought me to my new mother, a young woman who wanted a baby very much but was infertile. She was single and for various reasons deemed unacceptable by the adoption agencies, so she found her way to the black market, and to me. She lived alone in an apartment building and wasn't particularly friendly with any of the neighbors. She worked in a cubicle in a large office building and wasn't particularly friendly with any of her coworkers. Even so, she put on weight, wore loose clothing with pillows placed strategically and made a show of being pregnant for a couple of months, then went away for vacation, telling all who asked that she was going to her mother's house, and came back with me. Her acquaintances nodded when they saw her and congratulated her on such a cute baby.

For my purposes this was a continuation of my education. As an interviewer I met many people with approaches to life similar to those of my two mothers, but my focus had been solely on compassion. Here, in addition to the compassion I felt, my focus was also on being able to bring about a change, not just at the individual level, but for humanity. I had a world to save, and still didn't have the slightest idea how to do it.

All my memories from past lives were accessible to me, and it was somewhat frustrating to wait for my body to mature sufficiently for me to function and communicate adequately. On the other hand, the first couple of years of this life provided a time of observation and planning which were invaluable to me.

It seemed that I needed to get respect as an individual and for what I wanted to tell everyone, and that I needed to get through to virtually the entire population in order to

be credible and to have sufficient influence to bring about a radical change in the way people saw themselves and their world. In order to do so, I formulated a plan of action which, though far from perfect, seemed like it had a chance. I would need to achieve a high level academically while socially being active in all reasonable causes which aimed to bring us closer to each other and our habitat.

I strived to be popular with the other children at school and to participate in social activities, while at the same time excelling in classwork. It was my intention that the other children would see my academic success as somehow their success, which would make me closer to them, rather than set me apart. I didn't see this as an attempt to manipulate them, rather as a desire to enroll them in what would be to our mutual benefit. To enroll successfully would be a good start on the project I had set out to do; to manipulate successfully, I was convinced that this would not work. It seemed to me that if something seemed to be genuinely beneficial, people, and certainly children, would stay with it; on the other hand, anyone who felt manipulated into thinking something was good sooner or later would catch on and rebel.

As a result, our class in particular, and the entire school in fact, had an outstanding scholastic record, and we were also active in community affairs, collecting money and food for those in need and visiting the old and infirm. I was interviewed, alone or with other children and our teachers, on several occasions, and we always were able to get the message across that giving assistance to the community was to our mutual advantage.

It was determined that my IQ was very high and that I was mature for my age, so at the age of 14 I began attending university. In my early twenties I completed my university studies with doctorates in sociology, psychology and communications. During the entire time I was studying I continued doing volunteer work in the community, also working with children who were doing volunteer work.

So after completing my studies very successfully, it wasn't all that difficult to get backing to produce a chain of organizations dedicated to both assisting those in need and promoting human dignity. My plan was to build neighborhood groups connected to a municipal organization, which was in turn connected to other organizations, reaching national and international levels. It seemed to me that the neighborhood groups would provide leadership for the municipal organizations, and those would provide leadership for the levels above. I believed that this would work, and when the confederation of organizations got big enough the concept of assisting each other with dignity would seem perfectly normal and natural, and a world transformation would have begun.

Unfortunately, it didn't turn out that way. I discovered that the small groups, with limited numbers of participants and activities, tended to work really well; but when the numbers grew, problems grew exponentially. In the small groups, everyone worked well together, and if anything the workers would be hesitant about taking money for expenses and extremely careful not to overspend. In those groups where there was responsibility for a wider range of people and projects, the same individuals who performed so well and honestly at the group level, for the benefit of all, suddenly developed suspicions of their fellow workers and petty jealousies. Expense accounts were padded mercilessly, and sometimes totally fabricated.

This phenomenon was quite curious, I certainly hadn't expected it. I checked the literature and had many conversations with my colleagues, but could find no solution.

This led to an impasse – could I build an organization to lead humanity into a new era of connectedness with individuals caught up in the me-first syndrome? I didn't know, but what other possibilities did I have? I could think of none. Perhaps we could find some way to control and limit this competitive and selfish behavior and still succeed in shifting the way we humans saw things and acted.

But this was not to be. Using all the skills I had learned as an interviewer and all the techniques recommended by my colleagues, I still had no success. Maybe my trainer was right, and no correction was possible.

No, I couldn't think like that! I had to do something; this just wasn't the right thing to do. The organizations continued to function, but I began focusing on finding some other plan.

14

The only thing that I could think of was that I had to get through to everybody. But how could I do that? I wasn't a celebrity, and didn't see how I could become one in any reasonable time frame, if at all. But I didn't feel that I could just pick some celebrity and convince him to do the job for me. I wasn't certain I could do it, how could I expect anyone else to succeed?

After I eliminated all the other wild schemes I had, I was left with this one: write a best-seller telling my tale, and give interviews to whoever would be willing to interview me. Would it work? I didn't know, but it was the only option left, so without questioning further, I started writing.

Writing and editing took me a couple of months, and then when I thought it was sufficiently presentable to show to a publisher I started researching which publishers would be willing not only to publish a book such as this, but also to promote it vigorously. Then I looked for people I knew who could intercede with the publisher on my behalf and talked to them about the book. A friend and teacher of mine from university was sufficiently intrigued to read what I had written, and was actually quite enthusiastic about it. She arranged a meeting with a vice president at the publishing firm.

The three of us met in his office, and my friend actually promoted my work better than I did. The VP was moderately intrigued, and took the manuscript to evaluate its potential. Maybe we were getting somewhere. When he called to set up a second meeting I was very happy; it looked like this was going to work after all.

After the preliminaries were completed and we'd had our coffee and tea, we got down to business. He said that everyone who had read and evaluated the work thought it had tremendous potential. But it was important that the book be listed as fiction. If I wanted to claim that the book was non-fiction they wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole. I had anticipated this, and told him that this was okay with me, but that when asked I would say that although the book is fiction, the message is still important to us – we've got to work together for the benefit of humanity and the planet or we're heading toward destruction. He said that I needed to tone that down still further – we've got to work together for the benefit of humanity and the planet. This was too watered down for me. In the end we settled on – we've got to work together for the benefit of humanity and the planet or we're in serious trouble. Further, if I were asked by anyone from the media if the planet was in danger of being destroyed, I needed to say that the book was fiction, but if we looked at the state of the world today we could figure out for ourselves that unless some changes were made, and soon, our world would be in

danger; and I would be very happy if this book inspired people to begin making the necessary changes.

Once we agreed on this, we could move on to money matters and publicity. For me the money was of secondary importance, except as far as the budget for publicity was concerned. I wanted nothing spared. I expected the publisher to generate enough interest that I would be lined up for interviews for all the media, and would need to travel throughout the country and much of the world in order to get people to read the book and want to do something to help make a change. If I were successful in this, then I wanted my profits, excluding a living allowance, to go to beefing up the institutions set up to make these changes and allowing them to handle a massive influx of new volunteers. If readers wanted to give money to these institutions, I would certainly be happy for them to do so, but what I wanted was not their cash, but for their time, their efforts, their enthusiasm, their passion, their souls to be involved.

The VP tried to tone down my enthusiasm, and reminded me that the publisher was interested in making a profit even if I wasn't, and that we would have to see how things went, but that he would do what was necessary to get things rolling, and then it would be pretty much up to me, although they would continue to assist me, and hopefully sales would continue to fund activities.

And so, an agreement was drawn up, I was introduced to an editor, who was enthusiastic about the book, and we got started working.

15

The publisher did a wonderful job marketing the book, even before it was published. There was no need for me to try to drum up interest; instead, what I had to do was channel the interest so it would go where it needed to go. After all, there was still a world to be saved, even if I declared the book to be fictional.

For months I criss-crossed the nation, stopping wherever there was media interest in the book, which was virtually everywhere there were newspapers, talk radio and television. I declared the book to be fiction, but an important vehicle for social change, as was, for instance, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, which brought about significant changes in the early 20th century. In the case of this book also, I requested readers to consider that changes needed to be made or all humanity and the planet would suffer. Those media people who had read or knew something about the book would try to get me to talk about the time spent between lives – where had I gotten the idea that it was like this, did I believe in rebirth, did I believe in heaven and hell, etc. – and about how and when I thought the destruction of the planet would take place; but I was evasive, just saying that the book was fiction and that the ideas had come to me, but any thinking person could see that the time had come for change, regardless of whether or not we were on the brink of destruction.

There were positive results from all this activity. Money and volunteers poured into the institutions which had been working to make the changes which we so needed, and the feeling was "yes, we can bring about a better world." I traveled briefly abroad and drummed up interest world wide, but this was much more difficult than at home, and the institutions needed my constant attention, so I decided to concentrate as much as possible on activities close at hand until such time as I felt that I could leave the organizations to run themselves, and only then would I attempt to expand the work internationally.

Another interesting reaction to what we were doing was that many educational institutions and religious organizations of a wide range of affiliations became interested in the work and wanted to join in. I decided that it would be best not to let them act as units, but rather to have the individuals divided among several different groups so that their primary affiliation would be to the groups in which they worked. This entailed, however, setting up another set of support groups within the educational and religious frameworks so that these institutions would also be served. By and large this worked well.

The important thing is it looked like we were really going to accomplish something.

16

And then interest slacked off. Somebody came up with something new, and it grabbed all the attention, and people stopped thinking about the need for change. Gradually, but certainly, there were less volunteers, less contributions, less requests for me to speak. And the work bogged down; things were looking not very different from before the publication of the book.

Now I was really at a loss as to how to proceed. Had I made a rectifiable mistake? Were there other avenues I could pursue to get the message across? Although I was ready to pick any and all brains available to me, as well as my own and all its lifetimes of experience, I could think of nothing. I had reached a dead end. The planet and all its life would be destroyed. And I along with it, of course, unless I escaped before the event occurred, but my potential personal demise was a good deal less bothersome. I was filled with sorrow not for my own fate, but for the fate of us all.

I couldn't function. I went off to a retreat of undetermined length. I ate and slept and bathed and shaved and every so often cut my fingernails, but other than that I was alone with my thoughts. Part of the time I sat hoping that I had missed something which I was just about to stumble over and would still save the world; part of the time I convinced myself that the task was impossible, we were indeed at the end of the line and nothing could change us/save us.

These conflicting thoughts, and the depths to which they entered my being, together with the lack of human interaction, I suppose, caused me to lose my grip on reality. Of course, my memory banks contained previous instances of this having happened, so I wasn't particularly upset or worried by this. I did see, however, that my sanity was getting very fragile. There were people who worried about me and came to see me. I thanked them for coming, via messenger, but refused to see them. I was not ready to be argued back to sanity, or loved back to functioning, or anything. I was doing what I had to do, and the time had not come to get up and leave this retreat, even if my sanity depended on it.

In fact, visitors had the effect of making me more morose; the sadness that these people who I loved on this planet which I loved would all be no longer, and that nothing could be done to change this I felt as an even greater weight at these times. Yet, what was there to do? How horrible it all was.

After the retreat entered its second year, visitors began coming much less frequently. The world was forgetting me as much as I was forgetting the world. Gradually the thoughts of hope diminished and the thoughts of the inevitability of destruction grew. I came to accept that nothing would happen to save the planet.

17

And then I got the joke. Maybe I was totally crazy by this time, or maybe I had rushed to a new sanity, I don't know, but finally, finally, FINALLY, I got it.

Sure we had set up our own destruction. The flip side of our drive to survive is our selfishness, and the way we're wired, the need to survive – the selfishness – takes precedence over everything else. But something in our selfishness doesn't allow us to see, at least not very clearly, our race's need to survive, our planet's need to survive. When there's a conflict between our individual survival and our planet's survival, we feel that we as individuals have to survive first or the planet will not, so in order to save the planet, we do things which will destroy it.

Maybe I've done a poor job of explaining this, but believe me I was very clear that our need to survive was causing us to be unable to survive, and as such there was no way we could continue on this planet. Destruction would have to come, nothing else made sense. Hopefully on some other planet some other type of being had a different blueprint for survival which would avoid the paradox we had reached, but it was impossible for us to avoid that paradox, impossible for us to go on.

So, what about all the beings who were going to be destroyed when the planet's time was up? Hopefully for some the very action of the destruction would bring about the completion of their education. Those who still had things to learn would need to find new homes to go to. Other planets, other types of beings, other consciousness, but the same rules. Live, die, be reborn. Hopefully learn something in the process.

At first all I could do was laugh. Sometimes laughing at Fate, sometimes at my thickness, my not having understood anything for so long. Those who felt that I was sane until now began to revise their opinions. But after a few days of this I began to fill up with energy and a desire to return to the world. To do what? I didn't know, but that was where I belonged.

I returned home, began calling friends and family and seeing them. Of course they wanted to know what I had been through, and I told them, to the best of my ability. Some certainly still thought I was crazy, but that was okay. Others could at least understand vaguely what I was talking about, and could accept me. Others were just happy that I was back.

When it became known that I was back in circulation, there were some requests for me to speak again, perhaps because I had been out of the public eye long enough for nostalgia to set in, perhaps because they had heard of my retreat experience and wanted to compare the "after" picture to the "before". At first I refused the requests, but

eventually I felt comfortable enough with myself and my surroundings to speak briefly and answer questions.

I didn't plan my speeches, I just looked at the audience and got a feel of what they needed to hear, and then I talked. This was easy, due to my experience as a between-lifetimes interviewer. I had no special agenda in speaking, no special agenda in answering questions, and yet people responded in a way much more powerful than they had on my "book promotion" tour. I guess people prefer plain talk to preaching, at least when it was I doing the talking or preaching. Surprisingly, somehow, more than ever people seemed to get the message that a change was necessary and possible, and if it happened we could continue to live our lives on this planet and learn what we needed to learn here. If we weren't ready for it, then it wouldn't happen, but this too would be all right. Somehow those who accepted this invitation to choose were more deeply committed to living their lives in a way which could bring change. And those who declined, well, that was all right too.

18

So now that I had given up on our ability to bring about a change powerful enough to save the world from destruction, it looked like maybe it was possible to do just that.

But does it matter? I don't know, but I doubt it. I'm just telling people what I've got to say. Thanks for listening, and the best of luck to you, but my time has passed.

And in fact it did pass. I died, and the world still carried on.

There I was in a large hall, filled with people. A strange place, but I knew how I had gotten there. Some of the people yelled and screamed at some imaginary disaster, others acted as though they were enjoying a swim or a picnic, others seemed quite calm and comfortable even though their faces were bashed in and blood was dripping all over them. And then to each individual or small group, somebody would come over and start talking. I couldn't hear what was said, but didn't really have to.

After a while, somebody came over to talk to me. He smiled and asked how I felt and if I knew where I was. I told him, "Hey, it's me; you remember." Then he recognized me. "Why don't you go debrief, and then we'll talk. I'll tell your trainer that you're here." "Great," I told the interviewer, "it's bubble bath time."

The debriefing was short, and afterwards I met with my trainer and the interviewer who received me. The latter welcomed me back and then returned to work, leaving my trainer and myself alone. "You've surprised us again," he said. "You've done excellent work on your planet. It looks like destruction has been avoided, at least for now." That was great news. "Now what?" he continued. "Have you come back to us?"

I should have been ready to answer that, but I wasn't. Was I ready to come back? It seemed to me that I had done more for mankind, and the rest of the planet, in one lifetime on earth than I had done as an interviewer here. On the other hand, I wouldn't have been able to do it had I not been trained as an interviewer and had not received the information about the future of the planet which I got here. Where could I do the most to alleviate suffering? I didn't know. Where did I want to be? That one surprised me; somehow I felt that I belonged to humanity, and that I should be on earth.

Finally, I gave my answer: "No, I'll miss you, but this isn't where I belong. Send me back to earth, please." "Are you sure? You won't have total recall the next time. If you're going to live there, you're going to be like everybody else." I understood that, and told him so.

"Well, goodbye," he replied, "it was a real experience knowing you and working with you."

I chuckled. "I'm sure it was," I said. "Hardest you had to work in eons, I'll bet. I can't say I'll never forget you, because I certainly will in an instant, but what I learned from you will somehow stay with me." Holding back a tear, I added, "And now here's something else I don't think you'll understand. I love you."

19

I was the fourth child in the family, the first girl after three boys. I was a little princess, practically worshipped by my parents, who were like servants to me. Even more so as I was sickly as a baby and needed constant attention. My brothers were upset that I was taking up so much of our parents' time, although they understood that I had special needs.

But by the time I was three I had become fully healthy, and was just one of the clan. I liked my life, and had a good relationship with my parents and brothers. I grew up feeling that we all belonged together. I also had a group of friends with whom I was very close. I felt that all those close to me would do anything for me, whatever was needed; and I felt the same way about all of them.

After I started school my circle of friends widened. Somehow it was easy for me to make friends, and close friends at that. I attended several different schools as I grew up and made great friends at all of them, who continued to be a part of my life after I changed schools. I was also a good student and took enriched courses in a wide variety of topics, in both sciences and arts.

When I was in high school my parents separated, and later divorced. At first this was really difficult for me to handle. I lived with my mother, and I was angry at my father. But I understood that both parents still loved me and I still loved them, and I came to accept the situation. And after my father found a new girlfriend I continued to visit him and them, and we all had a good time together. I was still sad that my parents had divorced, but realized that they had their own lives to lead.

After I finished high school I went into the army. It was a good place to be while I figured out how I wanted to spend the rest of my life. And I got to make a lot of new friends.

Then one day everything changed. I don't really know how to talk about this. I guess the best place to start is when the radiologist said, "There's something in the chest area, you need to go to the emergency room and have it checked out."

Have I told you this story before? Somehow it seems familiar.

Part two: Though only one at a time (*To be published in HCH 3, March 2015*)

Part three: Yet all together (*To be published in HCH 4, May 2015*)



HCH 2 / Enero 2015

un día de 1929 ó 1930, por Ángel Repáraz

la infección causada por la alejandría de I. durrell
una maraña de sectas
 una ciudad ramera entre las ciudades en sus palabras
 estaba ya bien avanzada
cuando penetramos en la claridad desilusionada
 del legado del poeta
el supuesto de partida era una ciudad edificada sobre polvo de oro
 con la blancura de los huesos molidos
 eones después y todavía
y el siroco que aventa los años

hoy el viento del desierto seca las gargantas
 cuando del portal de 10 rue lepsiuss ('rue clapsius')
 lepsiuss karl richard -naumburg 1810 - berlin 1884-
 arqueólogo alemán considerado en el área cultural de la lengua alemana como
el fundador de la egiptología véase internet
 ha salido un señor atildado
 aun cuando visto de cerca su traje
 deja algo que desear

pulcro desde luego y no sin elegancia
 las gafas de carey
 para e. m. forster que lo conoció en 1914
 a Greek gentleman

en su retina a la izquierda las líneas regulares
 del hospital griego
 donde pasará sus últimos meses en 1933
 cáncer de garganta
y donde morirá exactamente el día
 que cumpla 70 años
 un conmovedor (auto)regalo de cumpleaños
bien entendido si se admite para la fecha de su nacimiento
 el cómputo antiguo
 fue discreto su paso sea como fuera
 a una irrealidad algo más elevada

nunca tendrá luz eléctrica en su apartamento el *gentleman*
 después la calle se llamará sharm el sheikh 1967
 y desde 2011 c. p. cavafy street
 en los bajos de la casa por cierto

un burdel ponía un cierto color local
 cosas sin importancia
 hoy es día de asueto para el caballero
 que se tiñe el pelo

y es asiduo de librerías y pequeños cafés
 ya antes de que llegue al café al aktar
 donde alguna vez pursewarden
 se emborrachó brillantemente
 la calima se adhiere a la piel
 en este septiembre
 pero las fechas del calendario
 colisionan geológicamente con su tiempo elegido
 recuerda cuerpo
 por las mañanas habitualmente va a una oficina
 del ministerio egipcio de riegos
 donde le esperan documentos para traducir
 como a su figura especular fernando pessoa en lisboa
 por las tardes es corredor de comercio
 o recibe en casa de 5 a 7 previa cita
 los jóvenes admiradores singópulos petridis malanos
 se acercaba a los sesenta cuando se jubiló
 ahí os dejo esa inmundicia
 les espetó al abandonar la oficina
 con una dignidad todavía vigente
 en los tiempos de los diádocos
 el caballero es homosexual
 los amores estériles
 y por sus venas circulan torrenteras
 de literatura e historia griegas filosofía hermética también
 atrapado en su tiempo recurrente
 pasea despacio con las manos en los bolsillos
 un poco inestable
 un poco neurótico
 su ciudad natal su ciudad mortal
 un espejismo
 no hallarás otras tierras u otros mares
 la ciudad irá contigo adonde vayas
 nada de sentimentalidad
 y sin embargo obstinado trabajador en la cantera
 de una civilización desvanecida
 poesía substantiva se lee a veces
 lo único de interés para él
 la exclusividad de una pasión
 llamada poesía
 le llegan las sirenas de los barcos
 al poeta religioso
 de la cofradía de john donne de francisco quevedo
 oculto siempre casi secreto
 saludando por la *grande corniche*
 por la rue fouad
 via canópica
 sólo al final de su vida
 fueron conocidos algunos poemas suyos
 en traducción inglesa italiana francesa
 una foto de pessoa en la barra de una taberna lisboeta
 en la mano un vaso de vino
 y una foto de él en la pastelería pastrovidis
 de esta ciudad

hermanos gemelos
 habitantes de la torre de marfil
 de una sexualidad impublicable
una torre
 tapiada para tantos y para tantas cosas
 y en cuyo interior llovía

faraones menores
 teócrito orígenes
 reyezuelos caprichosos
tragados por la arena del tiempo
 un radio de vida reducido
 los amigos eran griegos no hay que decirlo
 su vida diaria pertinentemente rutinaria
y el poema 'eternidad' (*aionióntera*) de 1895
 él tenía 32 años una buena escuela
 para quien quiera matricularse en la intemporalidad
 para quien quiera aprender
cómo hay que guardar silencio ante los poderes del devenir
 el señor continúa su paseo por la parte occidental de la ciudad
 minaretes que parecen flotar
 en un cielo nacarado
*siempre llegarás a la ciudad para
otro sitio [...]*
no hay barco no hay camino para ti
 el hotel cécil
 donde negociaron nessim y justine
 los términos de su matrimonio
 tratándose de usted
justine infeliz reiterativamente adúltera
 o clea bailando allí con su padre
 la noche de fin de año
más fantasmas para el bisturí de durrell
 a nuestro caballero le asalta el recuerdo
 a rachas de aquellos cuerpos aquellas bocas
emoción vibrátil aquello fue en 1892 o 1894 o 1902
 ah la *sancta voluptas*
 y las rupturas las pérdidas
 *a mi memoria vuelve más hermoso
ahora que mi recuerdo lo evoca fuera del tiempo*
otra vez fuera del tiempo un tiempo arcaico
 irrepetidas experiencias circulares
 boecio que vio la eternidad como
interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio
 interminabilis es decir propiamente no consumada
 los encuentros de aquellas tardes con sol
 no han terminado
 regresan irisados
.. *a las cuatro de la tarde nos separamos
por una semana solamente... jamás
pensé que duraría para siempre*
 un viaje inaudito el de este hombre de semanas antiguas
 antigüedad helénica congelada
 pero su amante no cayó en 195 a. de c.

en la batalla de magnesia
ahora bien el combate a que asistió él mismo fue no menos feroz
el que libraban
cristianos y paganos
claro que el pagano con los pertinentes
gustos cismundanos
fue enterrado con acompañamiento del hisopo
de un sacerdote griego
ah el orgullo de un señor *old-fashioned*
hacia el lago mareotis el azul tenue ha progresado
hasta un incendio de color naranja
cuando él ya está en su despacho de la rue lepsius
anfibio histórico
su época no es su época
antonio
plotino los setenta cleopatra
ammonio sacca
un farallón inexpugnable
la fatalidad
un naufrago
sus poemas se han leído como ficción histórica
un error
él se nos sigue escapando
inasible *ineffabilis*
es estúpido es una banal imposibilidad
preguntarse por sus contenidos de conciencia de entonces
pero en los balances internos
que seguro que llevaba a cabo
ha tenido que ver ruinas al mirar hacia atrás
las de aquella hélade
las de su propia aventura
no es ciertamente el único
de eso no ha hablado mucho con su voz oracular
de eso no

Ángel Repáraz, Madrid, diciembre 2014



HCH 2 / Enero 2015

¿Dónde le aprietan las botas a Heidegger?, por Jordi Claramonte

Para Álvaro con amor cerebral pero verdadero.

Ve Heidegger un cuadro de Van Gogh en que aparecen pintadas un par de botas viejas y se le hace evidente que en “la oscura boca del gastado interior del zapato está grabada la fatiga de los pasos de la faena...la obstinación del lento avanzar a lo largo de los extendidos y monótonos surcos mientras sopla un viento helado...”. Por supuesto que esto es así, y no de otra manera, porque “en la obra de arte se ha puesto a la obra la verdad de lo ente. El arte es ese ponerse a la obra de la verdad”. Heidegger puede fantasear así con su labradora, llena de una dura pero sana –sanísima– fatiga. Y puede postular – sin duda como una revelación de la Verdad también– una, no por callada menos inquietante, llamada de la tierra que tiembla en las botas de marras. Los fragmentos en los que Heidegger describe su peculiar fantasía campesina son francamente hermosos y seguramente –si no nos ponemos pejugeros con lo de la llamada de la tierra– sea la de Heidegger una experiencia estética tan genuina y fértil como los surcos de la campesina. Ahora bien, no acabo de ver por qué esa concreta experiencia estética que Heidegger transcribe tenga que conllevar “la apertura de lo ente en su ser, el acontecimiento de la verdad”, saliendo a la luz –mira tú por donde– lo que obra en la obra. ¿Sólo eso obra en la obra?

Parece evidente que no deja Heidegger mucho espacio para el juego y la deriva estéticos. Parece evidente que no le sabe muy mal cargarse la generatividad característica de lo estético, de lo irreducible a concepto.

En Heidegger –y por eso no pasa de ser un dominguero de la estética– no hay policontextualidad, sino sobredeterminación metafísica. No hay juego de facultades y funciones, sino revelación de una Verdad –la comparecencia del Ser ese y por las mismas la famosa llamada de la tierra– que el filósofo resulta saber o que acaba por encontrarse de una vez por todas. Por supuesto que podemos coger el cuadro de Van Gogh y acoplarnos con la fantaseada vida de la campesina que usa esas botas para trabajar, pero ¿es esa la Verdad que alienta en la obra? Seguramente, y por no dejar el ejemplo de Heidegger, podríamos igualmente acoplarnos a partir del cuadro de Van Gogh con la sensación de la duración de los objetos con los que vivimos durante años, a los que reparamos, los que hacemos y nos hacen, y no decir ni una palabra de la llamada de la tierra ni de la vida campesina. ¿Sería esa una experiencia menos legítima? ¿menos verdadera? Es muy interesante en Heidegger su capacidad para postular, más allá de las lecturas secamente formalistas o historicistas, la vigencia de un modo de relación en la obra analizada, para hacernos ver las posibilidades relacionales que alientan en el material estético, pero al atribuirle la pesada y muy alemana funcionalidad de revelador de verdades acaba por acogotar no ya la obra –que ya sería doloroso– sino las competencias de los sucesivos espectadores para acoplarse con diferentes modos de relación a partir de la intrínseca densidad de la obra de arte en tanto medio homogéneo. Como ha demostrado Luis Ramos en su tesis sobre el *Ingenium*, Spinoza sabía que la teología intenta domesticar la razón intentando explicar imágenes ingeniosas –hechura de los necesariamente diversos ingenios– como si fueran dogmas o misterios divinos. Lo que le sobra a Heidegger de teólogo es lo que le falta de pensador de la estética, y eso hace abortar por completo el intento de sacar una estética de los escritos de Heidegger. Ningún intento que ignore las tramas y las complicidades de lo repertorial y lo disposicional puede postularse como un ensayo medianamente serio de pensar lo estético.

Jordi Claramonte, 19 de julio de 2009

Publicado en el Blog "Estética Modal" el 19 de julio de 2009:

<http://esteticamodal.hypotheses.org/42>



HCH 2 / Enero 2015

Colores, por Ivo Tejeda



Choroy (Reserva Costera Valdiviana, Chile)

Ave endémica de Chile; es decir, solo vive en este país. El choroy vive en bandadas en los bosques del sur. En este caso, en la Reserva Costera Valdiviana.



Lile (Isla Mocha, Chile)

Los cormoranes son especies de aves que buscan sus presas en el agua; algunos llegando a sumergirse hasta 30 metros. Esta pareja de liles forma parte de una colonia, que anida de forma permanente en una roca litoral en Isla Mocha.



Zarapito de Pico Recto (Chiloé, Chile)

Este zarapito nidifica en la tundra ártica de Canadá, aunque migra a la zona sur de Chile. Estos ejemplares estaban en la Bahía de Caulín, en Chiloé.



***Pilpilén* (Bahía de Caulín, Chile)**

Se le encuentra solo o en grupos pequeños en las playas. Éste fue fotografiado en la Bahía de Caulín, en el extremo norte de Chiloé, lugar que habitualmente recibe a miles de aves que migran buscando alimento.



Tagüita (Santiago, Chile)

La tagüita frecuenta aguas tranquilas del centro de Chile, como esteros, lagos y humedales. Este ejemplar es del Parque Bicentenario, en pleno Santiago.



Playero de los rompientes (Chaihuín, Chile)

Este playero visita Chile en verano, proveniente de las costas de Norteamérica. Las manchas rojizas del primero de la foto indican que se trata de un reproductor. Estos playeros fueron fotografiados cerca de Chaihuín, al sur de Valdivia.

Fotografías & texto: Ivo Tejeda, Santiago de Chile, diciembre 2014



HCH 2 / Enero 2015

Boyhood: una obra maestra, por Antonia Tejeda Barros

El día que *Boyhood* se estrenó en España, me apresuré a los Cines Renoir Retiro, aquí en Madrid. No había leído nada sobre la película, ni tan sólo había visto el tráiler. Con mis directores favoritos (Woody Allen, Richard Linklater y Radu Mihaileanu) me abstengo de conocer cualquier detalle sobre sus películas, para ir fresca al estreno y para que su arte me absorbiera completamente, sin distorsiones *a priori*.

Quedé maravillada con *Boyhood*. No sólo por la innovación y originalidad de la película ("*Boyhood is a complete original*", comenta el exquisito Ethan Hawke, "*It's the first movie I've ever done that is truly not like another movie*"⁶⁰), sino por su contenido, tan humano y tan real. El experimento de Richard Linklater (rodar durante 12 años la vida de un niño) es un proyecto arriesgado y audaz, totalmente nuevo en la historia del cine: "[Richard] wanted to shoot over a period of 12 years, collecting moments ... building a whole imaginative life of a young person and to grow up with them. Personally, I couldn't believe it hadn't been done already, it seemed like such a great idea"⁶¹. Según Richard, la película sólo fue posible gracias a la lealtad, amor y dedicación de todos los actores y de los productores: "*It was so much to ask of everyone; for Ellar to mature on camera in one film ...*"⁶².

Ethan comenta que el proyecto se realizó sin contratos, y que Richard (al que Ethan llama "*my best friend*") le pidió a Ethan que le prometiera que, si moría, se encargara de acabar la película. El resultado: espectacular. *Boyhood* no es *solamente* 12 años de la vida de un niño, sino 12 años de las vidas que orbitan alrededor de este niño: su hermana, su madre y su padre, los cuales crecen,

⁶⁰ Hawke, *Boyhood Official Featurette*

⁶¹ Hawke, *Boyhood Interview with Ethan Hawke, Richard Linklater, Ellar Coltrane & Patricia Arquette*

⁶² Linklater, *Boyhood Official Featurette*

evolucionan, maduran y envejecen junto a él: "*at some point you are not longer growing up, you are aging, but no one can pinpoint that moment exactly*"⁶³.

¿Cuáles son las películas que más nos llegan a las entrañas? ¿No son acaso las que nos hacen sentirnos, de alguna manera, identificados? En *Boyhood*, los más jóvenes se sentirán identificados con los personajes de Mason (Ellar Coltrane) y Samantha (Lorelei Linklater), especialmente en sus adolescencias, y los ya no tan jóvenes posiblemente nos sentiremos identificados con los personajes de los padres (Patricia Arquette y Ethan Hawke). La película refleja situaciones cotidianas, momentos hermosos y penosos que todos hemos podido sentir o vivir en nuestra pequeña e individual historia. Richard comenta: "*There is something so normal in a certain way about Mason's story that I really always felt that it would be about moments everyone shares*"⁶⁴.

El *cast* de la película es sensacional. Ethan (a las que muchas mujeres nos cautivó y enamoró con los personajes de Troy en *Reality Bites* (1994) y el de Jesse en *Before Sunrise* (1995), *Before Sunset* (2004) y *Before Midnight* (2013), aparece brillante, elegante, sexy, interesante y súper "*cute*" en su papel de padre irresponsable y "*cool*". Patricia hace una interpretación extraordinaria, con la que muchas mujeres de mi generación con hijos (y mayores que yo) se sentirán identificadas (aunque nuestra historia, especialmente la amorosa, haya sido muy diferente). Según Ethan, no se acostumbra a ver "*real women*" en la pantalla, y Patricia encarna, por encima de todo, a una mujer real, con sus frustraciones, sus esperanzas, sus equivocaciones y sus logros. Para Patricia, lo más difícil fue acabar la película: "*The hardest thing was when it ended. I wanted to continue shooting it for the rest of my life and I never wanted anyone to be allowed to see it*"⁶⁵. Ellar (que fue educado de una manera muy libre y artística) empieza con una buena actuación para mostrar muy pronto ser una de las jóvenes promesas del momento. Lorelei (hija del director) muestra desde muy joven sus dotes como actriz. Y el que hace una interpretación absolutamente brillante es Marco Perella, en su rol de profesor-y-padre-

⁶³ Linklater, *Boyhood Official Featurette*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Arquette, *Boyhood Official Featurette*

alcohólico-dedicado-severo-y-un-tanto-*psycho*, el cual evoca odio, compasión y repulsión.

Ethan y Patricia comentan que nunca recibieron ningún *script*. Según Ellar, Richard tenía una idea bastante clara de la película en su cabeza, pero el guión no estaba escrito, ni mucho menos: "*A lot of times we would write the dialog the day before we shot*"⁶⁶. Los actores nunca tuvieron que aprenderse un guión de memoria, sino que el diálogo se fue construyendo entre todos. Richard les avanzaba un poco la temática de cada año, para que todos fueran pensando sobre lo que iban a rodar próximamente.

Los 12 años de la vida de Mason muestran también a grandes pinceladas algunos hechos cruciales de la historia de EEUU (bajo el prisma demócrata y crítico de Richard y Ethan -ambos texanos y fuertes críticos de su país-): la guerra de Irak, las mentiras de Bush y las elecciones de Obama. La escena de las pancartas de Obama y McCain es genial y muy cómica; cualquiera que conozca bien la idiosincrasia norteamericana la disfrutará con una sonrisa o carcajada.

Richard muestra, como siempre, tener una visión de la vida, el amor, las relaciones humanas y el paso del tiempo muy acertada, artística y real al mismo tiempo. Según Patricia, *Boyhood* es una película sobre humanismo, fallos, defectos, errores, aprendizaje, intentos y amor: "*I think this movie is about humanism, flaws, making mistakes, learning as you go along, trying, wanting for love, giving love to each other ...*"⁶⁷.

¿No es acaso la vida misteriosa y hermosa, sin necesidad de falsos ornamentos? Ethan afirma: "*Life is beautiful and interesting enough as it is and you don't need to manufacture a lot of falsehood*"⁶⁸. La película muestra las elecciones de los personajes, sin juzgarlos y sin moralejas. ¿No escogemos todos, cada día de nuestra vida? El hombre es libertad, como muy bien dijo

⁶⁶ Coltrane, *DP/30: Boyhood, Ellar Coltrane*

⁶⁷ Arquette, *DP/30: Boyhood, Ethan Hawke & Patricia Arquette*

⁶⁸ Hawke, *Boyhood Official Featurette*

Sartre⁶⁹. El toque existencialista lo pone Richard: "*What else is life but a series of decisions? You know, some are good and some are bad*"⁷⁰.

Richard ya nos mostró su genialidad en la magistral e inolvidable trilogía *Before ...* Otra de mis películas favoritas es *The Newton Boys* (1998), una atractiva comedia "a la *The Sting*" (basada en una historia real de los años 20) sobre 4 hermanos que se hicieron famosos robando bancos (la música es sensacional y el *cast* -con el carismático Matthew McConaughey, Ethan y Skeet Ulrich-, buenísimo). Otra de sus grandes películas es *Tape* (2001), una película experimental con tan sólo tres actores (Ethan, la semi-diosa Uma Thurman -ex-mujer de Ethan- y Robert Sean Leonard - el inolvidable joven poeta que se suicida en *Dead Poets Society*, 1989-) y tan sólo un escenario (la habitación de un hotel). Su mayor crítica es *Fast Food Nation* (2006), una película un tanto dura y repugnante que me hizo dejar de comer carne de inmediato.

Boyhood se presenta como una de las películas más brillantes, emotivas y humanas de la historia del cine. Richard la define como "*one story, made up of a lot of little pieces*"⁷¹. Si arrasa en los Oscars, los "intelectuales europeos" podremos decir que los "estúpidos norteamericanos" han madurado un poquillo.

Lo mejor: la originalidad, el director y los actores.

Lo peor: que dure casi 3 horas, en lugar de 6.

Antonia Tejada Barros, Madrid, 19 de noviembre de 2014

Publicado en el Blog de Antonia Tejada el 19 de noviembre de 2014:

<https://antoniatejada.wordpress.com>

LINKS

Boyhood Official Featurette - Twelve Years (2014) (2'35"):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOjd_7aXRRk

⁶⁹ "*L'homme est libre, l'homme est liberté*", *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, p. 39

⁷⁰ Linklater, *DP/30: Boyhood*, Richard Linklater

⁷¹ Linklater, *Boyhood Official Featurette*

DP/30: Boyhood, Richard Linklater (32'41"):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1URMcqEgQE>

DP/30: Boyhood, Ethan Hawke & Patricia Arquette (31'36"):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4N0ZvcsKZQ>

DP/30: Boyhood, Ellar Coltrane (28'30"):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQXhUSkEdk0&spfreload=1>

Boyhood Interview with Ethan Hawke, Richard Linklater, Ellar Coltrane & Patricia Arquette (7'06"): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gS8tPO0dlc4>



HCH 2 / January 2015

Boyhood: a masterpiece, by Antonia Tejada Barros

The day *Boyhood* arrived in Spain, I ran to the Cinemas Renoir Retiro, here in Madrid. I had not read anything about the movie and didn't even see the trailer. When it comes to my favorite directors (Woody Allen, Richard Linklater and Radu Mihaileanu) I abstain myself from knowing any detail about their new movies. This way I'm able to go fresh to the premiere, absorb their art and let it influence me, without *a priori* distortions.

I was blown away by *Boyhood*. Not only because of the innovation and originality of the movie ("*Boyhood is a complete original*", comments the exquisite Ethan Hawke, "*It's the first movie I've ever done that is truly not like another movie*"⁷²), but for its content, so human and real. The experiment of Richard Linklater (to shoot during 12 years a boy's life) is a risky and audacious project, totally new in cinema history: "*[Richard] wanted to shoot over a period of 12 years, collecting moments ... building a whole imaginative life of a young person and to grow up with them. Personally, I couldn't believe it hadn't been done already, it seemed like such a great idea*"⁷³. According to Richard, the movie was only possible thanks to the loyalty, love and dedication of all the actors and producers: "*It was so much to ask of everyone; for Ellar to mature on camera in one film ...*"⁷⁴.

Ethan comments that the project was done without contracts, and that Richard (whom Ethan refers to as "my best friend") asked him to promise him that, in case Richard would die, Ethan would finish the movie. The result: spectacular.

⁷² Hawke, *Boyhood Official Featurette*

⁷³ Hawke, *Boyhood Interview with Ethan Hawke, Richard Linklater, Ellar Coltrane & Patricia Arquette*

⁷⁴ Linklater, *Boyhood Official Featurette*

Boyhood is not only the life of a boy, but 12 years of all the lives that orbit around this boy: his sister, his mother and his father, whom grow, evolve, mature and age next to him: "at some point you are not longer growing up, you are aging, but no one can pinpoint that moment exactly"⁷⁵.

Which movies manage to touch our guts? Aren't they those who make us feel, in some sense, identified? In *Boyhood*, the younger ones will feel identified with the characters of Mason (Ellar Coltrane) and Samantha (Lorelei Linklater), especially in their adolescence, while those whom are not so young will feel identified with the characters of the parents (Patricia Arquette and Ethan Hawke). The movie reflects daily situations, wonderful and painful moments that we all have felt or lived in our small and individual story. Richard says: "There is something so normal in a certain way about Mason's story that I really always felt that it would be about moments everyone shares"⁷⁶.

The cast of the movie is sensational. Ethan (whom captivated a lot of women with the characters of Troy in *Reality Bites* (1994) and of Jesse in *Before Sunrise* (1995), *Before Sunset* (2004) and *Before Midnight* (2013), appears brilliant, elegant, sexy, interesting and super cute in his role of an irresponsible and cool father. Patricia does an extraordinary performance, with which a lot of women of my generation with kids (and older than me) will feel identified (although our story, especially our love story, has been very different). According to Ethan, it is rare to see "real women" on the screen, and Patricia personifies, above all, a real woman, with her frustrations, her hopes and her achievements. For Patricia, the most difficult thing was to finish the movie: "The hardest thing was when it ended. I wanted to continue shooting it for the rest of my life and I never wanted anyone to be allowed to see it"⁷⁷. Ellar (who had a very free and artistic education) starts with a fine performance and slowly, but surely, reveals to be one of the young promises of the moment. Lorelei (the director's daughter) shows since very young her talent as an actress. And who does an absolutely brilliant performance is Marco Perella, in his role of a

⁷⁵ Linklater, *Boyhood Official Featurette*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Arquette, *Boyhood Official Featurette*

professor and alcoholic, severe yet dedicated (although a bit psycho) father, who provokes hatred, compassion and repulsion.

Ethan and Patricia comment that they never got any script. According to Ellar, Richard had a very clear idea of the movie in his head, but the script was not written, not at all: "*A lot of times we would write the dialog the day before we shot*"⁷⁸. The actors never had to learn a script by heart, the dialog was being built up among the entire cast. Richard would advance the themes of each coming year so that the cast could think about what they were going to shoot.

The 12 years of the life of Mason are also a blueprint of some of the crucial facts of American history (under the democrat and critic prism of Richard and Ethan, both Texans and strong critics of their country): the Iraq war, the lies of Bush and Obama's election. The scene of the yard signs of Obama and McCain is genius and comic. Everyone who is aware of the American idiosyncrasy will enjoy it with a chuckle or a laugh.

Richard shows, as always, his great vision for life, love, human relations and the pass of time. His vision is artistic and real at the same time. According to Patricia, *Boyhood* is a movie about humanism, mistakes, learning, trying and loving: "*I think this movie is about humanism, flaws, making mistakes, learning as you go along, trying, wanting for love, giving love to each other ...*"⁷⁹.

Isn't life mysterious and beautiful, without the necessity of false ornaments? Ethan asserts: "*Life is beautiful and interesting enough as it is and you don't need to manufacture a lot of falsehood*"⁸⁰. The movie shows the choices of the characters, without judging them and without morals. Don't we all choose, every day of our life? Man is freedom, as Sartre well said⁸¹. The existentialist touch is

⁷⁸ Coltrane, *DP/30: Boyhood*, Ellar Coltrane

⁷⁹ Arquette, *DP/30: Boyhood*, Ethan Hawke & Patricia Arquette

⁸⁰ Hawke, *Boyhood Official Featurette*

⁸¹ "*L'homme est libre, l'homme est liberté*", *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, p. 39

given by Richard: "*What else is life but a series of decisions? You know, some are good and some are bad*"⁸².

Richard already showed us his geniality in his masterful and unforgettable trilogy *Before ...* And then there's another favorite of mine: *The Newton Boys* (1998), an attractive comedy "*alla The Sting*" (based on a true story from the last century's 20s) about 4 brothers that become famous bank robbers (the music is sensational and the cast –with the charismatic Matthew McConaughey, Ethan and Skeet Ulrich– is really good). Another of his great movies is *Tape* (2001), an experimental movie with only three actors (Ethan, the half goddess Uma Thurman –ex-wife of Ethan– and Robert Sean Leonard –the unforgettable young poet that commits suicide in *Dead Poets Society*, 1989–) and only one scenario (a hotel room). Richard's biggest critic is expressed in *Fast Food Nation* (2006), a strong and, in many ways, disgusting movie that made me quit eating meat immediately.

Boyhood arises as one of the most brilliant, emotive and human movies in cinema history. Richard defines it like "*one story, made up of a lot of little pieces*"⁸³. If *Boyhood* conquers this year's Oscars, the "European intellectuals" will be able to say that the "stupid Americans" have matured a bit.

The best: the originality, the director and the actors.

The worst: that it lasts almost 3 hours, in stead of 6.

Antonia Tejeda Barros, Madrid, January 2, 2015

LINKS

Boyhood Official Featurette - Twelve Years (2014) (2'35"):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOjd_7aXRRk

⁸² Linklater, *DP/30: Boyhood, Richard Linklater*

⁸³ Linklater, *Boyhood Official Featurette*

DP/30: Boyhood, Richard Linklater (32'41"):
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4N0ZvcsKZQ>

DP/30: Boyhood, Ellar Coltrane (28'30"):
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Boyhood Interview with Ethan Hawke, Richard Linklater, Ellar Coltrane & Patricia Arquette (7'06"): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gS8tPO0dlc4>



HCH 2 / January 2015

3 Essentials in the Kitchen, by Eyal Streett

Welcome back!

So... the holidays are over more or less and we've had a great time, stress included. But what's one of the most important lessons we've learned if not that cooking is extremely gratifying in addition to being lots of fun BUT it takes a long time?

Here I am to suggest a few more ways for you to consume your time in the kitchen. Well, actually, the idea of these 3 essentials is that once you've got them prepared and ready inside your refrigerator you'll be able to make many delicious meals without working hard at all. But to get there you'll have a bit of work to do first and most of you will probably need to pass at your local spice shop before preparing these recipes. So, what I'm proposing is 3 essentials with their recipes and then I'll add a few examples of great recipes using these essentials.

Ghee

Ghee, samna or clarified butter is very easy to make. So even if you live in Austria and can get it in your local supermarket why not make it at home? Keeps you in control of what you're actually eating. Lately I've been using ghee for many recipes (see HCH #1). Apparently it's a very healthy way to cook, even though it isn't suitable for vegans -sorry. A short internet search will show you all of those great benefits ghee has, but you shouldn't believe everything you read on the net...

Ingredients

Unsalted butter (250 grams or more)
6-8 seeds fenugreek (per 250 grams of butter)

Preparation

1. Set fire to low.
2. Use a saucepan to heat butter and fenugreek.
3. After a few minutes foam will start forming. Gently get rid of this foam using a spoon. Wait a bit and you'll notice more foam (we don't want any of that foam, we only want the clear liquid).
4. Keep it on the fire for at least 20 minutes, get rid of all of the foam (thicker and thinner). Gently pour the liquid into a glass jar, but don't let any non-clear

elements enter in the jar (that includes the fenugreek and other heavier parts of the butter that will be on the bottom. We don't want any of that).

5. Let it cool down and harden; it will turn from clear to white (after about 2 hours). Keep it in your refrigerator and as long as it isn't exposed to sunlight it will keep good for a very long time.

Curry Paste

Very useful in many Indian recipes, but it could also help us add intense curry-like flavors to our dishes without having to actually make those curries. Some recipes add chili powder or dried chili peppers to their curry paste. I don't because I prefer to add those while cooking.

Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp. cumin seeds
- 4 Tbsp. coriander seeds
- 1 Tbsp. fennel seeds
- 1 Tbsp. fenugreek seeds
- 1 Tbsp. dry curry leaves
- 3 tsp. turmeric powder
- 5 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
- 3 Tbsp. water
- 8 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 3 Tbsp. vegetable oil (for adding later)

Preparation

1. Grind the cumin, coriander, fennel, fenugreek and curry leaves using a spice grinder or a mortar. Go on until you get a nice blend (the coriander shells don't grind as well with the mortar, but that's just fine).
2. Move the spice blend to a bowl and add the turmeric, vinegar and water. Mix well.
3. Heat the oil (8 Tbsp.) in a heavy bottom pan on a medium-low fire. Add the mixture and stir often. Do this for 12–15 minutes until the water evaporates and you get a paste.
4. Let it cool down and store in a glass jar.
5. Heat the remaining oil and when it's hot pour it on top of the curry paste, sealing the paste.
6. Once it all cooled down keep it in the refrigerator. Won't spoil easily.



Before and after grinding (smashing) the spices. Photos by Eyal Streett.



The curry paste on the fire. Photo by Eyal Streett.

Green Skhug

Skhug or schug is a great spicy sauce. It comes in different forms but my favorite is the green one. By the way, I've had as much difficulty in deciding how to spell it as you will in deciding how to pronounce it. This is a full-on garlic recipe, BUT if you prefer you could put less or no garlic. The result, of course, isn't the same since garlic in big quantities is actually quite spicy, but some of us simply can't handle garlic. Then there's the coriander. If you really can't do that you could substitute it with parsley. It ain't the same but it also kind of works. Anyway, if you're into spicy stuff, this is for you - you'll love it on anything (but it might grow some hair on your chest).

Ingredients

- 1 garlic head, peeled (told you...)
- 1/2 - 1 cup red chili peppers
- 2 handfuls of coriander (leaves and stems)
- 1 Tbsp. fine salt
- 1 lemon
- 10 green cardamom pods (we only want the seeds. Open the pods and keep the seeds)
- 10 cloves
- 1 Tbsp. black pepper
- 1 Tbsp. cumin seeds

Preparation

1. Grind the cardamom seeds, cloves, cumin, cloves and black pepper using a spice grinder or a mortar.
2. Process the garlic, chili peppers and coriander in a food processor or using a hand blender. Start with some garlic, then add some more, once you're done with the garlic add chili peppers and coriander to the blend (not all) and continue gradually until you added all coriander and chili peppers.
3. Add the spices and salt to the mix and blend in well.
Isn't that a great smell?
4. Add juice from half a lemon and mix it in by hand.
5. Put the skhug in 2 or 3 small jars. Add some lemon on top to seal the jar (use the other half of the lemon). Good news: this freezes without any problem so you could freeze at least half of it!



Skhug before and after.

Before photo by Yael Streett Tejeda, after photo by Itay Streett Tejeda.

Great! So there we are, we've got our 3 essentials. Here are a few examples of what we actually could do with them.

Chicken, Curry Paste and Rice Noodles

Here's an example for a main course gone much quicker thanks to our curry paste.

Ingredients

4 thin chicken fillets cut into strips
1.5 Tbsp. ghee
1 Tbsp. curry paste
1 large red onion
1 handful green beans
1 red chili pepper cut in thin slices
1 tsp. salt
1/2 lemon (juice)
200 grams thin rice noodles
A bit of parsley leaves, chopped

Preparation

1. Put the chicken strips in a large bowl. Add the salt and curry paste. Mix well until the curry paste is all over the strips. Add a bit more curry paste if you haven't managed to spread it all over the chicken.
2. Boil water in a large pot. Meanwhile, cut the onion into 12 and the green beans in units 3 cm. long.
3. Warm the ghee in a pan (high flame) and once it's hot add the onion. 2 minutes later add the chicken strips.
4. Sauté for a couple of minutes.
5. By now your water has boiled or is at least hot enough. Turn off the flame (for the water) and add the noodles. Let them soak for 3 minutes.
6. While the noodles are soaking add the green beans to the chicken. 2 minutes later add the lemon juice. Move everything around.
7. Drain the noodles and add them to the pan. Mix together and keep on fire for 1–2 minutes.
8. Serve to plates. Add parsley and chili.
9. Enjoy your meal!



The marinated chicken and the final result. Photos by Eyal Streett.

Fried Aubergines in a Sweet Tahini Sauce

This is a great starter or a nice accompaniment to have on the table.

Ingredients

1 large aubergine cut into thin slices (thickness: 1 cm.)

Coarse salt

4 tsp. curry paste

Olive oil.

Paper towels

For sweet tahini sauce:

2 Tbsp. tahini

1/3 tsp. fine salt

1 tangerine (juice)

1 or 2 squeezes of lemon juice

A bit of water

Preparation

1. Spread coarse salt on a large plate or tray. Place aubergine slices on salt. Add more coarse salt on top of slices. Let aside for at least 30 minutes.

2. Prepare the tahini sauce: Put tahini in a bowl. Add a bit of the tangerine juice. Mix well with a fork. Add some more juice and mix. Continue gradually. The tahini will slowly transform and become grainy. At this point add a bit more liquid (if the juice is finished add water). Keep on mixing with the fork. The tahini will now transform into a creamy substance. For this sauce we're looking for quite a liquid texture so you'll probably need to add a bit more water (slowly). Once you've got the right texture add 2 squeezes of lemon juice and the salt.

3. After at least 30 minutes have passed, clean and dry the aubergine slices with paper towels. The coarse salt releases liquids from the aubergine. This makes the frying easier and the result tastier. Be sure to wipe off the slices well, you want to avoid them being too salty.

4. Heat oil in a pan (medium-high). You want to have a 1 cm. layer of oil in the pan.

5. Spread the curry paste on one side of all of the aubergine slices.

6. Place aubergines in the hot oil with the curry paste face up. Put as many slices as fit in your pan. Fry for 2 minutes on one side, then turn over for another one and a half minutes on the other side. Then back to the first side for 30 seconds and the other side for another 30 seconds. The curry paste will fall off the slices into the oil, but that's not a problem.

7. Take slices out of oil and place on paper towels.

8. Repeat phases 6 & 7 until you fried all slices.

9. Once your slices are dry from oil place them on a plate or tray and add some of the tahini sauce on top.

10. Serve with the rest of the tahini sauce on the side.



The aubergines with the tahini sauce. Photo by Eyal Streett.

Tuna / Smoked Salmon Sandwich With a Bite

No time to cook lunch? Why not try this?

Ingredients

1 slice good bread
Some tuna or smoked salmon
1 hard-boiled egg
Skhug
Lettuce or some other leaf

Preparation

Spread a thin layer of Skhug on your bread. Add all other ingredients to make your sandwich. It's just the same as you always make it, only it has this wonderful bite to it. Note: after eating, don't forget to brush your teeth for at least 4 minutes and pop a few mints in your mouth.

Easy Hors d'oeuvre

Serve these with good friends who don't feel uncomfortable around you.

Ingredients

Crackers
Anchovies
Skhug
Pitted olives
Parsley

Preparation

Kind of obvious, isn't it? In this order: cracker, skhug, anchovy, leaf of parsley, olive. Important: know your skhug and know yourself. In other words, you got to know how spicy your sauce is and how much of it you can tolerate while still enjoying your food.

That's all for this number. Please let me know what you thought about these recipes.

Until next time, keep on cooking!

Eyal Streett, Madrid, 31 of December 2014