

WAKE UP!

Proposals for a Decentred Humanism



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Publisher: CRISTIANISME I JUSTÍCIA - Roger de Llúria 13 - 08010 Barcelona

+34 93 317 23 38 - info@fespinal.com - www.cristianismeijusticia.net

Printed by: Ediciones Rondas S.L. - Legal deposit: B 15359-2019

ISBN: 978-84-9730-443-6 - ISSN: 2014-6566 - ISSN (virtual edition): 2014-6574

Editor: Santi Torres i Rocaginé - Translated by Gerarda Walsh

Cover drawing: Roger Torres - Layout: Pilar Rubio Tugas

Printed on recycled paper - May 2019

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On June 30th and July 1st 2017, Day II of a Discussion on Faith and Justice was held, with the aim of maintaining a dialogue between faith and the struggle for a fairer world. The meeting, entitled “Facing the Century of the Great Test,” took place in Barcelona, and 113 people took part: members from our group, as well as participants from Madrid, Valencia, Bilbao, Seville and Saragossa. The inaugural speech was given by Jorge Riechmann and was supported by the contributions of José Ignacio González Faus and Carmen Magallón. The booklet that you are reading now is the result of this discussion. As Jorge Riechmann points out, we began the 21st century as the century of the Great Test: “We dreamed of a different course for civilisation, which would have sought other goals and fostered other values: welcoming the foreigner, taking care of the weak, making peace with nature, accepting ourselves as the vulnerable mortal beings we are.”

These great tests, as we stated in our more programmatic booklet, no. 200, emerge at every new frontier that humanity approaches. On this second day, we wanted to tackle some of these new challenges of justice, knowing that we find ourselves at a critical moment in time. In our response, and in our ability to build alternative paths in the face of this century’s Great Test, we will either be looking at a future dominated by inequalities, authoritarianism and the destruction of nature, or on the other hand, a future pointing towards solidarity, rights, inclusion and participation. It’s time to wake up.

ECOHUMANISM IN THE CENTURY OF THE GREAT TEST

Jorge Riechmann

I would like to begin this discussion by looking at an activity which, in comparison with the colossal problems faced by the world today –global warming, the acidification of the oceans, deforestation, defaunation, the destruction of fertile soil, flooding in coastal regions, the scarcity of clean water, the disruption of global biogeochemical cycles, the decrease in energy resources, depleted mineral resources in the Earth's crust, etc.– will seem more like a childish pastime: making piles of stones.

This issue is, as the newspaper *La Vanguardia* explained on May 26th 2017, “an apparently innocent trend which is ruining the coastal ecosystems of the Balearics and the Canary Islands, and it won’t need much encouragement before it arrives at the rocky beaches of the Spanish Peninsula: [...] piling up small stones in a pyramid shape, as a way of saying *so-and-so was here*, just as in the eighties when it was common to leave one’s mark with graffiti, or carve one’s name with a penknife into a tree.”¹

Let’s have a closer look: the hobby of creating piles of stones is nothing

new. The Inuit, in the Arctic regions, erect *inuksuit*, anthropomorphic piles of stone slabs which serve as navigational landmarks. Juan Pedro Chuet-Missé reminds us that in Asia, Buddhist and Taoist cultures often make piles of rocks as a way of representing inner balance. Also, the Native American cultures of North and South America often make similar mounds at sacred sites; in Ireland and Scotland, stone *cairns* can still be seen from the Celtic tradition; and several more examples exist.

Mass tourism is a whole other story, however. In the Balearic Islands, these heaps of stones are becoming more and

more numerous along the rocky coast, particularly around the Cap de Ses Salines, Punta de N'Amer and Cala Mesquida in Mallorca; S'Espalmador and Formentera; or Cala Binimella in Menorca, among other areas. As Toni Muñoz explained, a biologist and spokesperson for the ecological group GOB, these piles of stones "are having a very clear impact on the biodiversity of the coast," since by moving stones, roots of plants are left exposed, as well as habitats of invertebrates, mostly insects and molluscs, which disrupts a delicate environment, "in which native plant species unique to these islands are found."²

Why build pyramids?³

I believe that here we have two elements that are worthy of reflection. The first issue is the question of scale: an innocent practice carried out by a few people becomes destructive when, in larger societies, the tendency towards imitation which we human beings have, leads to the practice being enthusiastically copied on a large scale. Today on the coasts of Ibiza, Mallorca, the Teide National Park or on the beaches of Tenerife, among many other places, thousands of tourists are erecting their own mounds, and taking their selfies in order to say that "I was here," and they are leaving an altered ecosystem behind. It prevents plants from growing and disrupts the native fauna. "Seven or eight years ago we saw the first mounds, and now they're everywhere," said Jaume Adrover, spokesperson for the ecological organisation Terraferida, in Mallorca.⁴

The second issue –which is much more complex– is about the need to record the fact that "I was here." Why specifically choose to build a pyramid of stones, given that these handmade pyramids associated with mass tourism were originally built by the Pharaohs of Ancient Egypt? Here we find a basic motive for human behaviour: the fear of death, (and our difficulty in accepting our own mortality in a constructive way). How we deal with death (and the concept that we are finite and mortal), ends up defining to a very large extent, how we live our lives, both individually and collectively. Gabriel Albiac raises this issue in very raw terms: "How the hell does a bug that is deadly and knows it, manage not to exterminate everything around him"⁵... Or as Elias Canetti argued on death: "The awful thing is not that animals devour each other, because, what do they *know* about death! The awful thing is that people, who *know* what death is, carry on killing each other –that is awful."⁶

The anthropologist Ernest Becker (in his seminal work of 1973 "*The Denial of Death*"), supported the idea that human activity is motivated to a large extent by subconscious forces working to deny and transcend our mortality. "We build character and culture in order to shield ourselves from the devastating awareness of our underlying helplessness and terror of our inevitable death," observed Becker. This is also the opinion of Zygmunt Bauman in *Mortality, Immortality and Other Life Strategies*.⁷

How do we respond to the absolutely basic realisation of human vulnerability and mortality? We could

do it –and unfortunately we have too many examples available to us– by monopolising resources and trying to dominate and exploit others: for example, in the colonial conquests and the enslavement of human beings. “Women, nature and exploited peoples and countries, are all colonies of the White Man. Without their colonisation, that is, subordination for the purpose of predatory appropriation (exploitation), the famous Western civilization would not exist, nor its paradigm of progress.”⁸ However, we could also respond with compassion, solidarity, respect, courage and responsibility. It is this second type of response which is vital for us to promote at every opportunity.

How should we confront death?

It is worth dwelling on this issue for a while. How should we confront death? There are certainly other alternatives to killing others, (or making piles of rocks in order to symbolically allow us to live on, particularly when it is at the expense of the plant and animal life that thrives along the islands’ coasts). We could consider ourselves as just one more person among “ten thousand people” (as Chinese traditions would point out), from a perspective of awareness of our interdependence and “ecodependence.” In this way, we would lessen our fear of death by taking away the focus on self, and cultivating our identity within the context of the flourishing life of the biosphere on the third planet of the solar system, and the human communities that inhabit it. Paco Puche highlighted

this issue in an interview, and using a *Gaian* perspective of the world (relating to Gaia or Gea, Mother Earth), he said,

“what characterises us is that we are interwoven with our ecosystems. This interlinked world, in which the individual is no more than a detail in this unfathomable density, points to the fact that we are all intertwined within a network of relationships rather than simply being part of linear ones. We are not simply standing on the shoulders of giants, but instead are embraced by them. In this vision of the world, nothing is wasted, nothing dies forever, since we bring through our lives something of the past, and we contribute to building the future... and in our social human world, we keep the pleasant memories of those we can remember and the dreams of those that remain alive. At any rate, insignificance and immaterialism should be our guides to live good, fulfilled lives. We are instead living very individualistic lives. The sacred for me, is realising that others’ lives are as important as my own. The most relevant religion or re-ligion to this *Gaian* profession of faith is immaterial pantheism.”⁹

From values like this, from a Gaia-centred worldview, we deal with our fear of death, not by building pyramids of rocks that destroy the habitats of the small creatures that populate the Balearic and Canary Islands, but instead by actually preserving these habitats, and as far as we are capable,

by making them even more capable of harbouring life. We will find our own identity not through the imaginary symbolic domination found through a pile of rocks, but rather through the lives of these small living beings: lizards, crabs, birds, insects and plants.

Worldviews (or cultural paradigms)

As we have seen then, an apparently banal practice has allowed us to look at deep layers of the human condition: those which are linked to our basic values, our fundamental beliefs and our worldviews. And it could be said that, if we really want to face up to the socio-ecological crisis, we should start here. An anecdote told by Ferran Puig Vilar comes to mind: when the meetings of the IPCC would begin (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), there was an old Japanese scientist in the group, who pointed out the following at one of the meetings:

“As scientists, we have realised that there is a problem with global emissions, but we cannot resolve it. Since Carbon Dioxide is produced by engines, we will have to call engineers. These, in their turn, will say that the technology necessary to solve the problem exists, but it costs money, so they will call in the economists. The economists will make their calculations and say that, in order to manage it, we’ll have to change our current social model based around transport and wasting energy... so they will call in the sociologists. These, in their

turn, will say that it’s a problem relating to people’s values which they are unable to resolve, so they will go to the philosophers, so that they can tell us which values we should be focusing on and give our attention to.”¹⁰

And we could even add the need to consult theologians if we’re going to be thorough about this.

Albert Schweitzer was right when he insisted, a century ago, on the huge importance of people’s worldviews¹¹ or “new paradigms.” He also pointed out the importance of ecofeminism (Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies¹², Yayo Herrero), and José Manuel Naredo.¹³ Or John Michael Greer, who used the well-known work of Thomas Kuhn on paradigm shifts. Our basic beliefs, interlinked with our basic values, form our potential actions. Our behaviour in the world depends on how we interpret it. “If we interpret the universe incorrectly, we will behave incorrectly. How do we know if we have behaved incorrectly? From the life which results from our actions; the definitive proof of the quality of our worldview is the type of life which results from it.”¹⁴

An alternative modernity

Erasmus, in his work *In Praise of Folly*, a humanist work in which irony reaches impossible levels, reproaches those “...As therefore among men they are least happy that study wisdom, as being in this twice fools, that when they are born men, they should yet so far forget their condition as to affect the life of gods; and after the example

of the giants, with their philosophical gimcracks make a war upon nature: so they on the other side seem as little miserable as is possible who come nearest to beasts and never attempt anything beyond man.” Let’s leave to one side for the moment the tone in which the entire work is written and ask ourselves seriously: if we were to accept our human mortality and give up the notion of domination, which is so often manifested through a “war against Nature,” armed with the weapons of science and technology, would this not represent a more enlightened path to follow? This is how the Erasmist model would have looked at the dawn of modernity, the model of an almost unborn alternative version of modernity, which we can also find in the writings of Bartolomé de las Casas,¹⁵ or in those of Michel de Montaigne, and which continues to be very relevant in the twenty-first century.

We will now take a look at the Renaissance and Baroque period in France, one of the periods from which modernity originated. René Descartes emphasised the domination of Nature in his work: if we recall the famous Part VI of the *Discourse on Method*, in which he urges us to become “masters and possessors of Nature.” As for de Montaigne we would find a self-limiting and potentially “ecosophic” form of humanism. This would be the minority opinion in this range of ideas: a form of modernity that is neither Promethean, Faustian, and which is in favour of self-restraint. Montaigne would not be a bad patron saint for this second model of modernity: it is undoubtedly modern, but it sketches out an alternative understanding of modernity.

Thus rejecting the notion that all is finite, and pursuing a path of domination is how we could sum up the loss of European and North American modernity from the sixteenth century onwards. Boaventura de Sousa Santos explained this well, particularly from the time of Europe’s expansion at the end of the fifteenth century,

...when the natural world came to be considered by the Europeans as a natural resource which was devoid of any intrinsic value, and was therefore available to be exploited without limits and conditions. This notion, which was new in Europe, and which was not practised in any other culture in the world, gradually became the dominant way in which capitalism, colonialism and the notion of patriarchy (patriarchy being set up by the other two elements), was imposed in every part of the world considered as modern. This system of dominance became so far-reaching that it formed the basis of the modern, contemporary era, and became synonymous with the notion of progress.¹⁶

Let us imagine hypothetically, that civilisation had taken a different course, that it had sought out other aims and fostered other values: welcoming the stranger, caring for the weak, living in harmony with Nature, accepting ourselves as the vulnerable, mortal beings we are. The model that we need is not only that of Newton, Voltaire and Kant; this would also lead us to failure, but rather we need some balance with the self-critical examples of Goya and Leopardi.

A Model that is not Eurocentric

We would also need an Enlightenment that would not be solely Eurocentric, but which would instead be “decentred,” (just as we are discussing moving away from self-centred humanism). We would always need to keep in mind that we should speak of Enlightenments, in the plural. Amartya Sen alluded more than once to those non-Western thinkers (prior to the modern era), who also underlined the “search for reason” when faced with the “dependence on tradition.” Neither a qualitative understanding of progress (acceptance of others, finding peaceful resolutions to conflicts, ensuring a good quality of life for all), nor the other ideals illustrated are a preserve of Western societies.

We need to liberate the concept of *enlightenment* from the historiographical barriers that keep it within the geopolitical limitations of the Eurocentric Age of Enlightenment. It is necessary to redefine the Enlightenment, going beyond the linguistics of instrumental reason, and beyond its grammatical shortcomings. It is worth uncovering the mythological and mystical roots of the *Aufklärung*, similar to the cult of the sun in the Vedas, or the Buddhist and Taoist concept of spiritual enlightenment, along with the Islamic mysticism around light and Islamic philosophies on reason.¹⁷

It should be stated clearly: an Enlightenment which is only Western and Christian –or post-Christian– is of no use! And just as Eduardo Subi-

rats pointed out, an important role for us – in Europe and Spain– was played by Ibn Rushd/Averroes in seventeenth century Cordova, who we can rightly consider to be a founder of the tradition which later became identified as Western.¹⁸

Humanism that goes beyond a narcissistic understanding of our species

Humanism can be confused with the self-deification of a lost humanity that refuses to accept its mortality. And those of us who support the notion of a crippled, incomplete, flawed humanity, are often seen as the wailing prophets who have spent too much time in the desert.

However, a self-deifying humanism which is common in modern Europe, and has been since the Renaissance, is a sign that we are lost. Today, our unbridled technology is accelerating down this runaway, with the illusion of leaving behind our broken humanity and creating a better god. What we should be promoting instead, is the more humble *humanism of orphanhood*... In this era of global warming, the energy crisis, and the environmental holocaust which fossil capitalism has set in motion, we need –Roy Scranton tells us– a new humanism, “... a new conceptual understanding of reality, and a new relationship with the deep polyglot traditions of human culture.”¹⁹ We need new ways of thinking about our collective existence, more insightful and accurate questions, new visions of who we are, this “us” on the third planet of the solar system: *Homo*

sapiens in the first century of the third millennium, which we can call the Century of the Great Test.

However, *humanism* does not simply point towards a solution: it is also a word which is part of the problem. As with almost everything, the human being is ambiguous. During the last five centuries, that historical period which we usually call modernity, humanism –with its basic belief in the centrality and absolute sovereign value of the human being– has not only encouraged our efforts at emancipation: it has also boosted our belief that we are something very special within (or rather above) nature, that we are superior to every other living thing, which can therefore become the object of our limitless manipulation and desire to dominate.

One of the very fundamental principles of humanism, the humanism of Renaissance Europe, was precisely a “a rediscovery of the continuity (*unity*) of human beings with Nature”²⁰; but on many occasions, it asserted itself by separating the human being from Nature. A decentred humanism, *the humanism of orphanhood*, is a humanism which is not anthropocentric, is not a type of humanism where human beings feel separate from or above nature, but rather encourages the sense of being very much within nature, and building a form of symbiosis with it.²¹

This is where proposals of critical thinkers come in –such as that of Rosi Braidotti– who affirms that posthumanism is anchored in emancipatory traditions, for example –anti-fascism, socialist humanism, feminism, decoloniality, environmentalism...–. Going beyond these linguistic tongue-twist-

ers (“I define posthumanism as a phenomenon of convergence between anti-humanism [like that of Foucault and Deleuze] and post anthropocentrism”)²², what is important for me from these positions is : 1) their laudable assertion that humanity should open itself up to the natural sciences (and vice versa)²³; 2) their valuable criticism of anthropocentrism; 3) their rejection of abstract universalism, while at the same time proposing a practice whereby common values can, constructively and through dialogue, be rebuilt, and 4) their defence of non-Eurocentric viewpoints.²⁴

However, if we accept these contributions, are we then obliged to do away with what we know as humanism? What I understand as humanism agrees with all of these points! And it seems to me that we would confuse people more if we had to now refer to “posthuman humanity,” as the philosopher and Director of the Humanities Department of the University of Utrecht suggests. All things taken into consideration... I would say that these type of viewpoints could be called non-Eurocentric and non-anthropocentric humanism, but if Braidotti prefers to call it posthumanism (even though we then have to add various adjectives in order to avoid confusion), I’m not going to have a dispute with her. For my part, I will continue to defend the fact that being against anthropocentrism does not mean being anti-humanist –as long as we are of course starting from a different notion of humanity than that which has prevailed in the era of Western European modernity: with elements of fossil capitalism, colonialism and patriarchalism (the “BBVA model”

which Amaia Pérez Orozco usually refers to as: white, bourgeois, male, adult...).

The humanism of orphanhood

In June 1974, at a symposium entitled “Beyond Alternative Technology” which took place in London, Henryk Skolimowski offered a reflection on ecological humanism which can serve us today as a starting point. He pointed out that “Western technology and all technics... are the tactics for living,” thus agreeing with Oswald Spengler, and at the end of his participation, he sketched out five defining features of this desired ecohumanism:

Ecological humanism is based on a new organisation of the world as a whole:

- seeing the *world* not as a place for pillaging and looting, or as an arena for gladiators, but rather as a *sanctuary* in which we dwell only temporarily, but to which we should dedicate the highest care;
- seeing the human being not as a consumer or a conqueror, but rather as a *curator* and *guardian*;
- viewing *knowledge* and awareness not as instruments with which to dominate nature, but instead as skills which refine the soul;
- looking on *value* not from the point of view of commercial worth, but instead in intrinsic terms, as a means which contributes to a deeper understanding

among human beings and a better cohesion between the human species and the rest of creation;

- and seeing all of the elements mentioned above as forming part of a new framework for living.²⁵

Seeing the world as a sanctuary; the human being as its guardian (and careful curator of nature, and as the big brother of all the creatures); awareness in relation to spiritual development and intrinsic values (beginning with a reverence for life as formulated by Albert Schweitzer)... I suggest that an ecological humanism, decentred, and not anthropocentric, as is being promoted in the modern world, could begin from these four or five basic points. I would supplement these with a respect for reality (which brings us back to a worldview or model with a scientific basis), the connection with life (a model or worldview of our symbiosis with nature), and rejecting the model of domination (an essential aspect of good ethics: at the end of this discussion we will return to this point through the writings of Jacques Ellul). And I would also suggest that this could include a theistic ecohumanism (such as that which is articulated in the “eco-encyclical” from 2015, *Laudato si'*), a form of religious evolutionary ecohumanism (similar to Teilhard de Chardin, as Skolimowski explains in his 1992 work *Living Philosophy*, recently translated into Spanish), and secular ecohumanism (which is the position I take myself).

The young Marx wrote: “For Hegel, the starting point is the State. In a democracy, the starting point is man. [...] Man is not made for laws, but

rather laws are made for man.”²⁶ Here, we need to move the focus to make it *decentred*, in order to be able to say: the starting point is the human being (whether male or female), who is eco-dependent on the biosphere. Has the time not come for ecosocialism and ecofeminism to finally start a productive dialogue with *deep ecology*?

This point needs to be reached in such a way that we have no longer have a self-deifying humanism, but rather a humanism of orphanhood. Not a humanism of separation from and domination of nature, but instead a form of humanism that is absorbed within nature, through a conscious re-integration of humanity within nature.

What right do we have to occupy and monopolise everything?

How many times in the last few decades, have we heard exhortations for changing our way of life? How many times have we heard that we need “a new model of development,” “a new plan for energy” or “a new economic model”? Undoubtedly, this has happened numerous, countless times.²⁷

That being said, supposing that it is clear that we need a new cultural model along the lines of what we have been discussing, “a decentred humanism,” how can we bring the world closer to change, from believing they *should* change to actually *making* those changes? It is not enough to outline our good intentions in order to come close to making them a reality. As Spanish, we have the classical example of our liberal Constitution of 1812 –la Pepa, as it is known– which established in Article 6 that “love for our country is one of the main obligations for every Spanish man and woman, as well as being fair

and good”; yet we cannot be confident that a mere constitutional mandate will be enough to ensure that citizens will be fair and good. What are our reasons for desiring this decentred humanism? I would like to briefly explore two sets of reasons. Firstly, it involves reasons relating to justice, and secondly, reasons of self-preservation.

Today, the special position which human beings hold as the dominant species of the biosphere is undeniable (this is why we talk about the Anthropocene), yet at the same time, ambiguous. Having dominion over nature does not mean the same as having control over it, nor does it imply possessing the ability to redesign the biosphere –as the dominant culture would like to– to suit “our own” interests, (the quotation marks are necessary, because perhaps as well as mentioning “Anthropocene,” we should also talk about “Capitalocene”). We are faced with the phenomenal *problem of the sorcerer’s apprentice*... Our own position is extremely fragile, if we compare it with that of other species that have more potential in the future to survive –bacteria, algae, fungus, insects...–. To a certain extent, bacteria dominates the Earth, but in another sense, we human beings undoubtedly dominate the planet.

Well then, let’s dominate it. We certainly dominate the other animals that live around us. For example, a calculation of the biomass (weight) of terrestrial mammals alive today gives the following result: humans + livestock and pets, 97.11%; wild animals, 2.89%.

As human beings, we represent 30.45%... more than ten times the weight of wild mammals.²⁸ Yet we

turn our backs from this reality, lost in our own cultural bubble, just as we turn our backs on so many other realities... When I have asked audiences in talks and debates to estimate the percentage that wild animals make of the total biomass, guesses range between 20% and 70%. That is how remote our perception of reality can be!

Today, there are around 900,000 African buffalos in the world... and some 1,500 million cows. 200,000 wolves... and more than 400 million domestic dogs. 50 million penguins... and 20,000 million hens.²⁹ It is right that we should therefore ask ourselves: why has one species assumed the right to treat all the other species in this way? How did we decide that we had the right to occupy and take over everything?

Domination actually makes us feel bad...

I am now going to look at the reasoning behind self-preservation. Jorge Wagensberg aphoristically suggests that it is good “to gain independence from uncertainty,” as far as material progress is concerned, (and he affirms that the driving force behind moral progress is compassion).³⁰ This is a good observation, but we should look at what it implies. “To gain independence from uncertainty” means dominating our environment, or at least, certain aspects of it. However, defining material progress in terms of increasing our domination of the environment could lead us to forget that we are interdependent and eco-dependent in a world that is made up of complex, changing processes,

and for this reason, excessive domination will ultimately be counterproductive: it will eventually work against the very people that are trying to dominate their environment.

Why is this? If we were dealing with a linear relationship, the give and take relationship would be a lot simpler; but since we are dealing with relationships that are not linear and in which feedback loops exist—as happens on a large scale in this world of complex, interlinked and changing processes—, taking more resources ends up making the situation worse. This goes against our linear method of thinking, but it is as real as life itself...³¹ There are several examples, particularly those that are seen as examples of technical progress in industrial societies: we only have to think of the use of fossil fuels, or organochlorinated pesticides such as DDT.

Having a mature understanding of life means, among other things, accepting that we cannot have all the good things we want together. This springs from a deep ontological foundation: that is, in more complex systems, when we maximize one variable, we typically reduce others.

The “ethics of non-power” of Jacques Ellul

I have placed my ethico-political proposal in the context of my idea of *self-restraint* for years, writing a “pentalogy of self-restraint.”³² I believe that the *ethics of non-power* of Jacques Ellul, which I only learned of much later (in 2016), has much in common with my proposal of self-restraint. “The no-

tion of limitless resources “is the denial of the very nature of humanity and culture.” And the very object to which the sacred refers is the limit [...] Against the unlimited omnipotence of Technology, against efficiency which has been established as a supreme value, Ellul promotes an ethics of non-power, as a limit which puts itself up against the universe of things and their predicament.”³³ The Colombian poet and storyteller William Ospina also argues along these lines:

For centuries, humanity has deceived itself in naive struggles for power [or domination], when the only reasonable thing to do would be, not to struggle for power, but rather to refute power or transform it into something

else. If these powerful entities [particularly exemplified in transnational corporations] are so great, it is because they have a customer base, on whom to impose norms, to give orders to, to flatter and to praise. Their greatness is no more than the extent of our submission to them, and it is perhaps even an error to struggle against them. In this day and age, it is becoming increasingly evident that the work which needs to begin against them, needs to begin within ourselves.³⁴

To have power but not to use it, to be able to dominate but to refuse to do so: that is the real proof of being human. In these difficult times that we are going through, this requires us to think in terms of *conversion*.

STANDING TOGETHER AGAINST BARBARITY

José I. González Faus

I would like to begin by celebrating and being grateful for the fact that a non-believer opened a day's discussion, which was organised by a group with Christianity in its name. Not only because Christianity implies a claim to universal fraternity, but rather because the timing and the theme of this particular discussion ("The Great Test"), seem to be telling us that we must save ourselves or we will all drown. From this point of realisation, we will then be able to dialogue and disagree on our paths, and on the reasons why we are trying to overcome this great test. It should however, remain clear that these differences do not divide us in the slightest on our common human objective.

Jorge made a few points that I would really like to hear from our current leftist secular leaders. It would perhaps bother and unsettle them to hear them said by someone who is not in the least bit right-wing.

Jorge's words seem to me to have two defining strands: one is the importance of worldviews. The society we live in doesn't provide any different understanding of the world other than a consumerist one ("man is created to consume," we would say if we

were parodying the old Catechism), and we are living in the age of "post-truth," when we all tend to react like old Pilate: dismissively asking "what is a worldview?" and then leaving, (or perhaps we would say that worldviews are borne from totalitarianism). For this reason, the viewpoint that acknowledges that we will not manage to overcome our current great challenge without a global perspective on reality, seems to me to be a very brave position to hold.

The other strand focuses on today's taboo subject of death. I will start my commentary here.

Sister Death?

Using Jorge's words, this issue brings to the fore the need not to avoid, but rather to "respond to the absolutely basic awareness of human vulnerability and mortality." Today this awareness is avoided by doing away with the idea of death, using the old sophism of Epicurus ("if I am, then Death is not, if Death is, then I am not: why should I fear that which can only exist when I do not?"). In this way, we ignore something which had already been taught in an old text of the New Testament: the fear of death (whether we are conscious of it or not, whether we acknowledge it or not), is at the root of much of our servitude (cf. Heb 2:15).

And this is not only found in religious texts like the Bible: from the Greco-Roman world, we have slogans like *carpe diem*, "let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die," or our *Gaudeamus igitur iuvenes dum sumus* (easy to sing when we see death as being a long way off, and yet chilling as time passes ever faster). The poet Horace believed that with his work, he had created "a monument more lasting than bronze," and that because of it, he would not wholly die (*non omnis moriar*). Yet of what use is this endurance in people's memory if you are not there to appreciate it?

We humbly discover this fear of death when we see people seeking ways to endure that are harmful to the planet: the need to leave an imprint of oneself, the "I was here," ... The stu-

pidity of making piles of rocks is the product of this fear, as the speaker noted, and is the final step, when people within a consumerist society don't know how to respond to this fear.

Yet it is this very negativity associated with acknowledging our own mortality that has brought us to a twisted and exaggerated level of consumerism: tomorrow we will die, so let us acknowledge today by spending our time as consumers, ("I buy, therefore I am," was the poignant slogan of an old advertisement on some stores in Barcelona). This is why I usually say that one way of working for justice today, as well as incorporating feminism and ecology..., would be to struggle against the outrage that is consumerism. If around two billion Christians united with other like-minded people, deciding to rally against the system, we could take it on. This is what Luther King once dreamed of.

As humans, we have a radical need for self-affirmation and death ruptures that notion. Why do we need life to be like this? Or rather: how does life succeed in presenting this claim of continuity to us? Even the Christian that believes in the resurrection needs to explore the question of whether this is not some form of deceit or illusion, created by themselves in order to satisfy this need to live forever.

In this context, the proposal of the speaker to become a part of the environment which lasts forever, will surely help towards caring for that environment. However, it of course gives rise to Sartre's question of whether man is nothing more than a "useless passion." And if this is so, I take up the words of Jorge again in order to note that when

the transcendent is denied, everything else becomes meaningless, (beginning with others). This is the question that the non-believer needs to ask themselves, just as the believer needs to ask themselves the question mentioned previously, as in, whether they are deliberately deceiving themselves or not.

The importance of worldviews becomes clear when we recognise ourselves in this way. Otherwise, the desire to live on will act on our subconscious, and lead us to do foolish things like making piles of stones or carvings on walls.

Why are we humans like this? Mortal and yet with pretensions that we are infinite, dependent, and yet with the false idea that we ourselves are absolute beings? Xavier Zubiri described man as being “relatively absolute.” Why we are like this, and how we can overcome this contradiction, is an issue which shows us the necessity of worldviews. And here the Biblical vision of Creation inserts itself into the narrative: man is a creature, and yet at the same time, more than a creature: “made in the image and likeness of God.” This element definitively marks man’s destiny. However, therein lies the risk also: because the temptation of being made in God’s likeness is to think oneself “equal to God.”

This is why, in spite of the differences between believers and non-believers, I can say as a Christian, Jorge’s proposal has value for both positions: “accepting our human mortality and renouncing our desire to dominate our environment.” This is equally valid for the Christian, as I will go on to explain. The difference is that the believer will do this confidently, while the non-be-

liever will resign themselves to it, but accept it responsibly.

Dominate the earth?

Against

If we agreed on the previous point, then we will also agree that “original sin,” which destroyed our history, means in Jorge’s words: “rejecting our own mortality and pursuing a path of domination.” Exactly, although this then manifests itself in two ways: accepting our mortality, and then renouncing the path of domination from the “secular” point of view. And accepting our mortality, and then *receiving* and *living out* the promise of being able to transcend our mortality, from the point of view of believers, (I hope the importance of the two highlighted verbs is clear).

We can also agree on Jorge’s statement about: “the human as being essentially crippled, incomplete, flawed,” and by not accepting this, humanism since the Renaissance has headed down a “lost path.” However: Christianity is not excluded from this narrative simply because it has always been “conservative,” since up to the present time, Christianity itself has played a part in this progress. “Self-restraint”: how Christian that phrase is! And yet how Christianity has been attacked over time for suggesting it, as if it was a disempowering, tyrannical, and inhuman proposal!... How Christian (and “Jesuanic”) is the proposal also for the “need for conversion”! Although we also need to discuss how this transformation of self should manifest itself, for both believers and non-believers.

I am not saying this in order to make an apologetic work in the wrong context, but rather with the aim of taking this “great test” seriously. The time we are living in is a vulgar one, in that the issue in question is treated simply as if we had lost a match or something like that. It should be a time in which we take these issues very seriously, but it seems we prefer not to realise the gravity of events around us, and using an image of Imanol Zubero, “we continue to dance happily on the deck of the *Titanic*,” (ignoring the fact that we are rapidly approaching an iceberg).

The threat is a serious one, and disaster lies ahead: in the last century, we lived for about thirty years, (from the end of the war until the seventies), through a period in which everything seemed to be going well, and which was sometimes called “the golden age of capitalism.” Today however, many sociologists state that it was not a golden age, but merely a type of stopover brought about not through responsible behaviour, but rather through the fear of communism. This is why, when communism fell in 1989, the true capitalist system emerged again. Renowned economists and anthropologists like Schumacher, Polanyi, etc., affirmed that fascism was a possible consequence of our system. From a more philosophical point of view, Adorno affirmed that Nazism was not an exception within our civilisation, but rather a possible consequence of it. Today, following on from these warnings, our planet is gravely ill.

Will we ask ourselves what has gone wrong in our model of civilisation? Criticism of the Enlightenment and the ideology of progress was

started by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in an incredibly famous book.³⁵ Today however, the ideology of “progressives” is presented as a type of plenary indulgence which can save you, and without which you will be condemned to hell. Nevertheless, criticism of this ideology has now come from people considered to be “leftists,” like Walter Benjamin or Simone Weil, (the former spoke of progress as a “return to barbarity”). One of the leaders of events in the May of ‘68, Bernard-Henri Levy, published a book called “*Barbarism with a Human Face*” shortly afterwards.³⁶ And the question which some people are now asking themselves, is whether we have already arrived at another form of barbarism, which does not even have a human face. This is why we need to join with Jorge and examine the critical question about our reason, about the Enlightenment, and about modernity in the sixteenth century Renaissance period... because there is perhaps a flaw in this understanding of Greek reason which defines us. That is why we need to overcome this Eurocentrism and seek another model of Enlightenment, which is not Eurocentric, just as Jorge suggests we should.

We need to at least clarify that not everything which has emerged through history is black and white: it may bring life, but that new life may be soiled and fraught with dangers. If we were to believe that it was wholly good, then over time, these grey areas would spoil everything good it possesses. And this is exactly what has happened with progress all because of our lack of self-restraint which, as Jorge points out, we need to start exercising immediately.

Everything that has been said, while being true, is only half true; and I usually say that sometimes half-truths are more dangerous than lies. While it is true, using theological language, that in history, there is such a thing as “original sin,” it is also true that there is redemption, and that, (as Irenaeus of Lyon wrote in the second century), “God created man so that he would grow and progress.” Prometheus, the greatest saint of the secular calendar according to Marx, cannot now change himself into the Biblical serpent that tempts man in order to bring about his downfall.

Here I would like to highlight two words used by Jorge: anthropocentrism and humanism, and his warning that “anti-anthropocentrism is not a form of anti-humanism...,” although for him, it means the humanism “of orphanhood.”

I believe that there are two forms of anthropocentrism, one being that man regards himself from a kind of Promethean perspective.

The other, which I will call “*acquired anthropocentrism*,” consists *not in being the owner, but rather the custodian*. This is an aspect that is very particular to the origins of the Christian tradition, and is already implied in the Biblical book of Wisdom: man owns nothing, but is instead the custodian of everything. This gives man a position of power, (or rather: responsibility), but at the same time, in complete humility.

An example of this ambivalence, in a Biblical context, is the verse in Genesis: “be fruitful and multiply,

and fill the earth and *subdue* it.” The highlighted verb is ambiguous: the Hebrew word *cabash* simply means “set foot on,” and it holds the same ambiguity in Spanish: to set foot on, can mean to inhabit, or to dwell..., but it can also mean to trample on. The Biblical phrase should be understood as “to make the earth habitable,” not to mistreat it; this is confirmed when the second chapter of Genesis talks about *caring* for the Garden. Thus: the original sin of our progress has been to view this task as a license for complete domination. The earth needed to be transformed, and this is the reason why man was given that responsibility. However, we changed this responsibility into permission to destroy our planet.

Therefore, I share the idea of Jorge Riechmann, that is “a form of humanism of man *within* nature, in symbiosis with it.” Within, and yet also *responsible* for it, as is indicated in the final phrase: “the world as a sanctuary, the human being as the guardian and careful custodian of nature and the older brother of all the creatures.” Perfect. And I would add that this seems to me to be the same as “acquired anthropocentrism,” which, from this perspective, seems to be the only way of integrating our need for “more.” Furthermore, we must never forget that the cry of the earth is also, before and above all, the “cry of the poor,” to use the famous title of Leonardo Boff. The system which is destroying the earth, is also the same system that is producing human victims.

Therefore, I also believe it is absolutely necessary for dialogue to take place between eco-humanists who

are believers, (rather than theists or religious), evolutionists, and secular eco-humanists, the group in which Riechmann identifies himself: eco-humanism means that man is not lord of creation, but instead is responsible for it.

Orphanhood?

Finally, I will focus on the word orphanhood. I believe that neither believers nor non-believers are orphans. In the case of the believer, there is an absent father; for the non-believer, there never was a father; so they never lost anyone. They only realised that Father Christmas wasn't real. Neither was this a case of feeling orphaned, but rather a case of no longer asking Father Christmas for what they wanted. Neither has the believer lost a father, even though at times He may seem absent, the believer knows that God is there. The word orphanhood is as expressive as it is debatable.

Why, if we are not orphans, do we feel as if we are? Why do we yearn for this father that never existed, and yet we interpret his non-existence as orphanhood?

I believe that this question is linked to the way in which the Christian West has experienced God. Allow me to quickly explain what I have just said. I wrote elsewhere, in a somewhat simplified but pedagogical way, that the experience of God on planet Earth has taken the following forms:

- In the East, God is understood by his Spirit as being *the deepest part of ourselves*, the best and most valuable part of interiority itself:

the Hindu mantra *at-man-Brahman* and the *Advaita* ("non duality"), fashionable in today's society, emphasise this belief.

- On the American continent, the experience of God seems to be more linked to the earth and *nature*. Not in the idolatrous sense of the sun god, but rather in the experiential sense of a mother, (*Pachamama* in quechua), to whom we owe our lives.
- In the area in which the Judeo-Christian tradition was born and is set, and which we call the West, we have the experience of God in *history*: as the Liberator who wants to build an exemplary "people." This experience does not cancel out the other two, since all emerged from the same desire to experience God. Not only does it not cancel them out, it actually needs them: since a study of history that does not spring from a profound interior mysticism will degenerate into Prometheanism, doomed to the type of failure that is set out by the writers of this booklet. Furthermore, any study of history that is detached from a respect for nature, degenerates into the destruction of the planet which we are witnessing today.

This does not cancel them out then, since as I said earlier, they are absolutely necessary. In fact, they complete them: because a search for inner truth which does not take place within the framework of history, can instead be used to justify the existence of the marginalised and other inequalities among human beings. Respect for nature, when it is not connected to history, can

instead become a type of conservatism that is closed to all progress.

God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, brings about an inner encounter with the Holy Spirit, and an encounter with the Father when faced with the mystery of the natural world around us; and we become supporters and companions to the Christian encounter with the Son, overwhelmed by the crucifixions of history, (“you did this to Me”). Here is where I believe we particularly see this experience of orphanhood: it did not emerge from a theoretical or rational form of theism, but rather from a feeling of having lost Something which was guiding us in our task of building history, which is so characteristic of the West.

Conclusion

Taking all this into consideration, I would like to close this commentary

with an appeal made by Albert Camus during a talk given in a Dominican monastery in 1948. It can now be understood on two levels: not only the cry of an agnostic to Christians, but also the cry of Christians to non-believers: What I know –which sometimes creates a deep longing in me– is that if Christians made up their minds to it, millions of voices –millions, I say– throughout the world would be added to the appeal of a handful of isolated individuals who, without any sort of affiliation, today intercede almost everywhere and ceaselessly for children and for men/women.³⁷ [We could also apply this to our suffering planet.]

In other words: it seems to me that the most urgent issue today is in facing this problem together, believers and non-believers, so that we can look at reality in the same way.

I hope we will be able to achieve this.

AN ECO-FEMINIST AWARENESS

Carmen Magallón

I really admire the Italian philosopher Alessandra Bochetti, foundress of the Virginia Woolf Cultural Centre in Rome. She is a wonderful reference point for a school of thought that recognises the difference of women's experience as a source of wealth for humanity. In her book *What a Woman Wants*, she wrote that taking as a starting point what women lack, only leads to limited gestures, as "no access to politics exists which stems from what we lack; access to politics, rather, stems from what we do possess"³⁸ She also says: "We have to approach politics aware that our hands are full, that we have something to offer. We should not approach politics with the idea that we are empty-handed... Let us chart our own path, not request one."³⁹ Glossing her ideas, I would also say that there is no access to words or to writing starting from what we lack, but starting from what we do possess, both individually and collectively.

These thoughts support me in building a reference system and using language exactly from the vantage point of what I possess: nothing more and nothing less than a whole female tradition and genealogy; a genealogy of women who realized the discrimination they faced, becoming aware at the same time of the necessary and positive roles they played in society. It is this tradition which allows me to present myself here with my hands full, as Bochetti recommends. Speaking from

a perspective anchored on the lives of women, allows me to build on this awareness, and on the movement that emerged from it: feminism.

I belong to this human triad which has been symbolically linked and devalued: women, nature and peace. Throughout the ages, nature, women and peace have been conceptualised as being fundamentally weak, and placed in separate categories from men, who claimed the right to subjugate us. The symbolic union between women and

peace naturalised a type of behaviour, conditioned more by social factors than by actual biology, making it become a core essence, and whose consequence was the naturalisation of linking violence to men. The identification between women and peace served to devalue them both, and today it still constitutes a source of resistance to the universalisation of the value of peace. Returning to the critical review of the foundations which form the basis for the predatory lifestyle that is currently endangering the very survival of life on the planet, we find this type of humanism, anchored on the Enlightenment, that Jorge Riechmann refers to: a form of humanism bent on creating boundaries and separating man from nature. It is important to point out that women were not active subjects in this paradigm, nor did its premises reach us. The philosopher Celia Amorós repeatedly offered proof in her writings about how the Enlightenment did not manage to illuminate the female sex. Authors of the time such as Poulain de la Barre defended the inclusion of women, but his egalitarian ideas, summarised in the statement “the mind has no sex,” were soon lost along the way, buried under the opposing and well-known ideas of Rousseau.

Nature itself was conceived as being feminine

The notion of situating ourselves outside nature, as opposed to within it, was not applied to women in the same way as it was to men. On the one hand, because in most Western intellectual traditions, nature itself was systematically

conceived as being female,⁴⁰ and on the other hand, because women have been persistently deemed to be closer than men to animals since ancient times. Londa Schiebinger, science historian, recovers one of these historical traces that sets up the postulated idea of a greater proximity of women to animals, making reference to the name chosen by Linnaeus in order to designate our specie as *mammals*.

“Linnaeus created his term *Mammalia* in response to the question of humans’ place in nature. [...] It might be argued that by privileging a uniquely female characteristic in this way, Linnaeus was actually breaking with a long-established tradition that viewed males as the measure of all things. In Aristotelian tradition, females were viewed as misbegotten males, monsters or errors of nature. By honouring the mammae as sign and symbol of the highest order of animals, Linnaeus assigned a new value to females, especially women’s unique role in reproduction. [...] It is important to note, however, that in the same volume in which Linnaeus introduced the term *Mammalia*, he also introduced the name *Homo sapiens* [...] to *distinguish* humans from other primates [...] From a historical point of view, however, the choice of the term *sapiens* is highly significant. ‘Man’ had traditionally been distinguished from animals by his reason; the medieval apposition, *animal rationale*, proclaimed his uniqueness. Thus, within Linnaean terminology, a female characteristic (the lactating mamma)

ties humans to brutes, while a male characteristic (reason) marks separateness.”⁴¹

Examining the history of science, it becomes obvious that nature, women and human groups of non-hegemonic cultures have never been well-treated. It is not surprising that, starting in the Eighties last century, female philosophers began to make an impressive critical assessment of the science in use, not only questioning the alleged association of women with animals but also previous notions, like those of Francis Bacon, considered the Father of Modern Science. Bacon conceived knowledge as power, presenting a kind of science in which the masculine mind seeks to dominate the feminine nature. And although it is certain that, as Evelyn Fox Keller pointed out, Bacon when read in-depth also states that nature can only be dominated by obeying her, later traditions were more focussed on connotations of dominion, transmitted through sexual images and metaphors, than in the alternative reading.⁴² This sexist bias found in scientific theories still makes up the deepest layers of the scientific canon, which is passed on as worthy of study.

Negative criticism is not all there is, however. Eco-feminism created and proposed alternative models and visions, bringing to light existing practices that were more harmonious and respectful towards living beings. Vandana Shiva, one of the most significant authors in this line of thought, has written about the importance of women’s work in what was once called the Third World. Highlighting their survival instinct, she affirms that these women

managed to place life at the centre of human history. “When recovering the survival possibilities of all forms of life, they are laying down the foundations for reinstating the female principle in nature and society, and through this, for the recovery of Earth as sustainer and provider”.⁴³ Anna Bosch, Cristina Carrasco and Elena Grau, in a written work of dialogue between ecological thought and feminist thought,⁴⁴ picked up the singing to life from Shiva, hinging on the practices of poor women in the South, and added: «In short, we and the women of the South both, advocate something sensible and not necessarily too complex –it is more a question of political will– to bet decidedly in favour of living in harmony with the eco-system, which is the only viable way for all humanity, present and future, to live fully and in a dignified way».⁴⁵

Given the fact that we witness at present the catastrophe derived from the separation of human beings from nature, we women, who have been classified simply as another kind of animal, might well say in a colloquial way, that we have already taken some steps to reverse this path. Shouldn’t we grant more social authority, and even take as a guide, the voices already resonating from an eco-feminist conscience? ⁴⁶

The radical common human vulnerability

Another question posed by Jorge Riechmann is: How should we respond to human vulnerability and mortality? What immediately comes to my mind is that in this human group that we women form, we have already been responding

to human vulnerability in a very simple and practical manner: we have responded with practices of caring.

Again, the tradition of hegemonic thinking was nefarious in its conception of humans as beings “with use of reason”, a condition allegedly reached at seven years of age (considered to be the age at which human beings acquired reason). That meant to put aside the first years of life, infirmity and old age, the stages during which dependency and vulnerability flourish in human lifespans and that are an important part of what we human beings are. The human being was solely conceived as an autonomous being who thinks, ignoring bodily functions and the vulnerability of human individuals, who are born totally dependent and incapable of surviving on their own, constantly under the risk of contracting diseases and dying.

Faced with the vulnerability of individuals,⁴⁷ women have responded with care practices; with what Sara Ruddick (1989) calls maternal work or mothering⁴⁸ (an important part of care). From Ruddick we learn that the practices of mothering give rise to cognitive abilities, attitudes, virtues and beliefs composing a model of reason (maternal thinking) based on responsibility and love, not on emotional aloofness, neutrality and objectivity. Despite this being a key element in sustaining life, mothering and caring have constantly been made invisible and devalued, a devaluation often hidden under flattering rhetoric. Those who practise mothering know that it needs courage, daily resistance, perseverance, will and intelligence. Even though mothering has for the most part been carried out by women, whether they are mothers or

not, it can also be carried out by men. As a matter of fact, the number of men who are caretakers is on the rise.

The important thing to highlight is that responding to human vulnerability with care,⁴⁹ transforms biological vulnerability into something socially meaningful. The philosophy which does not deny but rather accepts this vulnerability, comes from the material and practical care given to children, the sick and the elderly. Historically such practices have been considered the responsibility of women to a large extent, pending their universalisation.

Humanity must acknowledge the contributions made by those involved in mothering and caring, and listen to them, whether they are women or men. They are the people who chose to care, and not to impose the use of force, and for this reason they are better equipped to grasp the meaning of vulnerability, confront it and manage it.

Vulnerability and policies

An alternative kind of rationality, opposed to the prevailing one, arises from caring work. This alternative reason leads to different attitudes and may also well lead to drafting different types of public policies, more focussed on cooperation and mutual support than on domination and imposition. It is normal for us to cast a shadow of suspicion over a form of logic which has invariably ignored vulnerability and dependency in human beings. Thinking from the standpoint of caretakers it is understandable to be suspicious of the dominant logic, seeing how often and easy it is to use this log-

ic to defend the interests of those who set themselves up as leaders or, in the worst cases, to justify violence.

Pacifist feminism highlights the importance of profoundly assuming that individual and collective vulnerability is not something circumstantial, but rather an essential characteristic of human beings, and as such it should be a central point for political analysis. Its focus serves not only to draw guidelines for living out individual lives, but it can also help draft new types of policies, particularly to confront international conflicts and human rights violations.

Sara Ruddick and Carol Cohn defend the importance of assuming the human vulnerability to generate peace discourse and peace policies.⁵⁰ Following the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers in New York, they were both part of the U.S. feminist pacifists who stated: We cannot respond to this attack by thinking that our country's technological capacities will protect us; we cannot respond with the use of killer bombs and drones; technological arrogance means nothing before a human being who is prepared to kill himself for a cause. They also added: The intelligent response results from assuming human vulnerability, theirs and ours, and from there, generating policies that help us to establish common grounds, de-escalate tension, and place more trust on diplomacy and cooperation between peoples and cultures. Assuming human vulnerability is a key issue. Other analysts, like Martha Albertson Fineman, believe that in order for the State to produce policies towards a more just society, vulnerability is a stronger category than equality.⁵¹

Taking vulnerability on board does not blur the value of life. Why conceptualize human beings as 'mortals' instead of 'those born'? By always placing death at the core, we are giving more importance to those who have the capacity to kill than to those who have the capacity to give life. Once again, it is crucial to question a way of thinking which has marginalised the central role of life givers; a way of thinking that prioritises abstract concepts rather than actual bodies. There have been circumstances in which we have seen how great speeches and alleged absolutes clashed against humans of flesh and blood. I am thinking of cases in which, in order to purportedly defend human rights, real human beings were indiscriminately bombed.

Perhaps the conversion form that Riechmann points to lies in making daily care visible and valuable; focusing more on real human beings, not on humans in the abstract; giving importance to daily life, the 'little things in life', in sum, understanding just how profound the title of Schumacher's book is: *Small is Beautiful* (1973).

A relational humanism

I don't believe much effort is needed in order to accept that vulnerability and interdependence are features of our common humanity, which accompany us from the cradle to the grave. We live immersed in them. Admitting this is not a form of surrender. In fact, we gain when we care for others and we gain when we are objects of care. Restoring the importance of our dependence helps put relationship and links

among human beings at the centre. We are relational beings, for whom mutual support and care are vital. We are not simply isolated individuals leading miserable lives seeking success.

Jorge spoke of a humanism off-centred from the human being. It has to be said again: the humanism that needs to be off-centred is the one that placed the middle-class white man at the centre. What we need now is to introduce into this humanism those people who have been excluded, and also nature, not as isolated elements, but instead reminding us that we are what we are through relationship with others, emphasizing the importance of our interaction. For these reasons, instead of an off-centred humanism, or in addition to, I would propose a relational humanism.

We need a humanism that does not homogenise us, and which does not wipe out nature or human biodiversity. Many women are also co-opted by the dominant culture, by the model of the dominant male. We are not morally better than men, we are just as consumerist and therefore just as responsible for the deterioration of nature as men are. But the fact also remains that, having been excluded from decision-taking and socialised as mainly caretakers for so long, we have developed priorities conforming to another paradigm; allowing visions more respectful of nature, and more proactive against warfare. Here I stress the example of the women who met at a Congress in The Hague in 1915, founding The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. While the men in their countries were killing each other, these women proposed measures to achieve a lasting peace in the world.

It is within the feminist tradition, where we find what we have to offer: a fruitful and respectful way of thinking, a new paradigm. We must listen to women's voices, not only as victims, but as beings who are agents of life and have their own words to say.

Finally, I will refer to the notion of orphanhood mentioned by Jorge Riechmann. I will now speak from the subjective point of view of my own experience as an orphan, following the recent death of my mother and father. I do so, not for autobiographical purposes, but because the truth is always embodied in experience. I am now aware that losing those who gave me life has also made me become aware of other losses: the loss of childhood, of youth, of beauty, and in some cases, health.

Jorge was asking: Are we able of living as good orphans, as modest and compassionate orphans? Is it possible that within this orphanhood there also lies something which unites us and can help us to escape from this feeling of loss? I wonder if seeing how subsequent generations grow up, no matter whether they are our own children and grandchildren or those of others, can help us to accept becoming orphans. Perhaps. Perhaps by thinking about future generations and projecting our love upon them, we can escape hopelessness and give meaning to our existence in the world; give meaning to caring for ourselves and for the planet given to us. Orphanhood places us before mystery: the mystery of the sense and meaning of existence.

In spite of everything, Jorge, I do believe, indeed, that we are capable of living as modest and compassionate orphans.

1. CHUET-MISSÉ, Juan Pedro (2017). "Apilar piedras: una moda peligrosa para el medio ambiente" ("Making piles of stones: a dangerous trend for the environment." *La Vanguardia*, 26th May 2017.
2. Quoted by BOHÓRQUEZ, Lucía (2017). "Esos montoncitos de piedras no los hagan en la playa, 'mejor en sus casas'" ("Don't make these piles of stones on the beach, 'better do it at home'"). *El País*, 3rd May 2017.
3. I was able to reflect upon our obsession with building pyramids (including social pyramids and pyramid schemes), in the following: RIECHMANN, Jorge (2012). "De las tramas piramidales ¿a la complejidad autolimitada?," *El socialismo puede llegar sólo en bicicleta*. ("From pyramid schemes to self-limiting complexity? Socialism can only arrive by bicycle.") Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata.
4. Quoted by CHUET-MISSÉ, Juan Pedro (2017). "Apilar piedras... *Op. cit.*
5. Gabriel Albiac (in an interview in *Filosofía Hoy*, no. 50, winter issue 2015-2016, p. 12), recommends reading over the works of Freud written between 1914 and 1920. Elisabeth Roudinesco, biographer of the founder of psychoanalysis, emphasises that Freud understood the will of man to self-destruct, in an interview conducted by Emma Rodríguez, also recommended, published in *Lecturas Sumergidas*, no. 29.
6. CANETTI, Elias (2010). *Libro de los muertos*. ("Book of the Dead"). Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg/Círculo de Lectores, p. 105.
7. BAUMAN, Zygmunt (2014). *Mortalidad, inmortalidad y otras estrategias de vida*. ("Mortality, Immortality and other Life Strategies"). Madrid: Sequitur.
8. MIES, Maria and SHIVA, Vandana (2015). *Ecofeminismo (teoría, crítica y perspectivas)*. ("Ecofeminism: critique, influence, change"). Barcelona: Icaria (the first Spanish version of this book is from 1997, the English original is from 1993), p. 103. To these three colonies we should undoubtedly add animals (considered as individual beings, each with their own life to live, without them being absorbed into the substantive group that is "nature").
9. Interview by Salvador López Arnal of Paco Puche, still unpublished. The author of *Amianto* ("Asbestos"). (2017, Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata) is struggling with multiple myeloma.
10. PÉREZ-LANZAC, Carmen (2008). "Cambio climático: ¿la nueva religión?." ("Climate Change: the new religion?") *El País*, 14th February, 2008.
11. SCHWEITZER, Albert (1962). *Civilización y ética*. ("Civilisation and ethics"). Buenos Aires: Sur. (The original German version of this book, *Kultur und Ethik*, is from 1923).
12. MIES, Maria and SHIVA, Vandana (2015). *Ecofeminismo... Op. cit.*
13. NAREDO, José Manuel (2013). *Economía, poder, política*. ("Economy, power, politics"). Madrid: Díaz & Pons.
14. SKOLIMOWSKI, Henryk (2017). *Filosofía viva. La ecofilosofía como un árbol de la vida*. ("Living Philosophy. Eco-philosophy as a Tree of Life"). Vilaur (Girona): Atalanta, p. 27.
15. See FERNÁNDEZ BUEY, Francisco (1999), in the introduction to his edition of Bartolomé de las Casas: *Cristianismo y defensa del indio americano*. ("Bartolomé de las Casas: Christianity and the Defence of the American Indian"). Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata, pp. 18-23.
16. DE SOUSA SANTOS, Boaventura (2016). "La incertidumbre, entre el miedo y la esperanza." ("Uncertainty, between fear and hope"). *El Viejo Topo*, no. 346, November 2016, pp. 51-52.
17. SUBIRATS, Eduardo (2016). "Para salir de una edad oscura" ("Getting out of a dark age"). *El Viejo Topo*, Barcelona, p. 64.
18. We asked the Arab world for a new Enlightenment, out of which a democratic and progressive form of Islam could emerge. At the same time, in our societies, the values of the Enlightenment are increasingly becoming inop-

- erative rhetoric, crushed under the avalanche of trash from the media, nihilistic consumerism and the degeneration of democracy.
19. SCRANTON, Roy (2015). *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene. Reflections on the End of a Civilization*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, p. 19.
 20. BLACKBURN, Simon (1994). *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, p. 178.
 21. In relation to the narcissism inherent in our species and the decentred humanism which we need: KINGSNORTH, Paul (2016). "Somos si la naturaleza es," in the blog <http://civalleroypalaza.blogspot.com.es>, published 24th October 2016. It originally appeared in *The Guardian*, with the title "The Call of the Wild."
 22. BRAIDOTTI, Rosi (2016). "El humanismo del futuro no será europeo" ("Humanism of the future will not be European"), (interview conducted by Enric Puig Punyet). *La Maleta de Portbou*, no. 16, Barcelona, March - April 2016, p. 84.
 23. In the same recently quoted interview, Braidotti complains that "the humanities have pretty much left Darwin to one side."
 24. For a more in-depth look at her views, see BRAIDOTTI, Rosi (2016). *Lo posthumano* ("The posthuman"). Barcelona: Gedisa.
 25. Quoted in SKOLIMOWSKI, Henryk (1990). "On the Origin of Eco-Philosophy." *The Trumpeter (Journal of Ecosophy)*, vol. 17, no. 1. See also SKOLIMOWSKI (2017). *Filosofía viva... Op. cit.*, p. 330.
 26. Quoted by MACDONALD, Dwight (2017). *La raíz es el hombre. Radicales contra progresistas* [1953] ("The Root is Man"). Madrid: Ediciones el Salmón, p. 188.
 27. Thus, for example, the first of the Recommendations which concludes the Report on sustainability in Spain drafted by the Fundación Alternativas (Alternatives Foundation) in 2017, is that of a *new model of development*: BELÉN SÁNCHEZ, Ana (coord.) (2017). *Informe sobre sostenibilidad en España 2017. Cambio de rumbo, tiempo de acción*. ("Report on Sustainability in Spain 2017. Change of Course, time for action"). Madrid: Fund. Alternativas, p. 133.
 28. HARARI, Yuval Noah (2016). *Homo Deus*. Barcelona: Debate, Barcelona, p. 88.
 29. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
 30. WAGENSBERG, Jorge (2015). "El progreso en aforismos" ("Progress in aphorisms"). *Babelia*, 31st January.
 31. I analysed this in detail in RIECHMANN, Jorge (2009). "Hacia una teoría de la racionalidad ecológica" ("Towards a theory of ecological rationality"), *La habitación de Pascal*. Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata.
 32. In the books: *Un mundo vulnerable* ("A vulnerable world"), *Biomimesis* ("Biomimicry"), *Gente que no quiere viajar a Marte* ("People that don't want to travel to Mars"), *La habitación de Pascal* ("Pascal's room") and *Todos los animales somos hermanos* ("All animals are our brothers").
 33. VIDAL, Daniel (2014). "Jacques Ellul, Théologie et Technique. Pour une éthique de la non-puissance" ("Theology and technique. Towards an ethics of non-power"). *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, no.168. The book by ELLUL, Jacques (2014) is: *Théologie et Technique. Pour une éthique de la non-puissance* (edición de Sivor, Danielle and Yves Ellul; introduction by Frédéric Rognon). Ginebra: Labor et Fides.
 34. OSPINA, William (2017). *Parar en seco* ("Cold Turkey"). Barcelona: Navona, p. 18.
 35. HORKHEIMER, Max and ADORNO, Theodor (1994). *Dialéctica de la ilustración* ("Dialectic of the Enlightenment"). Madrid: Trotta.
 36. LEVY, Bernard-Henri (1978). *La barbarie con rostro humano*. ("Barbarism with a human face"), Caracas: Monte Avila.
 37. CAMUS, Albert (1995). *Moral y política* ("Morality and Politics"). Madrid. Chapter entitled "El no creyente y los cristianos" ("The non-believer and the Christians").
 38. BOCHETTI, Alexandra (1996). *Lo que quiere una mujer. Historia, política y teoría. Escritos, 1981-1995*. ("What a Woman Wants. History, Politics and Theory. Writings, 1981-1995"). Madrid: Ed. Cátedra, p. 314.
 39. Speech given before a million people at the Piazza del Poppolo, in Rome, during a rally held in February 2011, under the slogan: *Se non ora, quando?* (If Not Now, When?), to protest against President Berlusconi, who was still in power and was to resign in November 2011.
 40. MERCHANT, Carolyn (1990). *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific*

Revolution. San Francisco: Harper & Row. Originally published in 1980.

41. SCHIEBINGER, Londa (1993). *Nature's Body*. Boston: Beacon Press, p. 53-55.
42. FOX KELLER, Evelyn (1991). *Reflexiones sobre género y ciencia*. ("Reflections on gender and science"), Valencia: Edicions Alfons El Magnànim.
43. SHIVA, Vandana (1991). *Abrazar la vida. Mujer, ecología y supervivencia*. ("Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival"), Montevideo: Instituto Tercer Mundo, p. 251.
44. Written in the summer of 2003, the article by Anna Bosch, Cristina Carrasco and Elena Grau, entitled "Verde que te quiero violeta. Encuentros y desencuentros entre feminismo y ecologismo" was included as the epilogue of a book by Enric Tello (2005), *La historia cuenta. Del crecimiento económico al desarrollo humano sostenible*. (History counts. From Economic Growth to Sustainable Human Development). Barcelona: El Viejo Topo, 321-346.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 346.
46. Jorge Riechmann acknowledges and appreciates the contributions of ecofeminists, quoting generously from their works: international authors such as Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, or Yayo Herrero and Alicia Puleo in Spain..
47. Elsewhere, I have distinguished between individual and collective vulnerability, between radical vulnerability and constructed vulnerability: MAGALLÓN, Carmen (2015). "Más allá de la vulnerabilidad de las mujeres" ("Beyond the vulnerability of women"), in ARLETTAZ, Fernando and PALACIOS SANABRIA, María Teresa (eds.). *Reflexiones en torno a derechos humanos y grupos vulnerables*, ("Reflections on Human Rights and Vulnerable Groups"). Bogota, Prensas de la Universidad del Rosario.
48. Ruddick insists that mothering can be carried out by men and women alike. It is mainly women that carry it out at present, but there is an observable trend towards its universalisation.
49. On caring as an Ethics, see COMINS MINGOL, Irene (2009). *Filosofía del cuidar. Una propuesta educativa para la paz* ("The Philosophy of Care. An Educational Proposal for Peace"). Barcelona: Icaria-Antrazyt.
50. Among her works: RUDDICK, Sara (1989). *Maternal Thinking. Toward a Politics of Peace*. New York: Ballantine, and Ruddick, Sara and COHN, Carol (2003). "A Feminist Ethical Perspective on Weapons of Mass Destruction." Boston: Consortium on Gender, Security, and Human Rights, Working Paper no. 104.
51. ALBERTSON FINEMAN, Martha. (2008). "The vulnerable subject: Anchoring equality in the human condition." *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, 20(1), pp. 8-40. Other analysts like Antonella Pichio, Cristina Carrasco and Amaia Pérez Orozco lean on interdependence and the radical vulnerability of human beings in order to criticize the dominant economic model making care invisible.

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N. 172, May 2019

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