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Umberto Eco
Predicción e ideas

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PREDICCIÓN E IDEAS

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RESUMEN En el momento actual muchos estudiosos trabajan para entender cómo funciona el cerebro humano, incluida la cuestión de cómo se produce el lenguaje. Lo que intentan comprender en particular es el misterio de la conciencia humana. En mi libro *Kant y el ornitorrinco* hablo de personas que estudian los secretos del cerebro humano o, como yo lo llamo, “la caja negra”. Los científicos dedicados a este quehacer están avanzando a pasos agigantados.

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, many scholars work in order to understand how the human brain works, including the issue of how language is produced. In my book *Kant and the platypus* I speak about people who study the secrets of human brain or, as I call it, “the black box”. Scientists are making big steps forward in this domain.

1. Predicción: Cerebro humano y lenguaje

Yo no trabajo directamente en descifrar el funcionamiento de la “caja negra”. A diferencia de los científicos cognitivos, no estudio sinapsis y neuronas. De lo que yo me ocupo, más bien, es de estudiar el output y el input de la caja negra. Pero las investigaciones sobre la caja negra están avanzando en un sentido que está cambiando gradualmente muchas de nuestras ideas. Es difícil saber hoy día la manera precisa en que estos descubrimientos de las ciencias cognitivas van a modificar las ideas en filosofía, semiótica y lingüística. Es posible que afloren hechos completamente nuevos; que algunas de las divisiones del conocimiento desaparezcan.

Tengo que decir que procuro no hacer clases de predicciones. Imaginemos simplemente lo que ocurrió cuando se inventó el dirigible. Qué cosa más maravillosa, pensó la gente, poder viajar por el aire como los pájaros. Y entonces se descubrió que el zepelín era un intento que resultó sin porvenir. El invento que sobrevivió fue el aeroplano.

Cuando aparecieron los primeros dirigibles, la gente creyó que se produciría una progresión lineal a partir de ahí, un avance hacia modelos más refinados y más rápidos. Pero no fue así. Por el contrario, en un momento dado se produjo un desarrollo lateral. Después de que el *Hindenburg* fuera pasto del fuego en 1937 (causando la muerte de 35 personas), las cosas empezaron a evolucionar en otra dirección. Hubo un momento en que lo más lógico parecía ser pensar que había que ser más ligero que el aire para poder volar por el cielo; pero resultó que había que ser más pesado que el aire para lograr que el vuelo funcionara bien.

La moraleja de esta historia es que en filosofía y en ciencias hay que tener mucho cuidado para no enamorarse del propio zepelín.

2. Ideas

Las “ideas” desarrolladas por el propio Umberto Eco, expuestas en sus diferentes libros, así como las expresadas en entrevistas y en la web, tal como las selecciona y presenta en: http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/1730.Umberto_Eco?page=1 y www.umbertoeco.com/en/umberto-eco-quotes.html, las clasifica y ordena Fernández-Carrión en torno a los libros a las que pertenecen; en caso de contar con varias traducciones, se dará preferencia al español, seguido del inglés, italiano y del resto

de idiomas.

De la numerosa bibliografía que existe de Umberto Eco, el autor destaca las ideas expresadas en unos pocos libros por encima del resto (indicándose entre paréntesis las autocitas que se hace de cada uno de ellos): Ideas¹ (40), *The Name of the Rose* (35), *Postscript to "The Name of the Rose"* (7), *Foucault's Pendulum* (25), *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana* (3), *Baudolino* (3), *The Island of the Day Before* (15), *The Search for the Perfect Language* (1), *How to Travel With a Salmon&Other Essays* (2), *Serendipities: Language and Lunacy* (1), *Five Moral Pieces* (1), *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (3), *Il cimitero di Praga* (6), *Non sperate di liberarvi dei libri* (2), *Pastiches et Postiches* (1), *La Guerre du faux* (1), *Die Kunst des Bücherliebens* (1). Los tres libros más citados por el propio Eco son *The Name of the Rose* (33), *Foucault's Pendulum* (25) y *The Island of the Day Before* (15). Llama la atención que de su obra *Foucault's Pendulum* escoja muchas de sus ideas traducidas al ruso, en cambio en *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* lo haga en español. De las obras que cita una sola idea, en tres ocasiones lo hace en inglés (*The Search for the Perfect Language*, *Serendipities: Language and Lunacy* y *Five Moral Pieces*), dos en francés (*Pastiches et Postiches* y *La Guerre du faux*) y una en alemán (*Die Kunst des Bücherliebens*). Es igualmente significativo cómo Eco en la selección de sus propias ideas que hace pública, escoge en primer lugar y de forma más numerosa las que presenta en las novelas: *El nombre de la rosa*, *El péndulo de Foucault*, *La isla del día de antes*, etc., que las que muestra en ensayos: *The Search for the Perfect Language*, etc.), con ello se da la impresión de que es un autor -como el mismo alude de alguna forma expresa en su *Apostillas a "El nombre de la rosa"*- que busca la notoriedad histórica -no hablo del éxito simplemente-, por encima de la erudición e incluso de la investigación científica desarrolla ésta última en libros científicos del reconocimiento, como: *Tratado de semiótica general*, *El superhombre de masas...* hasta el muy conocido y utilizado en numerosas universidades del mundo, durante el último cuarto del siglo XX: *Cómo se hace una tesis, técnicas y procedimientos de investigación, estudio y escritura*.

Otro detalle sorprendente, con respecto a las fuentes escogidas para seleccionar sus ideas, es que lo hace mayoritariamente de las novelas *El nombre de la rosa* (35) y *El péndulo de Foucault* (25), mientras que con respecto a la primera, no alude en ningún caso al contenido de su trabajo colateral denominado *Ensayos sobre "El nombre de la rosa"*, y lo hace de forma reducida (7) de la *Apostillas a "El nombre de la rosa" y traducción de los textos latinos*.

Algunas de las ideas expresadas por Umberto Eco son aforismos, otros pensamientos sobre diferentes temas, crítica de la realidad, acertijos, e

¹ Son las únicas citas que no pertenecen a ningún libro en particular, sino que han sido expresadas por su autor personalmente en la prensa, televisión o internet, como "textos libres".

incluso presenta alguna divagación u ocurrencia intelectual; pero, la mayoría de estas ideas si se analizan en profundidad nos muestran un trasfondo intelectual y crítico de la realidad, de la cultura, de la religión... y de la ciencia más trascendente, distinto a veces de lo que aparenta a simple vista, y puede tener repercusión en la ciencia, la política y en la vida de cualquier ser humano, que pretenda ser distinto a la mediocridad imperante en la actualidad; por tanto, no es extraño que lo haya sido elegido como miembro del "Foro de Sabios" de la Unesco, ni tampoco es casualidad que haya sido profesor visitante de numerosas universidades de prestigio internacional y le hayan concedido múltiples reconocimientos: premios y nombramientos honoris causa en todo el mundo. Podemos terminar diciendo, al igual que lo han hecho otros autores, es "uno de los pensadores más destacados" del siglo XX.

Fernández-Carrión

Free ideas

"Dios ha muerto, el arte dejó de existir, la historia ha llegado a su fin, y yo mismo no me siento del todo bien".

"When men stop believing in God, it isn't that they then believe in nothing: they believe in everything".

"I have come to believe that the whole world is an enigma, a harmless enigma that is made terrible by our own mad attempt to interpret it as though it had an underlying truth".

"The real hero is always a hero by mistake; he dreams of being an honest coward like everybody else".

"Absence is to love as wind is to fire: it extinguishes the little flame, it fans the big".

"All poets write bad poetry. Bad poets publish them, good poets burn them".

"I love the smell of book ink in the morning".

"I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows that he cannot say to her "I love you madly", because he knows that she knows (and that she knows he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still there is a solution. He can say "As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly". At this point, having avoided false innocence, having said clearly it is no longer possible to talk innocently, he will nevertheless say what he wanted to say

to the woman: that he loves her in an age of lost innocence".

"Sometimes I look at the Moon, and I imagine that those darker spots are caverns, cities, islands, and the places that shine are those where the sea catches the light of the sun like the glass of a mirror...I would like to tell of war and friendship among the various parts of the body, the arms that do battle with the feet, and the veins that make love with the arteries or the bones with the marrow. All the stories I would like to write persecute me when I am in my chamber, it seems as if they are all around me, the little devils, and while one tugs at my ear, another tweaks my nose, and each says to me, 'Sir, write me, I am beautiful'".

"Nothing gives a fearful man more courage than another's fear".

"Where else? I belong to a lost generation and am comfortable only in the company of others who are lost and lonely".

"I seem to know all the cliches, but not how to put them together in a believable way. Or else these stories are terrible and grandiose precisely because all the cliches intertwine in an unrealistic way and you can't disentangle them. But when you actually live a cliché, it feels brand new, and you are unashamed".

"I felt like poisoning a monk".

"The conquest of learning is achieved through the knowledge of languages".

"Perhaps the mission of those who love mankind is to make people laugh at the truth, to make truth laugh, because the only truth lies in learning to free ourselves from insane passion for the truth".

"If you want to become a man of letters and perhaps write some Histories one day, you must also lie and invent tales, otherwise your History would become monotonous. But you must act with restraint. The world condemns liars who do nothing but lie, even about the most trivial things, and it rewards poets, who lie only about the greatest things".

"A book is a fragile creature, it suffers the wear of time, it fears rodents, the elements and clumsy hands. so the librarian protects the books not only against mankind but also against nature and devotes his life to this war with the forces of oblivion".

"Your masters at Oxford have taught you to idolize reason, drying up the prophetic capacities of your heart!"

38 "The real hero is always a hero by mistake".

"That day, I began to be incredulous. Or, rather, I regretted having been credulous. I regretted having allowed myself to be borne away by a passion of the mind. Such is credulity".

"Two clichés make us laugh. A hundred clichés move us. For we sense dimly that the clichés are talking among themselves, and celebrating a reunion".

"Le regole per scrivere bene (adattate da Umberto Eco) 1. Evita le allitterazioni, anche se allettano gli allocchi. 2. Non è che il congiuntivo va evitato, anzi, che lo si usa quando necessario. 3. Evita le frasi fatte: è minestra riscaldata. 4. Esprimiti siccome ti nutri. 5. Non usare sigle commerciali & abbreviazioni etc. 6. Ricorda (sempre) che la parentesi (anche quando pare indispensabile) interrompe il filo del discorso. 7. Stai attento a non fare... indigestione di puntini di sospensione. 8. Usa meno virgolette possibili: non è "fine". 9. Non generalizzare mai. 10. Le parole straniere non fanno affatto bon ton. 11. Sii avaro di citazioni. Diceva giustamente Emerson: "Odio le citazioni. Dimmi solo quello che sai tu". 12. I paragoni sono come le frasi fatte. 13. Non essere ridondante; non ripetere due volte la stessa cosa; ripetere è superfluo (per ridondanza s'intende la spiegazione inutile di qualcosa che il lettore ha già capito). 14. Solo gli stronzi usano parole volgari. 15. Sii sempre più o meno specifico. 16. L'iperbole è la più straordinaria delle tecniche espressive. 17. Non fare frasi di una sola parola. Eliminale. 18. Guardati dalle metafore troppo ardite: sono piume sulle scaglie di un serpente. 19. Metti, le virgole, al posto giusto. 20. Distingui tra la funzione del punto e virgola e quella dei due punti: anche se non è facile. 21. Se non trovi l'espressione italiana adatta non ricorrere mai all'espressione dialettale: peso e! tacòn del buso. 22. Non usare metafore incongruenti anche se ti paiono "cantare": sono come un cigno che deraglia. 23. C'è davvero bisogno di domande retoriche? 24. Sii conciso, cerca di condensare i tuoi pensieri nel minor numero di parole possibile, evitando frasi lunghe —o spezzate da incisi che inevitabilmente confondono il lettore poco attento— affinché il tuo discorso non contribuisca a quell'inquinamento dell'informazione che è certamente (specie

quando inutilmente farcito di precisazioni inutili, o almeno non indispensabili) una delle tragedie di questo nostro tempo dominato dal potere dei media. 25. Gli accenti non debbono essere nè scorretti nè inutili, perchè chi lo fa sbaglia. 26. Non si apostrofa un'articolo indeterminativo prima del sostantivo maschile. 27. Non essere enfatico! Sii parco con gli esclamativi! 28. Neppure i peggiori fans dei barbarismi pluralizzano i termini stranieri. 29. Scrivi in modo esatto i nomi stranieri, come Beaudelaire, Roosewelt, Nietzsche, e simili. 30. Nomina direttamente autori e personaggi di cui parli, senza perifrasi. Così faceva il maggior scrittore lombardo del XIX secolo, l'autore del 5 maggio. 31. All'inizio del discorso usa la *captatio benevolentiae*, per ingratiarti il lettore (ma forse siete così stupidi da non capire neppure quello che vi sto dicendo). 32. Cura puntigliosamente l'ortografia. 33. Inutile dirti quanto sono stucchevoli le preterizioni. 34. Non andare troppo sovente a capo. Almeno, non quando non serve. 35. Non usare mai il plurale *majestatis*. Siamo convinti che faccia una pessima impressione. 36. Non confondere la causa con l'effetto: saresti in errore e dunque avresti sbagliato. 37. Non costruire frasi in cui la conclusione non segua logicamente dalle premesse: se tutti facessero così, allora le premesse conseguirebbero dalle conclusioni. 38. Non indulgere ad arcaismi, *apax legomena* o altri lessemi inusitati, nonché *deep structures* rizomatiche che, per quanto ti appaiano come altrettante epifanie della differenza grammatologica e inviti alla deriva decostruttiva –ma peggio ancora sarebbe se risultassero eccipienti allo scrutinio di chi legga con *acribia ecdotica*– eccedano comunque le competenze cognitive del destinatario. 39. Non devi essere prolisso, ma neppure devi dire meno di quello che. 40. Una frase compiuta deve avere".

"Omne animal triste post coitum".

"INTERVIEWER/ Do you believe in God?/ ECO/ Why does one love a certain person one day and discover the next day that the love is gone? Feelings, alas, disappear without justification, and often without a trace./ INTERVIEWER/ If you don't believe in God, then why have you written at such great length about religion?/ ECO/ Because I do believe in religion. Human beings are religious animals, and such a characteristic feature of human behavior cannot be ignored or dismissed".

"Mystical additions and subtractions always come out the way you

want".

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"But I had also learned that freedom of speech means freedom from rhetoric".

"The contents of someone's bookcase are part of his history, like an ancestral portrait".

"I suspect that there is no serious scholar who doesn't like to watch television. I'm just the only one who confesses".

"If you want to use television to teach somebody, you must first teach them how to use television".

"De mens bedrijft het kwaad nooit zo hartstochtig en vol overgave als wanneer hij dat doet uit godsdienstige overtuiging".

"Heden ten dage verstaat men onder vrijheid echter de mogelijkheid om de geloofsovertuiging en de mening te kiezen die je het meest aanstaat en die allemaal inwisselbaar zijn - en het maakt de staat niet uit of je vrijmetselaar, christen, Jood of een volgeling van de Grote Turk bent. Zo wordt men onverschillig jegens de Waarheid".

"A library's ideal function is to be a little bit like a bouquiniste's stall, a place for trouvailles".

"If culture did not filter, it would be inane — as inane as the formless, boundless Internet is on its own. And if we all possessed the boundless knowledge of the Web, we would be idiots! Culture is an instrument for making a hierarchical system of intellectual labor".

"Pengetahuan Tuhan mewujud dalam pengetahuan manusia".

"Μου φτάνει που ξέρω να διαβάζω, γιατί έτσι μαθαίνω αυτά που δεν ξέρω, ενώ όταν γράφεις, γράφεις μόνο αυτά που ξέρεις ήδη".

"Only an unhinged movie survives as a disconnected series of images, of peaks, of visual icebergs. It should display not one central idea but many. It should not reveal a coherent philosophy of composition. It must live on, and because of, its glorious ricketiness".

"Con Cusano si delinea l'immagine di un universo infinitamente aperto che ha il centro dappertutto e la circonferenza in nessun luogo. Dio, in quanto infinito, supera ogni limitazione e ogni opposizione. A mano a mano che si aumenta il diametro di un cerchio,

diminuisce la sua curvatura, e al limite una circonferenza infinita diventa una retta infinita: in Dio si ha la coincidenza degli opposti. Se l'universo avesse un centro, sarebbe limitato da un altro universo. Ma nell'universo Dio è centro e circonferenza. La terra non può essere il centro dell'universo".

"Books are not made to be believed, but to be subjected to inquiry. When we consider a book, we must ask ourselves not what it says, but what it means".

"Hoy no salir en televisión es un signo de elegancia".

"Privado de vuestra mirada soy ciego pues no me veis, mudo pues no me habláis, desmemoriado pues de mí no acordáis".

The Name of the Rose

"Omnia mundi creatura/ quasi liber et pictura nobis est/ in speculum".

"What is love? There is nothing in the world, neither man nor Devil nor any thing, that I hold as suspect as love, for it penetrates the soul more than any other thing. Nothing exists that so fills and binds the heart as love does. Therefore, unless you have those weapons that subdue it, the soul plunges through love into an immense abyss".

"Books are not meant to be believed, but to be subjected to inquiry. When we consider a book, we mustn't ask ourselves what it says but what it means...".

"Because learning does not consist only of knowing what we must or we can do, but also of knowing what we could do and perhaps should not do".

"Until then I had thought each book spoke of the things, human or divine, that lie outside books. now I realized that not infrequently books speak of books: it is as if they spoke among themselves. In the light of this reflection, the library seemed all the more disturbing to me. It was then the place of a long, centuries-old murmuring, an imperceptible dialogue between one parchment and another, a living thing, a receptacle of powers not to be ruled by a human mind, a treasure of secrets emanated by many minds, sur-

viving the death of those who had produced them or had been their conveyors".

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"A dream is a scripture, and many scriptures are nothing but dreams".

"Love is wiser than wisdom".

"Then why do you want to know?" Because learning does not consist only of knowing what we must or we can do, but also of knowing what we could do and perhaps should not do".

"True learning must not be content with ideas, which are, in fact, signs, but must discover things in their individual truth".

"The order that our mind imagines is like a net, or like a ladder, built to attain something. But afterward you must throw the ladder away, because you discover that, even if it was useful, it was meaningless".

"Monsters exist because they are part of the divine plan, and in the horrible features of those same monsters the power of the creator is revealed".

"Show not what has been done, but what can be. How beautiful the world would be if there were a procedure for moving through labyrinths".

"Daytime sleep is like the sin of the flesh; the more you have the more you want, and yet you feel unhappy, sated and unsated at the same time".

"A narrator should not supply interpretations of his work; otherwise he would have not written a novel, which is a machine for generating interpretations".

"Penitenziagite! watch out for the draco who cometh in futurum to gnaw your anima! death is super nos! pray the santo pater come to liberar nos a malo and all our sin! ha ha, you like this negromanzia de domini nostri jesu christi! et anco jois m'es dols e plazer m'es dolors...cave el diabolo! semper lying in wait for me in some angulum to snap at my heels. But salvatore is not stupidus! bonum monsasterium, and aqui refectorium and pray to dominum nostrum. and the resto is not worth merda. Amen. no?"

"This, in fact, is the power of the imagination, which, combining

the memory of gold with that of the mountain, can compose the idea of a golden mountain".

"We stopped to browse in the cases, and now that William - with his new glasses on his nose - could linger and read the books, at every title he discovered he let out exclamations of happiness, either because he knew the work, or because he had been seeking it for a long time, or finally because he had never heard it mentioned and was highly excited and titillated. In short, for him every book was like a fabulous animal that he was meeting in a strange land".

"How beautiful was the spectacle of nature not yet touched by the often perverse wisdom of man!"

"On sober reflection, I find few reasons for publishing my Italian version of an obscure, neo-Gothic French version of a seventeenth century Latin edition of a work written in Latin by a German Monk toward the end of the fourteenth century...First of all, what style should I employ?"

"I seal that which was not to be said in the tomb that I become".

"The list could surely go on, and there is nothing more wonderful than a list, instrument of wondrous hypotyposis".

"And so I fell devoutly asleep and slept a long time, because young people seem to need sleep more than the old, who have already slept so much and are preparing to sleep for all eternity".

"I did not know then what Brother William was seeking, and to tell the truth, I still do not know today, and I presume he himself did not know, moved as he was solely by the desire for truth, and by the suspicion - which I could see he always harbored - that the truth was not what was appearing to him at any given moment".

"There was no plot... and I discovered it by mistake./ William of Baskerville".

"Pengetahuan tidak hanya terdiri atas mengenai apa yang harus dan dapat kita lakukan, tetapi juga tahu apa yang mungkin tidak usah dilakukan (Kata Willian dalam The Name of the Rose)".

"And when someone suggests you believe in a proposition, you must first examine it to see whether it is acceptable, because our

reason was created by God, and whatever pleases our reason can but please divine reason, of which, for that matter, we know only what we infer from the processes of our own reason by analogy and often by negation".

"The monkish vows keep us far from that sink of vice that is the female body, but often they bring us close to other errors. Can I finally hide from myself the fact that even today my old age is still stirred by the noonday demon when my eyes, in choir, happen to linger on the beardless face of a novice, pure and fresh as a maiden's?".

"Quase inebriado, gozava então da sua presença nas coisas que via, e através delas desejava-a, satisfazendo-me à vista delas. E, no entanto, sentia uma dor, porque ao mesmo tempo sofria por uma ausência, mesmo sendo feliz com tantos fantasmas de uma presença".

"Mas talvez naquele momento ele não tenha sido capaz de nenhum cálculo, o grito que lhe saiu da boca era o grito de sua alma e nele e com ele descarregava anos de longos e secretos remorsos. Ou seja, após uma vida de incertezas, entusiasmos e desilusões, vilezas e traições, posto diante da inelutabilidade de sua ruína, ele decidia professar a fé de sua juventude, sem mais perguntar se era justa ou errada, mas para mostrar a si mesmo que era capaz de alguma fé".

"The print does not always have the same shape as the body that impressed it, and it doesn't always derive from the pressure of a body. At times it reproduces the impression a body has left in our mind: it is the print of an idea".

"Agora selo o que não devia ser dito, no túmulo em que me torno".

"The older I grow and the more I abandon myself to God's will, the less value intelligence that wants to know and will that wants to do; and as the only element of salvation I recognize faith, which can wait patiently, without asking too many questions".

"I returned to the courtyard and saw that the sun had grown weaker. Beautiful and clear as it had been, the morning (as the day approached the completion of its first half) was becoming damp and misty. Heavy clouds moved from the north and were invading

the top of the mountain, covering it with a light brume. It seemed to be fog, and perhaps fog was also rising from the ground, but at that altitude it was difficult to distinguish the mists that rose from below and those that come down from above. It was becoming hard to discern the bulk of the more distant buildings".

"We live for books".

"In omnibus requiem quaesivi, et nusquam inveni nisi in angulo cum libro. (In allem habe ich Ruhe gesucht und sie nirgends gefunden, ausser in einer Ecke mit einem Buch)".

Postscript to "The Name of the Rose"

"Thus I rediscovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again): books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told".

"Entering a novel is like going on a climb in the mountains: you have to learn the rhythm of respiration, acquire the pace; otherwise you stop right away".

"Rem tene, verba sequentur: grasp the subject, and the words will follow. This, I believe, is the opposite of what happens with poetry, which is more a case of verba tene, res sequenter: grasp the words, and the subject will follow".

"When the writer (or the artist in general) says he has worked without giving any thought to the rules of the process, he simply means he was working without realizing he knew the rules".

"The author should die once he has finished writing. So as not to trouble the path of the text".

"I lacked the courage to investigate the weaknesses of the wicked, because I discovered they are the same as the weaknesses of the saintly".

"...Imagining a medieval story without a fire is like imagining a World War II movie in the Pacific without a fighter plane shot down in flames".

Foucault's Pendulum

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"Hay cosas que ves venir, no es que te enamores porque te enamoras, te enamoras porque en ese período tenías una desesperada necesidad de enamorarte. En los períodos en que tienes ganas de enamorarte debes fijarte bien dónde te metes: como haber bebido un filtro, de esos que hacen que uno se enamore del primero que pasa. Podría ser un ornitorrinco".

"I believe that what we become depends on what our fathers teach us at odd moments, when they aren't trying to teach us. We are formed by little scraps of wisdom".

"We were clever enough to turn a laundry list into poetry".

"As the man said, for every complex problem there's a simple solution, and it's wrong".

"I believe all sin, love, glory are this: when you slide down the knotted sheets, escaping from Gestapo headquarters, and she hugs you, there, suspended, and she whispers that she's always dreamed of you. The rest is just sex, copulation, the perpetuation of the vile species".

"Any fact becomes important when it's connected to another".

"The lunatic is all *idée fixe*, and whatever he comes across confirms his lunacy. You can tell him by the liberties he takes with common sense, by his flashes of inspiration, and by the fact that sooner or later he brings up the Templars".

"There are four kinds of people in this world: cretins, fools, morons, and lunatics...Cretins don't even talk; they sort of slobber and stumble...Fools are in great demand, especially on social occasions. They embarrass everyone but provide material for conversation...Fools don't claim that cats bark, but they talk about cats when everyone else is talking about dogs. They offend all the rules of conversation, and when they really offend, they're magnificent...Morons never do the wrong thing. They get their reasoning wrong. Like the fellow who says that all dogs are pets and all dogs bark, and cats are pets, too, therefore cats bark...Morons will occasionally say something that's right, but they say it for the wrong reason...A lunatic is easily recognized. He is a moron who doesn't know the ropes. The moron proves his thesis; he has logic, howev-

er twisted it may be. The lunatic on the other hand, doesn't concern himself at all with logic; he works by short circuits. For him, everything proves everything else. The lunatic is all *idée fixe*, and whatever he comes across confirms his lunacy. You can tell him by the liberties he takes with common sense, by his flashes of inspiration, and by the fact that sooner or later he brings up the Templars...There are lunatics who don't bring up the Templars, but those who do are the most insidious. At first they seem normal, then all of a sudden...".

"Well, Diotallevi and I are planning a reform in higher education. A School of Comparative Irrelevance, where useless or impossible courses are given. The school's aim is to turn out scholars capable of endlessly increasing the number of unnecessary subjects".

"Idiot. Above her head was the only stable point in the cosmos, the only refuge from the damnation of the *panta rei*, and she guessed it was the Pendulum's business. A moment later the couple went off -- he, trained on some textbook that had blunted his capacity for wonder, she, inert and insensitive to the thrill of the infinite, both oblivious of the awesomeness of their encounter -- their first and last encounter -- with the One, the *Ein-Sof*, the *Ineffable*. How could you fail to kneel down before this altar of certitude?"

"I should be at peace. I have understood. Don't some say that peace comes when you understand? I have understood. I should be at peace. Who said that peace derives from the contemplation of order, order understood, enjoyed, realized without residuum, in joy and triumph, the end of effort? All is clear, limpid; the eye rests on the whole and on the parts and sees how the parts have conspired to make the whole; it perceives the center where the lymph flows, the breath, the root of the *whys*....".

"Както отявленият атеист, който вижда нощем дявола и безбожнически разсъждава така: "Той безспорно не съществува, сигурно е от храносмилането, но рогатият не го знае и си вярва в своята преобърнатата теология. Кое би могло на него, уверения, че съществува, да вдъхне страх?" Прекръстваш се и той, доверчив, изчезва сред серен облак".

"I will tell you the deeper significance of this, which otherwise might seem a banal hydraulic joke. Caus knew that if one fills a vessel with water and seals it at the top, the water, even if one

then opens a hole in the bottom, will not come out. But if one opens a hole in the top, also, the water spurts out below"./ "Isn't that obvious?" I said. "Air enters at the top and presses the water down"./ "A typical scientific explanation, in which the cause is mistaken for the effect, or vice versa. The question is not why the water comes out in the second place, but why it refuses to come out in the first case"./ "And why does it refuse?" Garamond asked eagerly./ "Because, if it came out, it would leave a vacuum in the vessel, and nature abhors a vacuum. Nequaquam vacui was a Rosicrucian principle, which modern science has forgotten"./ "Excuse me," Belbo said to Agliè, "but your argument is simply post hoc ergo ante hoc. What follows causes what came before./ You must not think linearly. The water in these fountains doesn't. Nature doesn't; nature knows nothing of time. Time is an invention of the West".

"What did I really think fifteen years ago? A nonbeliever, I felt guilty in the midst of all those believers. And since it seemed to me that they were in the right, I decided to believe, as you might decide to take an aspirin: It can't hurt and you might get better".

"Whoever reflects on four things I would be better if he were never born: that which is above, that which is below, that which is before, that which is after".

"From shit, thus, I extract pure Shinola".

"А стига бе! - каза Белбо./ Само пиемонтец може да разбере чувството, което се влага в този израз на учтиво удивление. Нито един от неговите еквиваленти на други езици или диалекти не бимогъл да възпроизведе върховното безразличие, фатализма, с които той утвърждава непоклатимото убеждение, че другите са създания на едно твърде непохватно божество".

"Each of us is sometimes a cretin, a fool, a moron, or a lunatic. A normal person is just a reasonable mix of these components, these four ideal types".

"I don't know, maybe we're always looking for the right place, maybe it's within reach, but we don't recognize it. Maybe to recognize it, we have to believe in it".

"Not bad, not bad at all", Diotallevi said. "To arrive at the truth

through the painstaking reconstruction of a false text".

"Ще пуснеш ли вентилатора, animula vagula blandula?/ - Ама нали е зима?/ - За вас от погрешното полукълбо, миличка. Сега е юли. Имай търпение, пусни вентилатора не защото аз съм мъжът, а защото е от твоята страна".

"Ампаро отстояваше твърдо своята вяра. "Няма значение какъв е емпиричният случай, казваше, става дума за един идеален принцип, който трябва да се изпробва при идеални условия, следователно никога. Но принципът е верен".

"Jacopo Belbo didn't understand that he had had his moment and that it would have to be enough for him, for all his life. Not recognizing it, he spent the rest of his days seeking something else, until he damned himself".

"Für jedes komplexe Problem gibt es eine einfache Lösung, und die ist die falsche".

"It's so beautiful".

The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana

"When you are on the dancefloor, there is nothing to do but dance".

"It was awkward, revisiting a world you have never seen before: like coming home, after a long journey, to someone else's house".

"Memory is a stopgap for humans, for whom time flies and what is passed is passed".

Baudolino

"What is life if not the shadow of a fleeting dream?"

"Yes, I know, it's not the truth, but in a great history little truths can be altered so that the greater truth emerges".

"There, Master Niketas,' Baudolino said, 'when I was not prey to the temptations of this world, I devoted my nights to imagining other worlds. A bit with the help of wine, and a bit with that of the green honey. There is nothing better than imagining other worlds,'

he said, 'to forget the painful one we live in. At least so I thought then. I hadn't yet realized that, imagining other worlds, you end up changing this one'.

The Island of the Day Before

"Aspirar a algo que no tendrás jamás, ¿es ésta la agudeza del más generoso entre los deseos?"

"To survive, you must tell stories".

"All the stories I would like to write persecute me. When I am in my chamber, it seems as if they are all around me, like little devils, and while one tugs at my ear, another tweaks my nose, and each says to me, 'Sir, write me, I am beautiful'".

"...The first quality of an honest man is contempt for religion, which would have us afraid of the most natural thing in the world, which is death; and would have us hate the one beautiful thing destiny has given us, which is life".

"It is necessary to meditate early, and often, on the art of dying to succeed later in doing it properly just once".

"Love flourishes in expectation. Expectation strolls through the spacious fields of Time towards Opportunity".

"But the purpose of a story is to teach and to please at once, and what it teaches is how to recognize the snares of the world".

"Thus we have on stage two men, each of whom knows nothing of what he believes the other knows, and to deceive each other reciprocally both speak in allusions, each of the two hoping (in vain) that the other holds the key to his puzzle".

"He thought he would become accustomed to the idea, not yet understanding that it is useless to become accustomed to the loss of a father, for it will never happen a second time: might as well leave the wound open".

"...We can only add to the world, where we believe it ends, more parts similar to those we already know (an expanse made again and always of water and land, stars and skies)".

"But Roberto already knew what the Jesuit's real objection would

be. Like that of the abbe on that evening of the duel when Saint-Savin provoked him: If there are infinite worlds, the Redemption can no longer have any meaning, and we are obliged either to imagine infinite Calvaries or to look on our terrestrial flowerbed as a priveleged spot of the Cosmos, on which God permitted His Son to descend and free us from sin, while the other worlds were not granted this grace--to the discredit of His infinite goodness".

"Here he was holding the clear proof of the existence of other skies, but at the same time without having to ascend beyond the celestial spheres, for he intuited many worlds in a piece of coral. Was there any need to calculate the number of forms which the atoms of the Universe could create--burning at the stake all those who said their number was not finite--when it sufficed to meditate for years on one of these marine objects to realize how the deviation of a single atom, whether willed by God or prompted by Chance, could generate inconceivable Milky Ways?".

"...Living the same sorrows three times was a suffering, but it was a suffering to relive even the same joys. The joy of life is born from feeling, whether it be joy or grief, always of short duration, and woe to those who know they will enjoy eternal bliss".

"...I am not I who thinks, but I am the Void, or extension, that thinks me. And so this composite is an accident, in which Void and extension linger for the blink of an eye, to be able afterwards to return to thinking otherwise. In this great Void of the Void, the one thing that truly is, is the history of this evolution in numberless transitory compositions...Compositions of what? Of the one great Nothingness, which is the substance of the whole.!/ Substance governed by a majestic necessity, which leads it to create and destroy worlds, to weave our pale lives. I must accept this, succeed in loving this Necessity, return to it, and bow to its future will, for this is the condition of Happiness. Only by accepting its law will I find my freedom. To flow back into It will be Salvation, fleeing from passions into the sole passion, the Intellectual Love of God./ If I truly succeeded in understanding this, I would be the one man who has found the True Philosophy, and I would know everything about the God that is hidden. But who would have the heart to go about the world and proclaim such a philosophy? This is the secret I will carry with me to my grave, in the Antipodes".

"...We never cease hoping--and thus did our Judge condemn us to suffer in saecula./ Ferrante asked: 'But what is it that you hope for?'/ You might as well ask what you will hope for yourself. ...You will hope that a wisp of wind, the slightest swell of the tide, the arrival of a single hungry leech, can return us, atom by atom, to the great Void of the Universe, where we would somehow again participate in the cycle of life".

The Search for the Perfect Language

"...It would hardly be a waste of time if sometimes even the most advanced students in the cognitive sciences were to pay a visit to their ancestors. It is frequently claimed in American philosophy departments that, in order to be a philosopher, it is not necessary to revisit the history of philosophy. It is like the claim that one can become a painter without having ever seen a single work by Raphael, or a writer without having ever read the classics. Such things are theoretically possible; but the 'primitive' artist, condemned to an ignorance of the past, is always recognizable as such and rightly labeled as naïf. It is only when we consider past projects revealed as utopian or as failures that we are apprised of the dangers and possibilities for failure for our allegedly new projects. The study of the deeds of our ancestors is thus more than an antiquarian pastime, it is an immunological precaution".

How to Travel With a Salmon&Other Essays

"American coffee can be a pale solution served at a temperature of 100 degrees centigrade in plastic thermos cups, usually obligatory in railroad stations for purposes of genocide, whereas coffee made with an American percolator, such as you find in private houses or in humble luncheonettes, served with eggs and bacon, is delicious, fragrant, goes down like pure spring water, and afterwards causes severe palpitations, because one cup contains more caffeine than four espressos".

"For such is the fate of parody: it must never fear exaggerating. If it strikes home, it will only prefigure something that others will then do without a smile—and without a blush—in steadfast virile seriousness".

Serendipities: Language and Lunacy

"The cultivated person's first duty is to be always prepared to rewrite the encyclopedia".

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Five Moral Pieces

"... Luckily, Eden is soon populated. The ethical dimension begins when the other appears on the scene".

Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages

"Hoy en día no nos damos cuenta que la cualidad única de una obra de arte no hay que buscarla en una idea concebida por acto de gracia e independiente de la experiencia de la naturaleza: en el arte convergen todas nuestras experiencias vividas, elaboradas y resumidas según los normales procesos imaginativos, salvo que lo que hace única la obra es el modo en el que esta elaboración se vuelve concreta y se ofrece a la percepción, a través de un proceso de interacción entre experiencia vivida, voluntad de arte y legalidad autónoma del material sobre el que se trabaja".

"El alma humana es la verdadera cópula del mundo porque, por un lado, se dirige hacia lo divino y, por el otro, se introduce en el cuerpo y domina la naturaleza".

"Todo concepto filosófico, tomado en su sentido más genérico, explica cualquier cosa".

Il cimitero di Praga

"A te închipui un element necesar în ordinea universului echivalență, pentru noi, oamenii cu lecturi serioase, cu ceea ce e superstiția pentru analfabeți. Nu se schimbă lumea cu ideile. Persoanele cu puține idei sunt mai puțin supuse erorii, se iau după ceea ce fac toți și nu deranjează pe nimeni, și reușesc, se îmbogățesc, ajung la poziții solide, deputați, oameni cu decorații, oameni de litere renumiți, academicieni, jurnaliști. Poți să mai fii nerod când îți faci așa de bine propriile afaceri? Prostul sunt eu, care am vrut să mă bat cu morile de vânt".

“E nevoie de un dușman ca să-i dai poporului o speranță. Cineva a spus că patriotismul e ultimul refugiu al canaliilor: cine nu are principii morale se înfășoară de obicei într-un steag, iar bastarzii fac întotdeauna apel la puritatea stirpei lor. Identitatea națională este ultima resursă a dezmoșteniților. Or, simțul identității se întemeiază pe ură, ura împotriva celui ce nu-i identic. Trebuie să cultivi ura ca patos cetățenesc. Dușmanul e prietenul popoarelor. E nevoie oricând de cineva demn de a fi urât ca să te simți justificat în propria-ți mizerie. Ura este adevărata pasiune primordială. Iubirea reprezintă o situație anormală”.

“Über die deutsche Sprache: „Sie halten sich für tief, weil ihre Sprache unklar ist, ihr fehlt die clarté der französischen Sprache, sie sagt nie exakt das, was sie sollte, so dass kein Deutscher jemals weiß, was er sagen wollte – und dann verwechselt er diese Undeutlichkeit mit Tiefe. Es ist mit Deutschen wie mit Frauen, man gelangt bei ihnen nie auf den Grund”.

"Die Menschen tun das Böse nie so vollständig und begeistert, wie wenn sie es aus religiöser Überzeugung tun".

"A civilização não chegará à perfeição enquanto a última pedra da última igreja não tiver caído sobre o último padre, e a Terra tiver sido libertada daquela escória".

"Os homens nunca praticam o mal tão completa e entusiasticamente como quando o fazem por convicção religiosa".

Non sperate di liberarvi dei libri

"L'essere umano è davvero una creatura straordinaria. Ha scoperto il fuoco, edificato città, scritto magnifiche poesie, dato interpretazioni del mondo, inventato mitologie etc... Ma allo stesso tempo non ha smesso di fare la guerra ai suoi simili, non ha smesso di ingannarsi, di distruggere l'ambiente circostante. La somma algebrica fra vigore intellettuale e coglioneria dà un risultato quasi nullo. Dunque, decidendo di parlare di imbecillità, rendiamo in un certo senso omaggio a questa creatura che è per metà geniale, per metà imbecille".

"Für die Leute, die einen zum ersten Mal besuchen, eine imposante Bibliothek entdecken und nichts Besseres zu sagen wissen

als: "Haben Sie das alles gelesen?", kenne ich mehrere Antworten. Einer meiner Freunde sagt; Mehr, Monsieur, mehr"./ Ich für mein Teil habe zwei Antworten. Die erste ist: "Nein. Das sind nur die Bücher, die ich nächste Woche lesen muss. Die, die ich schon gelesen habe, sind in der Universität." Die zweite Antwort lautet: "Ich hab keins dieser Bücher gelesen. Warum würde ich sie sonst hier aufbewahren?"

Pastiches et Postiches

"Je récapitule. Entrez dans une salle de ciné: si pour aller de A à B, les protagonistes mettent plus de temps que vous ne le souhaitez, alors c'est un film porno".

La Guerre du faux

"Mais l'idéologie proclamée de Forest Lawn est la même que celle du musée Getty qui est gratuitement ouvert au public. C'est l'idéologie de la conservation, au Nouveau Monde, des trésors que l'imprévoyance et le désintéret du Vieux Monde sont en train de réduire à néant./ Naturellement cette idéologie occulte quelque chose: le désir du profit, dans le cas du cimetière, et, dans le cas de Getty, le fait que la colonisation affairiste du Nouveau Monde (dont fait partie aussi l'empire pétrolier de Paul Getty) a affaibli le Vieux./ C'est exactement les larmes de crocodile du patricien romain qui reproduisait les grandeurs de cette Grèce que son pays avait rabaisée au rang de colonie".

Die Kunst des Bücherliebens

"Was der Unselige nicht weiß, ist, dass die Bibliothek nicht nur ein Ort der Erinnerung ist, wo wir aufbewahren, was wir gelesen haben, sondern der Ort des universalen Gedächtnisses, wo wir eines Tages, im schicksalhaften Moment, auch das finden können, was andere vor uns gelesen haben".

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