

## MAN'S HISTORICAL PRESENCE IN THE WORLD

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The evolution of the physical world may have undergone numerous crises. None of them, however, may be considered as an historical or even as a prehistorical one, unless it has affected any human society. The presence of man may be considered as the term of reference of any event claimed as being historical, since history is an exclusively human privilege and an exclusively human creation. In this respect, history is a process equal to that of the evolution of mankind. It may even be identified to the latter. Indeed, history is essentially understood as the consciousness of the itinerary of mankind, an itinerary which, *mutandis mutatis*, could be qualified by applying to it Kant's qualificative formula "an aimless finality",<sup>1</sup> i.e. a finality in se and therefore, a finality lacking any kind of objective except that which may be related to the indefinite carrying-on and the improved welfare of mankind itself. One should, of course, distinguish the biological process of evolution<sup>2</sup> of mankind from that of its historical evolution, which also includes some particular aspects of the evolutionary process, such as the cultural and the social ones.

It has been generally accepted that from such a viewpoint there is a fundamental inadequacy between physical or astronomical time and historical time.<sup>3</sup> Whereas physical time is more or less uniform, historical time is subject to alterations as far as its structure is considered. It has also been accepted that physical time obeys its own entropy, i.e., that it flows, so to speak, in a precise and unalterable direction towards a precise, though unknown, aim. Historical time, on the contrary, being an "aimless finality", is deprived of any entropy. Being a free outcome of the activity of human consciousness, it is subject only to the freely instituted laws which the human consciousness has imposed on it through the ages. Long ago the author of these lines had already determined the model according to which the process of history functions as a fugal one,<sup>4</sup> alternatively combining causality and freedom, recurrence and uniqueness, progression and regression. Within the framework of such a model shaped by man himself, considered as the representative idea of mankind, historical time sustains the process through which the general behavior of mankind is manifested. Such a process is qualified not only by alternative progressions and regressions, as has already been accepted, but also by alternative tensions and loosening, accelerations and retardations.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding its inherent capacity of suffering such organic alterations, the historical process testifies to a prevailing orientation whose major property is that it imposes an intensification of mankind's consciousness, hence an intensification of both its ontological and existential status. It is understood, the more man's historical presence in the world may last, the more his ontological and existential status are consolidated. Even historical crises,<sup>6</sup> which express the disruption of the wholeness of the historical process through the insertion of discontinuity into continuity, contribute to such an intensification. This obviously means that, through his historical presence, man does not necessarily grow better, but that he certainly becomes more aware of his own essence and fate, i.e. that he himself indefinitely realizes his own telechē.<sup>7</sup>

The progressive itinerary of mankind may thus be assimilated to a spiral which one is allowed to follow in two opposed directions: the first leads from an initial infinitesimal curve to a succession of openly advancing segments that form the entire itinerary; the second, due to a certain compensation, leads from an open infinity which qualifies a movement leading itself to a deepening of existence.<sup>8</sup> Combined movements concur in marking, at any moment, the precise place of man along his itinerary. The itinerary in question results in the continuous discrimination of man from the world to better reintegrate himself into it.<sup>9</sup> During several millennia man has been able to realize this through a very slow motion which turned out to be in general a quantitatively accelerated one. Whereas, due to some kind of compensation, it proves to be, qualitatively, a slow one. Indeed, historical time is extended along with the growing intensity with which both historical time and man's ontological and existential status are experienced.

Man has emerged very slowly from the biological level to attain his historical position which is unique in the world. By so doing he has upset the equilibrium of natural forces, to his own benefit. However, there is a "kairic" measure<sup>10</sup> to be respected, beyond which this upsetting may become disastrous for mankind. The eventual painful results of the inconsiderate quantitative acceleration of history may be partly avoided only through its qualitative intensification. This could become possible only through rational consideration of the further capacities of man to dominate, rather than to destroy his links with nature and, hence, with the entire universe. Man's secular instinct sharply operates towards the 20th century of our era through warning messages - and these have so far already been received.

During the 21st and subsequent centuries, man will be called upon to elaborate a new dialogue with the world whose part he is<sup>11</sup> - a part that expresses the world's extreme splendor, and to reshape the model of his historical presence by using moderation in his relations with nature

and the universe on the one hand, and with himself on the other, by condemning any kind of violence, since violence has proved a harmful procedure in both external and internal activities of mankind. Quantitative acceleration of human history, under the form of a constant improvement of human civilization and quantitative intensification thereof, as a form of moral implementation and as a part of man's understanding of the meaning of his presence, have played (and probably will play) a significant role during the period of the passage of mankind from a productive past to a creative future.

## REFERENCES

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