

THE SEARCH FOR MAN

JULIÁN MARÍAS

I will be short, because we have little time. I am going to talk about the search for man. I think there is now a tendency, maybe even a temptation, on the one hand to prefer primitivism to full forms of reality, and on the other to embrace what might be called the myth of time, the idea of a simple duration which explains everything irrespective of what actually happens during that time. There is also a tendency to reduce realities to their constituent elements.

Many people say that man is extremely old. We frequently hear or read about the hundreds of thousands of years of the existence of man. The general idea is that man is extremely old, but for 98% of this time it seems that nothing happened. There was no change. This 'mankind' was beneath the level of what we understand by man. I think the point is to give an account of ourselves, and the accepted idea is that this to be found by unearthing the remains of man, that is to say bones, just bones, but I think even an animal is a living being, is a pattern of life, is a repertory of vital actions, and not mere bones.

I am afraid it is difficult to explain the fact that mankind for an enormous period of time did not change, did not display the attributes we find in ourselves, and that then in a few thousands of years there was an enormous acceleration, and that this mankind created everything we have, everything by which we define ourselves.

I think this is very unlikely. It is difficult to accept this. I think that the continuity, the biological continuity between animal and man, is evident. Of course doctors are now making transplants from organs, from animal organs, and placing them in the human body. This shows not only that the primates, but all higher animals, are very close physically, biologically, to man, but I think man is something different: a human person is a reality

which is extremely different from all other realities, because in the reality of man, of the person, there is embedded unreality.

All realities are real, are present, existing, but this is not true of man. Man lives in the future, is expectation, project, insecurity, something which does not exist, and this is surprising, a reality which is extremely different from all other realities. If you look for instance at the birth of a person, it is evident that what the child is comes from his parents and our ancestors, and from the elements of the world, of the cosmic world of course, but in the whole he is entirely different, irreducible not only to his parents but also to our ancestors and to the cosmic world and even to God, to whom he may say 'no'.

This is, therefore, an entirely different reality, and I think that if you consider the whole you find something absolutely different. There is a tendency to deny or to doubt the creation of mankind. This is a very thorny question which is very difficult. I am sure it is not easy to solve, because we do not have the Creator, we do not find him, He is not present, He is not available. There is something different here. The creation of mankind is a very problematic subject which we approach with difficulty. But the creation of each man is entirely different because of this characteristic of being irreducible. The person who is born, who shares this reality which is unknown in the rest of the world, this reality with unreality, which consists in unreality, is something entirely new, something which adds to the rest of the world, including his parents. This means that we cannot find the Creator, we have to look for Him or to infer Him, but the fact of creation is evident, absolutely evident, because we understand by creation the radical innovation of reality, the appearance of a reality which is entirely new, which cannot be denied by others. This is what we call reality.

It is a very interesting linguistic fact that in Spanish a child, a small child, is called "*una creatura*", and that in Portuguese the term is "*una criança*". That is to say that the child is understood as something which is a creation, a new creation irreducible to others, to anything.

We speak of evidence and there are two types of evidence. On the one hand, there is the evidence of things, the evidence of reality. On the other hand, there is the intellectual evidence. For instance, we have a rock. A rock is evident, and the geologist knows what it is, how this rock was produced, and this evidence is what makes science and philosophy. A man is also evident, but the point is that man now prefers theories to evidence, and if there is a theory which says that this cannot be so, the man of our time rejects evidence and sticks to theory.

For instance, man is free, man lives as though he were free. We know that we are free, we have to decide, we are necessarily free. We have to take decisions and make choices. Everybody judges men because they are free, because we live as though they were free, but if there is a theory which says that man is not free, most men now reject the evidence of freedom and stick to the theory that man is not free.

This is what I call the fragility of evidence, which is something very important. I think that often people hear or read something which is evident and accept this evidence and see things this way and after a while under the pressure of what is said, of what is accepted generally, of what is repeated by the media and so on, they lose the evidence they had at first, they reject it, and they return to the point of view held prior to the discovery of this evidence. I think this is extremely important.

Therefore I think we have to give an account of ourselves, to give an account of what we are, of what man is, the man that we know that we are. Many theories speak of the 'missing link', but there is no living missing link. In reality, in the real world, there is nothing which is not either man or non-man. There is nothing which raises doubts. We cannot point to any reality about which we are not sure. There is either man or non-man. It is unlikely that there were missing links, and none of them exist now or is real in our world. Therefore I think it is better to think of reality such as it is, such as we find it, with the attributes which we consider belong to man, to human life, and this is mostly unreality, anticipation, project. Man is not a present reality, he is mostly a future reality: of the future and uncertain. There is no certainty. The word 'future' is not exact because the future means what will be, and we do not know if something will be. It can be; we project it; we imagine it. The reality of man is highly imaginary.

I think that present theories of man involve the search for something which is not man, for something which is not what we call a person.