

Guido De Giorgio

## The Instant and Eternity

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We can say that the sacred is distinguished from the profane in what is essentially oriented toward the past to fix the stages of a procession which necessarily finds its culmination in a “present”. This “present” is the metaphysical point where eternity throws itself, where the worlds dissolve in a fullness without limits, a duration without rhythm, a bliss without end. The present is eternity, the past is only the vestibule that leads toward, which inserts into eternity. To repeat, to retrace the whole cycle which is realized in the point means to carry with oneself the experience of the centuries, all cosmic evolution to unravel the framework in the pupil of God.

Faust could not stop the instant because he knew only the caducity of the instance, the immediate iridescence of illusion, the vertigo which submerges instead of transfiguring, the “shadow of the flesh”, the labile and evanescent phantasm, not that which in God resides an infinite momentariness which is the mystery of the eternal now. Such are the two aspects of the “instant”, according to which one places himself on the human or divine plane; it is about two apparently opposed and divergent points which mark two worlds, two rhythms, two realities, of which one is absolute, true, the other fallacious and illusory. Faust's words “stop, you are so beautiful!” is only a not very original lyrical substitute in the face of the unfathomed plenitude of the Ineffable where the mystery of the divine gestation takes place. The myth of purification through aesthetics is only the very fragile bridge thrown by modern imbecility onto the momentariness of the human-cosmic illusion in order to evade the positive certitude of the mystery, an impassable wall or else by the dizzying passing of the wing, i.e., of the Spirit of God.

That is why the modern world oscillates between a dead past and a nebulous future, between what is no longer and what will never be, except in the hope that anticipates and builds. Traditional wisdom, on the contrary, turns toward the past, lives it, enriches it, updates it, inserting itself in it to lead it fully into the present and renew it in the *ver aeternum* [eternal spring] which the Ancients attributed to the Golden Age, pointing to the perennial germination of the Truth, the multitude of transfiguring states, life which knows neither birth nor death, for it uncoils

itself in the bliss of the realizing consciousness. But for moderns the past is past, dead, finished, concluded, closed, irremediable: “*le déjà vu, le déjà vécu*” [already seen, already lived], says Bergson, according to a psychological orientation that clearly manifests all the nostalgic sentimentality of the small man horribly enslaved by his small world. So that between a dead past and a future not yet born, the twilight present swings, at once a cloudy waning and a too pale dawn, in sum a veritable pause in agony. And from this erroneous vision the myth of the future is derived, the tension toward what is not, toward what will never be because in reality only the present, in absorbing the past, is the dynamic point, the whole bow of the ship which faces the horizon but never reaches it.

Modern man can be compared to a burying beetle [nécrophore] that longs for the day that never comes: the cadaver that he carries is the past, his inert, sterile heritage, and the day that he awaits is the future, the imaginary descent, the glorious completion of a chimeric unfinished childbirth. We will remark that all modern men, the “great men of history”, wait for a definitive judgment of the future on their oeuvre, for perhaps they feel, consciously or not, that nothing of what they made relates traditionally to the royal stream of the past, not is it capable of resisting the movements of the magnetic needle of the present, the brief and momentary instant having an impact on many abysses other than the insignificant trace of the passing cloud. That is why ancient man is a bearer of worlds: he did not leave the past behind him, but harvests it and carries it along, in such a way to construct in reality a single incidental point, the sole present, the current time, while modern man, discarding a heavy burden for his not very virile shoulders, is light, inconsistent, and through fear of being thrown to the earth by the blows of the crosswinds, clings to the machine, which is both his cradle and his tomb. For the myth of the future is associated with the myth of speed which—if we consider its function, its interior plan—is the abolition of the past in the already traversed, the imperceptibility of the present minimized in the permanent expectation of the future. The readers who would like to deepen these insights in a penetrating manner will find more than one way leading easily to the comprehension of some major truths. We desire to establish here, with a certain insistence, only some critical reflections whose development perspective will turn out to be clearer and surer.

We therefore understand that modern man and ancient man are absolutely opposed and like the antipodes, in the literal sense of the term, the one by relationship to the other: tied to a same line of descent but turned toward different heavens with different constellations, although the same impassible sun throws light on that line of descent in what for one is day for the other, night. For the

Ancients, in effect, the past is everything, for the moderns, nothing, even when they have the illusion of absent mindedly looking in the past for solutions to the questions of the present—what are called the “warnings”, the “teachings” of the past, around sentimental fantasies exploited with a cynical opportunism according to the circumstances and proposed to the credulity of the naïve for the most pitiable perpetrations. Rhetoric, which triumphs today as never before in today’s cloudy and swampy Europe, has recourse to the most bestial ruses to obtain the consent of the plebes as the audience and makes use of the past as a remedy against all illnesses, the universal balm, the supports of the present, but of a momentary usage as if to ward off the *Vae soli!* [Woe to him who is alone, Eccl. 4:10]

Modern man, in reality, is already frozen in the past, no longer lives it, and takes from it only dust and ruin: he studies it, classifies it, ignores it. The more detailed the inquiry is made, the more it becomes sketchy, each one seeking subsequently to make life blow over these bones asleep in the slumber of death. Thus, when they turn toward the past to study it, the moderns then succumb to the same illusion as when they believe, for example, that the photograph is closer than the truth, although it is denatured totally in being fixing in the momentariness of something already passed. But independently of study, let us see if the moderns use the past according to life. Who says past, says tradition, i.e., interior, dynamic unification, not exterior adhesion, not opportunistic sympathy, not simple position or situation; in other words, there should be between the past and the present, continuity, immutability, or, better said, a rhythmic development so regular, permanent, internal, that it would appear to be indifferent. Antiquity, in fact, is characterized by a constant tonality which endures, immobile, from one epoch to the other; there is and must be a change, but it takes place in depth, in the interior strata, invisibly, we are tempted to say, in a way to not disrupt the regularity of the rhythm.

We said many times that ancient cultures are immobile or seem to be such; but that is precisely their greatness, that fundamental stability that removes all contrasts, integrates all rhythms into the central vein, to the traditional type, who alone remains in the wholeness of its formative efficacy. That is why whoever intends to remain in the pure domain of traditional truth, always turns, logically, toward the past, to retrace the stages of certitude and add them to his experience. This, under that angle, is then recapitulative and conclusive: it is not an exterior repetition, but grants its rhythm to that which is none other than its own face, today still ignored, from now on found again and vivified. It is very difficult to explain certain things to those who hold onto dualist positions and who think that

there is something besides the Truth, which is God eternally present. Truth: there only can one become what he is, i.e., one transcends the sphere of human limitations to live the same beat of the infinite.

When we say ancient we mean everything that is valuable, perennial, traditionally authentic in the past of the East and the West, whether it is about a distant or near, doctrinal or poetic, past: it matters little, provided that it reflects, in the truth of its expression, the great light of the Superworld. Beyond the Sacred Books, there is Poetry and sacred Art. There is finally all the forms of activity which, in the past, always relate to a truth of a higher order, be it in a modest utensil, and in the fabrication and the destination of objects of current usage. That past, as we mean it, and all those who are searching only for the truth of God should mean it, is life, creative rhythm, an inexhaustible deposit of wisdom which renews itself each time it is actualized by a new experience. But it is especially the reality of a vibrant life because vivified by the perennial breath of traditional energy. Moderns consider the past as a relic whose ruins they borrow and around which they prowl with the curiosity of photographers and archeologists: who, among them, accepts the past totally, assumes it in all its fullness, not in order to seize from it some fragments and exalt them, but in order to integrate it in one's experience of life while recapitulating it in a creative manner?

How many of Dante's admirers are there who are not content in glorifying his verses or expression—something absolutely exterior and superficial—but who in applying the doctrine, the knowledge on all the planes of being to which they relate and in the totality of the Heavenly Voyage.

The past is nothing if it is not integrated, lived, validated by personal experience, by life, if it is not totalized and exalted in the great shaking of the eternal now. The moderns, when they are not fornicating in the past like the thieves in a necropolis, turn their backs on it, contemplating then the hypothetical "sun of the future" which will never shine, because the future exists only as the last evanescent border of an arduous vision, a mirage and nothing more, a fallacious projection stained by the spasms of their own insufficiency. The "non-achievement" in the face of the Truth, the incurable sentiment of one who does not know nor wants to know, does not know how to nor wants to carry with himself all the weight of the world, to assume it in the divine instant, created the myth of the future. Turning obstinately their backs to that which is, they wait with curiosity for what is not, for what will be, and they long for the confirmation of a dream by an illusory reflection of the dream itself, in a nocturnal march of phantoms that alone engender the present, by the spontaneity of its flux and its

mirage. Strange speculation on the future, which makes them forget the treasures of the past and the tangible immediacy of the present. For they are really only in the present, with all worlds, in the essential unity of the point, jewel of all jewels, the eternal eye of God!

We would like to still say some other things, but we prefer to conclude with the words of Zarathustra: To these men of today will I not be light, nor be called light. Them, will I blind with the lightning of my wisdom! Put out their eyes!  
(Friedrich Nietzsche)

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