



Exploration and Society: a Philosophical Perspective

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Few species occupy a surface of extension as vast as ours, in zones of life in the so varied conditions, so much so that some do not hesitate to speak about the "urgency to explore" as being proper to mankind. The political or economic utility cannot be the only reason, the only alibi with exploration: with Homo sapiens, the conquest can leave place with exploration because there is no exploration without imagination. Temptation is large to give up the space-suit of the astronaut and to suspend the missions of return on the Moon or voyage to Mars. But before giving up exploring space, it is necessary to enquire which lessons to draw the fifty years past since Sputnik. Far from diverting human its duties and of its tasks, terrestrial and common, exploring can lead it to still take them more with serious. The identity, vitality, fruitfulness are not born from the fold on oneself but from the meeting from the other, first and ultimate goal of exploration like work of our imaginary. We need to know the other at the horizon of our knowledge like the our imaginary ones. Without him, how to find the right measurement of our humanity? Is banished from exploration the malmesure of Icare who forget the advices of his father and underestimated the altitude during his inaugural flight. Disproportion, on the other hand, is sometimes necessary: without it, learnedly proportioned, never uncontrolled, how to dare to penetrate in the unknown? Of measurement, it is well a question as regards exploration, not like insuperable fence, but rather like balance ever reached, always required, which only makes it possible to advance in all ease and freedom. Which glance do we relate to our companies? If I think of Europe, I am ready to ask to me whether the lack of European enthusiasm for space exploration (or then in a so sporadic and event-driven form) does not find its principal reasons in true a faintness with regard to the other. What appears well far time when the humanistic ones of the Old World were impassioned for the exploration of New, to underline the sizes of them and to denounce miseries of them! An ethical step is today necessary if one understands by ethics an interrogation on the one hand in terms of finality and responsibility, on the other hand in terms of protection,

promotion and preparation. To protect the past, to promote the present, to prepare the future: the ethical step is closely related to the concept of heritage, of inheritance. One would not have to lock up the future generations in the partitions of a destiny traced in advance or a simple repetition of the past. Jacques Monod was right to write, in connection with the man: "Either that its destiny, its duty is not written nowhere. With him to choose between the Kingdom and darkness "This choice means at the same time ethical requirement and courage to explore.