

BIOCOSMOLOGY AS A NEW SIGN AND ITS POSSIBLE MEANINGS

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I am a citizen of the Universe
Socrates
There is something
intermediate between them
Aristotle, "Categories"

Abstract

The unresolved universal human existential dilemmas, both the Biologically given and Culturally induced, even in today's context of human knowledge and pseudo-knowledge, dictate new paradigms, which unavoidably make a recourse to the past. And Dr. Konstantin Khroutski's BioCosmology, despite its ambiguities and some questionable claims, does offer a much needed today sound analytical beginning, amidst the postmodern confusion, the crisis of creativity and consciousness, and futile attempts to connect the disconnected. Dr. K. Khroutski's "Russian" BioCosmology represents a very intriguing and ambitious neo-Aristotelian model —synthesis of Nature and Culture —all the biological and cultural evolutionary processes of Homo sapiens from the primitive to the most advanced stages of development, with some insights into the future of art of healing and producing culture. We witness a new postmodern renaissance of the Aristotelian metaphysics, philosophy and medical ethics, coming again from a physician-philosopher. It is an attempt to adjust the cultural signification of the last two millennia to the ultimate human physical and cultural possibilities, reaching the desired state of eudomonism in harmony with Cosmos, with the physical and cultural Other, reconciling the ever-seeking homo sapiens with oneself and the restless sapienza.

This paper will semiotically dissect Khroutski's paradigm in the light of its own (albeit negated) analytical point of departure—the Aristotelian theories of cosmology, his categories and metaphysics—and its postmodern renditions, arising from the lack of a close textual familiarity and poor translations from Greek. Despite the claims of being an antithesis to the Aristotelian cosmology and universalism, it actually represents its very successful post-modern continuum.

I. Place of Aristotle in the History of Ideas

The postmodern Western European tradition, relying more on Plato, Aristotle's mentor, or solely on the fragments from his much-quoted republic, to be precise, with even Bertrand Russell's blessing, has not produced a satisfactory schema of the Universe. While, in fact, the much neglected, or actually unknown to post-modernists, Aristotle could offer a much more sophisticated analytical apparatus even for the self-confident post-sputnik and post-virtual postmodern reality and philosophy. Aristotle (384–322 BC), a physician by training, a migrant from Stagira, Macedonia to Athens where he studied under Plato (428–347?BC) for nearly twenty years, has left a remarkable corpus of work, a legacy of the Hellenic culture, which is still the cultural foundation of Western civilization. Despite his towering metaphysics left for the West, Aristotle is less known and less quoted than his mentor Plato. The current narrative of history of thought, dominated by the Anglo-Germanic-American presentment, has essentially expunged Aristotle, instead, giving prominence to Plato and his model of utopian state—the blissful notorious republic without the troublesome poets, anti-intellectual at its core and aiming at the state of physical comfort and pleasure.

The postmodern technocratic soul-less world-machine has turned Homo sapiens into the passive homo-mechanicus who has lost one's sapienza, Reason and reasonableness, as well as the notion of the Ultimate Purpose/cause and Ultimate Good. Thinking and thought, creative imagination and traditional aestheticism have been replaced by the Platonian utopian idea of a single republic, characterized by the single identifiable mode of expression, existential practice and primitive cultural signification. At this moment in human history, Aristotle, with his metaphysics, categories and ethics, is what Homo sapiens requires. Only he can provide a sensible guidance through the maize of pseudo-knowledge and false-sign production.

Aristotle was essentially a follower of Anaxagoras (500–428 BC) who had placed Reason and Thought at the point of the Ultimate Beginning of Human Existence, *vis-a-vis* NOUS—the Intellect or the Intelligent Cosmos. Aristotle regarded Anaxagoras as the first rational philosopher and radical of antiquity to have defiantly proclaimed “the Sun to be the burning mass rather than the embodiment of God Apollo” (A. Herzen, 1944 [1845]:63). Anaxagoras and Aristotle could be seen as the ancient antecedents of the modern empirical sciences and non-Platonian philosophical alternative. Alexander Herzen (1812–70), a prominent Russian 19th-century thinker, wrote in his “Letters on Studying Nature” / *Pis'ma ob izuchenii prirody* that modern European philosophy essentially had not and could not have progressed much in the area of understanding the relationship between Man and

Cosmos since Aristotle, as “Aristotle had left behind not only most Greek philosophers but nearly all modern ones” (A. Herzen, 1944:46). Regrettably, in Herzen’s view, the same Aristotle had faded away in numerous schools that would follow him. Herzen though failed to pinpoint the cause of forgetting Aristotle and his principles in modernity.

The time span from the 4th up to the 12th century AD was the sad period of gradual submission of Reason and reasonableness to the myth and desire of the religious mind. The perceptive insights of the Greek thinkers, their theories of harmonious existence in Cosmos and in between men had been violently displaced by the dark reductionist myth of obedient unthinking slaves of monotheism. The adoption of Christianity (a modified Judaism) by Emperor Constantine (303–337 AD) had forced European civilization to reinvent the wheel, having replaced the ancient Phoenician-Egyptian-Assyro-Babylonian-Greek-Roman cosmology by a primitive Judeo-Christian myth of creation, with no room for questioning the Ultimate Cause. The irrational but convenient mythopoesis had been censoring the impulses of thought, suppressing the production of undesirable signs, scientific discovery and free cultural expression for centuries, up to the brief period of the European Enlightenment. Up to the 18th century, the forces of intellect and analytical processes and imagined systems of cosmos could not appear freely.

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527) openly blamed Emperor Constantine for ruining the Roman Empire and dismantling, in his view, the cultural pathway of European civilization by adopting Christianity, the clone of Hebraic religion, both of which he held responsible for the cultural retardation of Europe. Machiavelli dared to voice this before the trials of Galileo and Giordano Bruno. He disclosed for the reading public of Florence and Italian States that numerous treatises of ancient “wise men”, the scholarly works, artistic and cultural treasures of “pagans”, relying on NOUS—Intelligence—Intellect (Makolkin, 2007). Up to the 17th century European metaphysics was expressed in the presence of the religious censor, with the heavy reliance upon the Biblical discourse. Its monosyllabic semiotic meaning had been imposed on a civilization which had produced the brilliant proto-scientific models millennia prior. European philosophy, imagination and science had been semi alive until the utterances of Dante, Machiavelli, Galileo, Giordano Bruno and Copernicus only to silenced by the Church again.

Only in the 18th century, the scientific imagination and creativity would be revived in Europe – Montesquieu, Diderot, Helvetius, the Encyclopaedists, the leaders of the French Revolution such a Robespierre would restore Reason in the pantheon of human collective culture, as a universal sign, and along with it, Aristotle and his metaphysical theory. Aristotle would briefly become the ideological armament of many Europeans, with German, French and Russian Marxists as the avant-garde of the Aristotelian thought, the most compatible with the atheistic ideology of the new utopian state.

II. Signification is Always a Political Act

The much quoted cliché “antropos sofos eanae zoon politikon” / *a thinking man*

is always a political animal, from Aristotle's rapidly scanned "Politics," applies not only to economics, politics and sociology, but to all human activities which are caused by or predetermined by the dominant mythologies of the day, its cultural ethos and powerful politics of others. Aristotle, a migrant from Stagira, Macedonia to Athens, carried with him the discovery of the universal law: "In forming opinions, we are not free." He wrote this in his essay "On the Universe", implying that even pure science (and he had already a very clear notion of it), quite developed in his day, is never free from the impact of the societal dominant mythology and ideology of the day. And, indeed, the exploration of cosmos in the 20th century was not driven by purely scientific curiosity and the altruistic desire to learn more about the Universe, but by pragmatic political and military goals of the developed European powers.

Similarly, the postmodern bio and nana technology, the tempting prospects of human, vegetation and animal cloning, the DNA research and the discourse around it, with the postmodern medical and scientific epistemology – all derive their force due to the prevailing socio-political ethos of the day and cultural competition between the countries, traditions and civilizations. And all suggested throughout history analytical explanations and scientific discoveries are the political acts of the day.

III. On Definition of Terms and Need of the New Paradigm

"Definition is a phrase, signifying a thing's essence," wrote Aristotle, a philosopher with the precision of a medical diagnostician in his "Posterior Analytics" (1984, vol. 1:169). Since the 4th century BC, none of the thinkers in the global academic community could provide a better, more succinct, more revealing and more all-encompassing description of what a term means. The rather confused and intellectually and creatively impotent 20th and 21st centuries have only obscured the familiar terms in the futile game "of making things strange"(in Victor Shklovsky's definition of modern art) and indulging in playing with Logos and signification at the expense of meaning and purpose. Thus, today we possess a rich kaleidoscope of verbal signs and lack of understanding of the basic phenomena and purposes of human endeavors. The intentionally obscure postmodern code conceals substance and true knowledge and most of the post modernists compete in the skills of befuddling themselves and each other.

We need a new clear terminology of the phenomena and the process of naming things which reflects their essence, as well as the new paradigm, helping us to understand the world around us and each other. For the sake of our common global human physical, moral, mental and analytical health a new paradigm—the 'a posteriori' universe of categories to deal with Nature and Culture which could revive Reason and "thinking about thinking," or open discourse and exposure of "false signs, leading to belief rather than knowledge," as Aristotle used to write in his "Rhetoric to Alexander" (1984, vol. 2). And in the midst of this nightmarish human drama, called post-modernity when the homo sapiens has lost control of one's own thinking, any neo-Aristotelianism is more than welcome. In this connection and from this perspective, Dr. Khroutski's BioCosmology is a timely discursive intervention

into the post modern philosophical debate about Universe, place of Homo sapiens in it, and a formula of approaching Culture in harmony with Nature.

Cosmology, as a common term in all Indo-European languages, comes from the Greek “hōsmogonia” and means first the creation and origin of the world or universe and then the theory of the origins of the universe (Webster’s Nine’th College Dictionary, 1987:294). The term implies natural, biological and physical origins of the world. In this sense, Dr. Khroutski’s choice of a term for the otherwise intellectually exciting and challenging topic is very problematic. “The term “BioCosmology” as a name for his suggested and much needed paradigm is not only unsuccessful, but is rather misleading and limiting its territory. Dr. Khroutski intends and does produce an intriguing model of the Nature-Culture-Cosmos, while his own term negates it. Moreover, the shared universal sign – Cosmology – also loses its historic universal meaning. While Dr. Khroutski’s innovative paradigm actually encodes the all-embracing evolutionary trajectory of Homo sapiens and the universe around, from the physical, biological beginning to a cultural progression, his “BioCosmology” term misrepresents it, concealing his own, rather rich physio- and bio-cultural cosmology or a SYNCRETIC NEW COSMOLOGY, a completed semiosphere of numerous natural and cultural signs in the process of ongoing semiosis.

IV. What physician-philosopher Aristotle Might Have Said to physician-philosopher Khroutski?

In his “Prior Analytics”, Aristotle wrote, “First we must state the subject of the enquiry and what it is about” (1984, vol. 1:39). And if the subject is the Nature-Culture balanced Cosmos and its hypothetical origins, then it should be named as such for clarity.

Dr. Khroutski claims that his theory “has polar directiveness with Aristotelian universalism.” He misinterprets Aristotle to whom he mistakenly ascribes the analytical pathway he had never taken—allegedly from “God (Absolute) to Man,” while attributing to the Russian cosmism “the directivity from Man to Absolute” (Khroutski, 2007:1). Aristotle may have been surprised to have learnt that his term NOUS—Intellect or Intelligence from his “Metaphysics” had been mistakenly translated in many European texts as “God” whom Aristotle labeled actually as ZEIOS or life-giving (1979:209). The post-Christian unfree thinkers (after all, Europe has been in the clutches of Christianity for millennia up until the 18th-century Enlightenment) have tainted the Aristotelian concepts with their mythological religious dogmatism. Aristotle was not a Christian, but a pagan free thinker, uncensored by the state or church, gods in his time had been on the margins and never ruled the philosophers and rulers.

“Man begets Man”, he wrote in his Metaphysics” (1979, 246). The post-Christian man misinterpreted Aristotle, who had come back to Europe via Byzantium, Moslem Spain and Papal Rome during the Renaissance. Aristotelian texts had been read in the light of the post-Christian analytical categories, tinged with Judeo-Christian and Islamic theology. God was never on the mind of the pagan thinkers

who had elevated Man. “Man is the measure of all things” preached Protagoras (481–411BC), the student of Democritus and a respected authority for Plato and Aristotle. The post-Christian modern man, bamboozled by the Bible and censored secular texts, gazes at the Aristotelian Metaphysics with horror. The songs, prayers and angry utterances of ignorant shepherds from the margins of the former Roman Empire had displaced the intelligent debate, and rationality had been sacrificed in the name of Belief and Dogma. The post-Christian man had turned the Aristotelian world up side down, having adjusted it to the politically correct Belief. After all, Christianity negated Being-Existence-EINAI. The heaven of the seat of the gods was not important to the Greeks and Romans, the wisest students of Egyptians, Phoenicians, Babylonians and Etruscans, and even less did they signify to Aristotle, to whom Being was the primary and ultimate Good and the Ultimate Cause.

Aristotle would have been also rather surprised to learn his own Ultimate Cause, i.e. the Good, the ultimate *raison d'être* of all human activities and of medicine, the art of healing, in particular, could be mixed with the divine. Aristotle, already in the 4th century BC, knew that nothing productive could come out of the fixation on the divine or the primary cause of being. He was the ancient forerunner of Niccolò Machiavelli, Giordano Bruno, or Galileo, later “indited for impiety by Euremedon, the hierophant,” as we learn from Diogenes Laertius (1972:44–82). He held that “infinite Cosmos exhibited itself in numerous ways, signifying generations of man, and division of magnitudes,” as he stated in his “Physics”, encoding the complex symbiosis between Nature/cosmos, culture, being and thinking about life in cosmos, and in harmony within it (1984:1351).

Cause, for Aristotle, was a sign of multiple meanings/senses. In his Metaphysics”, he wrote, “The term ‘cause’ has many senses as the term ‘principle’” (1979:73). To him, a cause of being was a doctor who was to give or secure health” and the “cause of health was the doctor,” but not always. Aristotle did not limit the causes to five as Dr. S. Modell suggested in his critique of Dr. K. Khroutski’s “BioCosmology” (both of whom do not even have Aristotle among their cited texts). Aristotle’s causes are as numerous as the reasons of human activities or etiology of illness. Incidentally, the Greek word ‘etia’, now a universal medical term, means actually the ‘cause’ or ‘reason,’ often mistranslated by nearly all Indo-European traditions. For Aristotle, the cause was also the end, “the end of medical art is health,” he wrote in his “Nicomachian Ethics,” laconically summarizing the goal of medical ethics (1985, vol. 2:1728).

Aristotle would have been shocked to hear his theory interpreted as “Greek universalism”. Greek means “particular” while philosophy and science deal with the Universal. The particular had been foreign already to the ancient Greek thinkers, even prior to Aristotle and Plato. “I am a citizen of the universe,” uttered the ancient rebel Socrates, and prior to him, ancient Phoenicians, the forerunners of the Greek civilization. “I am an Athenian or Corinthian,” had been the concepts already foreign and discarded by the “wise children of humanity”. This principle of cosmopolitanism, articulated by the ancient Greeks followers of Egyptians, Phoenicians, Cretans and Persians, had defined the common shared biological and civic global space within cosmos. The present “I am a citizen of Europe” is the post-modern revival of the

ancient existential motto. Since “cosmic” means “universal”, then “Russian cosmism” or “Greek universalism”, the terms-preferences of Dr. K. Khroutski, would be very much objectionable to Aristotle, who as a philosopher, never operated in particular categories. Philosophy and science operate within the realm of the Universal and its primacy over the obvious, but less significant, particular. It is particularly obvious with the human body or the universal anatomy and rather uniform biological functioning of the human body and human brain. The cultural semiotic production of the brain may vary on the superficial level (including languages, music, dance, artistic styles, fashion etc), but on the level of the deep stratum it is uniform – it is this deep universal stratum which enables the Chinese to read Freud and Shakespeare in their own native tongue, or the Europeans to read and understand Confucius in their respective languages. The uniform brain structure of the homo sapiens is able to mediate the common categories, the shared ethical precepts and imagery, understood by all human species who have to pass the same cultural pathway from barbarism to civility, bypassing the Particular via the uniform. Thus, “Russian Cosmism” is a contradiction in terms, since Cosmos is one, shared by all, and his own witty model, as a perfected extension of the ancient model, is perceived by others just because it is translated from his native Russian (a particular code) into the post-modern *lingua franca*, English, and accepted as a successful universal paradigm.

Aristotle, who had secured the secular platform in antiquity would be quite saddened by the fact that gods and the Religious be so important again, more than two millennia after his death. Dr. K. Khroutski’s recourse to Dostoevsky, a modern Christian philosopher with a very particularist world view, would be rather bothersome to Aristotle, for whom god meant NOUS-Intelligence and who had placed Human Reason and the Good above all other inquiries and meaningful activities. In contrast, Dostoevsky, a man of the European Enlightenment, had turned to God and religion, being oppressed by the tzarist state, after his death sentence had been miraculously overturned. His later sermons “Russia will be the third Rome, Constantinople will be ours” derive their origins in the rising 19th century radical particularism in Europe. The concept about the special cultural mission of Russia originated during this period of collective European delusions and crisis of reasonableness. Prior to that Russia had already asserted herself as a European State during the respective reigns of Peter the Great and Catherine II who had proclaimed in 1768 “Russia is a European State,” having modeled the artistic and intellectual development of her Empire after Italy, France, Germany, and ancient Rome. Dostoevsky was a profoundly concerned pathologist of the human soul who had anticipated Freud by more than a century, who did not allow though to violate the sacredness and purity of a child, his essentially sole authentic divine symbol (Makolkin, 1990:2000). But he was not a philosopher in the traditional sense – he could not think in universal terms, while philosophy is built on universal categories. To deny the universal means to deny philosophy and science, and universal anatomy and function of the Brain, the most universal part of cosmos and the producer of the most universal signs, mixed with repeated varieties of the particular.

Doing the Good was the Ultimate/final cause of all human activities and of medicine, and Aristotle wrote the following commandment for entire humanity: “Every act and every inquiry, and similarly every action and choice is thought to aim at some good (1985, vol. 2:1728). To deny universal is not only create “false signs” and negate knowledge, but it also means to act against the GOOD. Modern science and technology, art and education have miserably failed to be on guard of the Common Good. So far, as Dr. Khroutski’s paradigm acknowledges the Aristotelean sense, it stays on the course of philosophical inquiry or the beneficial semiosis, since Aristotle is, indeed, “the cradle of modern rational cognition,” as the post-modern Russian physician-philosopher agrees (Khroutski, 2007:3). Despite the flirtations with particularism in the form of pan-Slavic expression of the Self, the suggested new paradigm originates in Aristotle’s metaphysics which anticipates his own post-modern paradigm by two millennia, stretching the fresh Russian branches of the same global collective tree of human knowledge.

V. The Absent-Present Aristotle and Post-Modern Paradox

It is quite remarkable that the recourse to Aristotle, the wisest ancient sage, is being made today when Thinking and Reason have surrendered themselves to False Signs, leading to Belief, Myth and Delusion, and clarity has been displaced by a meaningless play with Logos and Cosmos. The Anglo-American philosophers, raised on excerpts from Plato, St. Augustine, Bacon, Lock, Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Hobbes, are now paying attention to the quotations from Aristotle. Even business analysts “take a trip down Aristotle’s second road,” actually vaguely familiar with his first—“thinking is thinking about thinking” (The Globe and Mail, Jan. 21, 2008, Harvey Schachter). Dr. Stephen Modell and Dr. Arthur Saniotis, the respondents to Dr. Khroutski’s BioCosmology and Dr. Khroutski himself, do not have sound knowledge of Aristotle who is absent in their respective bibliographies. Attempting to engage into thinking about his classical pattern of thought, they make a regrettable recourse to rather questionable jazz of post-modern authorities, such as P. Bowler, I. Lieb, E. Laszlo, L. Bale, T. Volk, A. Affiti, D. Polkinghorne and others, purely marginal in the context of the classical European cognition theories, philosophy and science. Thus, Aristotle, absent from their bibliography or as a cognitive tool, reappears as a cause for inapt debate. Aristotle is feared by the post-modern capitalist West for his advocacy of the public sphere—subsidized theatres, housing, medical and scientific ethics which are obvious to any attentive reader of his two-volume *Collective Works*, the sole legacy to modernity, who does not bother reading him, but rather choosing to rely on the unreliable tertiary, if not even more removed, sources of the Aristotelian myth.

VI. Do We Need New Consciousness or New Aristotle?

The human family is obviously in a state of collapse, or at a critical moment of developing a new attitude to life in cosmos. The cosmos, biosphere and cultural semiosphere are being destroyed in front of our eyes. The civilization as whole is on

the brink of extinction, from the micro to the macro level. The causes become obvious only when we recall Aristotle's observation that "change cannot be infinite" ("Physics"), and that "nature often operates contrary to human interest" ("On Plants"). His notions about the patterns of development, either in nature or in culture, and his ethical precepts are more valid today than ever before.

Aristotle, revived or excavated from under the millennial layer of the intellectual debris, or butchered by the tyranny of the Judeo-Christian mythology, is still capable of challenging Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, Hegel and Bacon, Hobbes and Marx. The Dostoevskian/Nietzschean superman, the Kierkegaardian clown, the Darwinian heroic species, the American superman, the Freudian sex-obsessed modern man, the Foucauldian pseudointellectual – all stand naked in front of the Aristotelian Metaphysics and his categories. He towers them all, despite the obvious progress in understanding and monitoring cosmos. We do need time for thinking about the way we think and approach life, cosmos and being in the universe, not as the ruthlessly exploited spare parts of the grand machine, but as reasonable beings, searching for Harmony, Health and Happiness. All the utopias – about democracy, free enterprise, consumer bliss, space travel, colonization of space, eternal life or eternal youth have failed us miserably.

The most popular existential recipe in its present Anglo-American presentment, aiming at the biological, animalistic or primitive Rousseauvian side of Homo sapiens, has reduced the thinking man to the level of a lower species. In contrast, Aristotle used to perceive man as a superior cosmological product, capable of creating balanced existence in Cosmos, able to preserve oneself and protect cosmos from destruction. He preached to be weary of Nature, not always mindful of man and be weary of man, trespassing and transgressing the boundaries set by Cosmos.

VII. Dr. K. Khroutski's Paradigm

This neo-Aristotelian paradigm has a potential of becoming a new existential prescription for post-modernity against the bio- and cultural maladies of humanity. The basic underlying strength of his NEW CULTURAL SIGN is its catholic quality, addressing the Whole – the bio- and cultural spheres in their historic succession and respective evolution from the cellular to the macrocosmic levels. His models of the universe, be it the globe or the spiral, symbolically and wittily account for the Universal against his own will.

The post-modern mind and reasonableness could not be awakened in the presence of the "signs leading to belief" or the religious mythology, under the tyranny of particularity, be it religion, political ideology, or economic dogmatism. What is required is the recourse to the sane secular pagan antiquities. Dr. Khroutski's spiral model of development poetically or semiotically represents the bio-cultural cosmology or the schema of the complicated human presence in Cosmos, as a biological complicated organism, a thinking sign-producing animal. His theory is luckily nurtured by Aristotle's categories, his metaphysics, physics and vision of the world, transmitted through history and accepted by all, Europeans and non-Europeans alike. Ultimately, cosmism cannot but be predicated by the Universal, since

Knowledge is the cumulative and collective. Despite the claims of ‘Russian cosmism’, his theory is the successful blend of the latest in European and human thought, an expression of the ultimate strive for eudomonism, not a contrast to the Graeco-Roman world view, but an organically evolved successful clone of the ancient and modern human sapienza. His new paradigm alludes to Machiavelli and his lament over the acceptance of Judeo-Christian myth of the primitives, suggesting, even against the sign-producer’s intention, another way of Being in Cosmos in the presence of NOUS—Intelligence, in Greek, rather than GOD. God suppresses while NOUS liberates.

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