

# THE DIFFERENT STEPS OF EVOLUTION OF THE WEST: ARISTOTLE, DESCARTES, KORZYBSKI: THREE VISIONS OF MANKIND AND OF THE WORLD

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To understand the evolution of the ways of thinking in the western civilization, it is important to place it in its context at the scientific and semantic levels, from Aristotle to nowadays. Indeed, the semantic evolution was not independent on scientific evolution, but was the consequences of it, springing from maps drawn by the mathematicians of the different times in function of the data they had at their disposal. From there the philosophers put up systems of thought based upon the maps drawn by the scientists of their time, which structured the vision of mankind and of the world.

During four centuries BC, Aristotle built a logic of thought bound to the antique vision of the world, seeing the earth was a flat disk situated in the center of the universe, which was the vision of the mathematicians of that time. The scientific system which shaped this antique period was Euclidean system. This first step matches with the Greek period, called metaphysic or pre-scientific.

Aristotle's logic was the reference in the West until the discoveries of Galileo and Newton, on which rested Cartesian logic at the seventeenth century and rationalism, on the base of which the present human sciences rest. This second period is called classic or semi-scientific. At the beginning of twentieth century, quantum physics appeared, as well as Einstein's theory of relativity, which put in question the basis of Newtonian system and led to general semantics or non-Aristotelian logic, which invalidated then the basis of previous logics of Aristotle and Descartes. This third period is called mathematic or scientific.

Hence Aristotle's logic structured the evolution of our languages and of our civilization at human, institutional, spiritual, etc., levels during two thousand years, and Descartes' logic, from the seventeenth century to our time. General semantic is the thought which fits to our present scientific level of evolution. The only way our civilization can integrate the fruits of its scientific evolution at human levels passes by the study and integration of GS.

The most of our problems at human levels come from the dichotomy between our evolution at scientific and human levels, and from the fact that we still reason in human affairs on the basis of previous systems of thought.

Now which are the basis of those systems of thought, and which role did they had in elaboration of the successive visions of mankind and of the world?

## **I. Basis of Aristotle's logic, antique vision of mankind and of the world:**

### **1. Premises :**

We know that Aristotle built his logic on three premises or postulates:

"Let me recall the "philosophical grammar" of our language which we solemnly call the "laws of thought" as given by Jevons:

1) the law of identity. Whatever is, is.

2) the law of contradiction. Nothing can both be, and not be.

3) *The law of excluded third. Everything must either be, or not be.* ("Science and Sanity", p. 749)

The law of identity (A is A) led to the reasoning: whatever is true is true, whatever is false is false, whatever is good is good, whatever is bad is bad.

The law of contradiction (A is not non-A): nothing can at the same time be and not be, a proposition cannot be true and false at the same time. Hence whatever is true is not false, whatever is false is not true, whatever is good is not bad, whatever is bad is not good.

The law of excluded third: there is no way between A and non-A: whatever must be either be or not be: a proposition is either true, or false, hence everything is either good or bad.

Aristotle described those premise as ruling the "laws of thought", whereas they were mathematic principles.

This logic, also called "logic of opposition", is the basis of the dualist conception which structured the languages, ways of thought and behaviors in the West from antiquity to our time, through the mechanisms of thought it induces.

### **2. Mechanisms of thought induced by Aristotle's three premises and their consequences at human level:**

#### **a) Evaluations based upon judgements of values, leading to misunderstandings :**

Those premises led us to reason in terms of values, to evaluate, to judge, starting from opposed concepts of "true" and "false", "good" and "bad", i.e. of abstract notions the meaning of which is not defined, and which rest of imprecise basis. Hence the meaning of the words "good" and "evil" vary in function of criteria of evaluation of the people who use them, those criteria differ for everybody, as a same thing may appear as "good" to one person and "bad" to another one, for a set of reasons of their own. Hence misunderstandings involved by the fact that nobody agrees on their meaning, and the conflicts which they inevitably induce, as the people who use them start from the principle that their criteria are "good" and those of the others, "bad".

## **b) False identifications, confusion between the level of words and the level of facts:**

So those premises led us to inadequately identify the objects, animals or people we talk about with characteristics we attribute to them, and judgments of value which we stick on them, without taking in account the fact that those judgments rest on concepts created by our nervous structure and have no existence out of us.

Hence this logic conditioned our whole vision of reality, which we have built not in function of facts, from what we can observe and perceive through our experience, but in function of the level of words, from given judgments of value, from abstract criteria which represent nothing real. Hence a confusion between the level of words, what is said, and the level of facts, of what actually happens and an inadequacy in our ways of thinking and behaving, (in our thought and behavior) which expresses itself through the propensity to act not in function of the facts and the effective consequences of our acts, but in function of words, of speeches based upon opinions, upon beliefs based on doctrinal premises. The behaviors induced by this system of thought are the reflection of an imposed word.

## **c) Abstract concepts erected into absolute values, to the detriment of the value of human life :**

Those notions accredited the idea that there would be something as "the good" and "the evil" independently of us and of the facts they are related to, leading us to consider those abstractions as gifted with a real existence, to identify with them and to attribute to them an absolute value, superior to the value of human life. This inversion of the values led to an over-evaluation of these concepts of good and bad, and more generally of abstractions (the nation, democracy, the party, the state, etc...) and a relativization, and under-evaluation of the value of humans.

This inversion of values led at the semantic level to an inversion of handling levels of abstraction, through the ignorance of inferior levels (level of events), and the tendency to orient oneself though superior levels of abstraction, of theories, of doctrines not similar to facts, used to enslavement purposes.

## **d) An inversion of the values at the origin of victimless crimes, generating irresponsibility.**

From the opposed notions of "true"/"false" and "good"/"evil" followed those of "right"/"wrong", "allowed"/"forbidden" , "innocent"/"guilty", "inferior"/"superior", etc., the meaning of those words resting not as much on the facts we are involved in, nor the actual consequences of those acts, as on opinions not underlain by demonstrations, ready-made ideas, imposed doctrines in the name of various "authorities". Hence notions of permitted and forbidden structured not in function of the consequences of the acts for the human set involved, but of the interests of the dominants, everything which comforts dominance or goes in its direction being taken for "good", and everything which threatens it or puts it in question being taken for "bad". Hence an inversion of the notions of "good" and "bad", those concepts being used to justify the law of the strongest and to legitimate oppression. In such a system, the value of individuals comes down to the value of the attributes of dominance (wealth, money, power, etc.) which they own; it is proportional to their status.

This inversion of the values bred the notion of victimless crime and doctrinal interdictions, not based upon an actual nuisance, on the basis of which people who had not harmed anybody could be declared guilty.

Hence the phenomenon of scapegoat, as the societies which reason according to this logic are unable to face the facts, to put in question their behavior, reporting as guilty the individuals who take a lucid look at them (Socrates, Jesus, etc.), rejecting on them, in terms of guilt, the disastrous consequences of their system of thought and behavior.

Hence as well the propensity to behave according to doctrinal notions of “good “ and “evil”, preventing individuals to make their own experiences in confronting themselves to the facts, and a negative conception of error, assimilated to the notion of guilt.

Hence the Aristotelian conception of guilt, without relation with the facts, is not compatible with the notion of responsibility, which rests on the conscience of the actual consequences of the acts. Hence unconsciousness and irresponsibility generated by this logic.

### **e) Logic of conflict :**

From the belief in the existence of opposed concepts of “good” and “evil” followed the idea they were in conflict the one with the other, and that it was in the natural order of things that the supporters of the “good” fight against the supporters of “the evil”, hence the multiple and unceasing conflicts which it led to, groundless conflicts based upon doctrinal oppositions and misunderstandings generated by those premises. This distortion led to a propensity out of control of humans to develop conflicts everywhere and their inability to solve them otherwise than through strength, those conflicts generating enslavement and destruction of populations in the name of the fight of “the good” against “the evil”, the semantic meaning of those terms changing according to the times, the authorities and their interests.

### **f) Static and simplistic vision of a dynamic reality:**

The law of identity gave us a static and rigid vision of ourselves and of the world, leading us to think that things or beings are once for all and from time immemorial as we see them, and to consider as definitive the images and judgments we bear on them, without taking in account the fact that we live in a dynamic universe, extremely richer and more complex than what we can apprehend with the capacities and the limits of our nervous structure, and all the elements of which are submitted to multiple and constant changes, even if those changes are not perceptible to our senses and escape to us. Hence a truncated vision of ourselves and of the world, doctrinally limited to the false images we have of them.

### **g) Loss of the ability to make choices, of freedom:**

The third law of the third excluded led us to consider that, in the situations we face, we have two opposed possibilities, a “good” one, and a “bad” one. In reality, there are not only two possibilities, but infinity. Hence, the doctrinal reduction limits considerably the possible choices we have, those limits being in fact purely imaginary, mental, insofar as they rest upon the law of the third excluded, and are created by our nervous structure conditioned by this law. The mental barriers induced by this law of third excluded led to the loss of the ability to make free choices, in other words, the loss of freedom.

## **h) A logic twisted at the root, leading to dramatic outcomes:**

This law of the third excluded is at the origin of the reasoning “either”/”or”, which underlies polemics in which each protagonist is certain to be “right” and that the other one is “wrong”, and tries to convince him on this ground. The speeches which keep such controversies going on are generally not based upon the observation of the facts, but on contradictory opinions without relations with them: no argument can be made on the matter, no factor allows to demonstrate their validity and hence, to put an end to the polemic. They consist in meaningless discussions, generally endless and insolvable, leading to endless problems and ineluctably come to situations of conflicts. Their aim does not consist as much in solving the debates as using those questions as pretexts to contradiction, they generally rest upon sophisms, twisted arguments without validity nor coherence, the aim of which is to destabilize the protagonist, considered straightaway as an opponent.

To sum up, the mechanisms of thinking induced by those third laws of Aristotle’s logic, logic of conflict, have generated mechanisms of thought responsible for the destruction of mankind and its environment by this specie. Those mechanisms being ignored, as well as the premises they rest upon, they are at the source of the mental barriers which condition, in individuals reactions and behaviors they are not conscious of, those individuals involuntarily participating to make happen the disastrous consequences induced by those mechanisms, those consequences most of the time being opposite to the previsions they had made, sometimes with the best intentions in the world. Hence, as the results they lead to cannot be, among the most of them, as much imputable to a will to harm s their unconsciousness of the mechanisms of their mental structure, it is important to become aware of those mechanisms induced by this system of thought and of the factors it is linked to at different levels to be able to understand them, and doing so, to free oneself from them.

### **3. Aristotelian conception of mankind :**

From the logic he had put up, Aristotle characterized man as a political animal, gifted with reason, composed of a body and a soul.” He conceived the soul as a “motor which deliberates” the word “motor” meaning a motive force, governing the body. This conception, which identifies man with an animal and shares him in two parts, on one side a material body, identified to animality, considered as inferior, and on another side a soul, a domain of reason and spirituality, considered as superior, has structured our whole vision of ourselves, since 2400 years:

*« We will, therefore, restrict ourselves to the living creature which, in the first place, consists of soul and body : and of these two, the one is by nature the ruler, and the other the subject. » (Politics, Book I, chapter 5)”*

*“And this is at once indicated by the soul, in which one part naturally rules, and the other is subject, and the virtue of the ruler we maintain to be different from that of the subject ; the one being the virtue of the rational, and the other of the irrational part. Now, it is obvious that the same principle applies generally, and therefore almost all things rule and are ruled according to nature. » (Politics, Book I, ch. 13).*

This vision gave us an image of ourselves shared in two opposed parts, material and spiritual, isolated. It induced the idea of a hierarchy between the body, the animal part, identified to the “low instincts”, conceived as “inferior”, and the soul, conceived as “superior”, and, as a result, as supposed to dominate the body and submit him; hence the idea of a

conflict between the body and the soul, matter and spirit, the belief in this imaginary fight leading to a vision of a shared self at the origin of our internal conflicts. Hence as well the source of guilt related to the bodily functions, especially sexual, in our civilization. This guilt rests upon a map of our organism not similar to it, is at the source of the most of our so-called “sexual problems”.

This Aristotelian map of our organism got us used to conceive ourselves as animals, beings of an inferior origin, shared in two parts doctrinally opposed, and separated from our environment and from the people we relate to. This conception led us to identify to animal species and to model our types of behavior on them. By isolating factors and elements structurally related to one another, it mentally cut us from ourselves and from the world we live in. Due to the set of limitations it induces, it led us to see ourselves, to reason, to treat ourselves and the others as sub-humans.

#### 4. Social and familial structure of dominance:

Aristotelian logic also has structured the set of relations inside societies: considering that “*some species are made to rule and dominate the others*”, Aristotle divided mankind in two opposed categories in terms of value, the “masters” and the “slaves” :

*“For that which can foresee by the exercise of mind is by nature intended to be lord and master, and that which can with its body give effect to such foresight is a subject, and by nature a slave.”* (Book I, Part II)

*“For he who can be, and therefore is, another’s and he who participates in rational principle enough to apprehend, but not to have, such a principle, is a slave by nature. Whereas the lower animals cannot even apprehend a principle; they obey their instincts. And indeed the use made of slaves and of tame animals is not very different; for both with their bodies minister to the needs of life. Nature would like to distinguish between the bodies of freemen and slaves, making the one strong for servile labor, the other upright, and although useless for such services, useful for political life ... It is clear then that some men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right.”* (Book I, Part V).

Hence a conception of the society shared into “superior” and “inferior” individuals, whose value is proportional to the one of their status: “*Almost all things rule and are ruled according to nature. But the kind of rule differs; the freeman rules over the slave after another manner from that in which the male rules over the female, or the man over the child; although the parts of the soul are present in an of them they are present in different degrees. For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority, and the child has, but it is immature. So it must necessarily be supposed to be with the moral virtues also; all should partake of them, but only in such manner and degree as is required by each for the fulfillment of his duty... Clearly, then, moral virtue belongs to all for them; but the temperance of a man and of a woman, or the courage and justice of a man and of a woman, are not, as Socrates maintained, the same; the courage of a man is shown in commanding of a woman in obeying. And this holds of all other virtues.*” (Book I, Part 13)

The concepts of “chief” and “subordinate”, at the source of the modern concepts of “intellectual” and “manual”, resting upon criteria of dominance, they generated a hierarchic structure of social relations, based upon balance of power, officializing relations of domination/submission, and societies copied on animal behaviors, ruled by jungle law and

the right of the strongest, this right being legitimated by the notion of “just war”, defined by the strongest one to the detriment of the weakest : “*The art of war is a natural art of acquisition, for the art of acquisition includes hunting, and art which we ought to practice against wild beasts, and against men who, through intended by nature to be governed, will not submit; for war of such a kind is naturally just.*” (Book I, Part VIII).

The opposition “superior/inferior” has also been extended to the conception of sex, imposing the image of the dominant male and the submitted woman, men being falsely identified to the only attributes of masculinity: strength, virility, domination, and the women, reduced to the ones of femininity: weakness, sweetness, obedience, submission : “*All classes must be deemed to have their special attributes; as the poet says of women, “Silence is a woman’s glory,” but this is not equally the glory of man.*” (Book I, Part 13). “*The male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind.*” (Book I, Part V).

Those images have induced between genders relations of opposition also ruled by relations of dominance, making relations of equality and complementarity impossible, and a hierarchic familial structure, similar to social structure.

The doctrinal opposition between the body and the soul, and the contempt of the body and of its functions led to a mental partition in love relations, opposing on one side the level of the feelings, conceived as superior and idealized, and the physical level, debased to the rank of bestiality. This vision gave birth to the concept of obscenity, absent in other cultures which were not influenced by Aristotelism.

The identification of human and animal species led to an identification of the functions of human organism to the ones of animals. Hence a vision of sexuality limited to the sole function of reproduction and its negation out of this framework. With, as a consequence for couples, a sexuality restricted to the perpetuation of the species, made in the framework of hierarchic relations between husband and wife, relations of dependence and domination/submission, dramatic relations making impossible an harmony at the levels of the feelings and at the physical level, and serene actualization of the feeling of love.

Though the social image of couple was noticeably different from the present one in the West: “*It should be first observed that the individualistic factor in marriages was quite unimportant and certainly not the determining one. Inclination and affection were only accessory elements, and the stock carried the most weight. The dignitas matrimonii in Rome was linked from the very beginning to the idea of ancestral descent. This, not only in Rome but also in Greece and other traditional civilizations, the woman selected for the dignitas matrimonii was chosen with this end in view. The man was perhaps allowed the privilege of having other women at the same time for the purpose of mere erotic experience (thus arose the institution of concubinage, which was recognized by law alongside the family system as its complement).*” Julius Evola, “The metaphysics of sex”, p. 173, Inner Traditions International, Limited, 1983.

Identification of man to its sole masculinity and of woman as its sole femininity led to a conflict between male and female forces existing in both genders, with as a result, a diversion of creative forces into forces of destruction, exteriorized in men, and interiorized in women.

So the inner conflict induced by the opposition between the body and the soul has resulted, outside, in fore relations and a diversion and waste of energies of individual in all-



out conflicts, as a consequence of the confrontation, the annihilation of the respective forces. Hence a dramatic, tragic conception of a “human condition”, locked in a problematic of guilt based upon despise of human person and guilt of bodily functions, and an existential problematic based upon the loss of the attributes of our humanity and the impossibility of a non dramatic issue for individual.

## 5. Influence of Aristotelianism at the religious level:

This Aristotelian philosophic vision of mankind influenced Christianity since its beginning through saint Paul, Saul of Tarsus, who impulse through it his debased vision of sexuality: *“Now in regard to the matters about which you wrote: “It is a good thing for a man not to touch a woman But because of cases of immorality every man should have his own wife, and every woman her own husband. But if they cannot exercise self-control they should marry, for it is better to marry than to be on fire.” (Corinthians, VII, 1-2, 9)*

It structured Catholicism since middle age, from Augustine of Hippo (IV century) who formulated the doctrine of original sin, which was attested by several synods in Africa and, in 431, by the ecumenical council of Ephesus. Then later on it was at the basis of the foundation of Scholasticism (IX – XIV centuries), which consisted, on behalf of the theologians, in an attempt of harmonization of the Christian doctrine with Aristotle’s logic, which fitted to the way of thinking of the time and to its level of evolution

The opprobrium heaped on sexuality expressed by Aristotle infiltrated Catholicism and through it, the whole Christian West. On the other hand it does not appear in the other monotheist religions, Judaism and Islam: *“Men of this culture have more or less clearly understood and conceived of conjugal relationships, beginning with the blessing conferred by the Law of the Koran on the sexual act in a polygamous system. Hence arises the special meaning of procreation, understood as the extension of the divine creative power in man.*

*Judaism did not take an ascetic or puritanical stand on sex. Wedlock was thought of not as a concession to the law of the flesh, but as one of the holiest mysteries. For the Kabbala, every true wedding was in fact a symbolic re-creation of the union of God with the Shekhinah.” (Julius Evola, “The metaphysics of sex”, p.177).*

## II. Descartes’ logic, rationalist vision of mankind and of the world:

Aristotle’s logic and the antique vision of mankind and of the world have been abandoned at the XVII century by the scientists, after Copernic’s, Galileo’s and then Newton’s discoveries. The Newtonian vision of the world gave rise to Cartesian logic, to the rationalist movement and to the scientific theories which adopted as the only reliable criteria those of science and reason. The scientific time generated a mechanist conception of the universe, reduced to what we can perceive through our physical senses and human instruments of investigation, a universe limited to the material world, tangible, observable and, under the influence of evolutionism, a conception of mankind as descendant of monkeys, perpetuating the animalistic vision of mankind, and the vision of human life as limited to its material dimension and to the time of life from the birth to the death of the organism.

Though the dualistic mechanisms of thought, conveyed by language, have not been put in question nor abandoned. They have perpetuated the Aristotelian opposition between spirit and matter under a different form, adapted to the scientific theories, the concept of soul

being abandoned to the benefit of the one of psyche. This opposition still is authoritative nowadays in human sciences, among others in the medical domain which considers as domains of separated activities somatic medicine, which concerns the body, and psychiatry, limited to psyche. It also opposed on one side “scientific thought”, considered as “true”, and “magical thought”, in which it included the myths and religions, considered as “non-scientific”, and therefore, as deprived from credibility and interest.

In the domain of knowledge, it led to a separation between the fields of sciences and those of human affairs, those fields being considered a without relations the ones with the others and as progressing separately. This doctrinal split prevented us from integrating in human activities the progresses of our scientific evolution, so we still use in 1997 the products of this evolution, which fits to the XX° century, with mechanism of thinking, concepts and a mental structure corresponding to the levels of evolution of Antiquity and of the XVII° century.

In the framework of the rationalist system was elaborated the Freudian theory of neurosis and psychosis. At the end of the XIX° century, Freud formulated a theory on sexuality, which was previously taboo and banned from speech. He established a distinction between a normal sexuality which he opposed a pathologic sexuality and established, on the basis of the concept of perversion, a theory of neurosis and psychosis which still is the ground of present psychiatric nosography. He characterized “normal” sexuality as limited to the strict framework of procreation, calling sexual pleasure “perverse” and as such be regarded with contempt.” , as well as any sexual act accomplished out of the intention to procreate, including in the framework of a legitimate couple:

*“The common characteristic of all perversions, on the other hand, is that they have abandoned reproduction as their aim. We term sexual activity perverse when it has renounced the aim of reproduction and follows the pursuit of pleasure as an independent goal. And so you realize that the turning point in the development of sexual life lies in its subjugation to the purpose of reproduction. Everything this side of the turning point, everything that has given up this purpose and serves the pursuit of pleasure alone, must carry the term “perverse” and as such be regarded with contempt.”* (“A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis”, TWENTIETH LECTURE, GENERAL THEORY OF THE NEUROSES, *The Sexual Life of Man*)

He inferred from this that every human being is naturally perverted, since childhood, and that there was no basic difference between a normal individual and a neurotic one.

Hence this theory substituted to the Catholic vision of man as a sinner in essence the vision of man as naturally pathological. In introducing the concept of an unconscious-garbage can, as a place of unavowable and out of control drives, it induced a fear of the so-called unconscious, felt as dangerous, which mentally cut the people from their inner space.

It widely spread in the Western world, especially since the fifties. By doing so, it contributed to perpetuate guilt related to sex, replacing the religious dogmas by psychiatric dogmas, and attributing to the psychiatrists the role previously allotted to the priests. Starting from the postulate that “reality” was limited to the vision of the scientific conception, it accredited the ideas that any belief in another vision of the world was “opposed to reality”, and as such, delusional. Considering death as a blow to the so-called omnipotence of the medical world on human organism, it played a large part in the occultation of any fundamental interrogation from official speeches, generating new taboos, and imposed a

conception of human life as absurd and desperate, without any meaning nor finality, locking the people into an existential problematic.

By doing so, it presented the whole population as a group of neurotics and psychotics, changing it into an inexhaustible tank of potential mental patients, spreading the idea that the origin of the problematics in which, due to its postulates, it locks the people in, and the suffering they feel from it, which it conceives as “pathological”, was lying in their traumatic experiences of childhood, only psychiatrists and psychoanalysts could free them from. Hence a colossal consumption of psychotropic medications, widely prescribed out of the framework of their therapeutic indications, and used to cure their mental distress. (read "[Le prix du bien-être psychotropes et société](#) " d'Edouard Zarifian, Ed. Odile Jacob).

In parallel the discoveries in the area of contraception have modified the behaviors of the people towards sex, which can nowadays be lived independently of procreation, and out of the framework of the couple. It led to the spreading of the “sexual liberation” of the sixties, followed by the arrival of sex industry: literature, films, sex-shops, pink minitels, etc., using sex as a source of profit and presenting it as cut from the other levels of the being, under the degraded angle of perversion, identified to pornography, and therefore, outlasted as immoral and kept into a ghetto.

At the same time, the access of women to the world of work brought them financial independence towards their partner. The feminist movements asked for equal rights between sexes, as well as the control of women on their body and on procreation. The bases of the traditional couple have collapsed, leading to an increase of the divorces and a break-up of the family unit.

### **III General semantics or non-Aristotelian logic: a new vision of man and the world based upon the data of quantum physics of the XX° century:**

From the beginning of the XX° century, the discoveries in physics of quantum mechanics, and then of Einstein's theory of relativity , have turned the scientist conception of man and of the world upside down. On those new data in physics, a Polish engineer, Alfred Korzybski, created, during the first half of the XX th century, general semantics, a non-Aristotelian logic, to solve the contradictions of the previous systems of thought and the problems they induce at human level. He elaborated a new conception of man as “a psychosomatic whole, in his environment which penetrated him and to which he reacts.” the different levels are structurally bound and cannot be artificially isolated the ones from the others.

Korzybski categorically rejected the Aristotelian laws of identity, of contradiction and of excluded third and founded general semantics on the following premises:

- A map is not the territory,
- A map does not represent the whole territory,
- A map is self-reflexive

which, adapted to everyday life and language, produces :

- A word is not the thing it represents,

-A word does not represent all the facts,

-Language is self-reflexive.

This new logic is a tool of thinking making possible to unify human sciences and exact sciences in applying to human problems scientific methods to solve problems, in tackling them through a scientific step, starting from the observation of the facts. Insofar as it integrates the data of modern physics, it permits to draw new maps of ourselves and of the world which are similar to the facts, reliable and predictive maps. It permits to obtain, in human domains, results as efficient as the ones we got to in scientific and technical domains.

### **1. A conception of human being as a whole:**

Those data made possible to elaborate a new vision of man whose different dimensions and different levels of the being constitute a whole and cannot be shared; the conceptions which divided until now spirit and matter are obsolete nowadays. We have discovered that psychic factors have repercussions in the body, and that somatic factors have incidences on psyche; we also know that our knowledge concerning human organism are partial and incomplete and that we still are far from apprehending all the potentialities and all the aspects; finally we know that it is not possible anymore to consider human beings apart from his physical, social, cultural surrounding, etc., nor to make abstraction of the interactions between the individuals and their context of life. Therefore it is important to take in account the fact that we approach everything we observe with the totality of our psycho-somatic organism, the characteristics of which are bound to the influences of our surrounding.

### **2. A dynamic being, in constant evolution:**

We also know nowadays that, if animal species are static societies, with frozen behaviors (the behavior of a fly or a dog or any other animal and the group in which it lives is not different nowadays from what it was 5000 years ago), in contrast human societies are characterized by elaboration of cultures and evolution of civilizations : every generation enriches and reshapes an experience to the next generation which is going to modify and increase it in turn. Hence a conception of mankind as different from animal species, and a dynamic vision of man as a being in constant evolution.

### **3. Faculties and attributes of mankind:**

Besides its ability to elaborate cultures and civilizations, mankind differs from animal species through a number of attributes, of faculties, which animals do not have. Those attributes are specific of our humanity.

#### **a) Ability to symbolize :**

One of them is the ability to use symbols, to communicate through words, what the other species can do. From this ability to symbolize follows the use of symbolic languages and writing.

## **b) Time-binding:**

This ability to communicate through writing permits us to bind moments in time beyond our own life-time : thanks to human language, bridges can be put up between humans separated from one another by time-space distance : for instance, if we read, in France in 1997, a book written by a Chinese 1000 years ago, we are bound through time-space with the author of this book. Korzybski called "time-binding" , a temporal bind, this ability which consists in "binding time", which the other species have not got; thanks to it we can communicate with other human beings beyond the time of life of our physical organism; it has made the elaboration and evolution of cultures and civilizations possible.

## **c) Consciousness of death:**

Another characteristic of humankind is the fact that we are confronted to the imminence of our death: "*Man is the only being who knows he has to die.*" (Henri Laborit). This awareness of the death has bred the notion of time: "*Time is something that ends*" (William Burroughs)<sup>1</sup> , and conditions our perception of it: the more time that we have got appears to us as limited, the quickest it seems to pass. It is at the source of our existential interrogations, of the research for a meaning to human existence, which has been actualized through multiple attempts of answers through the centuries and civilizations and which still is opened nowadays, as none of those attempts has led to any certain nor definitive answer.

## **d) Ability to evaluate the impacts of one's acts:**

Another attribute, which follows from the previous one, is the ability to evaluate the impacts of one's acts and confront oneself to their consequences, in other words, responsibility. « *To be a man is, precisely, to be responsible.* » Antoine de Saint-Exupéry), as responsibility is itself bound to this other attribute: the ability to decide about one's acts, to act in function of the choices that we take, in other words, freedom.

## **e) The cortex, tool of reflection, specific of mankind :**

At the biologic level, our nervous system is gifted with, among others, a thalamus, the place of emotions and feelings, and with a cortex, tool of reflection and language. Through the thalamus, we feel emotions and feelings, and thanks to the cortex, we can analyze them, think about what is going on inside and outside us, and describe it in using spoken speech and writing. The cortex is the organ which permits us to use symbols; in using it properly makes us able to develop our abilities of reflection which the Aristotelian logic had forbidden us the access to previously in maintaining us prisoners of emotional reactions induced by the words. As those emotions are associated to the context in which we learnt those words, we could not free us from their power of suggestion which influences the mixture of feelings and ideas our various behaviors follow from.

Therefore, those emotional reactions, called thalamic reactions, have obstructed our abilities of thinking, limiting our use of our nervous system: we react to words as to signals, under the empire of emotions they provoke in us, as the animals do, without taking in account what they represent, neglecting the fact that they are symbols, signs which represent things,

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<sup>1</sup>\* "*The Time of the Naguals – Around Burroughs and Gysin*", Bill Rich: Interview : William Burroughs - Talk-Talk - Lawrence - Autumn 1981, Interzone Editions [www.interzoneeditions.net](http://www.interzoneeditions.net) .

and not those things themselves. Hence a confusion between the words and the things they represent, an inability to handle symbols which result, at the biological level, in an unsuitable use of our cortex in particular and of our nervous structure in general; the reactions to words prevent the nervous impulse, which transmits information, to get to the cortex, creating a break, a breach, between the elements of our nervous system naturally conceived to function related to one another.

This short-circuit in the transmission of nervous impulse leads us to go directly from the level of the feelings to the level of action, without going through the level of reflection, a necessary step to lead to a well-fitted action. Those reactions to the words also have repercussions on our whole psycho-somatic organism and thus can generate a number of pathologies. Hence the importance to understand how they consist in and the consequences they lead to, as well as to learn how to use correctly our nervous structure, in function of its actual capacities, to get to an efficient and adjusted action and preserve our own balance.

#### **4. Human knowledge, a knowledge which depends on the capacities and the limits of human organism:**

Our nervous structure feels sensations which it organizes in perceptions; those perceptions depend on the possibilities and the limits of the human nervous structure; therefore, all which we can come to know depends on the capacities and the limits of our organism; so we are not able to know “everything”, nor to apprehend completely and exactly what we call “reality”, as some levels of it are for us of the order of known, some, of the unknown, and at last some others, of the humanly unknowable.

It follows from this that the extent of our ignorance on ourselves and the world we live in largely exceeds the extent of our knowledge, and that it is impossible to anybody to pretend to be “always right”, nor to hold “the whole truth” in any domain, which would require, to emit a grounded opinion, to have the whole set of the data concerning the subjects we talk about. As such a knowledge is humanly inaccessible, it follows from those elements that the dogmas and speeches grounded on the certainty to detain the sole and unique absolute truth on any subject, as well as the will to impose this certainty are deprived of meaning or credibility, as no human being can hold this absolute truth and can pretend to.

#### **5. Relativity of human observation:**

Concerning our vision of ourselves and of the world, i.e. our position of an observer towards what we observe, our civilization has experienced three periods:

-The Greek or metaphysic or pre-scientific period, (Pythagoras, Euclid – Aristotle: antiquity) : then, the observed object had no importance, only the observer was taken in account.

-The classical or semi-scientific period (Newton – Descartes, XVIIth century) which considers that the observer scarcely counts and that only the observed object is really important.

-The mathematic or scientific period (Einstein, Korzybski, XXth century): all man can know is a phenomenon due both to the observer and to what he observes. This period considers that every observation is pertaining to the observer and varies according to the observers. It follows from this that two people observing the same thing will make two different observations, in function of their sensibility, their tastes, their previous knowledge,

their points of interest, etc., without those observations being necessarily opposed nor contradictory, as each of them can reflect different aspects of the observed phenomenon.

The conception which still prevails nowadays in human sciences is the one of the Cartesian period, which does not take in account the coefficient of the observer, nor the fact that each observation being relative, it is impossible to describe everything with a complete accuracy, hence a tendency to consider what is described as the mirror of reality, as “true”, and not to make the difference between what is said, i.e. the level of the words, of the theories, and what actually happens at the level of the described facts; then we mistake the words for the facts they represent and orient ourselves with languages, which are verbal maps of reality, as those maps do not fit with the territories, with the facts they describe; they are not reliable, and lead to errors and disastrous results .

In conclusion, both Aristotelian and Cartesian periods, obsolete nowadays, have hampered our acquisition of handling the symbols, making us unable to use words accurately. This maladjustment has led to inaptitude to develop our capacities of reflection; it has paralyzed the development of our cortex, maintaining us captive of emotional animalistic reactions, and blocked us at a fixed step of evolution, depriving us of the specific attributes of our humanity.

Insofar as our vision of human organism conditions our vision of the world and the type of relation we set up with ourselves, the others and this world, the improper and distorted conceptions which were transmitted to us lead to a corresponding disorder in our thought, our reflection and our behavior. So it is important to acquire a vision of ourselves and of the world as much in accordance with the facts as possible, which fits what we actually are, to learn to use words properly and orient ourselves in function of reliable grids and maps, similar to the territories, so to learn how to find one’s way correctly.

It also is important to draw a new map of our organism in function of its actual capacities, specific of our humanity.

## **6. Sexual functions not limited to procreation:**

For Korzybski, sexual functions are not limited to the function of reproduction, far from it. They are wider and more important. He insisted in his lectures on the main function of the gonads, “sexual glands”, 9/10<sup>th</sup> of which consist in revitalizing the whole body, including the brain, and only 1/10<sup>th</sup> concerns sexuality strictly speaking. He insisted on the pernicious role of false knowledge and of the “snatches of medical learning”, which generate alienation and are at the source of the most of our sexual problems, as well as on the fact we have to know the functioning of some of our organs to be able to use them properly, and on the influence of the semantic environment and infantilism in our sexual problems.

In the domain of psychoanalysis, Jung put in evidence the notions of animus and anima, and the fact that male and female forces are present in all the people and that they should be accepted and recognized as such. He worked upon phenomena and psychic levels previously unknown in the West such as synchronicities, and upon the concepts of archetypes and collective unconscious, common to the whole mankind.

The translations of books from eastern civilizations permitted the spreading in the West of non-Aristotelian conceptions of sexuality, integrated to other levels of the being, recognized as a cosmic force (Indian civilization, Tantrism) and used related to spirituality independently of procreation.

As far as our sexual functions are concerned, we now know that they are inherent to our organism, as well as any other function (respiratory, cardiac, digestive, nervous, etc.), and that the judgments of value passed on it in the past are groundless and inconsistent.

From here we can foresee a new base of relation between men and women, free from guilt problematics and able to actualize the different dimensions of love. The recognition of animus and anima present in everyone as creative and complementary forces makes then possible an evolutive and constructive relation based upon mutual respect, affection, recognition and complementarity, the result of which is superior to the sum of its parts and the access to capacities and levels of the being of human organism which have remained at a potential step in our civilization.

Therefore we have at our disposal, at the end of the XXth century, new basis of data to restructure our conception of ourselves and of the world and go out of the dead ends of the previous system of thought of our civilization.

A restructuration of our vision of us also goes through the elaboration of a new map of human organism integrating the set of the functions and capacities of this organism. As far as a part of those functions and capacities still are unknown to us, to draw this map implies to explore the territories of our inner space, and to examine and compare our respective experiences in the framework of a scientific step. General semantics can permit us to sort out the contents of our head in unifying the different levels of knowledge of a similar structure, at the biological, physiological, psychological, semantic, structural and spiritual levels.

## **7. Free, autonomous and equal individuals:**

As far as the differences of hierarchic status between people are concerned in our societies, we also know that the concepts of “rulers” and “the ruled”, of “manuals” and “intellectuals”, inherited from the Aristotelian division between “masters” and “slaves”, have no reason to be in a democratic society in which “Men are born and remain free and equal in right.” (first article of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen , August 26th 1789). Hence those differences of status are unconstitutional since 1789, and, as such, illegitimate.

We also know that, at the biological level, every normal human being has at his disposal a nervous system gifted with a cortex, tool of reflection, and is perfectly able to think by himself, to take decisions concerning his own life, and bring to his interrogation on it the answers which suit him.

Therefore the theories on inequalities, on the differences of values, between the people in function of criteria of skin color, of ethnic, genetic, cultural, confessional, economic, etc., particularities rest upon untruth, sophisms; they do not fit the facts and without any scientific ground. They also are not compatible with the articles of our political model, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, which has remained until now at the level of the words under the influence of the systems of dualist thinking, as it has never been actually applied at the legislative and institutional levels.

We can adopt new criteria of evaluation based upon the absolute value of human person, in function of which we all have, as human beings, the same value, as nobody can be subjected to abstract criteria, created by our nervous structure and without any real existence.



We all have, as human beings, basically the same value, as the human value constitutes for our democratic and humanist system the absolute value, and the same human needs. Therefore it is suitable to restructure our ways to function according to those human needs and this absolute value as far as freedom of thought, of worship and of speech is concerned, as they are avouched by the articles X and XI of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.

We also presently know, concerning the structure of human organism, that the different systems inside our organism have relations of complementarity, interdisciplinarity and thermodynamic and informational openness (Henri Laborit). As this structure is not compatible with hierarchic structures of power based upon Aristotelian premises, we can restructure the set of human levels (political, economic, legislative, institutional, etc.) on relations structurally similar on one side to the ones of our organism, and on another side, to our political model, relations of freedom, equality and brotherhood.

So general semantics can help us to order human affairs in harmonizing our conception of the human being with our knowledge and our models at political and scientific levels, and benefit, at the level of facts, from the gains they aim to bring us.

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