

Aristotle: On Intuition and Induction in Research on the Universe



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Short Communication

In the ancient Greek culture and philosophy statements about the world had cosmologic and cosmogonic character. The first were totally (like, for example, in Thales', Anaximander's, Heraclitus' philosophy) or partially connected with inductive assumptions (e.g. in Pythagoreans', Plato's or Aristotle's statements). On the other hand, the second had always metaphysical (that is, mythical) nature of religious (like in Orphism), quasi-religious (like in Pythagoreanism) or secular (like in views of Plato – in spite of the fact that he referred to religious myths – as well as in Aristotle's and Epicurus' works) character. In Aristotle's statement about the empirically perceptible world (the cosmos) there are two main methodological currents – the inductive (empirical) one and the intuitive one – concerning the following findings:

- Those of ideographic (descriptive, based also on induction) character;
- Those interpreting sense, essence, principles and reasons in an intuitive way.

The first two kinds of findings inspired and made it possible to formulate:

- Intuitive statements of nomotetic character – that is, those explaining construction and functioning of the universe.

That is the sequence which comes from Aristotle's considerations included in "Metaphysics". The precondition for proper description and explanation of existence and functioning of the cosmos is understanding that the foundations of the universe are constituted by a supernatural being in the form of the necessary Unmoved, Prime, Eternal Mover or the First Cause, the divine Reason and God, who is a living, continuous and the optimal being, a very self-existent act (Aristoteles, Metaphysics/, 1071a–1073a). Thus, the pivotal aim of Aristotle's philosophy of nature is the proper groundwork for metaphysics of the universe.

The abovementioned methodological currents can be described as:

- The metaphysical one; that is – in that case – the intuitive one, which has mythical (or, if interpreted more broadly, mythological) character;
- The inductive one, based on external experience – that is, on extraspection.

The discussed currents constitute together methodological assumptions of universal or just global character. They refer both to the ancient Greek as well as to the contemporary philosophy of the universe.

At first Aristotle proclaims, on the basis of induction, that the cosmos exists and then he explains in an intuitive, metaphysical and mythical way the existence and functioning of the universe. He creates a peculiar philosophy of myth. God appears in it as a being which is immanent in its relation towards the world and transfers to it its power, divinity, immortality, eternity, constant and incessant movement and life in a hylozoist meaning. The Stagirite points also out to difficulties connected with reliable explanation and understanding of existence and functioning of the universe. In his times they led every philosopher to cognitive perplexity. "Now he who wonders and is perplexed feels that he is ignorant (thus the myth-lover is in a sense a philosopher, since myths are composed of wonders)" (Aristotle, Metaphysics, 982b). That who refers, for example, to myths saturating Greek culture or creates myths describing and explaining nature and qualities of supranaturalist – abstract, metaphysical or divine (of non-religious character) – beings is a representative of the philosophy of myth. That myth simultaneously points out to cognitive limitations of the human individual, philosophy and science.

The philosophy of myth is a philosophy justifying existence of supernatural beings and making use of the scheme of mythical thinking based on rational and irrational thinking. Both in the first and in the second case the final conclusions concerning the existence of God have irrational character, because they are based on intuition and a connected metaphysical hypothesis which cannot be currently confirmed. It means that – regardless the applied con-

text of justification: a rational or an irrational one – the certainty of God's existence is not going to be proved. The philosophy of myth and a methodology applied by the Stagirite has universal and global character in that sense that it concerns all independent idealist philosophies and philosophies of religious character, regardless culture as well as place and time of their coming into being.



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