

**Review¹ of Andrew Targowski's
 “*Harnessing the Power of Wisdom: From Data to Wisdom*”,
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**FROM ARISTOTLE’S WISDOM TO THE CONTEMPORARY
 INTEGRALIST WISDOM – 2400 YEARS LATER**

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The scholarly achievements of Professor Andrew S. Targowski, a Polish-American scholar, in the areas of cognitive informatics, civilization studies and wisdom theory is of particular interest for scientists of the Biocosmological Association (BCA).³ Professor Targowski was being a president of the International Society for the Comparative Studies of Civilizations (ISCSC) in the years 2007–2013 and is a leading scholar of this organization. One of the ISCSC’s founders (1961) and its president was Pitirim Sorokin – a Russian-American outstanding scholar who formed dynamic cyclic socioculturology and a civilizational theory.

Sorokin’s endeavours applied the principles of Organicism, of the Aristotelian essence.⁴ This Organicism does not consist only in searching for analogies with biological organism and thus following the formulas of holistic organicism: “the whole is more than the sum of the parts;”⁵ and “the whole determines the nature of

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³ The Biocosmological Association (BCA)³ was founded in 2010. Its website: <http://en.biocosmology.ru/> Realizing BCA’s activity, we rely on the Aristotelian philosophy as the autonomic whole all-embracing (super)system of rational scholarly knowledge. Thus, Biocosmology (neo-Aristotelism) is a kind of “cosmology,” or “kosmology” if to refer to the Ancient “Kosmos” – the notion of the world-whole and the Organicist world order. In this, we bear in mind that Aristotle’s philosophy and science (as the supersystem of rational scholarly knowledge) is the foundation of the entire modern scientific edifice.

⁴ A key to understanding Sorokin’s works is that he implicitly (spontaneously) used the scientific Organicism of Aristotle. However, inasmuch as the whole significance of Aristotle’s all-embracing (super)system of knowledge has been drastically misinterpreted, Sorokin did not realize this (true) Organicism in a explicit methodological mode; in this regard, his position was similar to the majority of modern scholars. For that reason we write the key notions (Organicism, Hylomorphism, Triadicity, etc.) with capitals – to emphasize their belongingness to the true (Aristotelian) Organicism.

⁵ Not surprisingly, as it is affirmed by Harold J. Morowitz, “the identical words ‘the whole is more than the sum of its parts’ occur in the scientific treatise and papal discourse” (Morowitz, H. J. 2002. *The Emergence of Everything: How the World Became Complex*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.23).

parts.”¹ In contradistinction, Sorokin’s Organicism (in essence, a form of Aristotelism) is reduced mainly to the inherent causes of the parts (organs of the given organism). This Organicism has basically a Bio-Kosmist² nature, i.e. in addition to the two accepted by science, independent components – physical (the material world) and vital (life, organic, biological) – the sociocultural or superorganic phenomena are added, playing a basic role in the hierarchy of Sorokin’s theory. The last ones are viewed as a higher immaterial component of the supra-conscious meaning (the inherently driving causes) superimposed upon the physical and vital components.

Thus, in Sorokin’s theory, the sociocultural world (individuals, groups, societies, civilizations) functions not only as a set of physical objects and biological organisms, but mainly as a collection of mindful individuals – the bearers, creators, and agents of inherent immaterial (but Hylomorphist – Organicist) meanings and goals. Sorokin introduces the basic principle of immanent determinism in his *Social and Cultural Dynamics*: “a sociocultural system, like a biological system, unfolds according to its inherent potentialities.”³ On the basis of this approach, the Biocosmological Association is founded and does its researches following both the Organicist principles of Aristotle’s philosophical and scientific system, and the Organicist dynamic and cyclic (of the Triadic essence – Sensate, Ideational, and Integral) principle of Sorokin’s civilizational theory. Hence, the Biocosmological Association is keenly interested in the researches carried out by Andrew Targowski.

First of all, we would like to state the cornerstone moment – every approach to the study of wisdom is essentially based on the organicist foundation for viewing and studying the issue, or includes organicism as its essential constituent. In principle, without the Organicist standpoint the understanding of the dynamic and cyclic substance and the hierarchical and heterogeneous nature of sociocultural and psychological phenomena and processes are impossible. In other words, each wise or right decision⁴ is possible only in the case of the integration of the individual’s emotions, intuition and intelligence (which are basically Ideational,⁵ of intrinsic origination) with the perception and knowledge of the tangible world and the

¹ For instance, as it is analyzed by Denis Charles Phillips, among the constituent ideas of Organicism is the following one: “the whole determines the nature of the parts” (Phillips, D. C. 1976. *Holistic Thought in Social Science*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p.16).

² Herein, “Bio-” has the all-embracing meaning, including all forms of life: biological, anthropological, social, cultural, and global. The letter “K” in the “Kosmist” points out to the Ancient (Organicist) notion of Kosmos (which signifies cosmos-world as the all-embracing Organicist Kosmos), i.e. to the ancient Greek rational cosmism.

³ Richards, M. P. 2010. “Introduction to the Transaction Edition.” In: *Social and Cultural Dynamics: A Study of Change in Major Systems of Art, Truth, Ethics, Law, and Social Relationships*. 4 vols. 1937 (vols. 1–3), 1941 (vol. 4); rev. 1957 (Fourth printing 2010). New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers. P.ix.

⁴ “Wise decision” and “right choice” are key notions in Targowski’s book.

⁵ If to use Sorokin’s terms, taken from his Triadic (Sensate/Ideational/Integral) conception, (substantiated in his four-volumes *Social and Cultural Dynamics*; 1937–1941).

surroundings (which are basically Sensate, i.e. have mainly an extrinsic origination). Otherwise, each wise decision is possible only if the individual is able (including the essential educational contribution) to perceive and realize her/his unity (integrity) with the surrounding world (what is basically related to Sorokin's Integral supersystem). Only in this case, it becomes possible to produce wise or right decisions—in establishing the equilibrium (harmony, safety, wellbeing) with the environment after a disturbance, or in representing prospects for her/his further sustainable development. On the contrary, each dualist position (when the mind of the individual is essentially separated from the milieu) is good for achieving a high level of expert (positivist) knowledge but is senseless and useless for making wise decisions. The point is that every wise decision and/or right choice is both holistically related to the given surrounding sociocultural and ecological world, precisely “here and now”, and, at the same time – is correlated to the individual's whole lifespan (ontogenetic) development.

Hence, Andrew Targowski states that the “right judgment alone is insufficient, then, for the right choice to be made: emotions, intuition, will, the historical time of the civilization, and many other factors come into play [...] necessary for the situation and time.” (Targowski, 2013, p.16) The relatedness of a wise decision to the whole life of the individual is not less essential (in the Organicist meaning): “One will be called wise when the balance of their life is positive and results from a number of wisely taken decisions over their lifespan.” (Ibid., p.17)

The structure of the book includes three parts: the first makes the “Introduction to Wisdom;” the second unfolds the “Wisdom Concept”; and the third deals with “Wisdom, People and Civilization” and develops the conception of “Wise Civilization.” The author's basic assumption is that “Wisdom ought to be defined in such terms as to be understood not only by experts but by an average man.” (Ibid., p.16) In this respect, Targowski's book is a vivid sample of a successful presentation of the complex material in a simple language and with plenty of easily understandable examples. This style precisely corresponds to the goal of explaining the notion “wisdom” whose essence is “good judgment and choice in the context of the art of living.” (Ibid., 2013, p.16) Likewise, this is a well-organized book (and its contents), especially given its broad sense – starting from the issues of information technology to the history of research on wisdom, thus arriving at the development of the wisdom concept and art of living, and contemporary applications of wisdom theory in various spheres of the psychological and sociocultural reality, up to constructing the concept of wise civilization.

The essential assumption introduced by Andrew Targowski is that “Any sane person can make wise decisions throughout their lifetime, from childhood to old age” (ibid., p.16); and that “in a cognitive IT approach, wisdom can be possessed by any sane individual.” (Ibid., p.7) Thus “any sane individual, including youths and even children, is capable of taking wise action and can think wisely. Certainly this depends on the context of situation and time.” (ibid, p.iv) The author adds: “the quality of

such wisdom changes over the individual's life and the historical time of the civilization." (Ibid., p.16)

Although not specially focusing on this subject-matter, the book of Andrew Targowski directly points out to Pitirim Sorokin's significant Triadic sociocultural approach claiming that every time three types of sociocultural (all-embracing) actual supersystems exist, but one of them dominates, determining the essence and wholeness of the cultural phase or epoch, and, in respect to the individual's ontogenesis – dominating over the existing "type of the person" and her/his "way of life." Essentially, all three types (Sorokin theoretically substantiated two polar: Sensate and Ideational; and the intermediate basal – Integral) are universalistic, exist permanently and synchronously in any social and cultural reality, are autonomic (independent in producing their own specific effects) and equal to each other, but organically are united and integrally cultivate a sociocultural reality and the individual's whole (ontogenetic) life activity. Any individual, therefore, must be aware and capable of entering and using all the three grand modes of thinking and deliberate behavioural activity.

In this light, it is clearly seen that wisdom according to Targowski has an Integral(ist) essence. Indeed, in the author's material and his discourse (given in a valuable dialogic manner and with a lot of interesting examples taken broadly from various domains of the social and cultural life) we can easily arrive at the comprehension of a Triadic mental structure. Evidently, the right judgment has the bipolar essence: on the one pole, we have reason (and reasoning) based on the objective data and its logical (mathematical) processing, and the conclusive consistent (expert) judgment, while on the other pole – native intelligence (the mind and intellectual functioning) based on the inherent ability to grasp intuitively (but on the basis of a factual evidence) the essential truths of the things (and of the "thing-in-itself" – the individual her/himself) and their logical consequences that lead eventually to the right judgment. Thus, each right judgment naturally includes in itself two polar constituents: one of them directly refers to Plato's mode of idealistic (Dualist) thinking, while the other is related to Aristotle's (Hylomorphist, Realistic) mode of theoretical wisdom, which is, according to Aristotle's definition, "scientific knowledge, combined with intuitive reason, of the things that are highest by nature."¹

Andrew Targowski emphasizes (although implicitly) these polar essences, for instance, while dealing with the main criteria and "components of wisdom, seen as the right judgment and choice," as follows: "conceptualization by means of big picture versus small picture and vice versa; short-term versus long-term in the understanding of the situation; localization versus globalization in the understanding of the situation, and vice versa" (ibid., 98) – all these elements in the context of the art of living. The author states that "the word 'art' used in this citation refers to an intuitive and innovative approach to the known and right principles of judgment and

¹ Aristotle. 1954. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Ross, W.D. In: *The Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Ross, W.D., vol. 9, Oxford: Clarendon Press. P.84.

an ability to create new principles and breaking the rules, outdated for the case.” (Ibid., p.7) At the same time, “the quality of wisdom depends on the individual’s art of living, which follows from their genotype, character, morality, education, practice, relations, environment as well as their ability to draw upon the wisdom of the family, trade, civilization and its other kinds.” (Ibid., p.112) In fact, each right choice is a clear combination and integration, in Sorokin’s terms – of Sensate and Ideational features of the individual’s and sociocultural reality. In any case, the integration of polar meanings and means (of tangible and intangible things – uniting the opposites into one whole wise decision, a right choice that “comes to fruition in effective action”) is the object of study and training (education), and, certainly, a piece of art, as well!

Thus, wisdom (right choices and wise decisions) straightly refers to the man’s natural ability; what is more, wisdom is equally expressed in the form of art in each conscious period of the individual’s whole lifetime (ontogenesis), and in each place of her/his social and cultural activity. At the same time, wisdom is distinct in each period of the individual’s dynamic and cyclic ontogenesis. This issue is brilliantly disclosed in the final Chapter 15, “Becoming Wise,” wherein likewise the practical significance of Andrew Targowski’s conception of the “Four Minds of a Contemporary Man” is shown.

Author’s key notions of wisdom (right choices, wise decision and art of living) are close to the meaning of Aristotle’s practical wisdom. As is commonly known, Aristotle distinguished theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom. The former refers directly to his scientific Organicism (i.e. the realm of scientific activity). In turn, the latter, has a principally distinct, i.e. practical sphere of activity. Aristotle wrote

“Now it is thought to be the mark of a man of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself, not in some particular respect, e.g. about what sorts of thing conduce to health or to strength, but about what sorts of thing conduce to the good life in general.”¹

Thus, for Aristotle, practical wisdom requires knowing, in general, how to live well throughout the whole individual’s life.

Andrew Targowski emphasizes that “the Greek philosopher and scholar Aristotle is a great example of the universal mind.” (Ibid., p.70) In all cases, we are to remember that Aristotle is actually a father of science, i.e. that his all-embracing supersystem of knowledge² is a real foundation for the entire edifice of modern science. Likewise, his Organicist cosmology is precisely the pole of cognition opposing the currently dominating Dualist pole of objective (expert) data and competent judgments. Thence, as “wisdom is seen as the right judgment and choice,” and inasmuch as “right choices” is clearly the form of Integralist intellectual activity – the only way to the rational cognition and scholarly understanding of “right

¹ Ross, W. D. 1955. *Aristotle: Selections*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons. P.260.

² In BCA, we define such an (all-embracing) body of knowledge as “cosmology.”

choices” (as the forms of Integralist thinking) is an urgent rehabilitation of Aristotelism in its true (Organicist – Naturalist) essential meaning. Indeed, the cornerstone is that wisdom (wise decisions, right choices, art of living) are located between the two independent poles of thinking and knowledge: of anthropocentrism (dualism, physicalism), and of AnthroKosmism (Hylomorphism, Organicist Naturalism).

Another cornerstone moment (from the above stated standpoint) is Andrew Targowski’s powerful and valuable endeavour to develop an interdisciplinary theory of wisdom and to realize its societal institutionalization (to apply his theory in social life, developing the man’s ability and approaching art of living). This endeavour is substantially similar to Pitirim Sorokin’s attempts to create a theoretical framework and realize the practical activities aimed at the inclusion into contemporary societal life the principles of creative altruism. Sorokin’s creative altruism is considered as one of his key concepts, together with the introduced Triadic Organicist conception of Sensate, Ideational and Integral types (supersystems) of sociocultural reality, principle of immanent determinism and the fundamental concept of Integralism. In the late 1940s Sorokin organized the Research Center in Creative Altruism at Harvard University in order to develop his concept of creative altruism. In the Center, together with his fellows, Sorokin strived to combat the exclusive role played by Sensate beliefs and practices in the contemporary society (enrooted in materialism, greed and egoism), and attempted to institutionalize and promote behaviour (by reconstructing and transforming social reality) that was based on altruistic values and Integralism.

At the Center, Sorokin produced his major works on altruism. He defined altruism (1948) as “the action that produces and maintains the physical and/or psychological good of others,”¹ and this definition (and Sorokin’s activity on the whole) evidently correlates with Aristotle’s practical wisdom. One more similarity of Sorokin’s and Targowski’s approaches is that along with theoretical explorations they both are aimed at the reconstruction of our everyday life so that – on the principles of Integralism—altruistic acts or wise decisions become accepted into the curriculum of conventional educational structures, and, eventually, be practiced in everyday life by ordinary people involved in common social settings.

Analysing this issue, Jay Weinstein and Elvira del Pozo Avino, referring to the researches of Barry V. Johnston, stressed the fact that “the research of the Center failed to start a significant mass movement or to institutionalize the study of altruism in the social sciences.” All this happened, according to them, because “the sociological community showed little interest in altruism, integralism, or the reconstruction of society.” In the end, although emphasising the importance of Sorokin’s studies and practical endeavors – they agreed with the conclusion of Barry Johnston that “Sorokin’s methods [...] is a start, not a science...”²

¹ See: Sorokin, P.A. 1948. *The Reconstruction of Humanity*. Boston: Beacon Press. Pp. 57–60.

² Weinstein, J., E. del Pozo, A. 2004. “Altruism and the Prospects for a Common Humanity.” Pp.98–124, in *The Changing Face of Globalization*. Dasgupta, India: Sage. P.115.

In this light, undoubtedly recognizing the high value of Targowski's book and his whole line of creation and practical application of his theory of wisdom (ITW), we must not overlook the great resource and direction of the ITW scholarly development. It is quite reasonable to enhance the scientific (primarily, methodological) component of the whole endeavor and process, starting with the actual construction of the foundation and basic framework for the Integralist scholarly activity. The latter (relying on the main principle of Sorokin's theory) is essentially the integration (but on the inherent Integralist fundamentals) of the exploratory and learning means of the both poles (sociocultural supersystems), of their cognitive and educational resources.

From the Biocosmological standpoint, one of them is the currently dominating (or, rather, dictating) pole of modern mathematical physicalism (in respect to science) and of dualist (anthropocentric) philosophies which study consciousness. The other pole (and the sociocultural supersystem that includes science and philosophy as its components) is built upon essentially the Aristotelian (Biocosmological) scientific and philosophical Organicism. Substantially, therefore, we really are able to substantiate and advance the contemporary Integralist realm of theoretical and practical activity, including the scholarly rationalization of ITW-development, and, thereby, its universalization. The point is that the rationally explained things become understandable by any sane person, including even unwise or bloodthirsty politicians and public leaders. In this way, objectives and contents of the ITW-process can get a significant increase of implementation.

In conclusion, Andrew Targowski's book *Harnessing the Power to Wisdom: From Data to Wisdom* is itself a remarkable wise contribution to the contemporary cultural world, forming an interdisciplinary theory of wisdom and conception of the wise Integralist civilization. Substantially, this is a significant step towards the integral organization of contemporary social and cultural life, and a valuable piece of information of the integrally organizing essence.