

ARISTOTLE'S AND LUCRETIUS'S COSMOLOGY, AND PARADOXES OF GIAMBATTISTA VICO'S POETIC COSMOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT. *One of the most distinguished cultural and analytical artefacts of the post-Renaissance and pre-Enlightenment era in Western Europe is the poetic cosmography of the Neapolitan philosopher Giambattista Vico (1648–1744), articulated in his monumental and ambitious New Science (1744). This “Italian Hegel”, as many later labeled Vico, was forgotten for a while in the history of European ideas, but his theory of cycles influenced the imagination of such thinkers as Michelet, Goethe, Foscolo, Marx, Cassirer, Freud, and, later, Northrop Frye and Marshall McLuhan. But the Vicean poetic cosmography, included into his new-science-project, has somehow escaped the attention of scholars, remaining on the margins of the history of European ideas. It is essentially rooted in the Greco-Roman culture, i.e. the Aristotelian paradigm, in turn, transmitted by the Romans via Ovid and Lucretius. This paper will pursue a double goal— it will establish the often interrupted line of **cultural continuity** from antiquity to modernity on the one hand, and on the other, will present Vico’s poetic cosmology as its manifestation, as well as in the context of present rising interest in cosmology and Biocosmology. We shall argue that ancient Aristotle and Lucretius constitute the basic point of analytical departure for Vico’s “new science”, having inspired his dismissive **divine anti-cosmology**, while Ovid is also a source of inspiration for his Aesopian tactics. In the process, we shall also deal with the role of religious mythology on scientific representation of the universe.*

KEYWORDS: *cosmos; cosmology; alternative dismissive anti-cosmology; poetic, cosmic; divine; sacred; reason(lessness); belief; triad.*

Gods go by the names we give them
Cicero

1. The Aim of the New Science

Giambattista Vico (1648–1744), a Professor of Latin Eloquence at the University of Naples, has entered the history of ideas with his single major work, *The New Science*, published in Italian in 1744. For several centuries, his work and his intellectual persona had been neglected, despite having influenced already such thinkers as Herder, Michelet, Marx, Peirce, Cassirer, Northrop Frye and McLuhan, and many others. The universally revered Bertrand Russell totally dismissed Vico’s

work as a “mixture of various ingredients that are not properly distinguished” (1959, p. 207). And yet, the ingredients of the Vician intellectual prescription are quite obvious – they are the towering Greek thinker Aristotle and no less impressive Roman poet-philosopher, Lucretius. Those are not only the major “distinguishable ingredients” of the Vician model of the civilized human world and cosmos, but also the basic analytical fundamentals of the entire Western culture, revived and re-edited in the post-Renaissance period.

Drawing on the re-translated Aristotle in the 17th and 18th centuries, Giambattista Vico made an attempt of offering some allegedly new paradigms for improving the understanding of the universe, human place in it and Being in general. He envisaged his “new science” become the new model of analysis, new look on history of human evolution, civilization, new vision of humankind and her place in Cosmos. Paradoxically, this post-Renaissance man, standing to greet the Age of Reason, oscillated between Reason and Belief, between the analytical conclusions, search for truth and simple surrender to Myth. Having re-discovered in the 18th century Aristotle and his materialistic or pagan thought two millennia afterwards, Vico had regrettably betrayed the man of Protagoras (481-411 BC), so much cherished by Aristotle. He had virtually decapitated the man as the “measure of all things,” having produced instead an analytical alternative – his **anti-cosmology**. Ironically, in the process, Vico came up with the most brilliantly formulated theory of cycles.

The problematic Vician cosmology in itself became the best proof of his own theory of cycles which could also explain the phenomenon of human regress, oblivion of the old discoveries, omission of brilliant achievements and forgetting the cultural past, followed by the brief Eureka-moments of intellectual delight. Vico’s anti-cosmology, contrasting the Aristotelian cosmology and that of the Roman neo-Aristotelians, is profoundly symmetrical to the 21st -century **cosmological paradoxes** – the vigorous exploration of Cosmos, on the one hand, and the rather flawed reasoning, regarding causes, unity of all phenomena and the role in the humankind in the universe. The 21st -century, much like the post-Renaissance era of Vico, is displaying the regrettable symbiosis of the secular, scientific and religious myths.

2. Three – the Key-sign and the Building Block in Aristotle and Vico

Pondering on the structure of the Universe, Aristotle proposed the general model of inquiry and the method of studying nature which was based on Unity and the **Triadic** principle. In his essay, “On Heavens,” he wrote, for instance, “three dimensions are all they are” (1984, vol. I: 447). This conclusion came to him in alignment with the thought of Pythagoras (580–500 BC) and his followers who held “that the universe and all that is in it is determined by the **number three**” (1984, vol.1:447). Aristotle also stated that “‘three’ is the first number to which term ‘all’ is applied (ibid). This **triadic** principle will be embraced not only by nearly all scientists, students of nature and scholars, but even by the theologians, advocating the divine mythology and attributing the origins of the universe to a single omnipotent power. Hence, the Holy Trinity in the Judeo-Christian doctrines, triads in

Giambattista Vico, firstness, secondness and thirdness in Charles Pierce, the three sources of knowledge in Isaiah Berlin and so on...

Having embarked on his ambitious project and offering allegedly new models of analysis, Vico emphasized the **archetypal triad**, nearly drilling the Pythagorean-Aristotelian principle into all his major categories. Having distinguished:

three kinds of natures;
 three kinds of customs;
 three kinds of natural law;
 three kinds of government;
 three kinds of languages;
 three kinds of characters;
 three kinds of jurisprudence;
 three kinds of authority;
 three kinds of authority;
 three kinds of reason;
 three kinds of judgments.

Vico deliberately extended the ancient Greek triads to underscore their value in the post-Renaissance Europe and anticipating the Age of Reason. In the process, Vico, despite his being a modern thinker, exhibited all the universal symptoms of cultural evolution, and unavoidably characterized either by deliberate or unintended amnesia. Unlike Aristotle who paid tribute to Hesiod while discussing the origins of the Universe, Vico chooses to rely on the more remembered Homer. The triad or the **number-three sign** enables Giambattista Vico to emulate Aristotle and laconically re-describe not only the physical, but also the cultural universe, i.e. the order of things in Nature and in Culture. The nature-culture paradigm, more sophisticatedly presented or event implied in Aristotle, is nearly dogmatically drilled by Vico into the cultural memory of his 18th-century contemporaries. If it is not a direct inter-textual link to the Greek antiquity, it is, at least, an attempt of secondary transmission via the Roman poet Ovid. Later, in the 20th century, Umberto Eco would re-visit the nature-culture paradigm in *The Theory of Semiotics* where he would bridge Aristotle, Ovid, Lucretius and Giambattista Vico.

3. Ovidian *Metamorphoses*

Change or *metabole* is the Aristotelian definition of the change of state “from something to something” but also a description of the possibility that “there can be change of change” (1984, vol. 1, p. 380-81). The Latin poet Publius Ovidius Naso (43BC–18AD) utilized his model in his own poetic story of change in the universe, the immortal 15-book *Metamorphoses*, long forgotten and resurrected in the 11th century, the time of the early Renaissance. Then it became popular later, during the High Renaissance. The Church, disapproving of Ovid’s immortality and his pagan thinking, could not stop poets in the cathedrals from emulating the glorious Roman poet. Thus, later, the Church fathers use another tactics – they seized upon the Ovidian **divine cosmology** to reinforce their own creed and domination. The English

“Ovidian Age,” as per Margaret Drabble, came with Chaucer, Marlowe, Spenser, Chapman and, finally, Shakespeare who were all indebted to Ovid (1985, p. 726). Ovid, who inspired many, imagined the history of cosmos and man in this grand historic poem. Having had a profound impact on generations of European writers and thinkers, he had also impressed Vico. In fact, one could even trace the Vician theory of cycles and his idea of ages both to Aristotle and Ovid.

Ovid imagined and idealized the first, allegedly, idyllic golden age of Man when harmony, happiness and peace reigned without army, weaponry, law and literacy. Then he invented the silver age that followed first, marked by the appearance of the four seasons which would enforce the **cyclical permanence of changes**. The next age that followed, according to him, was the age of hard iron, the time of invention of weapons or when “modesty and truth fled the Earth” (Ovid 1915, P. 12). Ovid designed this age to be the time of making gods “take seat in Heaven” in order to bring about some order at time of human chaos and savage state. His gods are a product of human imagination, luxury of existence rather than creators of the universe. Nearly eighteen centuries after Ovid, Giambattista Vico presented to the world his triad of ages – the age of spear with the silent men, the heroic age and the age of *fantasia*. The symmetry is more than striking. Vico distinguishes the three principal actors – gods, heroes and men. Having accepted the basic Aristotelian triad and appropriating Ovidian three ages, Vico, nonetheless, unlike both of them, entrusts Gods with the creation of things in the physical and cultural Universe, having thus constructed his own **dismissive divine cosmology**. A distant receiver of Plato, Aristotle and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Vico leaned more towards the Ovidian divine mythology which he completely adjusted to his society that had witnessed the barbaric public burning of Giordano Bruno and condemnation of Galileo.

4. The Revolutionary Cosmology of Lucretius – *De Rerum Natura*

Lucretius Titus Carus (99–55 BC) had authored his most blasphemous *De Rerum Natura* around 50BC, the time of the most vicious battle for Belief and spread of Christianity throughout the Mediterranean. Anticipating the rise of religious fanaticism and standing on guard for secular civilization, the clearly thinking Roman expounded in this grand and the longest European poem strict materialism, condemning religions of the past and future. If most ancient Greek materialist thinkers wrestled with the divine pantheon, including Aristotle’s mentor Plato, Lucretius, along with the Roman thinkers, provided the **analytical continuum** to the “process of separation and differentiation,” initiated by the Greek tradition. For instance, Cicero (106–43 BC) reminded in his *Nature of Gods* how Protagoras (483–410 BC)

was banished by the Athenians from the city and its territories, and his books were publicly burned because these words were in the beginning of the treatise concerning the Gods: “I am unable to arrive at any knowledge whether there are any Gods” (1888, p. 231).

Cicero's reference to Protagoras in the Roman context best reveals the essence of the Roman secular society, standing in front of the abyss of its own destruction by powerful religion and the parade of the Religious. The Roman secularism was a brief cycle of Western Enlightenment, later suffocated by the Christian dogma, the clone of the powerful and stubborn religion of the Eastern subjects, and the creators of the **dismissive cosmology**.

Sensing the coming destruction of the pagan Roman Empire, nearly a decade prior to Cicero, Lucretius blatantly condemned religion in his monumental *De Rerum Natura*, the grand ode to materialism, progressive scientific thinking, hymn to Aristotelianism and, what turned out to be also, a prophetic warning to all Europeans. Millennia after the first adoption of Christianity, many scholars were embarrassed by Lucretius, his bold and passionate denunciation of religion. Nearly four centuries prior to the official adoption of Christianity by Emperor Constantine, Lucretius dared to utter:

Religion breeds
Wickedness and that has given rise to wrongful deeds (2007, Book I, p.4)

And so potent was Religion in persuading to do wrong
Sooner or later, you will seek to break
Away from me [implied: thinker, poet] (2007, Book I, p. 5).

His poem is the greatest poetic explication of Aristotelianism, his cosmology, theory of sciences, such as medicine, physics, astronomy, culture and interconnectedness between Nature and Culture. In this poem, Lucretius reiterates that "the nature of the mind is at least **threefold**" and that "nature begets creation" and, moreover, that "the mind is physical" (2007, Book II, p. 47; 77; 79). Every line of this longest poem in European literatures is a sacred reaffirmation of the early ancient Greek materialism, late ancient Roman neo-Aristotelianism and secularism. Lucretius speaks to us, the neo-Aristotelians of the 21st century, reminding about the innate organic unity of the macro and microcosm, as well as that of Body and Soul "who exist only because they are yoked together" (2007, Book III, p. 89).

Book V in the *De Rerum Natura / The Nature of Things*, entitled "Cosmos and Civilization", is particular interest to our forum, reiterating not only the basic cosmological principles of Aristotle, but also tutoring in the future of Cosmology and Biocosmology. Acknowledging the splendor of Nature, Lucretius leads by hand away from **dismissive sacred cosmology**, later imposed by the Eastern subjects of the Roman Empire. Assuming for a moment that "It was the immortals' plan to create the splendid nature of the universe for Man," he then passionately asks:

Where could gods find
A model for creating things – what planted in their mind?
The notion of mankind, so that they knew
What they undertook

To make, and they could picture in
 Their Hearts how it should look?
 Unless Nature herself supplied them
 With the paradigm of creating things?
 (2007, Book V, p. 152).

Lucretius wisely reminded his contemporaries and forewarned the future generations of the post-Christian thinkers, writers and readers about the primacy of Nature and the well of knowledge it presented and the challenges to Man it contained. With the force of his powerful insight and materialist conviction, Lucretius had most forcefully destroyed all the **false cosmologies** of the religious thinkers of the past and future, urging to acknowledge the inescapable symmetry between Nature and Culture, all the unity between Cosmos and cultural universe of humanity – the paradigm of things created as a model for all other man-made paradigms. *De rerum natura* by Lucretius made the Roman poet the most daring inventor of **comprehensive cosmology**, towering over the early and antiquity, as well as challenging all the future obscurantist, dogmatic and knowledge-constraining **anti-cosmologies** of the Christian era. Speaking through the ages, Lucretius demolishes the future theological arguments:

My point – the universe was not created for our sake
 By powers divine, since as it stands it is so deeply flawed
 (2007, Book V, p. 153)

Rather than the divine intervention, Lucretius emphasizes human struggle in cosmos:

Nature herself would choke the thorns,
 Unless by toil and strife
 Mankind fought back, groaning over
 Mattock for dear life
 (2007, Book V, p. 154).

Lucretius paints the most accurate picture of the Universe, the eternally ever-lasting and ever-changing Cosmos, created not for men and not by gods, but for its own sake, to include humans with their talents, their artistic imagination. But his picture of *Natura*, the truth of Being and the boundaries of the possible do not satisfy the god and myth-makers. He was aware of that while writing his most profound poetic cosmological treatise. “The human race is always all ears for a fairy tale,” diagnosed wise Lucretius, centuries prior to the official adoption of the Judeo-Christian fairytale. His most ingenious existential formula – “the sum of things” would be later borrowed by the most influential religious thinker, Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) for his *Summa Contra Gentiles* (1261-64) and *Summa Theologica* (1265-74). One could hear the echo of Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura* and its main message even earlier, in the famous Christian neo-Aristotelian, St. Augustine (354-430 AD) who also insisted on the primacy of empirical knowledge in the understanding Nature.

Lucretius, an icon of the secular late antiquity, had formulated in the precisely Pythagorean-Aristotelian mathematical style, the entire complex universe, its structure, evolution, as well as the unity of the micro and macro cosmos (that which outlines the contemporary neo-Aristotelian discourse about Biocosmology, cosmos and human civilization within it, i.e. the interrelationship between Nature and Culture. It was Lucretius who 17 long centuries prior to Giambattista Vico, had outlined the cyclicity in the natural world where “air and water perish, and arise again and grow” (2007, Book V, p. 155). Lucretius had pointed out the paradoxes of the physical existence:

Because the Earth, as all men know,
Is not just the All-Mother, but the common graveyard too,
And thus you see the Earth dwindle but
Increased, she grows anew
(2007, Book V, p. 155).

Lucretius had poetically reformulated Aristotle’s change, making the Greek discovery successfully serve the Roman and the later future European civilization.

With his grand poetic insight, Lucretius had also made a most valuable scientific discovery, predicting that even “heavenly bodies are not immune from the inevitable ruin and decay” (2007, Book V, p. 156). Engaging his readers in the scientific debate, he asked his pre-Christian contemporaries, “Have you seen that even rocks are conquered by Time’s sway?” (Ibid). He scientifically predicts the inevitability of the cosmic death, contrasting the doomsday of the Christian fairytales and revealing the logical end of natural universe. In the new Roman cultural circumstances, Lucretius reinstated the Aristotelian scientific method and his **triad** – the three things that last forever:

solid in substance atoms;
void in between;
sum of things or totality of Being within the macro and micro spheres.

Centuries prior to the reign of monotheism and its byproduct and their **dismissive anti-cosmology**, Lucretius cautioned that:

You must consider there is more than just one reason
That explains the skulking moon and the eclipse of the sun
(2007, Book V, p. 171).

He demolished the core of the future religious myth, relying just “on the Scriptures” of Democritus”(460–370 BC) and having provided the formula of **Cosmic Being**, rooted in cycles, changes, **metamorphosis of states**, physical, chemical interrelationships rather than reductionist divine interventions. His works is the cosmology of the enlightened free intellect which humbly acknowledges one’s own and **cosmic limitations**. “Nature decries it all,” summarizes Lucretius, “and nature

itself makes man frightened with its natural might.” He asks, “Is it surprising that mortals are suddenly made humble?” Here is his explanation of religions – fear of Natural might. He does not despise the weak believers; he is forgiving those who do not see the complexity, unity, beauty, tragedy and essence of creation and destruction:

Since it was she made man, and at fixed times made every other
Tribe of beast that roisters across the mountainsides, together
(2007, Book V, p. 173).

Drawing parallels between Cosmos and its mini-expression in human universe, Lucretius outlined the pattern of human cultural advancement, having labeled it as the Ages of Man and all described in the Book V of his *De Rerum Natura*, called “Cosmos and Civilization.” He argued that all the achievements of men had been “taught by man” to man (and by God!), “step by step, by trial and error, and restless intellect” (2007, Book V, p. 195). Yet untouched by the tyranny of the religious myth and dismissive anti-cosmology, a free Roman designed and offered the universal model of cyclical advancement of humanity and evolution of bios in cosmos.

5. The Sacred Cosmology and the Amnesia Cycle in Cultural History

It took millennia of trial and error, human sacrifice for ideas to get to the moment of uttering the truth and guessing the True. Aristotle’s own freedom of thought and expression had along pre-history of book burning, public executions and brutal punishment for wrong unpopular thinking. The Aristotelian cosmology and general view of natural and cultural processes earned their rightful existence and recognition on the shoulders of banished Protagoras and poisoned Socrates, to be given the second life in ancient Rome, and the third one during the Renaissance.

Three hundred fifty six years prior to the tragic cultural detour of Europeans made starting with the official adoption of Christianity (337 AD) and the ending of the secular Rome, Lucretius sang his Hymn to Man in celebration of the brief cycle of the Roman Enlightenment His Man was the liberated man-thinker, who had “tamed religion with the living ardor of his mind.” And during this conquest, and” by his victory Man ascends to God” (E.Bevan, ed. 1927, p. 52). Relatively brief, by the historical measurements, was this secular society or the cycle of free-thinking humanity. The next three and a half centuries, following the appearance of Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura*, had been the pathway of gradual submergence into the waters of the divine, with all the concatenating circumstances that accompanied it. The road to Dante, Machiavelli, Copernicus, Giordano Bruno and Voltaire would be the tragic passage through cultural oppression, obscurantism, ideological tyranny, the absolute reign of the religious myth, **reductionist sacred cosmology** and severe censorship. The free man of Lucretius, the Roman neo-Aristotelian, would vanish into the abyss of prolonged obscurity. The cycle of darkness would last nearly eighteen long centuries, occasionally interrupted by rare shockwaves of free thinking and courageous expression of some.

For centuries, the discourse about the Universe and cosmos without God was the anathema, and the anti-clerical utterances had been seldom attempted. Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) defiantly embarked on the, rather dangerous for his time, public condemnation of Christianity which he regarded as cultural regress for European civilization. In his view, the adoption of Christianity by Emperor Constantine was a shameful political surrender to the primitive mythology which had stunted the advancement of the entire European continent. All the progressive Roman laws had been abolished, creativity and free thinking suppressed, the scientific discovery arrested – all had brought on the period of cultural amnesia. The recovery from it would be painful and very lengthy, and never complete. Machiavelli’s daring defiance of the Church and critique of Myth would be followed by even more repressive actions of the Church. Machiavelli’s books would be placed on the notorious *Index Prohibitorum* but, at least, Machiavelli would not luckily share the most brutal fate of Giordano Bruno. The 17-century state of cultural amnesia and “intellectual coma” induced by the Church would gradually subside. The cycles outlined by Lucretius would re-occur in the thought of the most original Neapolitan, Giambattista Vico whose ascendance marks the gradual (although incomplete) recovery from the **dismissive sacred anti-cosmology**.

6. The Vician Poetic Cosmography – Tribute to Aristotle

The poetic cosmography, a significant and rather problematic component of Vico’s grand *New Science*, marks the beginning of the recollection of secularism, the cycle of the retrieval of the Greco-Roman past, sifted through the monastic and scholastic theological minds in search of the lost free thinking man. His *New Science* purports to be “the true science” which is the 17th-century antithesis of and the replacement of the entire old metaphysical edifice of the West. However, Vico is reluctant and shy neo-Aristotelian who envelopes his discourse into the defensive and protective religious garb. Relying upon Aristotle’s main conceptual arguments and tool of describing the universe, Vico engages his 17th-century readers and, yet present, censors into a safe discourse, constructed on a secure post-secular foundation of the three ages: the age of gods; the age of heroes and the age of men. His **triad** is visibly Pythagorean and Aristotelian, but the first component is, either cowardly or tactically sly, surrender to the Catholic Church.

After the death of Giordano Bruno in 1600, Giambattista Vico wisely deploys the Aesopian tactics. Describing his method of analysis, Vico wisely omits the problematic ancient atheist and materialist Aristotle from the corpus of his sources. He does though mention Plato, Vergil, Hobbes, Grotius, Pufendorf and safely utters that “we must start from some notion of God” whose “light has shed on all men” (1961, Book I, p. 58). Vico explains that “this Science must be a rational civil theology of the divine providence” (1961, Book I, p. 59). Vico has a choice between Plato and Aristotle, Ovid and Lucretius. He can either explain that the universe is an act of the divine power, or the given **rerum natura**. Not to be discovered as a secular thinker in the post- Giordano Bruno-Italy, he wisely chooses the Aesopian structure of argument.

Without naming Aristotle and his **cosmological paradigm**, a product of the ancient materialism, Giambattista Vico built his own metaphysical edifice, actually out of the Aristotelian analytical building blocks. Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, if we recall, had already provided the genesis of science, having outlined the pathway of human reasoning – from poetry and poetic imagination to scientific postulates. It was poet Hesiod who had helped Aristotle, a physician and scientist to develop his concept of the order of things in the universe. Centuries afterwards, Vico would utter his famous “*tutto e fantasia*”/ all is fantasy, poetry. Unlike Aristotle who had recalled Hesiod in his arguments, Vico, inspired by Homer, would poetically re-describe cosmos and construct a special kind of, the allegedly new, metaphysics (1961, B.II: 74). Here, Vico appears on the 17-century scene as a true Aristotelian. He also states that poetry is “nothing but imitation,” alluding to the Aristotelian mimesis without actually naming the real source of his inspiration, i.e. Aristotle who was also the point of his analytical departure.

Yet, if 30,000 Greek gods did not affect Aristotle's convictions and his discourse on Man, society, cosmos and Being in general, Vico, a post-Christian thinker, over two millennia (!) after Aristotle, had trouble speaking his mind freely. Instead, he attempted the impossible – saying things blasphemous to the Church while singing panegyric to the divine power and promoting the **sacred cosmology**. Using the term “natural theogony”, Vico, a thinker, leaning towards the revived Aristotelianism, subtly hints about the duality of paradigms – the religious and secular, the co-existence of two solitudes, the theological and non-theological poets, vulgar uninhibited metaphysicians and constrained scientists, living side by side in the post-Christina era. Aware of the Phoenician, Egyptian, Syrian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Chaldean, Greek, Roman and the on-going post-Christian science, Vico was the heir of the long (albeit primitive) philosophical and scientific tradition. He had an entire millennium of history of ideas behind him. As an heir of this rich legacy, Vico could not but condemn the fanaticism of superstition and obscurantist force of religion. It is after Lucretius, from 50 BC, that Vico repeats in the 17th century AD the following:

It was the fanaticism of superstition which the first men of the gentiles, [had been] savage, proud and most cruel as they were, in some sort of restraint by main terror of divinity they had imagined (1961, Book II, p. 134)

7. Leaning to Ovid

But having uttered this in his Book II of *The New Science*, Vico had safely covered it with the anti-censorial blanket of the *Prolegomena*, at the very beginning. His **poetic cosmography** is the most divided discourse — torn between the loyalty to and fear of the Church, the “politically correct” divine cosmology, on the one hand, and his attempt to present the New Science, on the other. Vico shields his free original ideas by the recurrent motifs of devotion to the Church and vulgar censorial protective devices. He has to preach that “all that philosophers produce derived from the authority of religion and the wisdom of the poets”“ Vico oscillates between the

free unencumbered cosmology of Aristotle, the thought of, the banished from ancient Athens, Protagoras and his axioms, and the secure official divine cosmology, Lucretius's daring **secular cosmology** and the Ovidian compromise. In the process of delivering his discourse from under the veil of protective devices, Vico even distorts Cicero, never quotes Aristotle directly, resorting to the safe paraphrase. Vico's *New Science* is the most illustrative and convincing testimony of the **cyclicality of human advancement** and of the most ruinous impact of religion, in general, and Christianity, in particular, on the acquisition of Knowledge and on human understanding of the Universe. Could anybody blame Vico, the man who still had a fresh memory of the execution of Giordano Bruno, for his Aesopian tactics of discourse? "Memory is the mother of all Muses," he uttered honestly. The memory of the barbaric burning of man at stake for his allegedly blasphemous ideas as late as in 1600 is definitely the mother of the Vician elaborately crafted poetic **cosmography-compromise**. It is a skillful discourse of survival in the presence of the most tyrannical **divine omnipotent cosmology**.

8. Conclusion

The Vician cosmography is a sad attempt of reviving the Aristotelian cosmology and the secular scientific legacy of the Greco-Roman antiquity in the constrained circumstances of the 17-century Christian Kingdom of Italy and Europe. His discourse is an antidote to the dismissive obscurantist pseudo-scientific explanations of the Universe and the anti-cosmology, permitted by the Church. It indeed attests to the cycles of civilization and cultural history – the brief phases of free thinking, succeeded by the prolonged periods of tyranny, obscurantism, hypocrisy, silences, omissions and distortions. The small steps forward, trials and errors, back and forth, repeated again and again. It is also the best testimony of the harm inflicted upon human search for knowledge by Christianity and its anti-cosmology.

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