

ARISTOTELIAN CULTURAL UNIVERSALS AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL CONFLICTS

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ABSTRACT. *The entire recorded experience of Western and non-western human civilization has been persistently exhibiting one single peculiar phenomenon—certain recurrent events, coming periodically in cycles and certain characteristics in perception, attitudes and behavior, actualizing regardless of time, tradition, religion, race or ethnicity. This intriguing phenomenon was clearly observed and described by Aristotle as the manifestation of the **stable semiosis** of the **universal cultural signs**, otherwise known to philosophers as his **theory of universals**. At certain periods in cultural and political history, the universals were vehemently discarded, only to be rediscovered anew. Even the most complex post-modernity, defining itself as the epoch of Difference and Division, and so much characterized by interest in, passion for and even **cult of the Particular**, still paradoxically witnesses the revival of the **Universal**, reaffirming one of Aristotle's most prominent theories. Interest in religion he classified as one of the numerous **universal false or sacred signs**, and modernity happens to suffer from it in the most tragic manner.*

KEYWORDS: *stable semiosis, Universal, Particular, universal cultural signs, common, familiar and recognizable signs, universal homo sapiens, false signs, belief, knowledge, cyclicity, cultural detours, false, sacred signs*

*Universal is common.
Aristotle*

Introduction

Albeit the Aristotelian idea of **universals and common humanity** was somewhat crushed by the 19th-century Romanticism, then the 20th-century Neoromanticism, and later by the relativistic post-modernity, it still stands as a valid **epistemic discovery**. In fact, this Aristotelian paradigm has never left the background of all human endeavors. The post 9/11-postmodern world, forced by the tragic circumstances to revise its narcissistic, Self-oriented and particularist values, now again faces the dilemma of basic **existential universals** and the ultimate insignificance of Difference. The purpose of this paper is twofold – to revisit Aristotle's eternally relevant **theory of universals** and also deal with some most crucial contemporary

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conflicts, which manifest themselves through the various interpretations of the *sacred cultural signs*, ultimately resulting in tensions between the universal and the particular, i.e. precisely what Aristotle's *theory of universals* captures, elucidates and carries over from the distant antiquity...

1. Aristotle's Universals

By the time Aristotle formulated his theory of universals, the world of antiquity had already lived through, put behind and recorded numerous historical events, such as: the fall of the Tyrian (900 BC.) and Babylonian Empires, the diffusion of the Phoenician marine culture in the Adriatic, Mediterranean, and Black Seas (10,000–2,000 BC), the legendary destruction of Troy (1,100 BC) and her transplantation on the territory of the future the Roman Empire, the foundation of Rome (753 B.C.), the Greek migrations to the fallen Etruscan lands (474 B.C.), and the rise of the new powerful European civilization. In other words, by Aristotle's life time, the idea of the commonality of all human beings, their common reaction to the existential trials and tribulations, their cultural cross-pollination, and mutual interdependence, had already been accepted as a given by the world of antiquity.

Aristotle himself (384–322 B.C.E.), a native of Stagira in Macedonia, a former student of Plato at the Athenian Academy, having visited Egypt and moved to Athens, was not a stranger to **Otherness, Difference, Conflict, and Reconciliation**. In his *Metaphysics*, he articulated his long-thought over theory of universals, prompted by his own life experience, as much as by his philosophical musings, the collective accumulated knowledge and the memory of the ancient historical cataclysms. Consequently, Aristotle was able to make a profound conclusion:

Universal is common, since that is called universal, which naturally belongs to more than one thing (1984, 1639 [1038], vol.1).

This rather simple argument represents the essence of what would become his monumental ancient **existential theory**, encapsulating Aristotle's basic grammar of human existence which revolves around the **universal** and **particular** – his main analytical discovery. Being the most influential ancient thinker, Aristotle had mapped the entire process of human cognition, including our accumulation of knowledge and the universal route of the human basic thought, which, allegedly, invariably involves the two stages:

- a) particular observation and experience;
- b) general and generalized experience with the acknowledged common pattern.

Aristotle viewed the **particular** as a manifestation of the isolated experience or unsatisfactory analysis, made singular and open to possible false claims, delusions and pretensions, stimulated by Myth, Affectation, Desire, and Painful Memory, rather than based on Knowledge, Real Happenings, undistorted Event, or actual reality. The Particular, in the Aristotelian view, negates the Other or its awareness which, in his

view, is the essential precondition for the acceptance of the universal and common. Hence, following his classification and terminology, tribalism, collective egoism, radical nationalism, and their ultimate consequence – racism – are rooted in the Particular, often very naive, emotional, uninformed and unrealistic vision of the collective Self, falsely perceived as unique, unprecedented, possessing presumably some singular distinguished and unrepeatable heroic identity. History of human existence, societal systems of organization and cultural development have proven to be the arena of perennial tension between the Universal and Particular, with the cycles of the focus either on the universal or on particular.

Centuries after Aristotle, the triumphant Christianity would revive the Aristotelian pagan/secular **universal existential grammar** in the basic message of universal Brotherhood, universal human love, and universal ethics. However, later, the violent impositions of the same doctrine, the transgressions of the very Christians, committed in the name of the tyrannical single Deity and the monotheistic system of religious beliefs, basically undermined the original noble ancient universal precepts. Nonetheless, in the history of human ideas, the universal Christian sinner and martyr could be viewed as a certain double of the Aristotelian universal man.

During the Rationalistic 18th century, European philosophers of the Enlightenment, acting much like the “deconstructionists” of the Middle Dark Ages and even the Renaissance, resurrected the Aristotelian concept of the **universal**, having restored the idea of the *common man*, a universal being, the very idea, which, only a century later, to have been revived by Marx and Darwin, and later by Pavlov, Vygotsky, Freud, and Chomsky. This universal man, resurrected during the Renaissance, would become *a familiar and recognizable sign*, resurfacing in European art and social life as a running motif. His sufferings, mentality, and general attitude to life could be appreciated by most fellow life travelers, defining European sensibility immortalized in art.

It is suffice to recall at least the most popular post-Christian “*Ecce Homo*”-portrait, this archetypal image of the universal tormented man, in, at least, the three leading European painters, such as Luis Morales (1509–1586), Roland de Moïse (?–1590), and Bernardo Strozzi (1581–1644) to see the transformation of the archetypal image of a religious martyr into the universal image of a victim. The resurrected universal man of the Renaissance revived the joyful image of the pagan thinking, rational, universal man, deriving happiness from the acquisition of knowledge, understanding the world and planning one’s own active presence in the world, from living Here and Now, rather than in the after-life, the mythical universe, constructed by Christians to lure more believers.

The 19th-century, marked by the Darwinian biological theories, also revived to a certain degree the Aristotelian **theory of universals**, having reminded the common biological origins of the *homo sapiens* – the only, so far superior, evolved species. The idea of the Human body and brain, possessing the common structure and basic uniform functioning, phylogenesis and ontogenesis, shared by all races of the globe, has scientifically substantiated the ancient Aristotelian theory on the level

of biology, physiology, and, ultimately, medicine. The nearly concurrent, 19th-century Marxist economic theories, with their emphasis on the universal sufferings of the *common exploited pauper*, sharing the same burden of economic hardship, equally requiring food, shelter, clothing, rest, dignity, justice, and societal recognition, also perfectly fitted Aristotle's grammar of human relationships in society, revolving around and /or in between the *universal* and *particular*. If Aristotle emphasized the way all men think, moving from the personal to the common, European socialists and, finally, Marxists focused on what all men primarily need, i.e., basic equality, equal distribution of necessities, and nothing in excess, with a proper balance between Leisure and Labor, whose products are equally distributed among them all.

By the beginning of the “decadent” 20th-century, Sigmund Freud, a petty bourgeois, tormented by the particularity of his religion, Judaism, and influenced by the Darwinian generalizations in biology and their impact on medicine, invented his own common man— a sexual persona, who also had, obviously, originated from the Aristotelian proto-concept. Freud manufactured a quite convincing **erotic mythology**, overpowering and dominating the lives of all human beings. He advocated the alleged primacy of the Eros in all human endeavors, having provided the allegedly correct conceptual foundation to the *universal disturbed man*, who would be later misconstrued by psychology, medicine, and psychiatry, and abused by the industrial and postmodern capitalist society. The Freudian erotic myth would give rise to the misguided political myth of freedom, when the erotic freedom would become nearly the only freedom attained by the confused postmodern man.

The postmodern industrial world, largely shaped by the Anglo-American value system, has invented the *global universal consumer*, whose sole goal was in possessing the power to consume and sustain incessant consumption, enjoying the products of Niki and Mitsubishi, Honda and Ford, L’Oreal and Benetton, among numerous others. This new **universal persona**, clad in blue Levy jeans, black leather, and perfumed by Christian Dior or Coty has become the *universal familiar sign* of postmodernity, along with the bizarre contours of the hated Parisian Pompidou Palace of Culture or the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum of Modern Art. But the imposed aesthetic pseudo taste, the pseudo-Kantian **false *sensus communis***, is far from the worst features of the 20th-century existence.

2. The 20th Century – the Era of the Particular

The gravest malaise and the most consequential characteristics of the 20th century, founded on the Romantic delusions of the previous preparatory epoch, has been the **fetish of the particular** – particular traditions, concepts, values, religions and particular cultural physiognomy. The century, which started with the most provocative research in genetics, eugenics and perfection of the human biological race at large, had ended with the methodically planned physical destruction of the **objectionable particularity** – the notorious and shameful Holocaust, and what is most tragic – **the sacrifice of the universal common man**, a product of the civilized

and noble Graeco-Roman antiquity. The nightmare of the 20th-century Europe was brought on by the particularistic delusions of the 19th Century. The Romantic fixation on the Self (be it individual or particular) has led to the proliferation of the collective movements (be it Garibaldi or anarchists, Zionists or fighters for independent Greece, Finland, Turkey, Albania or Bulgaria etc.), whose key conceptual foundations were built on worshipping the Particular, Particular identity and Particular memory, Particular past and particular Future for an isolated Particularity. The universal Aristotelian Graeco-Roman *homo sapiens*, abiding by the laws, morals and traditions, possibly beneficial to the entire human family, had been crushed by the ideologies of the politically-blind Romanticism.

The universal God-loving and fearing Christian persona has been destroyed and sacrificed in the name of the victorious Particularity. It was quite logical and natural to have revived the cult of the chosen tribe precisely during the 19th Century. Contrary to the popular mythology, Zionism and creation of the state of Israel, Judaism, a particular religion for a particular people, had been resurrected, given global prominence and triggered not by the horrors of the Second World War, not as the aftermath of the particular ethnic conflicts, but as a part of the **common global pandemic of Worshipped Particularity**, conceived by the 19th-century Romantics across Europe. The myth of the Chosen People, the elevated and made -sacred Discourse on the Particular, central to Judaism, was a perfect fit for the mosaic of the particularist romantic movements. The ideologue of the Zionists, Vladimir Zhabotinsky, was just in the company of Gioberti and Gobineau, brothers Grimm and Alfred Rosenberg, mimicking the narrative on a specific particularity and elevating a particular religion of a special historical prestige and role. In the process, the universal Christian, a weak copy of the Aristotelian and Graeco-Roman original, had been crucified by the Romantic worshipers of the Particular, global fighters for independence and separatists.

The 1917-October Revolution in the impoverished Russia had paradoxically saved the universal Christian man by having elevated its Marxist-Leninist version – the *common worker*. The ideology of equal poverty and humility, central to Christianity, was naively, but very productively, appropriated by the Marxists and absorbed by the new secular Russian society, which had eagerly and efficiently dispensed with the aristocracy for the sake of the **common universal good**. Ironically, the Christian (hypocritical) capitalist West did not embrace this new Russia, which had essentially become a genuinely Christian society, sharing and caring society of nearly 250 million workers. A society-experiment, laboring with the social and political utopias and striving to create the universal, ethnically neutral, secular man, had been actually testing the Aristotelian theory of universals. Even the name of the state-experiment, in lieu of the old Russian Empire – the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics – implied the ultimate goal of forming a unified, single cultural, political, and social universe.

The religious, economic, political, and cultural conflicts of today – between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, between Europe and Asia, East and West, the

radical ruthless capitalism and more people-friendly modified socialism with a capitalist flair – are not the makings of a single century, but the outcome of the multi-generational malaise, which manifested itself in the complete abandon of the Rational, shirking common human responsibilities and concerns of the *Universal Common Man*. The *universal homo sapiens* has been discarded as an antiquated item for the sake of the colorful heroic pantheon of the multiple particularities, endless mythologized historical narratives, sacred to the particular tribes and serving as an ideological base of the newly-imagined political realities. The universal man, planning and acting in the name of the common good and humanity, has been exchanged for the ideological trinkets of the deluded tribes, engaged in the Worst Past -Pageant, competing for the heroic title of the most suffered collectivity, tribes-martyr and the most harmed particularity.

The 19th-century, which started the ideological brainwashing and preparation for the justification of the future genocides, ended with the mass killings in the name of the Sacred Particularity, often dramatically labeled as “national-liberation struggles” or “struggles for independence.” The 20th-century, which began as the utopian era of perfecting the biological species for the benefit of humanity, ended with the crimes against humanity, while the 21st century has, regrettably, commenced with counting the countless dead and compiling the list the most heroic tribes-martyrs. The civilized barbarians of the technocratic century, equipped with the most sophisticated machinery and weaponry, are now most preoccupied with counting the victims of human cruelty and irrational violence. We count the dead in Yugoslavia and Chechnya, Rwanda and Sudan, Iraq and Sri Lanka, Palestine and Israel, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. The unleashed particularity and her narrow concerns threaten to destroy the global community.

The 21st-century is a horror fairytale, with the central surreal figures, the prototypes of the well-known international folklore in making – Bush after Saddam, Ben Laden after Bush and Sharon, Sharon after Arafat, Bush and Western Capitalist Company after Lukashenko, and so on. The literate 21st-century barbarians, collectively possessing the weapons of mass destruction, would like to have a monopoly on them, while the civil and peace-seeking minorities are left to use the second-hand outdated submarines. The sole pathway out of this post-postmodern morass is in the revival of the Aristotelian universal common man of antiquity, concerned about the common ethics, universally applicable understandable good, adequate comfort and pleasure.

Our global cultural history and future destiny are interwoven in the shared accumulated knowledge, common civilization, shaped by Confucius and Aristotle, Thales and Diogenes, Buddha and Christ, Homer and Virgil, Ovid and Shakespeare, Rossini and Verdi, Leonardo and Van Dyke, Omar Khayyam and Chaucer, Marx and Mao, Dante and Boccaccio, Tagor and Goethe, Shakespeare and Pushkin... The polyphonic global village can survive in harmony, giving credit to all her major great thinkers, poets, composers, and artists, the creators of our shared Cultural Past, where each part of the narrative is just a part of the Whole, and who emphasize Discourse

and Consensus. The recourse to the Aristotelian universals offers some best explanations and most optimal solutions to our contemporary dramas, caused by the past errors in judgment and worship of the Particular, which threaten now not only our Common Achievements of the East and West, North and South, but even our physical survival as a biological species.

3. Aristotle and the Religious in Man

In 342 B.C.E., at the mature age of 42, Aristotle was appointed by Philip of Macedon to serve as a tutor for the future Alexander the Great (356 B.C.E. – 323 B.C.E.). This event inspired his famous *Rhetoric to Alexander*, whose authorship was sometimes questioned by some modern philosophers while the topic and the text itself though suggests authenticity of the work, so much in tune with rest of Aristotle's legacy. This work, representing a didactic treatise, instructing the future military commander on how to control and lead the army, how to rule the occupied populations, presents also an introduction to the art of argument and public speaking – what constitutes an art of an excellent ruler and how to control the unruly and belligerent in a peaceful manner. The treatise is an introduction to social mass psychology and governance of the conquered in the post-war circumstances, using strictly the verbal means and skills and relying solely on the power of persuasion. Intended as a course on leadership for the young Alexander, teaching how “to excel all Greeks and all Barbarians,” “how to run a state,” and “when to undertake or not the act of war,” the work simultaneously represents an interdisciplinary treatise on political science, jurisprudence and principles of knowledge acquisition and cognition. It also contains a summary of the **Sign Theory**, or the foundation of modern and contemporary semiotics, and, most importantly, succinctly explaining the origins of the Religious in man.

“One thing is a sign of another thing,” claimed Aristotle, distinguishing between the sign, leading to **Belief** and another – to **Knowledge**. He characterized the signs, causing Belief, as *plausible signs* which do not necessarily reflect or truly explain reality, nor are they the genuine causality factors of events. He labeled them as the *false signs*, albeit the products of the same human imagination, constructs, substituting for or anticipating Knowledge, either lost prior, or to be established later. The Belief-causing signs are the signs, signifying events, people, and phenomena, escaping our full grasp and understanding, expressing our existential fears and desire to be somehow shielded from them. The Aristotelian Belief-causing signs explain the production of the sacred rites and rituals, which, in turn, could give rise to the escapist superstition, prejudice, and the religious stratum. According to Aristotle, people en masse are in desperate need of the **belief-causing signs**, in order to be comforted by them in daily life, therefore:

It is of utmost importance that the religious observances should be continued which were prescribed by those who originally found cities and set up temples to the gods (1985: 275; vol. II).

To command people in foreign lands, Aristotle advised, the ruler should use to his own advantage their traditional rites, ceremonies, and collective symbolism to sustain the aura of pleasure, progress and celebration of Conquest. In his view, religion, religious rites, and parades were vitally needed for the citizens at large, not interested in acquiring the precise knowledge about the actual events around them, but rather preferring to experience the overall comfort, pleasure, and the ordinary joys of daily communal socializing. Thus, already in antiquity, there existed a common and quite distinct awareness between the spiritual life of the majority of citizens and objective truth-seeking scientific pathway of the few. Aristotle, already in his day, clearly distinguished between the system of the religious beliefs of the majority and the attempts to acquire objective knowledge, encoding the future separation between the Church and State, which even in the pre-Christian antiquity, controlled a very rich, but fluid and fragmented, religious world, symmetrically existing, parallel with the ruling Empire and the ancient State.

He witnessed his adoring pupil, the glorious Alexander of Macedon, in his own lifetime, defeat the Persians, having extended his conquest to Egypt where he had founded the famous centre of learning, Alexandria, with the most impressive depository of books, campaigning as far as India, and having opportunity to use his mentor's lessons on peaceful governing. This colossal expansion of the Greek cultural world and the absorption of numerous foreigners, strangers or, as the Greeks preferred to call them "barbarians," occurring in front of Aristotle's eyes, might have inspired him to work out his theory of *common universal nature*, *common spirituality* and law, and **common ethics**. Human soul, according to Aristotle, possessed the balancing power between Desire, Sense, Sensation, and Thought, or the capacity to tame emotions in favor of Reason and Reasonableness. Ultimately, he believed in the innate uniformity and goodness of the human soul. "Good is uniform and evil is multiform, the same as health is singular and disease has many shapes," proclaimed Aristotle in his less often quoted *Magna Moralia* (1985: 1885, vol. II). Consequently, as he saw it, the spiritual, the multiple expression of the soul could be only uniform in its essence, since there is an underlying uniformity in all expressions of the Soul, the desire to make man good, happy and be in harmony with others.

4. Contradictions between Belief, Religious Myth, and Knowledge and Truth

The Aristotelian ethical and moral principles were inseparable from the notions of law and justice, extended to all citizens, male and female, and even slaves. His philosophy, which anticipated the Judeo-Christian dogmatism, was far more comprehensive and profoundly inclusive, having expanded the boundaries of its collective application and human interrelationships at large – bonds within Family, Community and State, and in between the states. What 2,000 years later would be perceived by Freud as the source of trauma, the ancient Aristotle clearly saw as a psychological safeguard. Unlike the future religions which would legitimize the oppressive status of women – equally in Judaism, Christianity, and even more so in

Islam, and the religions of the subcontinent – Aristotle proposed to judge society by the way it treats its women, organizes one’s own family structure and duties and responsibilities. In Aristotle’s understanding, the traditional archetypal heterosexual monogamous family was the mirror of society. In his, much quoted today, *Politics*, Aristotle proclaimed that

in those states in which the condition of women is bad, half the city [state] may be regarded as having no laws (1985: 2015, vol. II).

Here, it would be proper to remind that wealthy, peaceful and allegedly civilized European Switzerland had not granted voting rights to women until 1968 of this era. The today’s outpost of the flaunting democracy, the USA, did not regard her women (black, colored, and white) worthy of entering the legal, medical or engineering professions until the sixties of the 20th century. While, ironically, the demonized “Empire of Evil” – the former USSR-managed to have trained millions of female academics, scientists, engineers, doctors and teachers of mathematics and physics for high schools and universities. Persistently labeled as the “evil Empire,” this experimental state, founded on the basic Aristotelian premises, treated her citizens of all races, religions and color on equal terms, being a stranger to segregation, racist politics or misogyny. The citizens of the Soviet Moslem Republics, such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, could continue attending the Mosques, but polygamy had been outlawed. Formerly invisible, oppressed and uneducated Moslem women, who could be sold and resold like sheep, in the Soviet times, took off their paranjas/veils and burkas, and bravely walked through the doors of public schools, universities, and factories. The state-social experiment, essentially guided by the Aristotelian universals, provided free universal education and health care to both sexes, having established a state where justice in between man and woman within the monogamous family was a metaphor for a new political justice within the public sphere, as articulated by Aristotle’s *Magna Moralia* (1985: 1890, vol. I).

It is not incidental that Plato, rather his pupil – Aristotle – has gained so much popularity in the Anglo-American educational institutions. Aristotle’s ideas of justice, equality and morality, which revolved around the political essence of *homo sapiens*, containing the formula for the allegedly blasphemous and evil socialist welfare states, have been pushed to the margins of the philosophical discourse. The idea of a stratum, superstratum and substratum of society, articulated in Aristotle’s essay *On Generation and Corruptions*, undoubtedly an authentic work, not ascribed to other philosophers, must have greatly influenced Marx and the Marxists, Lenin and the Leninists in the mid-nineteenth century. Aristotle’s notion of cycles in nature and cyclicity in civilizations must have inspired Giambattista Vico to produce his theory of cycles in the 18th century, in turn, influencing Northrop Frye in the 20th century, serving as the base of his own cyclicity theory.

Aristotle’s ideas of justice, equality and equal distribution of property, granting

equal rights to women, viewed already in antiquity as equal partners in family and society, were far ahead of the religious postulates, later systematized by the writers of the Bible and the compliers of the Qur'an. Tyranny and brutality of the so-called religious man, guided by Belief, would have been abominable to Aristotle, who could have seen it as nothing, but the expression of barbarism and malice. Similarly, Aristotle, who used to place an enormous emphasis on Equality and equal distributions of wealth, as well as the negative, nearly destructive, impact of Excess, is still quite an anathema to the Anglo-American societies – the outposts of most brutal and unbridled capitalist inequality. The American idea of happiness, enshrined even in her Constitution, actually stands for the joy of excessive consumption and as a reward for brutal exploitation in the process of the inhuman, excessive, collective mass production of the unnecessary objects. This psychotic, artificially cultivated obsessive need to consume is being presented as a genuinely manifested freedom, in what is, essentially, the most sophisticated atmosphere of oppressive dictatorship of the imposed excessive consumption.

The man of antiquity, guided by common sense, the ideas of the common good and excellence, was deeply grounded in the Present, in the Now, in Existence and Being. The Olympic Pantheon and, later clones, the copied Roman deities, existed merely for the decorum and indulgence of the atavistic impressions of the Past. They did not rule the ancient societies, striving for freedom and genuine collective democracy, nor did they legislate the social interactions of antiquity. From that perspective, Belief or signs, leading to the imaginary and desired, mythical and mythologized, did not reign, nor did they dominate the ancient thinking. On the contrary, the signs of Reality and Knowledge from the perspective of the common good were overriding in the mind and being of antiquity.

5. The Cultural Detours

Since the adoption of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine in the 4th century AD, European civilization made a **cultural detour** which would last for nearly ten centuries, up until the Renaissance. During the three short centuries, from the Renaissance and up to the Enlightenment, the concept of the universal man and **universals** indeed flourished, having resurrected the Graeco-Roman aesthetic, ethic, moral and legal values, the power of Rationality and Reasoning. The irrational, mythical, emotional, improbable and fictionalized world of Belief would be pushed aside, giving again prominence to the free thinking, acting, and creative man of antiquity – Michelangelo and Bernini, Dante and Leonardo, Machiavelli and Galileo, Rossini and Cimarosa, Shakespeare and Chaucer, Cervantes and Goethe, Mozart and Bach, Metastasio and Pushkin, among others, who would celebrate the re-born *homo sapiens*, the pagan man of antiquity. It is not incidental that the Italian Renaissance would lead Europe back into the world of the abandoned pagan antiquity, along the pathway of the inexhaustible source of wisdom, enchantment and creativity. During this period, as well as during its anticipation, the interest in Aristotle would be also revived. The Renaissance rebirth of the Beautiful for the sake of Here and Now

coincided with the collective rebellion against the tyranny of the Particular. The post-religious man of the Renaissance made an attempt to break the shackles of Belief and Religion.

The current conflict of civilizations, artificially delineated between the Judeo-Christian and Islamic world, could be described as **a false sign** in the Aristotelian categorization, since all the religious systems, in his view, are based neither on knowledge, nor rational reception of the Real for the common good. Therefore, Islam, denying women basic human rights and enslaving them via legalized polygamy and oppression, and privileging the particular gender, is a doomed mythical construct. It is designed to suit solely the male, corrupting and indulging his erotic impulses at the expense of the female, turning her into a sexual slave. The concept of the common good is foreign to the gender-particular religious system.

Equally ideologically bankrupt is the Judaic system of Belief, worshiping a particular tribe and privileging a monoethnic society, whose cult of the chosen and fetish of the particular contradicts the modern and ancient Western concepts of democracy and equality. Judaism, with its forced transference of the alien past onto the doubtfully related present, is another system of **false signs**, based on Belief, Desire and Myth rather than Knowledge and Reality.

Contemporary Christianity, separated from the post-modern state and mimicking its corrupt institutions, is another false sign. There is no brotherhood and love between the victims of famine in India or Africa and the computerized corporate world of the North America, not between the classes of the starving and affluent within their own country. The sex crimes and virtual pornography, voluntary slavery in the post-industrial capitalist societies flourish for the sake of the Trade almighty and in the presence of the all-forgiving Lord, who somehow is unable to distinguish between the evils and sins, nor establish the common good.

The *zoon politikon*, the Aristotelian universal man, interested in the Present and Now, in improving the life of Today for the common good, cannot retreat into a particular past and present, into a particular Self, but has to ask a question, “What does it mean to be human and civilized in the face of contemporary barbarism?” To enforce the game of elections in a destitute land of famine and prejudice with international armory? To desecrate Iraq, one of the most precious sites of Mediterranean civilization, its Assyria, Babylonia, Chaldea, in the name of the pseudo-democracy? To become “a majority, swayed to trust a person of no good standing”? As Aristotle pointed out in his *Constitution of Athens*, democracy had proven to be not always the best choice and not always for the common good, provided the gullible majority entrusted their fate to a non-trustworthy person. On the contrary, not every ruler is a mad tyrant, nor is every Empire a source of evil and oppression. Impressed by Solon, the lawgiver of antiquity, Aristotle extensively quoted him while interpreting and designing his own most beneficial laws:

But thus will the people best the voice of their leaders obey.
When neither too slack is the reign, nor violence holdeth the sway,

For indulgence breedeth a child, the presumption that spurns control,
 When riches too great are poured upon men of unbalanced soul
 (*Constitution of Athens*).

Are we, the unbalanced souls, with the “riches too great” that we are not willing to share? Or unreasonable beings who cannot come back to the basic class in Aristotle’s Lyceum?

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