

# THE NEW WORLD OVERCOMING PLATONISM IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: JOHN H. RANDALL'S *ARISTOTLE*

Anna MAKOLKIN<sup>1</sup>

*Man begets man...*  
Aristotle

**ABSTRACT.** The 21<sup>st</sup> century European and Anglo-American scholarship witnesses a very strong revived interest in Aristotle and applicability of his thought in various spheres of modern life. The “Aristotelian Renaissance” is revealed in nearly daily appearing new monographs and articles – *Form without Matter- Empedocles and Aristotle on Color Perception* by Mark Eli Kalderon (2015); *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects* by Anna Marmodoro (2014); *The Lagoon. How Aristotle Invented Science* by Armand Marie Leroi (2014); *Retrieving Aristotle in An Age of Crisis* by David Roochnik (2013); *John Salisbury on Aristotelian Science* by David Bloch (2012); *Aristotle On Time* by Tony Roark (2011); *Explanation and Teleology in Aristotle's Science of Nature* by Mariska Leunissen (2011); *Biocosmology and Neo-Aristotelism* (2010), a new peer-reviewed interdisciplinary electronic journal founded in Russia, at the Novgorod State University after Yaroslav-the-Wise, among many others, functioning worldwide publications.

In retrospect, given the millennia-old infatuation with Plato and the cult of Platonism, more pervasive in the Anglo-American philosophy, the credit for the 20<sup>th</sup>-century **historic paradigm shift** in Aristotle studies belongs to John Herman Randall (1899-1980), Columbia University Professor, who published in 1960 his monumental *Aristotle*. Even today, it remains the sole most comprehensive and fundamental English reference source on Aristotle, Aristotelianism and its contrast with that of Plato and Platonism.

This essay covers the genesis and the role of J.H.Randall's iconic monograph (which he humbly labeled after Petrarca a «little book») in history of modern philosophy, its significance for the rehabilitation of Aristotle's natural philosophy and its applicability for modern science, humanities and all aspects of modern life.

**KEYWORDS:** Aristotle, Aristotelianism, Plato, Platonism, natural philosophy, nature, reason, knowledge, knowing, nous/ing, god (s), translation flaws, canon, cultural history, Renaissance

## Contents

### Introduction

1. Difficult Coming to the Authentic Aristotle
2. John H. Randall's Advantage as an Author
3. Challenging the Philosophical Tradition
4. *Nous* or *Nousing*/Knowing in Aristotle
5. The Unadulterated Aristotle and Role of His Philosophy
6. On Mis/Translation of the Aristotelian Terminology
7. Rising Role of Aristotle's Natural Philosophy in Modern Times

### Conclusions

<sup>1</sup> University of Toronto, CANADA.

# НОВЫЙ МИР, ПРЕОДОЛЕВАЮЩИЙ ПЛАТОНИЗМ В XX ВЕКЕ: АРИСТОТЕЛЬ, ДЖОНА ХЕРМАНА РЭНДАЛЛА

Анна МАКОЛКИН

*Человек порождает человека ...*  
Аристотель

**РЕЗЮМЕ.** Европейская и Англо-Американская наука 21-го века демонстрирует очень серьезный возрожденный интерес к Аристотелю и применимости его мысли в различных сферах современной жизни. «Ренессанс Аристотеля» проявляет себя почти в ежедневно появляющихся новых монографиях и статьях – «Форма без материи – Эмпедокл и Аристотель о восприятии цвета», Марка Эли Кальдерона [2015] (*Form without Matter – Empedocles and Aristotle on Color Perception* by Mark Eli Kalderon, 2015); «Аристотель о Восприятии Объектов», Анны Мармодоро [2014] (*Aristotle on Perceiving Objects* by Anna Marmodoro, 2014); «Лагуна. Как Аристотель изобрел науку», Арман Мари Лёри [2014] (*The Lagoon. How Aristotle Invented Science* by Armand Marie Leroi, 2014); «Возвращая себе Аристотеля в эпоху кризиса», Дэвида Ручника [2013] (*Retrieving Aristotle in An Age of Crisis* by David Roochnik, 2013); «Джон Солсбери об Аристотелевской науке», Дэвида Блоха [2012] (*John Salisbury on Aristotelian Science* by David Bloch, 2012); «Аристотель ввремя», Тони Роарка [2011] (*Aristotle On Time* by Tony Roark, 2011); «Объяснение и телеология в Аристотелевской науке природы», Мариски Леунниссен [2011] (*Explanation and Teleology in Aristotle's Science of Nature* by Mariska Leunissen (2011); «Биокосмология и нео-Аристотелизм» [2010]); здесь *Biocosmology and Neo-Aristotelism* (основанный в 2010 г.) – это новый рецензируемый междисциплинарный электронный журнал, учрежденный в России, в Новгородском госуниверситете им. Ярослава Мудрого, который, среди многих других изданий, осуществляет публикации ученых со всего мира.

В ретроспективе, учитывая тысячелетнее увлечение Платоном и сложившийся культ Платонизма, более распространенного учения в англо-американской философии, заслуга в сдвиге исторической парадигмы 20-го века к изучению Аристотеля, как считает автор – принадлежит Дж. Херману Рэндаллу (1899–1980), профессору Колумбийского университета, опубликовавшему в 1960 году свой монументальный труд *Аристотель*. Даже на сегодня он остается уникальным трудом – наиболее полным и базовым источником справочной информации по Аристотелю, Аристотелизму и его противоположению с Платоном и Платонизмом.

В данном эссе раскрывается генезис и роль статусной монографии Дж. Х. Рэндалла (которую он скромно назвал после Петрарки «маленькой книгой») в истории современной философии, ее значение для восстановления натурфилософии Аристотеля и ее актуальности для современной науки, гуманитарной тематики и всех аспектов современной жизни.

**КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА:** Аристотель, Аристотелизм, Платон, Платонизм, натурфилософия, природа, разум, знание, познание, высший интеллект, недостатки перевода, канон, история культуры, Возрождение

## *Содержание*

### *Введение*

1. Трудный переход к подлинному Аристотелю
2. Достоинства Джона Хермана Рэндалла как автора
3. Бросить вызов философской традиции
4. Высший интеллект и его применение / Познание у Аристотеля
5. Настоящий Аристотель и Значение его Философии
6. О неправильном переводе Аристотелевской терминологии
7. Возрастающая роль натурфилософии Аристотеля в Современную эпоху

### *Выводы*

## **Introduction**

The protracted over millennia Plato-versus – Aristotle “cultural case” had difficulty being resolved in the court of the international scholarly opinion for centuries and is not completely closed even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The venerable Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374), one of the most brilliant minds of the Renaissance, “the paradigm of Italian humanism,” captured its essence in a single question, “Who was greater and more brilliant man, Plato or Aristotle” [D. R. Kelly, 199:7; “On His Own Ignorance”, 1948:110]. Apparently, given the post-Christian cultural climate, Plato dominated the collective imagination for a reason – his idea=myth= god(s) was far more compatible with the Christian mythology and the overall accepted ideology, he was “divine” while Aristotle was “demonious” in Petrarca’s words [1948:111]. But the complete rehabilitation of Aristotle and the true recognition of the value of his natural philosophy materialized only recently. Even 19 years since the publication of J.H.Randall’s monumental monograph, the prominent cultural historian and his co-author in the field, Paul Oscar Kristeller confessed, “ I am at heart a Platonist,” [1979:258]. The prominent British 20<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, who ironically had adopted many Aristotle’s ideas, still claimed that the entire European philosophy has been “a mere footnote to Plato.” J.Randall’s monograph truly paved the way to the total and permanent **rehabilitation of the wisdom** of the unique Stagerite thinker for the postmodern philosophy and Aristotle studies.

## **1. Difficult Coming to the Authentic Aristotle**

The long resistance to Aristotle’ teaching and the reluctant admission of his encyclopedic and polyvalent corpus into the world intellectual pantheon had two major reasons – its intimidating multidisciplinary breadth which anticipated numerous future discoveries in physics, astronomy, biology, genetics, etc., on the one hand, and the challenge and undermining the religious Judeo-Christian mythology and primitive cosmology, on the other. Since the adoption of Christianity, the pursuit

of knowledge and progress of science had been arrested by the Church which vigilantly had been censoring every thought and move of independent Reason. The Church had a “difficult romance” with Aristotle – being simultaneously seduced by the sophistication of his wisdom, and fearful of the secularity of his thought. The Church though has adopted Aristotle’s description of the natural world but distorted his representation of man in Cosmos. In the words of Canadian philosopher Yvan Lamonde, “philosophy was the servant of theology (*ancilla theologiae*)” and this was the precondition of its survival up to the Middle Ages [2012:1]. In the process of spreading Christianity and empowering the Church as an institution, the Church Fathers made an attempt of incorporating Aristotle’s teaching into their theological dogma in order to reinforce the ideological belief-platform, making it more sound and presentable to the public. In the words of Marcilio Ficino [1433–1499], the most influential Platonist of the Renaissance, argued that “philosophy had to be made religious, and religion philosophical for the success of the Christian indoctrination and popularity of Platonism” [1948:187]. In fact, up to the 17<sup>th</sup> century European metaphysics was expressed in the presence of the religious censor, heavily relying on the Biblical discourse and its monosyllabic semiotic meaning, imposed its tyranny on a civilization that had already produced Aristotle and **secular cosmology** millennia prior.

Aristotle had been habitually read and mentioned throughout centuries in conjunction with Plato whose ideas comfortably included the idea of the single Creator and did not interfere with the overall Christian ideology. The Italian Universities ( the oldest in Europe) were divided along the lines of their split loyalty to either Plato, or Aristotle – the Florence Academy became the centre of Platonism, while Padua, with its liberty in teaching, was synonymous with Aristotelianism. None of the Italian universities, characteristically, had any Departments of Theology, in contrast to the rest of Europe and Britain, and Italy’s intellectual climate on campuses was more conducive to the Aristotle studies and the intellectual debates about his doctrine.

In contrast, Britain and, eventually, her New World colonies maintained their educational systems in the climate of the uncomfortable symbiosis with the Church which was restrictive and controlling the minds of the populace. Thus, the Anglo-American scholarship had greater difficulty in liberating themselves from the “Platonic shackles” and coming to the authentic Aristotle. The curriculum was biased in favor of Plato, while Aristotle had been completely misinterpreted. The Jesuits, who had introduced the study of Aristotle into New France in 1663 and could be credited somewhat with the dissemination of his thought, still did not reach the needed authenticity in presenting Aristotle.

## 2. John H. Randall’s Advantage as an Author

John Herman Randall Jr. (1899–1980), son of a Baptist minister, had also a great advantage in his undertaking – he knew the core of European cultural legacy, Italy, the Renaissance and the development of Aristotelianism through the ages. It made him stand out among the Anglo-American philosophers – he did not shy away from

the continental European philosophy, nor did he possess the inferiority complex of his compatriots, the inhabitants of the New World. This Columbia University Professor constructed a bridge between the Renaissance Humanism and the confused misinformed modernity. He appealed to the silent “closed American mind” and woke the sleepy North America with his re-discovery of Aristotle. In some ways, J.H. Randall shocked his fellow Americans – at the very first page of what would turn out to be his monumental monograph, Randall quoted Dante in Italian from his immortal *La Divina Commedia*. He reminded his colleagues that Dante had called Aristotle “*il maestro che sanno*”/ the master who knew.” Right from the start of the book J.H. Randall appealed to the American collectivity to make a recourse to the shared European past, to “travel back” to Italy first and then to Greece, in order to retrieve the wisest sage of antiquity, to re-acquaint themselves with their own cultural roots.

### 3. Challenging the Philosophical Tradition

J.H. Randall apparently had enough intellectual courage to challenge the entire philosophical canon by insisting “Aristotle, not Plato is our real mentor.” On p.2, using Dante as a helper, J.H. Randall already argues that it was Aristotle who has been “the first of the great knowers”, categorically dismissing not only Plato, but also so many “from the band of knowers” and leaving them in the shadow of the “great master”. He implicitly suggested that even Thomas Aquinas, Hegel, Spinoza and Descartes were mere “footnotes to Aristotle,” subtly contradicting and paraphrasing Alfred N. Whitehead who had claimed that our entire modern philosophy had been “the mere footnote to Plato” [A.N. Whitehead, 1961:607]. Randall introduces the opinions of such European authorities on Aristotle as, German scholar Werner Jaeger [1920], French Octave Hamelin [1904] and F.J.C.J.Nuyens [1939] with whose help he defiantly turns the academic tables of cultural history around. He proclaims, “Aristotle now appears more than Plato – he possesses more understanding” [1960:2]. Randall’s defiance grows by lines, e.g. on p. 3, he applauds Aristotle for his definition of Man who is not just a physical but rational animal, endowed with *empsychia* and political consciousness and proclivity for reasoning. This alone is a rather daring focus, presented to the American society, with its overall pro-biological orientation in life and primitive cultural ethos, as well as narrow behaviorist trend in science, reducing Man to animals. Randall uses the opportunity and passes his subtle but strong judgment on the American science and philosophy, its limiting constraining Anglo-American pragmatism, contrasting the Aristotelian notion of civilized Man and society versus the dehumanizing and essentially barbaric American dogmas. He sets the double ambitious task of juxtaposing Plato and Aristotle, as well as the ancient Greek and modern American values. Moreover, Randall contrasts Europe and North America, the Italian Humanism, the ethos of the Renaissance with that of the dehumanizing modernity. J.H.Randall labels his study “a little book,” in the self-deprecating tone of Francesco Petrarca who used it in his essay “On His Own Ignorance” while the American Professor actually plans to expose not his own ignorance, but that of the modern scholarship, particularly in the area of philosophy and Aristotle studies.

For centuries, Aristotle had been nothing but a “syllogistic gentleman with a category for every occasion”, as J.H.Randall pointed out in his 1958 article “The Functionalism and Dynamism of Aristotle”, a definite preamble to his 1960 monograph. Even in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, “Aristotle was called a case of arrested thought” that has never changed since he had left Plato’s Lyceum and whose intellectual development had been allegedly nothing but a poor clone of Plato. Randall bluntly and fearlessly points out the ignorance of the scholars of the past and present, as well as to the lack of Anglo-American awareness about the Aristotle studies in Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, between 1904 and 1948. Acknowledging a certain Platonic period in Aristotle’s intellectual growth, Randall separates his Doctrine from Plato and Platonism, his early *Dialogues*, emulating Plato’s discourse from the late totally original and independent works.

J.Randall vigorously pursues his mission of rehabilitating Aristotle and his immortal Doctrine by dividing his intellectual pathway into Platonic and post-Platonic. One may not accept his analysis of some parts of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* or *De Anima* as tributes to Platonism, but, given the overall historic climate of misconception and misinterpretation, and the millennial tyranny of Platonism, it is possible to deal with those Randall’s characterizations as strategic descriptive routes. To make the status of Aristotle more acceptable and to change his image among the “brainwashed platonists,” and their students, Randall divides Aristotle into two separate figures – the early “Platonic Aristotle” and the mature independent Aristotle [1960:19]. Sharing the portraiture produced by Werner Jaeger, Randall views Aristotle as “passing from philosophy to science” [1960:21]. Nonetheless, Randall rather rapidly proceeds to summing up “the quality of Aristotle’s writings that have come down to us and forming a great contrast with those attributed to Plato” [1960:22]. This contrast and duality of the historic paradigm haunted and guided scholars for centuries, despite the misinterpretations and intentional adjustments to different trends in science and humanities. Randall emphasizes this drastic difference and sharp gulf between the two canonical thinkers, and the two modes of thought, the two dominant paradigms of European culture, symbolized by Plato and Aristotle. His rehabilitation of Aristotle is guided by this historic polarity and textual problematics.

Randall makes his readers aware of the somewhat dubious textology and chronology of the Aristotelian Corpus, given the distance in time and destiny of the transmission of his work through the Mediterranean region, compounded by the thousands of commentaries – a multilingual superstratum in Syriac, Aramaic, Hebrew, Arabic beyond Greek and Latin. The author acknowledges that some parts of *The History of Animals*, for example, “are probably in part reports of student investigations” [1960:25]. Nonetheless, despite all the layering, of the non-original additions, Aristotle is quite identifiable in the Corpus that came down to us. His distinct voice and clear thought are a part of our collective cultural inheritance. He passionately argues:

*If it took moderns seven hundred years to get as far from Platonism, Aristotle himself managed to do it quite successfully in his own lifetime* [1960:28].

Aristotle's encyclopedic thought has served as an introduction to all modern sciences, humanities, as cultural history would testify. In this connection, Randall states that "the Aristotelian Corpus can be said to present a totality, not of the results, but of problems" [1960:31]. The problems outlined by Aristotle in his Corpus would serve as a launching station and the analytical point of departure for millions of future scholars in the various branches of knowledge which he anticipated and perceptively foresaw.

#### 4. *Nous* or *Nousing*/Knowing in Aristotle

But, primarily, Randall presents the absolutely elegant and simple Aristotelian model and method of knowing, the significance of the "WHY", the first things/*taprota* and the causes or *aetia*, usually triadic in structure and appearance. Triadic is Aristotle's form of reasoning, he emphasizes, as well as "the dialectical, the eristic and demonstrative," teaches Randall, relying on Aristotle's *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, *Physics* and *De Anima*. He also claims that "Aristotle's first conception of what we call "logic" was revealed in the *Topics*, written prior to the *Organon*, *De Sophisticis Elenchis*, *On Sophistic Refutation* or *On Fallacies*" [1960:39]. One may disagree with Randall when he claims that "the Aristotelian conception of science, as set forth in the *Posterior Analytics*, is still the Platonic idea" – it is his own analytical concession and compromise with the modern *Zeitgeist*. But he correctly captures the central premise of the Aristotelian Doctrine, "Man is an animate being, endowed with the power of NOUS" or that "Man is a rational animal" – something which Rousseau in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, and Freud and Foucault in the 20<sup>th</sup> century would vehemently reject, throwing Man back into the cave of barbarism and animalistic *modus vivendi*, driven by the uncontrolled sexual appetite. Randall here misses the moment to promote Aristotle's wisdom by not dwelling on his concept of "continence" or control of instincts. However, Randall manages to attain his main goal of emphasizing the canonical contrast between Plato and Aristotle by dwelling on the basic superiority of Aristotle's thought:

*Above all, Aristotle rejected the Pythagorean faith of the Platonists and the Platonic tradition, that the Order of nature is and must be mathematical in nature* [1960:58].

This argument has a wise foretelling for the future post-modern obsession with Number, the digital programming and mathematical logarithmic processing of the complex human reality, which would mark another **cultural detour**, alerted and rejected by Aristotle, the natural philosopher, millennia prior. If NOUS for Descartes was God, for Aristotle it was Reason, and Randall comments on it, following the great ancient sage:

*Men are animals than can know the world, and the world is a world that can be known. Knowing intellectual grasp, NOUS is itself cosmic and vital* [1960:6].

Randall exposes the misinterpretation of Aristotle and his Doctrine which regrettably has reigned up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### 5. The Unadulterated Aristotle and Role of His Philosophy

Randall's definite achievement in the history of postmodern European Culture, continental philosophy and science lies in his profound clarification of Aristotle's role and image, "Aristotle's is a pluralistic philosophy" [1960:71]. Indeed, none of the philosophers of antiquity and modernity possessed Aristotle's clarity and encyclopedic knowledge and undying relevance to modernity, to all branches of knowledge, all aspects of human physical, intellectual and social life. None could simultaneously pose numerous probing questions and lay the foundation to so many disciplines as Aristotle had done in remote antiquity. The label of "a thoroughgoing functionalist and operationalist" somewhat diminishes the significance of Aristotle and Aristotelianism.

In 1978, Soviet scholar V. Asmus, introducing the latest translation of *De Anima*, defined Aristotle as "a classical psychologist" and the founder of the modern discipline of Logic, as we know it today [1978:51]. J. Randall, a by-product of the Plato-tinged scholarship, refrains from naming Aristotle's ideological platform as materialistic or idealistic, merely stressing that

"Aristotle, [is] at his best where the organization and function count most, in biology and psychology, leaving up to the readers to guess the implied stand" [1960:242]. J. Randall captures the main and more crucial points of Aristotle's Doctrine – the human ability to KNOW and KNOWING, dependent upon the understanding of Nature and connection with Cosmos. He even uses the neologism NOUSING, a derivative from NOUS/intellect, defining it as a "bodily function capable of rising above the body's limitations" [1960:93]. Randall repeatedly stresses that "man is a rational animal, endowed with the power of thinking "while the World Cosmos could be understood by man" [1960: 97]. In doing that, he resurrects for the North Americans such Aristotelians of the Renaissance as Pomponazzi, Zabarella, reminding that Aristotle's NOUS was "greater than the cosmic NOUS of Anaxagoras" [1960:103]. He invites to re-think the Platonian idea in Spinoza – "Man thinks therefore God exists" [1960:104]. Randall simultaneously challenges the theology-related Platonian paradigm and modern castrated North American secularism.

Randall juxtaposes Lock's, Kantian and Cartesian notions of Substance vis-a-vis the analogous Aristotelian ones, demonstrating their deficiency— what was Change for Aristotle became static and unchangeable in Lock, Kant and Descartes, i. e. one could detect regress and detour in the process of KNOWING since antiquity. Following Aristotle, Randall establishes the NEO-ARISTOTELIAN premise of Knowing, "Things, or *ousia*, are always changing into something else" [1960:123]. Randall connects the canonical Aristotelian FOUR CAUSES with the Ciceronian **concept of causality:**

What is it?

*Ti esti?*

The Formal Cause

Out of what is it made?	<i>Ex hou?</i>	The Material Cause
By what agent?	<i>Hypo tinos?</i>	The Efficient Cause
For what end?	<i>Hou heneka?</i>	The Final Cause

He argues that “every process or kinesis is something being made” and all the Four Aristotelian Causes are “discoverable in any process” [1960:124]. This appears to be the most brilliant part of the entire Aristotle -rehabilitation project, laconic and elegant exegesis, connecting Greek and Roman understanding with the Aristotelian one, forming a base for the 20<sup>th</sup>-century unadulterated natural philosophy of the formerly long misconstrued teaching. In between the commentaries on Aristotle’s Doctrine, Randall inserts periodically his anti-Platonian new challenging stand, “For Aristotle, even God has no purpose, only man!” His emphatic declaration may appear a bit blasphemous in a country, permanently referring to God (“May God help us!”, “God bless America!” – all Americans, old and new, including all Presidents repeat at any opportune moment). Randall stresses that “for Aristotle, the world is a panorama of processes,” naturally occurring, Being to be understood by man.

## 6. On Mis/Translation of the Aristotelian Terminology

J.H.Randall perceptively dwells on the linguistic problems and misinterpretation of Aristotle’s terms simply due to mistranslation. For instance, alluding to the canonical term ENTELECHY he suggests to interpret it as a tripartite unit:

$$EN = IN + TELOS = END + ELCHEIN = TO HAVE$$

This rendition is the echo of the non-mentioned but alluded to William James Durand, not well-trained in languages, who misled the army of scholars, including Randall himself. Durand did not know that ENTE in Greek meant BEING, and ENTITY, which in Italian, came as ORDER, SOCIETY, added on later. The Greek ENTELLIA meant PERFECTION and the French translators kept the original Greek sign (perfection) while the English translators reduced to the toothless and ambiguous “actuality”. The 1976-Russian translation of the Aristotelian corpus, edited by V.Asmus, added another new meaning GIVENESS or GIVEN ENTITY, originally provided by A.Kubitsky in 1934, as well as a number of other interesting translation versions, such as ESSENCE, PRIMARY INTERNAL MATTER, EXPRESSIVE SOUL or ENDOWMENT, the most innovative and in my view, the most semiotically potent of all (1976:478). This very term and its various translations would inspire the 2017-debate in the journal of *Biocosmology and Neo-Aristotelism*<sup>2</sup>.

Randall does not completely rid Aristotle from the canonical misinterpretation of NOUS which scholars traditionally mistook for God(s), Creator, Cosmic Divine

<sup>2</sup> See: Bremer, Josef; Khroustski, Konstantin S.; Klimek, Rudolf and Tadeusiewicz, Ryszard. “Challenging integralism, Aristotelian *entelecheia*, *hyle* and *morphe* (form), and contemporary concepts of information, touching upon the aetiological issues of carcinogenesis (with reflecting feedbacks of Paul Beaulieu, Ana Bazac, Anna Makolkin, Leonardo Chiatti, Milan Tasić and Dariusz Szkutnik),” *Biocosmology – Neo-Aristotelism* Vol. 7, No. 1 (Winter 2017): 8–111.

Reason, and he occasionally continues to treat it in the same vein, i.e. denying human act of cognition (1960: 141). His overall anti-Platonian premise often contradicts some indicated misinterpretations – Randall occasionally oscillates between the accepted traditional rendition of Plato and the true anti-Platonian position in Aristotle. A son of the Baptist Minister, raised in not a very secular USA, Randall sometimes does see God in Aristotle where there is Reason and the process of human cognition, but this not the major theme in his book.

### 7. Rising Role of Aristotle’s Natural Philosophy in Modern Times

However, J.H.Randall, an objective historian of philosophy, places Aristotle above his ancient predecessors and most future modern followers and commentators by bringing to the surface Aristotle’s reputation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He writes:

*As biology came to fore, it was realized  
that Aristotle was the greatest biologist [1960:166].*

His mention of Darwin’s opinion about Aristotle adds to the changing status of the Greek sage in the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

*Linnaeus and Crevien have been my gods;  
but they were mere schoolboys compared  
to old Aristotle [ibid.].*

Ironically, with the flow of time and rise of modern science, Aristotle would gain more authority and popularity– “his ideas of function and process would become fundamental in biology” writes Randall in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Aristotle’s greatness as a scientist, paradoxically, became even more vivid with the evolution of modern knowledge. Without debunking modern science, J.Randall, tracing the evolution of knowledge, defiantly argues that Aristotle’s natural philosophy could not and should be viewed as a forensic artifact of museum interest, but rather as an indispensable part of modern physics, biology, genetics and etc. He argues that

*the ideas in Aristotle’s physics are far closer to  
the present theory than the ideas of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,  
[and are]the most illuminating and suggestive inquiries [1960:167].*

Aristotle, in his view, anticipated the ages of scientific inquiry, while the 17th-18th century could not evaluate Aristotle’s thought adequately and the reality of inquiry forced scientists eventually to return to his functional and contextual concepts [1960:168]. Aristotle’s practical philosophy has not lost its meaning in modern times – his *Ethics* and *Politics* can still guide man in the era of space flights and digital obsession, guiding how man can be improved, made civilized and attain happiness/eudemonia. But Aristotle approaches society not as a geometrical structure, neither as a Pythagorean, nor a Platonian, but as a healer of the body and soul. The “greatest knower” is also the greatest healer. To prove his point of relevance of

Aristotle, J.Randall brings in the old work by Ernest Barker, *Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*, published in London in 1906. By quoting Aristotle's *Politics*, Randall complements the Aristotelian scientific corpus by his eternally relevant contributions to sociology, anthropology and modern political science. J.Randall's most comprehensive analysis of the Aristotelian corpus, with the most illuminating comments on the still existing democracy, oligarchy, tyranny, corrupt government and unresolved conflicts, brings Aristotle from the annals of antiquity into the thick of modernity.

His humble "little book" is definitely still the best modern Anglo-American reference source and introduction to Aristotle and Aristotelianism which he develops from the six positions:

1. Aristotelianism as an emphasis on the subject matter (materialist but without mentioning it).
2. Aristotelianism as a factorial analysis– Reality, Being, Nature.
3. Aristotelianism as a definite position of Man and his relation to the world through Thought and Logos.
4. Aristotelianism from the perspective of how we can best state our findings (the most logical way)
5. Aristotelianism is structuralism, knowledge expressed in culture
6. Aristotelianism means a functional realism.

Randall shocks his fellow scientists by claiming that, paradoxically, "today it is Aristotle who often seems strikingly modern, and Newton who appears of mere historical interest" [1960:168]. He repeatedly stresses the striking applicability of Aristotle's Corpus to the modern arrogant science, whose clarity is impressive, the thought is most fruitful and suggestive. Randall asks his Anglo-American colleagues in sciences and humanities to come back to Aristotle, to his books on Nature–*Physics*, *Meteorologica*, *De Cielo*, *De Generatione et Corruptione* – in order to appreciate how perceptive and correct was Aristotle, having no instruments at his disposal over two thousands years ago, while "the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Newtonian physicists were wrong" [1960:169]. Aristotle's idea of motion as a genuine process cannot be understood by the followers of Russell, Hume or Whitehead, according to Randall. These statements by Randall are revolutionary. He restores the authentic image of Aristotle, rehabilitating his thought and its eternal relevance to humanity. But in the process of his rehabilitation, J.H.Randall offers his own rendition of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, his notions of **process** and the archetypal **causes**, placing the sage from Stagira above Descartes and Spinoza, as well as Plato and generations of numerous Platonists. He draws attention to the unique unprecedented Aristotle's analysis of Time, Place, Motion, Continuity, Unity which place the entire modern philosophy into a small footnote to his Corpus. Without naming the method and approach as materialistic, Randall proves that Aristotle's vision of Cosmos, Bios and real observable physical and biological processes was rooted in the acceptance of the given Nature, i.e. reality rather than the Idea, the product of human imagination.

If Plato and Platonists had been obsessed with God and what god actually undertook the job of creation and creating Cosmos, Aristotle was never concerned

with it. His main interest was in the area of natural processes, in functioning of the real biological organism, events, coexistence of elements, oscillating changes back and forth, the circulation of matter and Coming to be and “Passing away.” His *De Generatione* was his denunciation of Plato and Platonism, offering an alternative vision of Cosmos and Cosmic processes. “Aristotle’s interest is rooted in the living things,” underscores Randall, despite the fact, that, according to him, “his biological treatises comprise some third of the entire Corpus” [1960:221]. He invites his Anglo-American readers to familiarize themselves with the Aristotle’s *History of Animals* and *De Generatione* in order to evaluate his most striking and profound intelligent guesses, having relevance to the future genetics, zoology, biology and emphasizing the continuity of thought, non-encumbered by the discursive acrobatics and post-modern confusion.

### Conclusions

The value of Randall’s “little book” lies in the complete rehabilitation of Aristotle as a uniquely original encyclopedic thinker and multidisciplinary scientist whose concepts, hypotheses, and ideas are more than relevant to modern pursuit of knowledge and modern society, and even to the modern thought. By no means, in his view, do they constitute museum artifacts of forensic interest. He passionately argues that Aristotelianism as a method of inquiry is applicable to all sciences and humanities, being relevant to all societies and cultures, stresses Randall – be it the then existing Soviet Union, Medieval Christendom, India or New York [1960:248]. The major significance of Aristotle’s Doctrine lies in its Universalism, recognition of universal features of human reasoning and universal patterns of cognition. In the process of re-evaluating Aristotle, this American scholar re-writes the philosophical and cultural tradition of Europeans, for millennia dominated by Plato and Platonic vision of Cosmos.

Randall’s re-reading of Aristotle is also daringly placed into the context of the Old-versus-New World. The American scholar foregrounds the invaluable European, and specifically Italian, cultural roots, the legacy of the Renaissance without which one cannot properly view the Aristotelian Corpus. His Aristotle is not only a Greek cultural property and icon, but also the universal one, embracing all human Science and Culture, including American. Randall’s Aristotle is the missing paradigm in the universal pursuit of knowledge and search for the Perfect Man and Society. The modern man who has lost his keys to the “temple of knowledge” and meaning of Being is, paradoxically, still dependent on Aristotle, his wisdom, his natural philosophy, his scientific method of inquiry and his social and political concepts, articulated over millennia prior.

### Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank the following colleagues: Prof. K. Khroutski from the Yaroslavl the Wise Novgorod State University, Russia, for encouraging to pay attention to J.H. Randall and his position on Aristotle and providing the electronic text of Randall’s 1958-article; Prof. Andrew Hunter, Ryerson University, Toronto,

Canada for referring to the Canadian Encyclopedia, 2012. This contribution greatly benefitted from their valuable suggestions.

## References

- Aristotle. *Complete Works*, 2 vol ed. by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984
- . *Polnoe sobranie Sochineniy / Complete Works*, 4 vol. ed. by V.AsMus Moscow: Nauka, 1976-78 (in Russian).
- V.AsMus. “*Traktat o dushe*” (Treatise on Soul”) in *Complete Works*, Moscow 1976-edition, pp. 50–63.
- Barker, Ernest. *Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*. London: Methuen & Co, 1906.
- Barnes, Jonathan. *Aristotle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- Bloch, David. *John of Salisbury on Aristotelian Science*. Brepols: Turnhout, 2012.
- Biocosmology – Neo-Aristotelism*, a bilingual Anglo-Russian peer-reviewed electronic interdisciplinary journal, regularly published since 2010, offering different renditions of the Aristotelian Natural Philosophy and the entire *Corpus Aristotelicum*. URL: <http://en.biocosmology.ru/electronic-journal-biocosmology---neo-aristotelism>
- Bremer, Josef; Khroustski, Konstantin S.; Klimek, Rudolf and Tadeusiewicz, Ryszard. “Challenging integralism, Aristotelian entelecheia, hyle and morphe (form), and contemporary concepts of information, touching upon the aetiological issues of carcinogenesis (with reflecting feedbacks of Paul Beaulieu, Ana Bazac, Anna Makolkin, Leonardo Chiatti, Milan Tasić and Dariusz Szkutnik),” *Biocosmology – Neo-Aristotelism* Vol. 7, No. 1 (Winter 2017): 8–111.
- Dante, Alighieri. *La divina commedia. A cura di Umberto Bosco*. Firenze: Le Monner, 1980.
- Durand, Will. *The Story of Philosophy*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1927.
- Hamelin, Octave. *Le systeme d’Aristotle*. Paris: Sorbonne, L.Robin, 1920.
- Jaeger, Werner. *Aristotle: Fundamentals of His Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934.
- . *Studen zur entstekungsgeschichte der metaphysik des Aristotle*. Berlin: Weidmann, 1912.
- Kalderon, Mark Eli. *Form Without Matter: Empedocles and Aristotle on Color Perception*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Kelly, Donald. *Renaissance Humanism*. Boston: Twayne Publishers & Co., 1991.
- Kristeller, Paul Oscar. *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.
- . *Medieval Aspects of the Renaissance*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1974.
- Lamond, Yvan. “Philosophy: History Before 1950”, in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2012, pp1–3.

- Lear, Jonathan. *Wisdom Won from Illness. Essays in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017.
- Lerois, Armand Marie. *The Lagoon. How Aristotle Invented Science*. Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Leunissen, Mariska. *Explanation and Teleology in Aristotle's Science of Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Makolkin, Anna. "Machiavelli's Roman Nostalgia and Critique of Christianity", Paper presented at the Conference of the Italian Studies, Trieste, Italy, 2007.
- . *Wisdom and Happiness, With or Without God*. Toronto: Anik Press, 2009.
- . "Sema, Semasia/ Meaning and Toying with Semantics in Aristotle's Translated Works", in *Biocosmology and Neo-Aristotelism*, Vol.7, No.1 (Winter 2017), pp. 85–88.
- . "Aristotle, Aristotelism(s) and Neo-Aristotelianism– Wisdom Therapy for the Ailing Civilization", in *Biocosmology and Neo-Aristotelism*, Vol 3, No.4 (Autumn 2013), pp. 585–607.
- Marmodoro, Anna. *Aristotle on Perceiving Objects*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014
- Petrarca, Francesco. "On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others", in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. by Ernst Cassirer & Paul Oscar Kresteller. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1948, pp. 47–134.
- Randall, John Herman Jr. *Aristotle*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.
- . "Dynamism of Aristotle" in *The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy, Newsletter*, 49/1958, pp. 1–24.
- Roark, Tony. *Aristotle on Time: A Study of the "Physics"*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Trott, Elizabeth "Philosophy in English Canada" in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2012, pp.4–7.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. *Alfred North Whitehead : an anthology / selected by F.S.C. Northrop and Mason W. Gross*. New York: Macmillan, 1961.
- . *Essays on Philosophy*, ed. by George L.Kleine, Englewood, Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1963.
- . *The Concept of Nature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964.