

## The subject Da Vinci and his scientist becoming

### O sujeito Da Vinci e seu devir cientista

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**Abstract.** *Leonardo da Vinci is evoked in the literature of the scientific thought by the originality and plurality of his works, and his legacy gives us news of the relationship between the researcher and his research objects. Representing the brightest minds of the Renaissance, Da Vinci drives his biographers and all those interested to the moment of transition of scientific occidental thinking between the low middle age and the modern age. It is through the Koyrerian perspective of this transition that we will emphasize his scientist becoming, valuing him as the subject of measurement, calculation, accuracy, and his uncanniness, elements that expose him at the forefront of a new language in the field of knowledge.*

**Keywords:** *Renaissance. Epistemology. Alexandre Koyré.*

**Resumo.** *Leonardo da Vinci é evocado na literatura do pensamento científico pela originalidade e pluralidade de suas obras, seu legado nos dá notícias da relação inquieta entre o pesquisador e seus objetos de pesquisa. Representante das mentes mais brilhantes do Renascimento, Da Vinci conduz seus biógrafos e todos os interessados ao momento de transição do pensamento científico entre a baixa idade média e a idade moderna. Será através da perspectiva koyreriana desta transição ocidental que daremos destaque ao seu devir cientista, valorizando-o como sujeito da medida, do cálculo, da exatidão, e de sua inquietude, elementos que o expõe na vanguarda de uma nova linguagem no campo do saber.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Renascença. Epistemologia. Alexandre Koyré.*

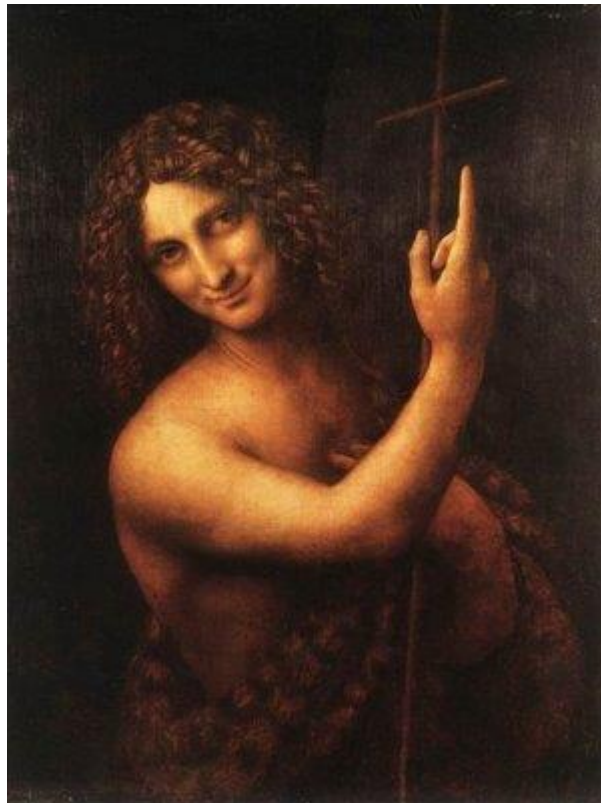
### 1. Restless subject

“Tell me”, “tell me”, the expression is frequent in his writings (Riaño, 2019), a demand located in the exercise of his self-reflection, which gives us news of his restless movement of investigation, as well as the distance between him and the “other” to whom the truth is demanded.

Da Vinci writes in second person, from this distance, by and for a knowledge that he lacks. Restless, he offers us the testimony of his sensitive experience and forges a knowledge about the said condition. Regarding his experience, Bramly (1989, p. 103) quotes da Vinci's phrase as follows: “the greater the sensitivity, the greater the martyrdom—a great martyrdom” (apud Siqueira, 2005, p.5).

The brief analysis of these two fragments of Da Vinci's writing converges to what is experienced in the contemplation of his works, which exposes him disturbingly (Freud, 2010) and ahead of the new paradigms for the exercise of science, sometimes strange, sometimes familiar to the scholastics.

Ambiguity is possible to be appreciated in his works, when he ingeniously forges a mysterious smile in his androgen characters, frequent in paintings and unfinished sketches, whose aesthetic stems from the mixture of classical themes with Christian motifs (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. St. John the Baptist. Leonardo da Vinci, 1515.**

Source: [www.culturagenial.com](http://www.culturagenial.com)

It is characteristic of renaissance man the rescue of Greek culture and aesthetics, aiming at a critical look at Aristotelian science, to the fundamental pillars of the theorization and dissemination of scholastic knowledge.

Thus, the praxis of this subject overflows the walls of the monasteries, but does not return his spirit to the Greek origins he revisits, locating him in the other place of his

writing. To understand this place and what it brings from novelty to modern thought, we evoke Alexandre Koyré.

## 2. Truth and destiny

Koyré was a French philosopher of Russian origin who dedicated his work to the study of Western history and scientific thought. The author supports that the scientific revolution of the century XVII was a theoretical revolution, critical to Aristotelian and Platonic reason, which does not derogate the condition of being science of the theorization and research of the world made until then (Koyré, 1982).

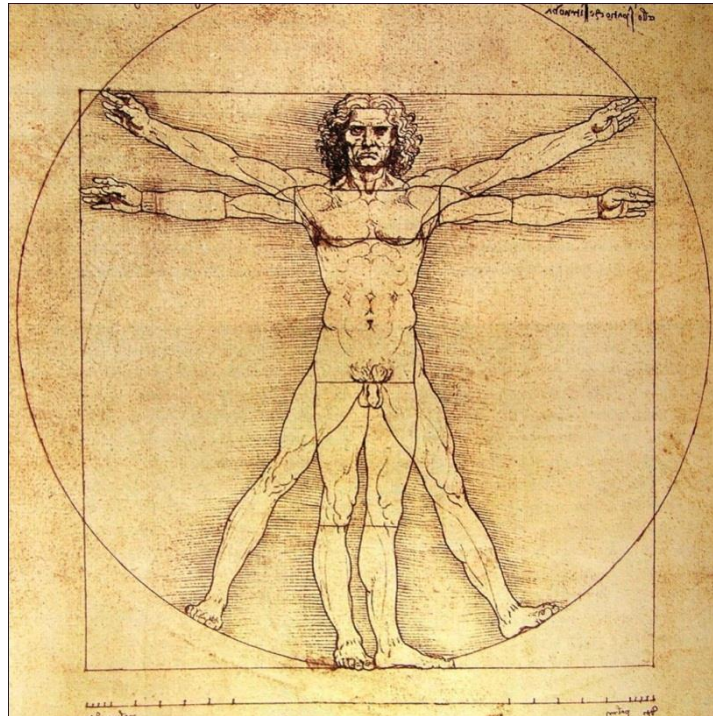
The engine of the revolution is not limited to the technical advances of observation and direct experience of the researcher. The discoveries made with the use of the Galileo telescope are not the starting point of the new science, but a consequence of the new scientific language that was constituted with the mathematicization of reality. It enabled the construction of the telescope and its condition of being, not only as a tool, but as a scientific instrument, in the pertinence of its use and in the interpretation of its results (Barbosa, 2011, p.9).

The geometrization of space allows the scientist another experience with the real, in addition to his sensitive experience. The breaking of the hierarchical division of the cosmos between terrestrial and celestial reality would not be possible without this geometrized real, and the coming of an individual, in its unit geometrically located in the universe would also not be (Figure 2).

The fate of this fellow in the face of infinity does not seem comfortable, but unsettling. Thinking about it from this universe does not dispense with what, for Koyré (1948) bases the new science, since the development of its instruments: Measurement, calculation and accuracy.

Curious thing: two thousand years earlier, Pythagoras had proclaimed that number is the very essence of things: and the Bible had taught that God had founded the world on “the number, the weight, the measure.” Everyone repeated it — but no one believed it. At least even Galileo, no one took it seriously. (Koyré, 1948, p. 277)

However, were these elements not on the horizon of Da Vinci's works?



**Figure 2. The Vitruvian Man. Leonardo da Vinci, 1490.**

Source: [www.culturagenial.com](http://www.culturagenial.com)

### 3. The scientist and the truth

While it is located, and only does so from a writing whose perspective is mathematized, the subject of science is implicated in the distance between him and the truth of his object of study. Truth is not guaranteed by divine revelations, but is forever on the horizon, which propels it to investigation and evokes fantasies about its lost origin (Freud, 2010, p.104).

It is possible to argue that the scientist is, therefore, between what, of these fantasies is conscious to him and what he does not know of them. This is also an ambiguous condition for one who, faced with a propositional perspective of space, describes it from a place not all, by a divided condition, cause of its becoming.

The Renaissance man is heir to the culture with which he attributes its origin, the origin of Western culture, and from it, he is neither totally coincident nor totally conscious. Through this movement of repetition and elaboration, it does not reach a zero point of its origin, does not close the question, does not cease to seek the original truth.

And we will see how it is by repetition, as a repetition of disappointment, that Freud coordinates the experience, while disappointing, with a real that will be from then on, in the field of science, situated as what the subject is condemned to have missing but that this lack even reveals. (Lacan, 2008, p. 45)

From the above, the modern scientist looks like the myth of Oedipus King, in the instant before the discovery of the truth about his desire, but, unlike the realization of Oedipus, he stands at the previous moment and works with him, always wanting to know more.

Da Vinci's work exposes this condition of being, and transmits it in the incompleteness of his sketches, in his demand for knowledge and in the enigma of his smiles. It is, therefore, a subject before his own becoming, not all aware of his past, of his object of study, of the most intimate and “martyred” fantasy that veils the truth, truth that moves his desire to know, 118 years ahead of the Cartesian Cogito (I think, therefore I am).

We can bet that when asked in second person, Da Vinci pointed to a possible place to man in the mathematical universe, and when he asked “tell me”, he also authenticated his becoming the moment he thought about his thinking.

#### **4. Considerations**

To specify the exact moment of the founding act of the scientist is a difficult task, since we have no more than his heir, partially coincident with his origin, absent at the time of his reproduction, circumscribing it in his a posteriori. In any case, we implicate Da Vinci in the cradle of this process, by the way in which the desire to know stood out, and we also imply ourselves as the condition of becoming a scientist, in the willingness to investigate it.

When we consider the originality of his works we draw inspiration from him and approach him as subjects of our desire to know, and subject to what, from the truth of desire, we do not know.

The investigation process involves the scientist in the search for the truth that the more persecuted, the more described, the more it is present in reverse to what is expected, that is, it is always present, under the shadow of unspoken words, lines and outcluded numbers.

If Da Vinci's anatomophysiological man exists through unfinished sketches, it mirrors the restlessness that sustains scientific thought. The heirs of his legacy are also subjects of science, destined to the production of knowledge, to the reproduction of his dissatisfaction and to the distance between him and the truth of his origin.

The scientist's faulty condition and the way in which it enabled transformations in modern thought does not derogate from man's place in the face of divine mysteries, but keeps him parallel to God and the State, in a strange and familiar relationship with them, contributing to a daring praxis over six centuries.

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