

In Memoriam: Lucio Russo (1944–2025)

On July 12, 2025, Professor Lucio Russo—physicist, mathematician, and historian of science—passed away in Bologna. He was born in Venice on November 22, 1944. He held the chair of *Calcolo delle probabilità* as Full Professor at the University of Rome *Tor Vergata*. His expertise was of the highest caliber, both in the fields of physics and mathematics and in classical studies.

It is only fitting that an international journal of ancient philosophy like *Méthexis* commemorate Professor Russo for his scientific activity of the highest cultural significance in the field of the history of Greek science. In my view, his work went well beyond mere popularization, even though he consistently regarded dissemination as a vital and non-negotiable mission for any serious and competent scholar. This attitude also explains his sustained attention to the issue of school education in Italy, a subject on which he wrote a very debated book: *Segmenti e bastoncini: Dove sta andando la scuola?* (Feltrinelli: Milan 1998; revised and expanded ed. 2000).

Among his many publications across various disciplines, Lucio Russo's name is rightly and indissolubly associated with a particularly influential book: *La rivoluzione dimenticata: Il pensiero scientifico greco e la scienza moderna* (1st ed. Feltrinelli, Milan 1996; new edition 2021), which has been translated into several languages. In this work, Professor Russo—through a methodology rigorously attentive to ancient texts and their historical contexts—re-evaluates the development of science during the Hellenistic era to such an extent that he demonstrates how, far more than Plato, Aristotle, or their schools, it was the scientists of the Hellenistic period—such as Euclid (to whose *Elements*, Book I, Russo dedicated *Euclide: il I libro degli Elementi. Una nuova lettura*, Carocci: Rome 2017, co-authored with G. Pirro and E. Salciccia), Archimedes (see his *Archimede: Un grande scienziato antico*, Carocci: Rome 2019), Eratosthenes, Aristarchus of Samos, and Hipparchus of Nicaea—who laid the foundations for the scientific revolution of the Modern Age.

For Russo, the Hellenistic period was, in essence, the greatest scientific revolution humanity had witnessed before Modernity. Of course, it is a *forgotten* revolution for several reasons.

First, because of the Roman conquest of the Mediterranean between 146 and 145 BCE—marked by the destruction of Carthage, the subjugation of Greece, and the effective absorption of Egypt and Syria into the Roman sphere of

influence. Russo addressed this theme in another important volume, *Il tracollo culturale: La conquista romana del Mediterraneo (146–145 a. C.)*, Carocci: Rome 2022, in which he demonstrated how Rome's expansion corresponded, in fact, to an authentic cultural regression in all fields—from geography to technology, from science to art. Secondly, the loss of a vast number of Hellenistic texts has contributed to the obscuring of this historical period, relegating it to a marginal and secondary status. Thirdly, the Hellenistic era has been negatively affected by a historiographical commonplace—partly ancient but still evident today—that portrays it as a period of undeniable decline when compared to the unmatched cultural splendor of the 5th century BCE: a mere 'parenthesis' between the Classical age and the Imperial period, and one that is, in effect, barely worth considering.

Russo's work—characterized by clarity of style and, at times, deliberate provocation—has played a pivotal role in re-establishing the Hellenistic period as a decisive phase in the development of science and its investigative methodologies. I believe that the best way to honor Professor Russo is perhaps to revisit *La rivoluzione dimenticata*, in order to fully appreciate the cultural and 'archaeological' effort he undertook to restore Hellenism to its rightful place in the history of scientific discovery. Russo reminds us that without that first revolution, there could not have been a second, and the course of history of science would have taken a different, and likely darker, path. For this alone, he deserves our deepest gratitude as a great scholar of ancient science.

Francesco Verde

Co-Editor-in-Chief, *Méthexis*