

ARS INVENIENDI

XX

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## ARS INVENIENDI

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New Perspectives from Brazil, Italy, Japan and Russia  
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# Investigations on Giambattista Vico in the Third Millenium

New Perspectives from Brazil, Italy, Japan and Russia

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## Preface

FABRIZIO LOMONACO, JULIA IVANOVA

Why hold a congress on Vico today at the beginning of a new millennium with a century behind it that could certainly be considered to have reached a mature critical and historiographical understanding of Vico's thought? Why induce people, even if unintentionally, to put forward once again the cliché of the topicality of a thinker who is difficult to classify in the scholastic gallery of «great spirits» (between empiricism and rationalism, recalling old school manuals) of the history of thought, each taken out of his historical context and defined according to a certain type in an ascending, always improving line without interruptions or slackening? First of all, the answer can be readily found in the need to contest this form of organization of knowledge in the hope of a serious, in-depth study of the documented relationship between an author and his success, a theme involving not only specialized studies (philosophical or others) but also basic common knowledge cultivated at school. Moreover, Vico is a special kind of classic scholar, one who put important questions in unusual ways in all the areas he touched upon, including his research method that dispenses with a science of methodology; his «criticism of reality» by means of *topica* and *ingegno*; his science of man without the logical involutions of Cartesianism and abstract metaphysics, reluctant to recognize the complicated but ineluctable «becoming» of man, who, by using his imagination, arrives at reason from the history of words (philology) of things and philosophy; and his very human philology, not only inseparable from philosophy but constituting a presupposition of it as *nuova arte critica* (as it would be called in *Scienza Nuova*, where Vico uses the two dimensions of eternal *ratio* and religious, poetic, and juridical language).

Vico was a thinker who wrote his own autobiography as a «historian» to contest a certain way of understanding philosophy (Cartesian) and the sense of the universal it presupposes. The need for a unity–distinction of systems of knowledge in their plurality and situationality is sufficient to appeal to the responsibility of men without falling into any kind of solipsism; hence the approach to the new «natural rights of people» (before the *Scienza nuova* and its «common nature of nations»), which means banning every ancient and modern natural law incapable of agreement on the themes and

problems inherent to modern ethics. There is a need not for a «moral of the solitary people» or of *monastics* (as Vico wrote), but for a philosophy for the «political philosophers», able to know their constitutive coexistence with other beings. Without forcing it into a present context, this can give rise to a better understanding of the modern concept of European citizenship, relying upon a relationship between philosophies and cities.

In the current impasse in the process of European integration, it appears more and more necessary to overcome the purely economic perspective and recover the links between ideas, people, and places. In this connection, we must go further in our investigations on the modern forms of nation–states (central in Vico’s thought) in order to understand the reasons for the dissolution of the daily «global» context in light of questions that are philosophical because they use *facts* that must be *verified* in the existence of populations. The conceptual framework provided by Vichian philosophy sheds new light on the crisis of the modern European conscience, in the world of values and actions divided between a localized perspective of the «territorial states» and a new need for *constancy* and *coherence* of ethical behaviour inspired by the principles of reason and universal justice. These reasons have made obvious the opportuneness of a meeting that could articulate the above–stated problems in the new panorama of these new global problems with and without Vico.

This long–expected event took place in Moscow in May 2013. The Moscow Congress «Investigations on Giambattista Vico in the Third Millennium» was intended to provide an intellectual platform for scholars of Vichian thought from different parts of the world to share and discuss achievements and perspectives borne both in long–established European traditions of Vichian studies (Italian and Russian) and in schools that are relatively young but already rich in insights — in Asia (Japanese school, represented by T. Uemura, who published an edition of the *Autobiography* in 2012) and in Latin America (Brazilian schools headed by Humberto Guido and Sertório de Amorin e Silva Neto).

The Congress aimed to establish an international research network in order to create new centers of Vico studies and to encourage further development of the existing ones. The conference brought together scholars involved in six main areas of Vichian studies: linguistics and poetics, history, anthropology, jurisprudence and rhetoric, practical philosophy and philology, and metaphysics and religion. Among the keynote discussion topics, of particular importance was the problem of *veritas* in both its theoretical and practical forms. At the conference sections devoted to Vico’s attitude towards Descartes and 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup>–century Cartesianism, special attention was paid to the Neapolitan’s pivotal formula *verum–factum–certum* and its metaphysical and juridical dimensions. Other key issues examined at the

conference — not without drawing cautious and fruitful analogies with the contemporary intellectual culture — were those of method, law, and literary hermeneutics.

It has been shown that the study of the Vichian approach to literature and relations between history and poetry, especially his category of *sublime*, have a high potential for ethnography and the study of Brazilian culture. A series of papers dealt with Vico's significance for contemporary philology and philosophy. Another significant topic was that of truth–falsehood (*verum–falsum*), considered in connection with a Vichian approach to the language of law and mind–body relations, a theme that inevitably implies comparisons with Cartesian anthropology. The Vichian category of the *conscience of certain*, situated at an intersection of mythology and Cartesian critique, was the focus of a paper that examined the notion of punishment in *De universi juris uno principio et fine uno*. Another paper touched upon the delicate problem of *gigantologia* set somewhere between sacred and profane history. A vast array of investigations have been devoted to Vico's role in modern and contemporary culture with particular reference to the philosophy of history in Russia, the theory of «historical periods» in G. Ferrari, E. Said's Orientalism, and contemporary Anglo–American hermeneutics and rhetorics.

Due to the tremendous efforts of the organizers, the Congress was crowned with well–deserved success and will justly go down in the history of 21<sup>st</sup>–century Vichian scholarship. But purely scientific results were not the unique goal set and effectively realized by the conference team. Another significant achievement was to bring together scientific research and education in order to establish a close connection between these two fields. A felicitous experiment of this mutually beneficial cooperation — CERTAME VICHIANO — has been carried out in Italy under the auspices of the University of Naples “Federico II” with the collaboration of the Interuniversity Consortium *Civiltà del mediterraneo* and the City of Bacoli (April 2013). The *Certame* was favoured with the participation of a number of schools from Naples and its province and involved high–level scientific institutions: the «P. Piovani Foundation for the Studies on G. Vico» and the section of the CNR dedicated to Vico's legacy. The winner of the *Certame*, Claudia Falanga, attended the Moscow Congress and presented her paper, which was awarded with the *Premio Vico*.

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However unexpected it may seem to those who are familiar with the conventional image of the history of Vichian scholarship, the pioneering decision to hold the Vichian Congress in Moscow was by no means arbitrary.

In fact, the peripheral centers of the reception of Vico's legacy — Slavic countries, the Middle East, the Far East (to a lesser extent) — still remain a blank spot in Western-centered Vichian historiography. In the case of Russia, the scarce attention paid to Vico's thought is part of a larger problem that can be defined as the marginalizing (on ideological grounds) of early modern intellectual history in Soviet historiography. The indifference of Russian scholars towards Vico looks like a counterpart of the Neapolitan's grotesque representations of the *Muscovites'* civilization: suffice it to mention the famous passages of the *New Science*, according to which «the Czar of Muscovy, although Christian, rules over men of sluggish minds», who pertinaciously stick to the «custom of fathers really selling their children». But on closer examination, retracing the outlines of the two-century-long Russian reception of Vico makes it possible to appreciate the variety of theoretical frameworks Russian intellectuals sought to impose on the Neapolitan's legacy: from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century «physiology of peoples» (V. Y. Bulygin) and the Hegelian philosophy of history (P. Kudryavtsev, etc.) to non-official Soviet Marxism (A. Guber).

In recent works of Russian scholars dedicated to Vico, one of the predominant research topics seems to be the presence of Vichian thought in contemporary sociology and the theory of the humanities. The historical reconstruction of the Russian reception of Vico undertaken by the authors of this series of articles has paved the way for an ambitious project of translating Vichian opera into Russian, which has already yielded its first fruit: the translation of the III<sup>th</sup> and VII<sup>th</sup> chapters of *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* is nearly ready to come off the press. But the goals of the project are not confined to translation; the utmost objective is VICO-LEXICON, a comprehensive vocabulary including names and categories collected on the basis of Vichian opera as well as the key notions and main characters of Vico's *Wirkungsgeschichte*.

Naples — Moscow  
5 november 2013

Fabrizio Lomonaco, Julia Ivanova

## Vico's autobiography as metaphor\*

TADAO UEMURA

**ABSTRACT:** What impressed me is one aspect of Vico's Autobiography: namely, what is told in it seems to be too metaphorical to be taken as an autobiography in the ordinary meaning of the word and to be used as historical data in order to understand the author's *Bildung* or intellectual formative processes. In so far as an autobiography is in itself a literary artifact, it might not be strange to be found rhetorical apparatus in it. But, when I say that what is told in Vico's Autobiography is too metaphorical, I do not mean this fact. As we all know well, Vico was a professional of rhetoric: when he wrote his Autobiography, it had already been nearly thirty years since he started his career as a professor of eloquence at the Royal University at Naples. What is particularly worth to be noticed is the fact that a rhetorical way of expression called *sententiae* and embellishing the story is here and there used effectively.

### I.

In his Autobiography, Giambattista Vico presents himself not in the first person, but in the third one. This fact seems somewhat odd to the modern reader. This style of narration, however, may belong to the Ciceronian–humanistic tradition that, in the public speech, the speaker used to portray himself in the third person<sup>1</sup>.

What impressed me is another aspect of Vico's Autobiography: namely, what is told in it seems to be too metaphorical to be taken as an autobiography in the ordinary meaning of the word and to be used as historical data in order to understand the author's *Bildung* or intellectual formative processes.

In so far as an autobiography is in itself a literary artifact, it might not be strange to be found rhetorical apparatus in it. But, when I say that what is

\* This paper is a revised English version of my essay *Yu to shite no Jiden* attached to the Japanese edition of Giambattista Vico, *Jiden*, translated by Tadao Uemura (Tokyo, Miraisha, 2012) as Introduction.

1. G. Costa assumes, in his essay *An Enduring Venetian Accomplishment: The Autobiography of G. B. Vico*, in «Italian Quarterly», 21 (1980), pp. 49–50, that, in entitling his autobiography as *Vita di Giambattista Vico scritta da se medesimo*, Vico imitated the title which the Venetian poet G. Chiabrera (1552–1638) gave to his autobiography — *Vita di Gabriello Chiabrera scritta da se medesimo* —, while D. P. Verene, in his book *The New Art of Autobiography: An Essay on the Life of Giambattista Vico Written by Himself*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 66–69, notices, though admitting the possibility of derivation of the style of narration in Vico's Autobiography from Chiabrera's one, that some precedents are found in the humanistic tradition from the ancient Rome to Renaissance.

told in Vico's Autobiography is too metaphorical, I do not mean this fact.

As we all know well, Vico was a professional of rhetoric: when he wrote his Autobiography, it had already been nearly thirty years since he started his career as a professor of eloquence at the Royal University at Naples. And, as Andrea Battistini analyzes minutely in his book *La degnità della retorica*, this skill of rhetoric is fully exhibited also in his Autobiography<sup>2</sup>. What is particularly worth to be noticed is the fact that a rhetorical way of expression called *sententiae* and embellishing the story is here and there used effectively.

Firstly, the sentences which open the part of his Autobiography, which was written in 1725–1728 and was published in *Raccolta d'opuscoli scientifici e filologici*, t. I (1728), pp. 143–256, under the title *Vita di Giambattista Vico scritta da se medesimo*:

Mr. Giambattista Vico was born in Naples in the year 1670 [sic] of honest parents who left a good fame after them. His father was of a cheerful disposition, his mother of a quite melancholy temper, both contributed to the character of their son..[After the mischance that at the age of seven he fell head first from the top of a ladder] he grew up with a melancholy and irritable temperament such as belongs to men of ingenuity and depth, who, thanks to the ingenuity, are quick as lightning in perception, and thanks to the reflection, take no pleasure in verbal cleverness or falsehood<sup>3</sup>.

This is one of the most typical instances of *sententiae* or brief aphoristic sayings, along with the following paragraph that embellishes the end of the whole story, which was written in 1731 as a continuation of the former part of his Autobiography:

These finally led him to the discovery of the *New Science*. And after that, enjoying life, liberty and honor, he held himself more fortunate than Socrates, on whom Phaedrus has made the following magnanimous vow:

I would not shun his death to win his fame;

I'd yield to odium, if absolved when dust <sup>4</sup>.

Secondly, the sentence which embellishes the opening of the paragraph which follows the author's testimony that, after «the period of solitude,

2. Cfr. A. Battistini, *Il traslato autobiografico*, in Id., *La degnità della retorica. Studi su G. B. Vico*, Pisa, Pacini, 1975, pp. 15–50.

3. G. Vico, *Opere*, V: *L'autobiografia, il carteggio e le poesie varie*, edited by B. Croce and F. Nicolini, Bari, Laterza, 1929<sup>2</sup>, p. 3; *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, translated from the Italian by M. H. Fisch and T. G. Bergin, Great Seal Books: Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1963, p. 111; G. Vico, *Jiden*, translated from the Italian by T. Uemura, Tokyo, Heibonsha, 2012, pp. 8–9.

4. Vico, *Opere*, V, p. 79; *The Autobiography*, p. 200; *Jiden*, p. 169.

which lasted a good nine years»<sup>5</sup> in the wood of Vatolla apart far from the city in which «taste in letters changed every two or three years like styles in dress»<sup>6</sup>, he returned to Naples and that he «lived in his native land not only a stranger but also quite unknown»<sup>7</sup>:

Fortune is said to be friendly to young men, for they choose their lot in life from among those arts and professions that flourish in their youth; but as the world by its nature changes in taste from year to year, they later find themselves in their old age strong in such wisdom as no longer pleases and therefore no longer profits<sup>8</sup>.

But, it is not these *sententiae* that impressed me above all in Vico's Autobiography. When I say that what is told in it is too metaphorical, the word "metaphor" points to the other meaning than that of a rhetorical way of expression called *sententia*.

To add to this, it seems to me that, in writing his Autobiography, Vico's self-consciousness as a professional of rhetoric was rather weak. As Keisuke Hanada, a Japanese philosopher known principally by his work on Francis Bacon, observes, «Vico is tired of his real life as a professor of rhetoric, and does his best endeavors to create a new style of philology, taking up his own position on the fissure which has been opened on the ground of rhetorical art»<sup>9</sup>.

If this is not the case, it will be difficult to explain the reason why many things which we can hardly believe that they were written by the professional of rhetoric are found in his Autobiography: such as too much disorderly arrangements, repetitions and delays, and the insertion of a great deal of digressions, and above all, obscurities which remain from beginning to end unsolved in the whole statements.

## 2.

What kind of metaphor is it, then, that predominates and determines the universe of discourse in Vico's Autobiography?

In it, we meet often the words such as «sign [*segno, indizio*]», «good genius [*buon genio*]», «adverse fortune [*avversa fortuna*]» and so on, which take up the role of explainer of the turning points Vico encountered in his life.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 17; pp. 128, 40.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 22; pp. 133, 48.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 22; pp. 134, 50.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25; pp. 137, 55.

9. K. Hanada, *Viko ni totte no Viko: Jiden wo yomu* [Vico for Vico: Reading His Autobiography], in «Shiso» [«Thought»], 752 (1987), p. 55.

Instance 1: When Vico was yet twelve or thirteen years old and, offended by the teacher's conduct that seemed to him an insult, left the school and, withdrawing to his home, learned by himself in Alvarez, «he would sit down at his desk at nightfall; and his good mother, after rousing from her first slumber and telling him for pity's sake to go bed, would often find that he had studied until daybreak. This was a sign (*segno*) that as he grew older in the study of letters he would vigorously maintain his reputation as a scholar»<sup>10</sup>.

Instance 2: In 1684, when Vico was sixteen years old, «he betook himself to the Royal University, and his good genius (*buon genio*) led him into the classroom of Don Felice Aquadia, the excellent head lecturer on law, just when he was giving his pupils this judgment of Herman Vulteius: that he was the best who had ever written on the civil institutes. This opinion, stored in Vico's memory, was one of the principal causes of all the better ordering of his studies»<sup>11</sup>.

Instance 3: When he returned to Naples as «a stranger in his native land», Vico «thanked those woods [of Vatolla] in which, guided by his good genius (*buon genio*), he had followed the main course of his studies untroubled by any sort of sectarian affection»<sup>12</sup>.

Instance 4: «The dissatisfaction with grammatical etymologies which Vico had begun to feel [since he published the first book of the treatise *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians Unearthed from the Origins of the Latin Language*] was a sign [*indizio*] of the source whence later, in his most recent works [i.e. the 1725 edition of *New Science*], he was to recover the origins of languages, deriving them from a principle of nature common to all nations on which he establishes the principles of a universal etymology to give the origins to all languages living or dead. And his slight satisfaction with Bacon's book attempting to trace the wisdom of the ancients in the fable of the poets, was another sign [*segno*] of the source whence Vico, also in his most recent works, was to recover principles of poetry different from those which the Greeks and Latins and the others since them have hitherto believed»<sup>13</sup>.

Instance 5: «That Vico was born for the glory of his native city and therefore of Italy (since, being born there and not in Morocco, he became a scholar) is evidenced by nothing so much as by this: that after this blow of adverse fortune [*avversa fortuna*], which would have made others henceforth renounce all learning if not repent of having ever cultivated it [i.e. after

10. Vico, *Opere*, V, p. 4; *The Autobiography*, pp. 112–113; *Jiden*, pp. 11–12.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 6; pp. 114–115, 15.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22; pp. 132–133, 46–48.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 37–38; pp. 153, 82–83.



being compelled to withdraw his candidacy for the vacant chair of lecturer on law at the University in the year 1723], he did not even suspend his labors on other works»<sup>14</sup>.

Instance 6: «By a blow of adverse fortune [*avversa fortuna*] he found himself in such straits he could not afford to print the work [i.e. a *New Science* in a negative form of exposition] and yet felt only too obliged to do so as a matter of honor, since he had promised its publication. So he did his best to find, by intense meditation, a positive method [of exposition] which would be more concise and thus more efficacious»<sup>15</sup>.

What I mean by saying that the metaphor predominates and determines the universe of discourse in Vico's Autobiography is precisely a metaphorical role the above mentioned words such as «sign [*segno, indizio*]», «good genius [*buon genio*]», «adverse fortune [*avversa fortuna*]» and so on play in it.

### 3.

Now, in the part that was published in 1728 of his Autobiography, Vico explains his plan of writing as follows:

We shall not here feign what René Descartes astutely feigned [*astutamente finse*] as to the method of his studies in order to exalt only his philosophy and mathematics and degrade all the other studies that complete the divine and human erudition. Rather, with the candor proper to a historian [*con ingenuità dovuta da storico*], we shall narrate step by step and with frankness the entire series of Vico's studies, in order that the proper and natural causes of his development which was such as it was and not otherwise as a scholar [*le proprie e naturali cagioni della sua tale e non altra riuscita di letterato*] may be known<sup>16</sup>.

And in the part of continuation written in 1731, concluding the work, he states as follows:

He wrote it [i.e. Autobiography] as a philosopher [*da filosofo*]; and, therefore, he meditated on the causes, natural and moral [*cagioni così naturali come morali*], and the occasions of fortune; he meditated on why even from childhood he had felt an inclination for certain studies and an aversion from others; he meditated on what opportunities and misfortunes had advanced or retarded his progress; and lastly he meditated the effect of his own exertions in right directions, which were destined later to bear fruit in those reflections on which he built his final work, the *New Science*, which was to demonstrate that his scholarly life was bound to have

14. *Ibid.*, p. 48; pp. 165, 104.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 48–49; pp. 166, 105.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 5; pp. 113, 11–13.

been such as it was and not otherwise [*tale e non altra aver dovuto essere la sua vita letteraria*]<sup>17</sup>.

«Astutely feigned [*Astutamente finse*]: What a bold saying! Descartes says that his *Discourse on the Method* is nothing but «a history [*une histoire*]» and that everyone will find his «frankness [*franchise*]» agreeable<sup>18</sup>, while Vico considers that Descartes astutely feigned [*astutamente finse*] the method of his studies, and claims that «the candor proper to a historian [*ingenuità dovuta da storico*]» belongs not to Descartes, but to Vico himself. Truly, Vico was the enemy of Descartes, as the Japanese sociologist Ikutaro Shimizu put it<sup>19</sup>.

On the meaning of this rivalry of Vico with Descartes, however, I would discuss in the other eventual occasion. Also on the fact that the word «historian [*storico*]» in the former passage is transformed into «philosopher [*filosofo*]» in the latter, I would limit myself, for the present, to call the reader's attention to it.

What I want to discuss here is whether Vico had really accomplished the cognition of «the proper and natural causes of his development which was such as it was and not otherwise as a scholar».

It was Giuseppe Ferrari who saw in Vico's Autobiography a sort of «natural illusion» that represents us the discoveries that only in the *New Science* have been done for the first time as if an object which had been aimed at since Vico started his course of a literary life. Ferrari judges that Vico's Autobiography was, after all, «nothing but a common and ordinary biography, or, at best, simply a historical document» and failed to complete the investigation of «the proper and natural causes» of his development as a scholar it aimed at<sup>20</sup>.

In opposition to this judgment, Benedetto Croce calls the reader's attention to the fact that Ferrari pays no heed to Vico's saying that he wrote his Autobiography “as a philosopher”. According to Croce, the meaning of a philosophical treatment of a philosopher's life is nothing but an understanding of the objective necessity of his thought and a perception of the scaffolding it involves even where the author at the moment of thinking did not clearly perceive it. And, from this point of view, Croce considers that

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 62–63; pp. 182, 133–134.

18. Cfr. Descartes, *Oeuvres*, publiées par C. Adam & P. Tannery, VI: *Discours de la Méthode & Essais*, Paris, Vrin, 1965, p. 4; *Discourse on the Method and Meditations*, tr. E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, Mineola, NY, Dover Publications, 2003, p. 5.

19. Cfr. I. Shimizu, *Rinrigaku Noto* [*Notes on Ethics*], Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1972, Chapter 17: *Dekaruto no Teki* [*The Enemy of Descartes*].

20. Cfr. G. Ferrari, *Preface to Opere di Giambattista Vico*, edited by G. Ferrari. II ed.: Milan, Classici italiani, 1852–1854<sup>2</sup>, vol. IV, pp. X–XVI

«Vico's *Autobiography* is, in a word, the application of the *New Science* to the life of its author, the course of his own individual history», and «its method is as just and true as it is original», although admitting that «Vico succeeded in part only of his attempt»<sup>21</sup>.

On this issue, however, I would rather agree with the opinion of the above mentioned Keisuke Hanada, who calls Vico's *Autobiography* «an Oedipus' type of autobiography», paying a particular attention to the fact that it is dominated from beginning to end by the consciousness of «fortune [fortuna]»<sup>22</sup>, on the condition that, instead of calling it a «subterfuge», as Hanada does<sup>23</sup>, the word “fortune” itself should be taken as a metaphor of something that binds up tightly, as if a chain, all the course of Vico's life. Vico cannot describe that “something” indirectly, and therefore he gives the word “fortune” to it metaphorically.

#### 4.

Lastly, one more word in conclusion.

In his remarkable essay on Vico's *Autobiography*, *The New Art of Autobiography*, Donald Phillip Verene says:

In Vico's view autobiography is not simply introspection, nor is it reflective knowledge in the sense of critical understanding of the connection between concepts and phenomena. Autobiographical thinking, in Vico's view, is *speculative* or, to put it in his own terms, it is meditative–narrative thinking. In this kind of knowing the knower repeats or ‘imitates’ in language the actions of his own being until the knower holds that he has attained the true *speculum* of himself. The autobiographer's task of self–knowing is complete when he judges to have placed, within the theatre of the world, the theatre of himself<sup>24</sup>.

My assumption concerning this topic is that the speculation toward the attainment of what Verene calls «the true *speculum*» of Vico is attempted putting itself on the zero point, as it were, of language.

As I have mentioned elsewhere<sup>25</sup>, when Vico holds in his *New Science*

21. Cfr. B. Croce, *Intorno alla vita e al carattere di G. B. Vico* (1911), in Id., *La filosofia di Giambattista Vico*, Bari, Laterza, 1911, Appendice I, pp. 280–281; *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, translated by R. G. Collingwood, London, Howard Latimer, 1913, Appendix I, pp. 265–266.

22. Cfr. K. Hanada, *Viko ni tote no Viko: jiden wo yomu* [Vico for Vico: Reading His Autobiography], pp. 48–49.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

24. D. P. Verene, *The New Art of Autobiography*, pp. 229–230.

25. Cfr. T. Uemura, *Giambattista Vico in the Crises of European Sciences*, in *Vico e l'Oriente: Cina, Giappone, Corea*, edited by D. Armando, F. Masini, M. Sanna, Rome, Tiellemmedia, 2008, pp. 174–175; Id., *Giambattista Vico nella crisi delle scienze europee*, in «Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiani», XXXVIII

that there is a metaphor in the origin of «poetical wisdom [*sapienza poetica*]» of the first men of the gentile world, this “metaphor” does not mean *meta-phorein* or an act of transfer of a word to another within the world of language already constituted. Rather, as Verene observes referring to Ernesto Grassi’s conception of rhetoric as a speech of first principles or *archai*<sup>26</sup>, it means a self-differential image-making those first men found out from their own “idea” or corporeal self-image, under the condition that they were ignorant of the natural causes producing things and could not even explain them by analogy with similar things. It is from this primordial plane of language that the essentially metaphorical character of Vico’s Autobiography arises.

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(2008) 1, p. 134 [traduction by D. Armando and L. Pica Chiamarra].

26. Cfr. D. P. Verene, *Vico’s Science of Imagination*, Ithaca–London, Cornell University Press, 1981, pp. 79, 181–183; E. Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanist Tradition*, University Park–London, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980, pp. 19–20.

## Vico «storico» and philosopher in Autobiography

FABRIZIO LOMONACO

**ABSTRACT:** The first meaning of the autobiographical contribution of Vico is not to be searched in satisfying a personal fanciful ambition but in the will of corresponding to a project of national extent wanted by the Friulan man of letters Giovanartico di Porcia — this last exhorting all the selected thinkers he contacted to tell their intellectual life, the work in progress and all the delusions lived for any internal obstacle of their research, or deriving from errors and forced afterthoughts. The proposal of Porcia looked propitious and worth the commitment, because during the years of writing of the *Scienza Nuova Prima*, it was useful to his intellectual consecration to be able to think back to the steps of the philosophical formation. His autobiographical writing has an historical–philosophical outline, adjectives, those, that he uses as nouns in different contexts: in the first one he says to have written his life «con ingenuità dovuta da storico», in the second one he admits his telling and writing to be output of a true *philosopher*.

In Naples, at the times of G. Vico, autobiographical writing of philosophical significance recalls the aspirations of the physical Cartesianism: the same ideal which entails, in 1693, the writing of the *Vita of Andrea Cantelmo*, by the medical doctor Leonardo di Capua, where it is said that «sempre è di più forza ne gli animi de gli huomini l'interesse proprio che il riguardo della pubblica utilità»<sup>1</sup>. The southern culture looks far away from the “ideale muratoriano” of «public happiness», and way more prone to that science of affections that the «gran renatista» Gregorio Caloprese shall resume in its Cartesian school of Scalea, Calabria, and in the *Sposizioni* by Della Casa, merging together the Cartesian model and the modern method of the genetic inquiry concerning *passioni* in poetry<sup>2</sup>. This involves the syntax of

1. *Vita di Andrea Cantelmo scritta da Lionardo di Capua*, Naples, stamperia di Giacomo Raillard, 1963, p. 170. After the masterly observations of N. Badaloni (*Introduzione a G. B. Vico*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1961, pp. 145–147) and D. Della Terza (*Misura dell'uomo e visione del mondo nelle autobiografie degli scrittori napoletani tra il Seicento e l'Ottocento*, in D. Della Terza, *Forma e memoria. Saggi e ricerche sulla tradizione letteraria da Dante a Vico*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1979, pp. 265–321), see E. Nuzzo, *Gli occultamenti dell' "io" e il tempo della guerra. La Vita di D. Andrea Cantelmo di Leonardo Di Capua*, in *Autobiografia e filosofia. L'esperienza di Giordano Bruno*, edited by di N. Pirillo, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003, pp. 163–229.

2. Cf. F. A. Gravina, *A' Lettori*, in *Rime di M. Gio: Della Casa sposte per M. Aurelio Severino secondo l'Idee d'Hermogene, con la giunta delle Sposizioni di Sertorio Quattromani, et di Gregorio Caloprese*. Date in luce da Antonio Bulifon (. . .), in Napoli, presso A. Bulifon, 1694, pp. IX, X, XII (unnumbered), 42,

fantasy and imagination for the study of the «costituzione d'animo», the very premise of every civil science<sup>3</sup>—cultivated by both Gravina and Metastasio in harmony with the master. At the same time, philosophical reflection founds literary critic and erudition, as documented by the *Elogi accademici* signed by Gimma and the *Avvertimenti ai nipoti* of D'Andrea. With this last title and author, we come across an horizon of interests which happens to be very close to Vico and the '*vichismo giuridico meridionale*', although rich of original arguments, finally introducing a biographical history of (forensic) class through a form of private transmission of the manuscript, in between the memoir and a form of juridical–political erudition that goes all the way to Giannone that considered the *Vita* of Vico «la cosa più sciapita e trasonica insieme che si potesse mai leggere»<sup>4</sup>.

The first meaning of the autobiographical contribution of Vico is not to be searched in satisfying a personal fanciful ambition but in the will of corresponding to a project of national extent wanted by the Friulan man of letters Giovanartico di Porcia — this last exhorting all the selected thinkers he contacted to tell the «più esatte circostanze, e minute» of their intellectual life, the work in progress and all the delusions lived for any internal obstacle of their research, or deriving from errors and forced afterthoughts, being although all of this necessary, for the complexity of the carried on work. Far from a solitary and abstract edification, the biographer of himself should have given information about his own birth, and his own schooling, «dalla Grammatica (. . .), ascendendo d'Arte in Arte, di Scienza in Scienza», exposing «gli abusi, e i pregiudicj delle scuole, e de' loro Maestri» or appraising «la loro sana dottrina». The new *Raccolta* by Porcia was a mark of the occurred necessity of making of the history of literature not just an hagiographical occasion, but a study issue upon different intellectual experiences — brought up to the common knowledge and meant to «giovare a una intera

68, 234, 133, 76 (hereafter as *Spositioni*, then in G. Caloprese, *Opere*, edited by F. Lomonaco and A. Mirto, Napoli, Giannini, 2004). On this point I would refer to my essay on «Un gran filosofo renatista». *Corpo, mente e vita civile in Gregorio Caloprese*, in «Archivio di storia della cultura», XVII (2004), pp. 3–39.

3. G. Caloprese, *Dell'origine dell'imperii* (1698), in *Delle Lezioni accademiche de' diversi valentuomini de' nostri tempi recitate avanti l'Ecc. ° Sig. r Duca di Medinaceli Vice-Re, che fu del Regno di Napoli*. Copiate dall'originale, che si conservava presso il Sig. r D. Niccolò Sersale, in National Library in Naples «Vittorio Emanuele III» [hereafter as BNN], ms. XIII B 69, Part I, Book I, cc. 24v, 1r, then in Appendix to S. Suppa (*L'Accademia di Medinaceli fra tradizione investigante e nuova scienza civile*, Naples, Istituto italiano per gli studi storici, 1971, pp. 203, 177) and in *Lezioni dell'Accademia di Palazzo del duca di Medinaceli (Napoli 1698–1701)*, tome I, edited by M. Rak, Naples, Istituto italiano per gli studi filosofici, 2000, tome I, pp. 37 and 7, they reproduce, respectively, cc. 37v, 3r of the Codex, Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, ms. 9110 (hereafter as *Lezioni*).

4. Thus in the letter to the brother Carlo from Vienna, 30. 07. 1729, quoted by S. Bertelli, *Giannoniana. Autografi, manoscritti e documenti della fortuna di Pietro Giannone*, Milan–Naples, Ricciardi, 1968, p. 259.

Nazione»<sup>5</sup>. Learned men and men of letters involved ever since the summer of 1721 (Bacchini and Maffei, Vallisnieri and Calogerà, Conti, Lodoli and Muratori<sup>6</sup>) share a new literary and philosophical involvement — more concrete than ever, aimed to involve the largest number of savants, and to get close to wide and wider sector of public and society, along with a model, the one so-called “muratoriano” of the *Rerum italicarum scriptores*, which theorize an *Italica Repubblica* of letters. Here comes the choice of a collective work, of a coordinated group activity, expression of a reform project, meant as an alternative to the traditional Jesuit practices and Counter-Reformation culture, still supported and defended by the *Curia Romana*, which led some notorious involved scholars (Muratori, Vallisnieri e Lodoli) to desist from presenting their autobiographical writings<sup>7</sup>.

Among the eight invited Neapolitan men of letters<sup>8</sup>, Vico was the only one to stick to the Progetto Porcia, that saw in his figure the one who «ha intesa la mia idea e l'ha ottimamente posta in pratica»<sup>9</sup>. When, around 1723, he sent the manuscript of his *Autobiografia* (lost, for us), the Neapolitan philosopher was known already by the Italian men of letters and quoted in an interesting correspondence of Porcia with Muratori and Vallisnieri<sup>10</sup>.

5. *Progetto ai Letterati d'Italia per scrivere le loro Vite, del signor Co: Giovannartico di Porcia*, in *Raccolta d'opuscoli scientifici, e filologici. Tomo primo*. In Venezia, appresso C. Zane, 1728, pp. 132, 136 (hereafter as *Progetto*), then in G. Vico, *Vita scritta da se medesimo*, edited by F. Lomonaco, Afterword of R. Diana and Bibliography of S. Principe, Naples, Diogene, 2012, pp. 138, 142 (hereafter as *Vita*). Leibniz's Letter is reprinted in *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, translated from the Italian by M. H. Fisch and Th. G. Bergin, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1944, p. 5. A transcript of the *Project* stated in the Appendix to the essay of R. Diana (*Ragione narrativa ed elaborazione dialogica del sapere. L'Autobiografia di Giambattista Vico e il suo contenuto problematico*, in «Bollettino del Centro di studi vichiani», XXXIV, 2004, pp. 113–167) which has the merit of performing a reflection on the contribution narrative with reference to the themes and philosophical issues in the entire speculative itinerary of the Author.

6. See the Correspondence Porcia–Muratori quoted by C. De Michelis, *L'autobiografia intellettuale e il «Progetto» di Giovanartico di Porcia*, in *Vico e Venezia. Actes of the Congress* (Venezia, Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore, 21–25.05. 1978), Florence, Olschki, 1982, p. 97. On the theme see also P. G. Gaspardo — G. Pizzamiglio, *La pubblicazione dell'Autobiografia vichiana nella corrispondenza di Giovan Artico di Porcia con il Muratori e il Vallisnieri*, *ibid.*, pp. 127–130.

7. Cf. P. G. Gaspardo — G. Pizzamiglio, *La pubblicazione dell'Autobiografia vichiana nella corrispondenza di Giovan Artico di Porcia con il Muratori e il Vallisnieri*, pp. 129–130.

8. Cf. *Aggiunta fatta dal Vico alla sua Autobiografia* (1731), quoted by G. Vico, *Autobiografia. Seguita da una scelta di lettere, orazioni e rime*, edited by M. Fubini, Turin, Einaudi, 1965<sup>3</sup> and 1977, p. 71 (hereafter as *Aggiunta*, followed by pages of the reprint of G. Vico, *Vita*).

9. Thus G. di Porcia to G. L. Esperti, 16.09. 1725, quoted by A. Battistini, *La dignità della retorica. Studi su G. B. Vico*, Pisa, Pacini, 1975, p. 18, note.

10. From a letter of Vallisnieri we learn that in 1724 the *Vita* was in the hands of Porcia, which allows you to accept the back-dating the work to 1723 as measured by Battistini, correcting the known hypothesis of Croce and Nicolini, which aims to consider 1725. Cf. G. Vico, *L'Autobiografia, il Carteggio e le Poesie varie*, edited by B. Croce and F. Nicolini, Bari, Laterza, 1929<sup>2</sup>, p. 375 (then in *Autobiografia di Giambattista Vico [1725–1728]*, edited by F. Nicolini, Milan, Bompiani, 1947, reprinted, Bologna, il Mulino, 1992) and A. Battistini in G. Vico, *Opere*, edited by A. Battistini, Milan, Mondadori,

Involved in this, was also the Abbot Conti, who showed much interest for the Venician reprint of the *Scienza Nuova*, raising so the attention of Vico, who thought he was a scholar of European fame, and therefore able to spread works even out of the national boundaries. The proposal of Porcia looked propitious and worth the commitment, because during the years of writing of *Scienza Nuova Prima*, it was useful to his intellectual consecration to be able to think back to the steps of the philosophical formation. His autobiographical writing has an historical–philosophical outline, adjectives, those, that he uses as nouns in different contexts: in the first one he says to have written his life «con ingenuità dovuta da storico», in the second one he admits his telling and writing to be output of a true *philosopher*<sup>11</sup>. The opposition is mainly to Descartes, who offered, in his *Discours*, a pseudo–autobiographical construction *a priori* prone to praise his own philosophy and mathematics<sup>12</sup>. He denigrated any historical discipline, philosophically involved in speculative transactions, and keeping his focus on his own logical and discursive monologue. The close–up concerns not the historical conditions of the subject, but the whole story from the very first day, starting from the decision of entering oneself, ever since the creator act of an independent life, and this lays in the style, also, and in the choice of a ‘past’ tense in a new one, all dominated by some anxiety of the present. On one hand Descartes oriented to a truth without history able to identify the error in an intellectual past that it would have been better to forget, giving to the reader no information about the phases and the obstacles of his itinerary. For Vico, on the other hand, the concern was to set the historical limits of an experience, the tortuous and tragic proceeding of a life threatened by the menace of the error and fall, to be told, therefore, «fil filo e con ischiettezza la serie di tutti gli studi (del Vico), perché si conoscano le proprie e naturali cagioni della sua tale e non altra riuscita di letterato»<sup>13</sup>. The metaphor of the «fil filo» – present also in the autobiography of Muratori – implies a uni–lineal concept of time in a cyclic system, coherent with the aim of having prevail a continuity of vocation — in spite of and against — the interruptions, never denied, but on the contrary, reused as dialectical moments of a continuous “being in action” and, at the same time, of a never repudiated past. The relation between writing and past puts in the middle of the autobiography the very sense of the lived experience, rationalizing that past in the entirety of the autobiographical itinerary. Evidence of this

1990, tome II, p. 1232.

11. *Vita di Giambattista Vico scritta da se medesimo (1723–1728)*, in *Raccolta d’opuscoli scientifici, e filologici. Tomo primo*, pp. 145–256, then in G. Vico, *Autobiografia. Seguita da una scelta di lettere, orazioni e rime*, p. 5 (hereafter followed by pages of the reprint of G. Vico, *Vita*); *Aggiunta*, p. 71 [84–85].

12. *Vita*, p. 5 [37].

13. *Ibid.*



is given by the use of verbs in the past tense («ritruovò») to indicate a solution to the issue of the principles of poetry and of the remote past in comparison with others that «hanno finor creduto»<sup>14</sup>. Even more explicative is the description of the lesson prepared for the competitive examination to the «cattedra mattutina di leggi» that the philosopher remembers in the past («la pensò fino alle cinque ore della notte antecedente»), selecting afterward for it a different tense (*passato prossimo*), and remembering how he prepared it with friend of his, at home, in the middle of the shouting of his own kids «come ha uso di sempre o leggere o scrivere o meditare»<sup>15</sup>. Here the choice of the verb in the infinite form gives an effect of presence to the narrated facts. Anyway, the reference to a past cultural time, always entails a lesson of life, realizing a coincidence between the time of the speaker and the one of the narration. From this point of view, we assist to a time shift that makes present the narrator, the I directly addressed to the reader; the autobiography is modulated on an impersonal narrating voice presenting the author in the third person, coming into line with the Aristotelian precept along which the things that can raise envy have to be referred to others (*Rhetorica*, III, 17, 1418b).

Subject of the work is «signor Giambattista Vico», presented as a child of melancholic attitude (the source of this condition is Aristotle quoted by Cicero, *Tusc*, I, XXVIII, 80) for the almost deadly fall off the stairs when he was seven years old; or «il Giambattista» that drops the «seconda scuola» of the Jesuits in order to study Grammar and Logic at home. Since that moment, the author presents himself as «il Vico» that shall maintain himself until the last pages, involving the identity of Vico–author and Vico–character of the autobiographical story<sup>16</sup>. This identity dyad doesn't hesitate in staggering the story with parenthesis of general contents, when, for instance, he signals the danger for young people of studiar scienze che sono sopra la loro età» or when, honoring the famous *Accademia degli Infuriati*, he addresses a panegyric to this institution, exalting the «bellissimo frutto (che) rendono alle città le luminose accademie, perché i giovani (. . .) s'infiammino a studiare per la via della lode e della gloria». Nor less relevant is the next warning, addressed to those young people, captives of some errors, if «non sono guidati e condotti da una sapienza intiera e che si corrisponda in tutte le parti»<sup>17</sup>. The times of politic pedagogy are back, the ones of the *De ratione*,

14. *Ibid.*, p. 44 [64].

15. *Ibid.*, p. 53 [70]. Cf. M. Cottino–Jones, *L'Autobiografia vichiana: il rapporto vita–scrittura*, in *Vico–Venezia*, especially p. 137.

16. *Vita*, pp. 3, 4 [35, 36]. Thus M. Cottino–Jones, *L'Autobiografia vichiana: il rapporto vita–scrittura*, p. 135. On the relationship between «the time of writing» and «the time of life» see G. Patella, *Tiempo y relato en la Autobiografía de Giambattista Vico*, in «Cuadernos sobre Vico», 15–16 (2003), pp. 179–188.

17. *Vita*, pp. 6, 9 [37, 39]. Cf. M. Cottino–Jones, *L'Autobiografia vichiana: il rapporto vita–scrittura*, p.

intent on reporting the converging limits of the stoics and epicureans, theoretical allies of a «morale di solitari»<sup>18</sup>. Vico renounces to the certainties of the Cartesian man and of his moral reduced to mathematics, wondering about the epistemological statute of modern science and confronting it to the one of the ancients. He points out, therefore, the very modern problem of the unity, ordered and not abstracted, of positive knowledge of his own time, from mechanics to chemistry, medicine and the art of rhetoric, jurisprudence, history.

The *Autobiography* of Vico belongs to the «epideictic» type, and its author knows how to move in it with great sharpness and ability, so to reach at least two results: feature himself in terms of «glorificazione dell'eroe»<sup>19</sup>, although adopting a profession of humbleness and dignity, along with an adequate rhetoric strategy, in order to offer in this life an ideal model of behavior and exemplary intellectual life — so very reliable, and bound to generate the desire of emulation. Nevertheless, the autobiographical writing also documents errors and losses, both functional to the perceived ability of being able of overcoming them and a confirmation of a vocation consolidated over the time. The stay in Vatolla, the examination failure, the unexpected evading of Cardinal Corsini to the funding of the *Scienza Nuova* were all *traversie* turning afterward into *opportunità*, also as a consequence of the influence of the Christian model — the use of terms like *presage*, *bent*, *vocation* are inspired by<sup>20</sup>. Also from this point of view it is necessary to recognize how relevant are Augustinian tones and issues: the liberation from skepticism, the scholarly ascesis, the choice of a formative exile; the post-platonic dualism of *veritas* and *opinio*, the quest of a *regula veritatis*, the intern-historical basis of providential finalism, the respect for the *ornatus* and the style — sublime versus taste — and the nauseating trends of his time, all the way to the compliment of the *opus magnum* with an «estro quasi fatale» tra «la mattina del santo Natale» between «ore ventuna della domenica di Pasqua di Resurrezione»<sup>21</sup>. To the error in the past and of the past — to be banned for Descartes — is now juxtaposed the philosophical commitment inclusive of the past, because resenting of the Christian model of history — history oriented by man predestined to the Good also in

139.

18. *Vita*, p. 14 [43]. On *De ratione* I would refer to my *Introduction* to G. Vico, *Il metodo degli studi del nostro tempo*, edited by F. Lomonaco, Naples, Scripta Web, 2010, pp. 7–34.

19. Cf. A. Battistini, *La dignità della retorica*, p. 47 (but also pp. 15–50).

20. A. Battistini, *La sapienza retorica di Giambattista Vico*, Milan, Guerini e associati, 1995, p. 53

21. *Aggiunta*, p. 82 [92]. Recalling models Augustinian and Cartesian D. Ph. Verene (*The New Art of Autobiography. An Essay on the Life of Giambattista Vico Written by Himself*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991, pp. 92–125), has reset the autobiographical discourse of Vico, treating of a «New Method of Studies» and a «New Critical Art» (pp. 126 ff., 147ff.) between falls, acts of heroism and recurrent «Barbarians» (p. 161ff.).

absence of clear signals. Religiosity is never canceled, but declined in the human reflection about the world, with the self-excitation («nato per la gloria della patria»<sup>22</sup>) in the very sign of the 'grandeur' of baroque matrix. All this is conjugated in the rebirth of the Socratism that — not casually — closes the *Autobiografia*. The antique philosopher shaped by Phaedrus (in the fable of *Socrates ad amicos*) is praised for the quest of self-knowledge, heart of the humanistic ideal of *sapientia*, *eloquentia* and *prudentialia*. Also, the abandon of any exterior datum or cyclic difficulty, in order to concentrate on the development of a thought already shaped by the destiny, objectified not anymore by divine signs but by a productive force that follows the same humanistic pattern of the creative furor and of the restlessness of making the modern man. Coherently with the redemption action, the *topos* of bad luck or misfortune of the martyr goes through a transformation, and the same "persecutions" of invidious colleagues make of Vico a man that doesn't live with the aim of obtain heaven, but as «occasioni per le quali esso, come a sua alta inespugnabil ròcca, si ritirava al tavolino per meditar e scriver altre opere, le quali chiamava 'generose vendette de' suoi detrattori'»<sup>23</sup>. A consequence of the final crisis of the theologism is, in Vico, perseverance, opposed to fickleness, that gave him the opportunity of living for nine years in a meditative retirement in the castle of Cilento of the Vargas family in Vatolla, «di bellissimo sito e di perfettissima aria» where he turned «dalla buon'aria del paese sarebbe restituito in salute ed avrebbe tutto l'agio di studiare»<sup>24</sup>. In facts, this is the most intense period he dedicates to the lecture and study of the ancient authors, (Plato and Aristotle, Socrates, Epicure, Carneade, Plotinus) and where «dal suo buon genio guidato, aveva fatto il maggior corso dei suoi studi senza niun affetto di setta, e non nella città, nella quale, come moda di vesti, si cangiava ogni due o tre anni gusto di lettere»<sup>25</sup>.

The experience of loneliness as well, that he shares with Descartes, plays several roles; the one of the historical Vico, with an emphasis in confirming the detachment of the complicated and hostile city life, is not the solitude of the French philosopher, expression of his need of getting the principles of any certitude from the bottom of a self-represented — physically, also — in a living unit defined by the limits of one single room. The times of the solitude are the expression of an extraordinary rhetorical capacity of writing of the scholar Vico, attentive in reporting the limits of a culture that

22. *Vita*, p. 55 [72].

23. *Aggiunta*, p. 87 [96]. On this see B. Anglani, *Le parole della morte nell'autobiografia del Settecento*, in *Le metamorfosi dei linguaggi nel Settecento*, edited by C. Borghero and R. Loretelli, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2011, pp. 125–140; especially, pp. 130–131.

24. *Vita*, pp. 10, 11 [16].

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 25 [41, 51].

is extraneous to him, and yet not unknown. The choice is the one of an ant-conformism heading to exemplarity, but without obscuring the dramatic datum of a philosopher living his years accepting the solipsism the current fashions condemned him to, and, at the same time, pleased in the dialogue with contemporaneous thinkers as Niccolò Caravita and Lucantonio Porzio, Giuseppe Lucina and Francesco Santoro<sup>26</sup>.

The subject of the *Autobiography* is not an essence *a priori*, but rather a cultural context — both linguistic and communicative — able to express a banal dissent towards the supporters of a risky recovery of the past. About Tommaso Cornelio, protagonist of the fortune of Descartes' work in Naples, Vico gives, for instance, a critical judgment for an intransigent purism, able to paralyze young people wits<sup>27</sup>. It is an accusation of intellectual *boria* recalling the defense of the thesis concerning the gradualness of learning, central in the paragraphs of *De ratione* and re-elaborated in the *Autobiografia*, in order to denounce the aridity of the texts by Crisippo or the exercises of algebraic method wearing out young people's memory, sinking into sloth their wits and slowing down their understanding<sup>28</sup>.

The separation from Naples is not a stoic attitude of self-satisfied solipsism, but rather the consequence of a critical judgment upon an unshared cultural situation, and for that sense of detachment from the existing Cartesian fashion. After the absence (not exactly uninterrupted but reinforced by the prose of Vico, the reasons inspiring him extraneousness and that make him feel sentire «non solo (...) straniero nella sua patria, ma anche sconosciuto»<sup>29</sup> are the rejection of Galenic medicine, the success of modern atomistic and materialistic orientations, the strong crisis of the civil sense, and of jurisprudence worn by the dominant erudition, the fortune of the gassendistic philosophy, taken back by Vico to its epicurean roots, the primacy of Cartesian physics known through the texts by Regius<sup>30</sup> and having atomistic tendencies and the experimental one of the empiricist Boyle, all extraneous to metaphysical meditation of platonic and new-platonic inspiration — to which is also re-connectable the suffering philosophy of the renaissance. The writing abandons any exterior datum in order to

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27 [51–52]; *Aggiunta*, p. 68 [82]; *Vita*, p. 43 [64].

27. *Vita*, pp. 24–25 [50].

28. *Ibid.*, p. 16 [45]. On this see the sharp comment of D. Della Terza, *Autobiografia di G. B. Vico: razionalità e scrittura*, in «Quaderni di retorica e poetica», II (1986) 1, p. 99.

29. *Vita*, p. 26 [51].

30. On the relations Vico–Descartes see L. Amoroso, *Nastri vichiani*, Pisa, ETS, 1997, pp. 19–43. On the «figura híbrida “Regius/Descartes”» cf. the interesting reconstruction of A. J. Pereira Filho (*O discurso e o método: Vico leitor de Descartes e a Autobiografia*, in *Embates da Razão: mito e filosofia na obra de Giambattista Vico*, edited by H. Guido, J. M. Sevilla e S. De Amorim e Silva Neto, Uberlândia, Edufu, 2012, p. 181), critically vigilant in recognizing the meaning of the complex and multiple references to the French philosopher and Cartesianism and southern European (pp. 180 ff., 197–198).

concentrate — this in favor of the homogeneity of the fiction — on very tortuous itinerary of self-formation, built with outstanding rhetorical wit for the self-affirmation of the author, bound to the intellectual success. He had the merit of elaborating critically the dissatisfaction for a part of the philosophy of his own times, for that southern Cartesianism captive of abstract logical involutions, supporting the subordination of physics to metaphysics, and although unable to defend philosophy from the attacks of modern skepticism. Nevertheless, the confrontation is meant by opposition, for its having been deeply assimilated, and this is self-evident just thinking to the relations of Vico with the southern Cartesianism — being this a complex cultural experience — and above all necessary to make a distinction between Descartes-thinker and his fortune in southern culture. Vico, about this, remembers the significant personal and cultural relations with Gregorio Caloprese, «gran filosofo renatista, a cui il Vico fu molto caro»<sup>31</sup>. This memory was taken in an articulated judgment concerning Descartes' philosophy, with not casual at all reference, to the original fusion of Platonism and Christian religion, coherent in Naples with the retrieval of platonic-Aristotle in opposition to the Averroistic one — in the years of crisis of the old (and new) Epicurean-Gassendist atomism.

Vico was aware of the complicated period of transition of the Neapolitan culture, set, after the experiment of the inquiring experience, to abandon “physical” Cartesianism which «fruttò punto alcuna morale comoda alla cristiana religione»<sup>32</sup>. In the *Accademia of Medinaceli* — that welcomed him for his great fame as men of letters — the author of the *De ratione* saw the representation of a changed political and cultural environment. In his will of cultivating «human letters» he identified the conversion to philosophical interests and, in particular, *metaphysics*, finding in Cartesianism a fashionable reference, and therefore «que' valenti letterati, i quali due o tre anni avanti dicevano che le metafisiche dovevano star chiuse ne' chiostri, presero essi a tutta voga a coltivarle, non già sopra i Platoni e i Plotini coi Marsili (...), ma sopra le *Meditazioni* di Renato Delle Carte (...)». The effect of those novelties that satisfy «le menti corte de' fanciulli e le deboli delle donniciuole» confirm Vico in the lesson of Plato; of a Plato seen from the side of philosophers (platonic-neoplatonic) of the Renaissance, in order to solve the question of the dualistic opposition of eternal and fickle, of *verum* and *doxa* through that principle of an «idea eterna tutta scevera da corpo, che nella sua cognizione, ove voglia, crea tutte le cose in tempo e le contiene

31. *Vita*, pp. 21–22 [48]. Giuseppe Giarrizzo has offered in this regard, illuminating observations: cf. *Da Napoli a Vienna: il circolo meridionale della filosofia del Metastasio*, in *Legge, Poesia e Mito. Giannone, Metastasio e Vico fra “tradizione” e “trasgressione” nella Napoli degli anni Venti del Settecento*. Actes of Congress (Naples, 3–5. 03. 1998), edited by M. Valente, Rome, Aracne, 2001, pp. 111–112.

32. *Vita*, p. 22 [49].

dentro di sé e contenendole, le sostiene»<sup>33</sup>.

The *Autobiografia* hesitated, with a bitter and though somehow pleased satisfaction, recalling the appellation «autodidascalo» given to him by Caloprese<sup>34</sup>, himself comforted by the experience of Vico and his choice of retiring in Scalea and to found there a school of philosophy. It had recourse to Descartes and meridional Cartesianism of the end of 1600 throughout precise and articulated outlines. If the generation of the *Investiganti*, in its vocation concerned by physics and experimentalism, had offered a kind of reading in a methodological key — for the most part —, in the last years of the century more and more popular became — as it is notorious — an approach of opposite sign, even more complicated by the tentative re-composition of the physical plan together with the metaphysical one, useful in saving modern rationalism from the libertine critics and renewed skepticism. This was, anyway, the theoretical-cultural orientation transmitted by the master to the pupils and shared, for instance, by Francesco Maria Spinelli<sup>35</sup>. The Cartesian rationalism was pressed to find a conciliation with the Ciceronian and humanistic reasons holding the classical nexus between *conscientia* and *sapientia*, blending with the Augustinian and Neoplatonic *scientia* of the interior I, synthesis of human and divine values. Consolidating this perspective, and reproducing in the lexicon the imprinting of Calopresi, collaborated outstanding exponents of the Neapolitan Academia, such as Agostino Ariani, worried in 1701 about founding the certitude of geometry on the «cognizione di noi medesimi, cioè della spiritualità della nostra mente e delle idee pure spirituali della medesima e della reale distinzione di essa mente dal nostro corpo»<sup>36</sup>. Nor to very different conclusions arrived Vico in the *Orazione inaugurale I* (1699), whose argument («la conoscenza di se stesso»), inspired to the famous Delphic saying, could be translated in the exaltation of the creative capacity of the human mind. This coincided — along with the Ciceronian precept — with the incitement to the true *sapientia*, which is active, positively conditioned by the presence in the human mind of «tante e così grandi verità innate e, per così dire, suggellate in noi da Dio,

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 18, 19 [53, 46].

34. *Ibid.*, p. 27 [52].

35. *Vita, e studj di Francesco Maria Spinelli principe della Scalea. Scritta da lui medesimo in una Lettera, in Raccolta d'opuscoli scientifici e filologici (...)*. In Venezia, presso S. Occhi, 1753, tome XLIX, pp. 474–475 (reprint with introduction of F. Lomonaco, Genova, il melangolo, 2007; hereafter as *Vita, e studj*).

36. Cf. A. Ariani, *Intorno all'utilità della geometria* (1701), in *Delle Lezioni accademiche...*, in BNN, ms. XIII B 73, cc. 44r, 56r, 46r, then in Appendix to M. Donzelli, *Natura e humanitas nel giovane Vico*, Naples, Istituto italiano per gli studi storici, 1970, pp. 165, 183, 169. The theme — also with reference to Caloprese — has been studied by M. Torrini, *Antonio Monforte. Uno scienziato napoletano tra l'Accademia degli Investiganti e quella Palatina di Medinaceli*, in *Ricerche sulla cultura dell'Italia moderna*, edited by P. Zambelli, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1973, especially p. 120 ff.

prima verità, e che sono chiuse nel nostro animo come scintille sepolte». In Vico's man, freed by the sensitive contingent experience, the insisting call to an inner life became the sign of his intimate participation to the life of the Absolut, attested by that divine philosophy which «dimostra con prove la natura divina degli animi nostri». Here, the reference to the philosophy of Descartes was explicit, and used for demonstrating the existence of the idea of God that the Neapolitan philosopher used to exalt and expose almost literally, summarizing the contents of the *Meditatio III*<sup>37</sup>. Assumption of all this was an original anthropology — sensible to the classic-humanistic lesson showed to be, at the same time, free from the traditional classifications, founded on the exigence of making coincide what is divine with what is rational. The *mens* can be directed towards those truths which are immune from any empirical temptation because, despite the alterations provoked by sin, *mens* is still *mens*, operating force that didn't loose completely the capacity of corresponding to the truth throughout the traces of the universal relations created and guaranteed by the supreme Good<sup>38</sup>. The reference to the French philosopher could be redefined from the point of view of a «metaphysics» meant not as a refuge or detachment from the world, but as a science of the first principles, true and real way of access to the life of men in common. The analytical approach to politics, limited to the sole description of inclination and affections dominated by the logic of the body-machine, would have inevitably led to the abandon of the traditional models of pedagogic and politic intervention; abandon that would have been unacceptable for those southern *renatisti* — such as Caloprese, Gravina or Spinelli — that after having faced the thesis of the orthodox Cartesian scholars from the transalpine countries and having used them critically, stayed in the theoretical space appearing more familiar to them: the classic-humanistic one, concerning the *historia iuris* and its practices. Discussing the certitude of the Cartesian truth means to bind the possibility of it to the temporal dimension, in order to conquer a general criterion of *justice*. For its being guarantee of an *obedience* system, the *order* can vouch for the vocation of the *mens* to be projected in the human activity, and enter, in this way, the world of the *law*. Another autobiographical work goes back to this, the work of Gianvincenzo Gravina, jurist and historian of the civil right, educated to

37. G. Vico, *Le Orazioni inaugurali I–VI*, edited by G. G. Visconti, in *Opere di Giambattista Vico*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1982, vol. I, pp. 72, 91, 93, 85, 87. Of Cicero Vico mentions steps from *Tusculanae* (I, 57), taking them from Paris edition of 1549: cf. the notes of G. G. Visconti, *ibid.*, p. 92, but also the relative *Commentary*, *ibid.*, pp. 217–223. «Intonations of Vico» in Caloprese were critically detected by M. Agrimi, *Descartes nella Napoli di fine Seicento*, in *Descartes: il Metodo e i Saggi*. Actes of Congress, edited by G. Belgioioso, G. Cimino, P. Costabel and G. Papuli, Rome, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Treccani, 1990, tome II, p. 561ff.

38. G. Caloprese, *Dell'origine dell'imperii*, c. 6r, in S. Suppa, *L'Accademia di Medinacoeli (...)*, p. 183, then in *Lezioni*, tome I, p. 14 (c. 111r).

the school of Caloprese — to whom he was introduced by Metastasio. But the relations with the author of the *Origines iuris civilis* (1708) and with the thesis of the *Setta dei luminosi* in Naples (along with the famous definition of Benedetto Croce, reviewed afterward by another outstanding historian of the thought of G.B. Vico, Nicola Badaloni), with the Gravinian philosophy of the *mens*, referred to theoretical experiences, shared and reworked by Vico in his *Autobiography* (which mentions the man of letter from Calabria as beholder of a relation of «stima e [...] amicizia», rinnovato dall'uscita della *Vita* del Carafa<sup>39</sup>) cross the more relevant one with Grozio. And this last is the forth of the four *Auttori* where Vico, selecting among ancients and modern classics, mythicize the fundamental issues of his thought. The name of the dutch jurist, in facts, follows the ones of the ancients Plato and Tacitus for the ancient part and Bacon for the modern part, at the origins of the new science, made of experimentalism and empiricism, both as far as possible from the old scholastic metaphysics<sup>40</sup>; an experimentalism that deepens the experience of the inquiring *Academia* of the first part of 1600, heading towards the choice of a new method, born from the interest for the true human nature, for that *umanologia*<sup>41</sup> able to break the ancient and modern nexus philosophy–cosmology and looking at the one order of men that is *their* history. The new *scientia iuris*, born from the «conversion» of *true* and *certain*, of *philosophy* and *philology*, is the illumination that Vico has received or believed to be able to receive from the author of the *De iure belli ac pacis*, published in Naples in an edition of 1719 that Dario Faucci identified with the text used by the Neapolitan philosopher for his notorious comment, interrupted because of — as the *Autobiografia* tells — didn't suit ad uom cattolico di religione adornare di note opera di autore eretico»<sup>42</sup>. Strong discussions went on about the meaning of this comment and about its function within a text that surely contains the famous appraisal of the forth author, nevertheless transformed by the powerful thought of Vico that understands the «universal system» of philosophy and philology, «in entrambe le parti di questa ultima, sì della storia delle cose o favolosa o certa, sì della storia delle tre lingue, ebraica, greca e latina, (...) pervenute per

39. *Vita*, p. 45 [65].

40. *Ibid.*

41. I take this expression from the interpretation of P. Piovani that refers to the «acosmica» and «anaturale» modern philosophy, dealing with *Vico e la filosofia senza natura* (1969), then in P. Piovani, *La filosofia nuova di Vico*, edited by F. Tessitore, Naples, Morano, 1990, pp. 55–89.

42. *Vita*, p. 46 [65]. H. Grotii *De iure belli ac pacis. Libri tres, in quibus ius naturae et gentium, item iuris publici praecipua explicantur. Cum annotatis Auctoris, ex postrema eius ante obitum cura* (...). Nec non Ioann. Frid. Gronovii V. C. *Notae in totum opus* (...). Editio novissima (...), Anno 1719. Cf. D. Faucci, *Vico editore di Grozio?*, in «Giornale storico della letteratura italiana», CXXXVI (1959) 413, pp. 95–104; the Dedication is transcribed in Appendix to pp. 102–104; the passage quoted is to p. 103.



mano della cristiana religione»<sup>43</sup>.

Between reason and authority comes to evidence all the complexity of the «natural right» in Vico, expression of the true divine order, only partially irradiated in the human world. The true natural law assess — actually — the participation of the human *ratio* to the *lex aeterna*, which, far from depreciating its action, potentiates from the inside its features and prerogatives. So, the doctrine of natural law thesis of the continuity of human development, based on the principle of the spontaneous and autonomous inclination to social life, is transformed by the introduction of the divine veritative structure needed to explain — without solving it — the utilitarian issue of the single individuality. This is the persuasive answer to the demolisher challenge of ancient and modern skepticism (from Epicure to Bayle), indirectly soliciting to pose the complex question concerning an unification principle and a reliable communication among men.

In the autobiographical account, very interesting is the rapprochement of the studies upon jurisprudence and the ones concerning metaphysics: if the first ones make evident the exigence of the eternal reasons the natural right is supposed to be generated by, individuating the words through which the fundamental concepts of this human philosophy is expressed, metaphysics indicates the reality of those immutable and eternal reasons, to be searched in that God that has them all, and in his infinite perfection, realizes them out of himself in human nature as well, thought and will. The references to Grozio, forth author, do not concern the natural right in general but the one of Vico, marked by the exigence of a reallocation of the human knowledge, inspired to the platonic and christian cultural model, and in accordance with both philosophy and philology. The natural right didn't offered to Vico any solution, but rather gave him problems that he examined and reformulated in philosopher. The *ius* did not appear to him as a technical question, nor as an occasion of study upon the empirical data of the human world. Avoiding the error of the traditional doctrines, prone to the arrangement of the juridical activity in abstract classifications, he felt, mainly, the need of considering the right in all its rich and complex variety of expressions, with reference to the linguistic uses typical of the *iusprudentia romana*, in order to search for the «principi del dritto universale»<sup>44</sup>. The jurisprudence lays out the problem of the quest of a principle able to connect all the human and divine knowledge and that — considered in its deep philosophical meaning — goes back to the history of this human nature that explains itself in the world that increasingly takes shape upon it, always keeping an eye on the supreme directive principle of the immanence of God

43. *Vita*, p. 46 [65].

44. *Ibid.*, p. 8 [39].

in what is human. Vico cannot accept to destroy the metaphysical relation between the human universal and the eternal divine: the first one is soaked of divine, without which it would fall from order to chaos. The *lex naturalis* carries out an active function as part of that eternal and divine part, able to give to the reason a breath of universality. It is a *reductio ad unum* coherent with Vico's philosophy of the *Universal right* and his reflection on the new truth, universal and concrete at the same time, lively and never parted from the life of the *gentes*<sup>45</sup> in the unaware maturation of a philosophical knowledge and a legislation inspired to a — although minimal — *iustitia communis*.

Vico worked to his *Vita* in the respect of the concrete data and facts, without reducing his construction to a chronological dimension. And as historian of himself he was philosopher, meditating on the «cagioni così naturali come morali e nell'occasione della fortuna»<sup>46</sup>. Emblematic was an indisposition at the age of seven, very dramatized in order to represent the true year of birth of the philosopher in comparison to the wrong indication (1670 instead of 1668). The precocious introversion taking physiological turns (purgations and suffering), the following physiological adversities (gangrenous ulcer and phlegm) are backdated to the infantile trauma, transformed in prophetic sign of election<sup>47</sup>. With a coherent humanistic palingenesis, Vico founds on the anthropological historicization of what is sacred the baroque fable of the world<sup>48</sup>. In this way, the eternal seeds of truth and justice are retrieved, (along with the well-known definition of *vis veri* of the *Universal right*), buried by the sin in the childhood of man and the spreading out of his *mens*, historically knowable in different ages. Along with natural causes, also errors of cultural nature come out, such as the abandon of the youthful studies of logic, balanced, afterward, by the stimulus given by the *Accademia degli Infuriati* that Vico explains through the metaphor of Tasso (*Gerusalemme liberata*, XVI, 28), the one of the horse well trained for the military life and left in the countryside, that regains his military inclination at the sound of a trumpet horn<sup>49</sup>. About *Carafa* already, news are offered about the condition of the author that for the drawing up of his work «vi spese due anni, uno a disporre da quelle molto sparse e confuse notizie i

45. The well-known judgment of Fassò is not devoid of rigid distinctions (*Vico e Grozio*, Naples, Guida, 1971, pp. 99, 100, 102). Of a “critical progress” of Vico's writings, from the *Universal Law* before the *New Science*, spoke F. Botturi, *La sapienza della storia. Giambattista Vico e la filosofia pratica*, Milan, Vita e Pensiero, 1991, pp. 297, 298.

46. *Aggiunta*, p. 71 [85].

47. *Vita*, p. 3 [35]; *Aggiunta*, pp. 76–77, 82 [89, 93].

48. On this theme see M. Del Serra Fabbri, *Eredità e kenosi tematica della «confessio» cristiana negli scritti autobiografici di Vico*, in «Sapienza», XXXIII, 1980, 2, especially pp. 190–193, 197–199).

49. *Vita*, pp. 5–6 [37]. On this metaphor in Tasso see D. Della Terza, *Autobiografia di G. B. Vico: razionalità e scrittura*, p. 103.

comentari, un altro a tesserne l'istoria» to which details are added, about the precarious physical condition ((«in tutto il qual tempo fu travagliato da crudelissimi spasimi ippocondriaci nel braccio sinistro»<sup>50</sup>). This established an educative relation with the reader and, at the same time, a human bond, made of comprehension and solidarity of quite the same depth of the *Annotazioni* to *Scienza nuova* of 1730, with further clarifications concerning the «lungo grave malore, contratto dall'epidemia del catarro, ch'allora scorse tutta l'Italia; e finalmente la solitudine nella quale il Vico vive»<sup>51</sup>. He tells that he started «con una brieve, grave e toccante invocazione», quoting then the principle of that law, «ridotta in somma e partita»; he stuck just partially to the rules of the *italicus ius docendi*, without touching the other authors involved and defending, for example, the Hotman of the accusations of the Fabro, although he thought he would have. Nevertheless, in that circumstance the difficulties were limited as well and the optimism of the construction of the daily fact prevailed, at the point of saying that the lesson was given «con tanta facilità come se (il Vico) non altro avesse professato tutta la vita» and gained the «universale applauso»<sup>52</sup>.

Coherently and in the limits of the autobiographical reconstruction comes out — just as a philosophical support of the narration, the difference of the experiences that «han dipendenza dal corpo» and that concern man «in tempo (...), e tutte in conoscendo le facciamo»<sup>53</sup> (along with the great principle of the *verum et factum convertuntur*) from the eternal truths which are not given to men, because they are independent from the corporeal world and depend on the eternal idea of God. A distance, so, between the eternal and the temporal, which are to be considerate in the entirety of the experience of life for that desire, all human, of order the autobiographical design responds to, raising the indirect problem of the comprehension of unforeseen events, if not irrational circumstances. The matter of the *cursus studiorum* is reconstructed in a perspective of cathartic finalization, of self-assicuration of a “mission” that presents its conscience as self-provident. The plan of the personal identity is shifted from the ipostatical relation with God to the human dimension of telling, predisposed to belie even himself. In this way, real and ideal are distinguishable in order to contribute to the philosophical reconstruction of the «mondo (...) fatto dagli uomini»<sup>54</sup>, object of the *Scienza nuova*. And this is not all:

50. *Vita*, p. 44 [64].

51. *Aggiunta*, p. 82 [93].

52. *Vita*, pp. 52, 53 [70, 71].

53. *Ibid.*, p. 19 [46].

54. G. Vico, *Principi di una Scienza nuova intorno alla natura delle nazioni per la quale si ritrovano i principi di altro sistema del diritto naturale delle genti* (1725), poi in G. Vico, *Opere filosofiche*, introduction by N. Badaloni, edited by P. Cristofolini, Florence, Sansoni, 1971, capo XI, p. 185 (hereafter as *Sn25*). A

the commitment in the autobiography was coherent with that reference to the «modificazioni del nostro umano pensiero»<sup>55</sup>, in order to show how the continuous prevails on the discrete in a complicated and long itinerary of stations that know initial interruptions (the fall) and of path (the examination failure) «nelle opportunità o nelle traversie onde fece o ritardò i suoi progressi» but also milestones of exception meditative advantage (the stay in Vatolla) and of European appreciation (the long and positive review of the dutch scholar Jean Le Clerc concerning the *Universal Right*, passage translated from the voll. XVIII of the «Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne»).

The autobiographical narration doesn't end to a pacific final destination owned for transcendent grace, but epitome of it is the *Scienza Nuova*, work for which Vico feels to «avere vestito un nuovo huomo»<sup>56</sup>. The historical–philosophical outline of the *Autobiografia* entails a projects, in the light of a problematic and aggregating principle, able to organize the multiplicity of the facts occurred in a unitarian order, an *ideal eternal story* coherently proposed by the work of 1725 «la qual approvasse tale e non altra aver dovuto essere la sua vita letteraria»<sup>57</sup>. This whole is confirmed by the verbal tone of some expressions, corresponding to the three ages of the individual history of the philosopher, that for the civil right «sentiva un sommo piacere», because «l'affezionò agl'interperti antichi che poi avvertì e giudicò essere i filosofi dell'equità naturale»; and with the *Scienza Nuova* of 1725 «ritruova finalmente tutto spiegato quel principio, ch'esso ancor confusamente e non con tutta distinzione aveva inteso nelle sue opere antecedenti»<sup>58</sup>. Because of this statement the *Autobiografia* displays a narration intent on enlightening the reached configuration of sense of philosophical problems, introduced and matured in the elaboration of a final work, the *Scienza nuova*, as an evidence of the intimate coherence of his discovers, after the ineffectual results of the reflection on the *Universal Right*:

(...) Nemmeno si disiderassero i libri del Diritto universale, de' quali assai meno della Scienza nuova prima, siccome d'un abbozzo di quella, il Vico era contento (...). Gli dispiacciono (...) perché in quelli dalla mente di Platone ed altri chiari

reprint of a copy of the work very meaningful, because containing a handwritten dedication of Vico to Porcia, was edited by F. Lomonaco and is in press at the Diogene edizioni of Naples.

55. *Ibid.*

56. Thus G. Vico to B. M. Giacco, Naples, 25.10. 1725, then in G. Vico, *Epistole con aggiunte le Epistole dei suoi corrispondenti*, edited by M. Sanna, in *Opere di Giambattista Vico*, Naples, Morano, 1992, vol. XI, p. 114.

57. *Vita*, p. 54 [71] e *Aggiunta*, p. 71 [85].

58. *Vita*, pp. 8, 56 [39, 73]. On the philosophical meaning of the autobiographical narrative and on the presence in it of the momentous steps and anthropologically crucials as the «sentir sin advertir», the «advertir conmovido» and the «reflexion» cf. M. González García and J. Martínez Bisbal, *La Autobiografía de G. Vico. Claves para una lectura*, in *Autobiografía de Giambattista Vico*, edición de M. González García y J. Martínez Bisbal, Madrid, Siglo XXI de España Editores, 1998, spec. pp. 14–43.

filosofi tentava di scendere nelle menti balorde e scempie degli autori della gentilità, quando doveva tener il cammino tutto contrario; onde ivi prese errore in alquante materie<sup>59</sup>.

Vico rebuilds his own past, the interrupted paths of a complicated meditation, indicating a perspective of reflection, both mature and coherent with his whole philosophical itinerary. This interpretative modulus, used in the philosophical history of himself, in order to correspond the autobiographical ideal of Porcia, was so potent to fascinate an Italian interpretation, the neo-idealistic one of Croce and Nicolini, very prone to prefer the work of 1725, and to reduce all the previous writing to progressive ameliorative phases, until the last edition (1744). But the proposal of recognizing «the extension of the *Scienza nuova* to the biography of the author, to the history of his own intellectual life»<sup>60</sup> risks to jeopardize the study of the historical and cultural milieu voluntarily opened by the biographer of himself, operating on *istorico* and at the same time on *filosofo*. Vico didn't give a natural history of his life, but a «mythical story» of his personality as it was highlighted by Fubini. Between the tendency to cohesion and the acknowledgment of the diversity of the contemporary cultural positions, the *Autobiografia* searches in the destiny of his own I the whole man, with an awakening of one's own *cursus studiorum* giving advantage to the exemplarity of the characters involved. Everything in a style that offers the

singolare vivacità di sentire, di cui l'austero filosofo era dotato e che si rivela, contenuta e dominata, nel suo aulico fraseggiare: ne nasce il sapore caratteristico del suo stile, solenne e pur vivo per un'intima acutissima sensibilità, ne nascono quelle espressioni tutte sue, proprie di uno spirito, sempre intensamente preso da quanto lo occupa e abituato, ad un tempo, a proiettare le sue impressioni su di uno sfondo d'eternità<sup>61</sup>.

Finally, this choice indeed became necessary for historical reasons that tied the Neapolitan philosopher to his time, to the Venetian background, to

59. *Aggiunta*, pp. 80, 81 [92].

60. B. Croce, *Intorno alla vita e al carattere di G. B. Vico* (1909), in B. Croce, *La filosofia di Giambattista Vico* (1911), edited by F. Audisio, Naples, Bibliopolis, 1997, pp. 276–277. On this interpretation cf. M. H. Fisch and Th. G. Bergin (*The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, p. 5) to support: «Vico's original autobiography is (...) to be read as the expression of his state of mind at the end of his two greatest creative efforts: (...) after completing "the new science in negative form", and (...) after publishing "the first *New Science*"» (*ibid.*, p. 14). Thus, directly or indirectly, was founded a more general interpretation which, in the Anglo-American culture of the late twentieth century, translated the inadequate historiographical category (Croce–Nicolini) of Vico "precursor" of the idealism (German) and neo-idealism (Italian) in the equally questionable, the philosopher "pioneer" of the social sciences in nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

61. M. Fubini, *Préface* to G. Vico, *Autobiografia. Seguita da una scelta di lettere, orazioni e rime*, p. XIX.

the relations of esteem with Porcìa, to the hopes of cultivating other similar ones with Conti in view of the diffusion and rewriting of the *Scienza Nuova*, whose author «con gloria della cattolica religione, produce il vantaggio alla nostra Italia di non invidiare all’Olanda, l’Inghilterra e la Germania protestante i loro tre principi di questa scienza»<sup>62</sup>.

In this, matured the great philosophical project (corrected, ameliorated and integrated for almost twenty years) of documenting the principles of humanity through the «nature of the nations» in the different manifestation of human faculties within the ages of history, starting with the pre-reflexive one, constituted by the mythological language and fables, in order to spread in the expressions–productions of the articulated language. In phases of complex development and never uniform or uni-linear, the process goes from the *instinct* to *fantasy*, passing through the *ingenium* as a constitutive faculty of the human mind, that express itself through sensitive forms and intellectual forms. The science of Vico is the science of concrete and universal history, because it has recourse to philology and philosophy, of ‘individual’ and ‘universal’ in a very rich and original synthesis, expressed through the creation of «universali fantastici» against any abstract form of knowledge and «sapienza riposta». In a triadic system of age (*gods, heroes and men*) the aim is to explain *courses* and re-*courses* of the human things, the possible “resurrection” of the nations through *ideas, costumes and facts* of the human race. An history and a philosophy of the humanity, ideal, because of their being rules of the action and — at the same time — philological for an inquiry about languages and origins of the human world, about the *nature* of things identifiable with their «nascimento»; an history of *human ideas* following the authentic *metaphysics of the human mind*, searching the «i principi della natura delle nazioni» in order to «contemplare una certa mente comune di tutti i popoli»<sup>63</sup>.

Of remaining alone in sustaining Porcìa’s initiative, Vico became aware too late, so his disappointment is strong, for having being clueless about the involution of the *Project*<sup>64</sup>. At the address of Porcìa, a supplementary manuscript by Vico arrived, on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1728, which contained references to the missed print of the *Scienza nuova* in a negative form, to the composition and publication of the work in 1725; a part of the catalogue which included it along with the *Orazione in morte della Cimmino* (1727); a list of corrections and adds and rectifications (about Vincenzo Carafa, dead in the month of April of 1726) to the autobiographical contribution sent before 1725. From this exchange, we also learn the interest of the two intellectuals

62. *Vita*, p. 61 [77].

63. *Sn25*, chap. XI, p. 184.

64. *Aggiunta*, pp. 74–75 [85, 87–88].

from Veneto, Conti and Lodoli, to obtain a second edition (which will constitute the *Aggiunta* of 1731, composed in the april–may of this same year with short accounts of the activity from 1725 and of previous happenings, not without references to occasional «studi ameni») of the *Vita*, enriched and updated in function of the opus magnum with the announcement of a Venetian edition (which got lost, we believe)<sup>65</sup>. The Venetian *Raccolta* of 1728, which collocated the *Vita* of Vico and the annexed *Catalogue* of the writings just after the *Progetto*, — and giving him relief also for the keen adhesion, resulted, anyway, full of errors and typos that saddened quite a bit the philosopher, as told in the *Aggiunta* and in two important letters sent — respectively — to Muratori and Calogerà, invited, by the way, to introduce a correction, when the work was about to be printed, though<sup>66</sup>. We do not possess the *editio princeps* of it, nor the autograph, nor any commented printed sample. Corrections and integrations are in the *Aggiunta* (we do have the autograph of it) and in another redaction of the text of 1728, composed to correspond the request of biographical data by the *Accademia degli Assorditi*, which co-opted the Neapolitan philosopher, as Muratori wrote to him, asking along to address them to father Bulgarelli as required by the *regula academica*<sup>67</sup>. The missed final redaction and print of this second edition of the *Vita* happened besides the difficulties of relation with the buyers, for the missed funding of the print, because of the changed attitude of the cardinal Corsini. Of the Venetian edition Vico gave somehow prematurely notice in the *Catalogo*, and after the failure, he explained the reasons in the introductory part of the *Scienza Nuova* of 1730, in that «Occasione di meditarsi quest’Opera» (whose content would have been reused in the *Aggiunta* of 1731) which persuaded him to correct the first edition of 1725, since conceived in a «maniera negativa di dimostrare», and to insist «in un’aspra meditazione per ritrovarne un metodo positivo»<sup>68</sup>. For all of this it is interesting to underline the first variable included in the title page: the one containing, as notorious, the reference to the «nature of the nations» which, in the text of 1730, presented the introduction of the adjective «comune» (common), almost to reinforce the anti-solipsistic dimension of the thought of Vico for its constitutive “politicity” and opposition to any traditional

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 71–72, 75 [85, 87–88].

66. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 75 [87–88] and the epistolary documents quoted and commented on by P. G. Gaspardo — G. Pizzamiglio, *La pubblicazione dell’Autobiografia vichiana nella corrispondenza di Giovan Artico di Porcia con il Muratori e il Vallisnieri*, pp. 125–126 and notes.

67. See G. Vico to L.A. Muratori, Naples, 5. 06. 1730, then in G. Vico, *Epistole*, p. 158.

68. On the relationship between the *Aggiunta* del 1731 and *Sn 1730* see the fundamental essay of V. Placella (*Il resoconto di Vico su una mancata edizione della Scienza Nuova e i problemi ecdotici dell’Autobiografia. Con un’Appendice di testi*, in «Annali dell’Istituto Universitario Orientale», sezione Romanza, XXVIII, 1986, 1, pp. 53–163.

model of «monastica» philosophy<sup>69</sup>.

Another *Aggiunta* was promoted by the meritorius marquis of Villarosa, presented in the edition of 1818 of the *Opuscoli* by Vico, first firm collector of texts and manuscripts signed by Vico, and therefore reliable source of facts and judgements, since prevalently constructed upon oral records (Gherardo degli Angeli, Gennaro Vico, Carlantonio De Rosa senior, Donato Corbo — especially for what concerns the promised senile decadence of the philosopher), besides illegitimate modernizations of the language of Vico and interventions of alteration on the text and the punctuation<sup>70</sup>. In the meanwhile, between 1700 and 1800 the *Vita* became a real exemplum, imitated by the italian culture of the second half of 1700, in such cases as the *Autobiografia* of Gherardo de Angelis to the *Memorie* of Costantino Grimaldi, the *Autobiografia* by Genovesi upon the *Vita* of Spinelli — composed in 1753 for the same *Raccolta* of scientific and philological pamphlets along with the suggestion of «celebre nostro Gio: Battista di Vico»<sup>71</sup>.

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69. In this regard it is allowed to refer to my essay, *Note su un esemplare postillato della Scienza Nuova 1730*, in «Bollettino del Centro di studi vichiani», XXXV (2005), pp. 81–99; cf. especially p. 89.

70. On these events and drafting phases see R. Verdirame, *Note sulla Vita di Giambattista Vico scritta da se medesimo: l'occasione, la genesi e le vicende editoriali*, in *Il mondo di Vico/Vico nel mondo. In ricordo di Giorgio Tagliacozzo*. Actes of Congress (Rome–Sansepolcro, 15–18. 04. 1999), edited by F. Ratto, Perugia, edizioni Guerra, 2000, pp. 307–315.

71. F.M. Spinelli, *Vita, e studj*, p. 465.



## Encounters and confrontations in the *Vita* of Giambattista Vico

CLAUDIA MEGALE

**ABSTRACT:** The *Autobiografia* is a very rich text, full of intellectual cues and is given like a real work instrument, hence to start all over again, in order to re-design the knowledge not only of an era — the one of Vico — but also and more than all, to respond to the necessities of a new culture, in a society more and more needy of certainties and intellectual cues. It has to be said, anyway, that the retrieve of some specific questions in a contemporary time doesn't mean to reproduce another anti-historic proposal of primates, *primacies* and/or *anticipations*, nor means to mark a 'nonexistent' presence of Vico, but has the aim to highlight how some questions have been topic of the cultural debate of the twentieth century. So, willing to indicate just some of the possible knots, the same concept *Autobiografia* becomes actual, the issue of the method, the very actual debate concerning hermeneutics, the idea of law and the complex notion of time.

### I.

The limited number — but of great thickness — of the pages of the *Vita di Giambattista Vico scritta da se medesimo* bring up a series of themes that more than two hundred and fifty years of interpretations haven't exhausted yet. What the *Autobiografia* signed by Vico still has to tell us, in a century «il cui continuo flusso informativo è un vortice che cattura contenuti rigurgitandoli in laghi artificiali e giganteschi, ma stagnanti e stantii (...) E la cui cultura della modernità liquida non è più una cultura dell'apprendimento e dell'accumulazione, è invece una cultura del disimpegno della discontinuità e della dimenticanza»?<sup>1</sup>. Well, exactly in this historical conjunction so perfectly shaped by Bauman it is easy to retrieve all the modernity of the Vico's text, its far seeing issues in order to reflect on the the fact that «il ritrovamento finale di un'immagine definitiva, ottenuto con l'autobiografia, è paradossalmente un romanzo di morte che con il ricordo genera la vita»<sup>2</sup>. The autobiography is a particular kind of narration where the narrator and the main character do coincide. The autobiographical account has always

1. Cf. *Nella modernità*, edited by C. Corradini and D. Pradella, in «Cooperazione trentina», 1 (2012), p. 26, in [www.fitcoop.it/portal/Portals/1/Mensile/201201\\_bauman.pdf](http://www.fitcoop.it/portal/Portals/1/Mensile/201201_bauman.pdf).

2. A. Battistini, *Lo specchio di Dedalo. Autobiografia e biografia*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1990, p. 9.

existed in human history, assuming features responding to the exigencies of the times, and still keeping, always, those *topoi* that make it correspond to its same meaning. In order to be named *Vita scritta da se medesimo* a “biography” needs to respect some characteristics: the first one is the subscription of a “pact of truth” between reader and writer. Furthermore, the autobiographical narrator needs to realize a process of re-elaboration of memories in his act of writing. And this is not all; because through the next action — the reading — comes the process of reflection and closer examination of the events of his own story. The forms that the autobiography can assume are different: memoirs, letters, confessions, novels, tales and even poems, and this is how «solo seguendo l’evoluzione del sistema di generi senza fare la storia “regionalistica” o “campanilistica” dell’autobiografia propriamente detta è possibile scoprire il mutamento storico di uno statuto»<sup>3</sup>.

It is notorious how Vico publishes his *Autobiografia* in 1728, accepting to respond positively to the *Progetto ai letterati di Italia per iscrivere le loro vite* theorized by the Friulian count Giovanartico di Porcia. The initiative can be collocated in that «crisis of the European conscience» of the last years of 1600 — and so efficiently defined by Paul Hazard, also with reference to Italy. In the project of the Count very lively is the exigence to redefine the social and political role of intellectuals and men of letters, in deep crisis for two different flows, encountering each other in Italy. On one side, the Cartesianism, risen and lived as true defender of the *libertas philosophandi* which — blowing from the Pyrenees moved towards the Tyrrhenian waters — asked for the primacy of a modern human *ratio*, but at the same time getting the shades of a philosophy, all read in the shade of the Mount Vesuvius and prone to an original *ars inventionis*. On the other side, the far echoes of a counter reform, confirming an hard relation with the temporal institute of the Church, bound to create a moment of deep unity between Italian *novatores* — the ones that for the entire XVII century kept alive the controversy against the Jesuit and scholastic dogmatism. In this atmosphere has to be collocated the project of Porcia, already presented in a private form to Muratori in 1721:

«Penso di raccogliere le vite d’alcuni letterati viventi in Italia scritte da loro stessi e di pubblicarle. In queste vite vorrei che questi signori stendessero la storia de’ loro ingegni»<sup>4</sup>.

3. Id., *L’autobiografia e i modelli narrativi secenteschi*, in *Cultura meridionale e letteratura italiana. I modelli narrativi dell’età moderna*, edited by P. Giannantonio, Naples, Loffredo, 1985, pp. 145–190; cfr. p. 145.

4. So from the *Correspondance* Porcia–Muratori, in C. De Michelis, *L’autobiografia intellettuale e il «Progetto» di Giovanartico di Porcia*, in *Vico e Venezia*, Florence, Olschki, 1982, p. 97. Cf. also P.G. Gaspardo — G. Pizzamiglio, *La pubblicazione dell’Autobiografia vichiana nella corrispondenza di Giovanartico di Porcia con il Muratori e il Vallisnieri*, *ibid.*, pp. 127–130.

[...] «Incominceranno dalla grammatica, notando come loro fu insegnata (...). Così andranno ascendendo d'arte in arte, di scienza in scienza conto rendendo di quante n'hanno apparate, e gli abusi, e i pregiudicj delle scuole e de' loro maestri additando»<sup>5</sup>.

In his proposal, the Count underlines, other than the pedagogic interest, the exigency of listening — from the very voices of the Italian men of letters — their judgment on the moral role of an intellectual. «Le autobiografie richieste dal Porcia diventano insomma altrettanti libri di testo da proporre a tutti i letterati e ai giovani soprattutto per essere gli strumenti di una scuola moderna e funzionale sullo sviluppo di una società civile»<sup>6</sup>. Among the eight men of letters contacted for the realization of this daring project Vico was the only one to respond right away, because — as Fabrizio Lomonaco well underlines — «la proposta (...) giungeva propizia e meritevole di adesione, perché, negli anni della stesura della *Scienza nuova prima*, alla sua consacrazione intellettuale giovava il poter ripercorrere le tappe della sua formazione filosofica»<sup>7</sup>.

Therefore, it isn't hard to understand how, within the *Vita*, we are likely to find arguments able to give a chance to very rich encounters and confrontations. The *Autobiografia* is a very rich text, full of intellectual cues and is given like a real work instrument, hence to start all over again, in order to re-design the knowledge not only of an era — the one of Vico — but also and more than all, to respond to the necessities of a new culture, in a society more and more needy of certainties and intellectual cues. It has to be said, anyway, that the retrieve of some specific questions in a contemporary time doesn't mean to reproduce another anti-historic proposal of primates, *primacies* and/or *anticipations* (tried, already, in previous readings), nor means to mark a 'nonexistent' presence of Vico, but has the aim to highlight how some questions have been topic of the cultural debate of the twentieth century. It's all about documenting the richness of the text through a wide number of multidisciplinary themes, selecting conceptual nucleus permitting to the scholar interested to Vico to trace a reticular path which — starting from the *Autobiografia* — keeps into consideration sectors of knowledge, although far from the philosophical speculation, and still connectable to it for the concerned themes. So, willing to indicate just some of the possible knots, the same concept *Autobiografia* becomes actual, the

5. G. conte di Porcia, *Progetto ai Letterati d'Italia per scrivere le loro vite (...)*, in G. Vico, *Vita scritta da se medesimo*, edited by F. Lomonaco, Afterword of R. Diana and Bibliography of S. Principe, Naples, Diogene, 2012; (hereafter as *Autobiografia*). The *Progetto* is also in *Appendix* to di R. Diana, *Ragione narrativa ed elaborazione dialogica del sapere. L'Autobiografia di Giambattista Vico e il suo contenuto problematico*, in «Bollettino del Centro di studi vichiani», XXXIV (2004), pp. 162–167.

6. So C. De Michelis, *L'Autobiografia intellettuale e il «progetto» di Giovanartico di Porcia*, p. 104.

7. F. Lomonaco, *Introduction to Autobiography*, p. 11.

issue of the method, the very actual debate concerning Hermeneutics, the idea of law and the complex notion of time.

The first reflection needs to be centered on the narrative style. Merging in an inseparable triad author–narrator–character, «signor Giambattista Vico» in the first pages is described by himself on the base of some facts and occasional episodes (fall from the stairs when he was seven and illnesses), all finalized to the description of a personality giving hints to the presentation of his intellectual course. With this aim the philosopher choose to speak at the third person «comme si 'je' était un autre»<sup>8</sup>; and doesn't really come into communication with the reader, in order to stay faithful to the promise of the first pages, the will of writing his own *Vita* as an historian, respecting the plurality of the phases of his education as man of letters and professor:

Meditò sulle cagioni così naturali come morali, (...) meditò sulle sue inclinazioni e avversioni (...) meditò nell'opportunità o nelle traversie». «Proponendosi quale *exemplum* educativo per la gioventù, (Vico) ripercorreva con tale intento pedagogico le tappe di una crescita culturale in una narrazione ordinata *fil filò e con schiettezza*, secondo un percorso esclusivamente interno alla stesura dei singoli scritti<sup>9</sup>.

And still, with this narrative technique he doesn't really want to preclude any real emotional relation with the reader. He emphasizes very captivating moments — for instance when he tells about the failure in the competition for the university chair in 1723, and it looks like he tries to capture the reader's comprehension — and indirectly justify his commitment to the Progetto Porcia, undoubted action meant to find an account in the *respublica literaria* of his time:

L'identità autore–personaggio, la relazione dinamica di tempo tra scrittura presente e vita passata, e il rapporto didattico–affettivo autore–lettori. (Nell'*Autobiografia*) funzionano a un livello semantico più profondo rispetto a altri livelli costituiti da elementi di tecnica narrativa che tendono ad effetti di obiettività storico–descrittiva. Ed è appunto l'interrelazione dinamica fra questi due livelli linguistico–semantici che produce l'originalità dell'*Autobiografia vichiana*<sup>10</sup>.

The autobiographical technique acquires in the 1700, in Italy, a new dimension, fitting a cultural climate just renewed by the *Discour sur la méthode* written by Descartes. The first aim that Vico means to reach through the writing of his *Vita* is to set him completely against the Cartesian *philosophy* — this just in the years in which this last has a sort of sovereignty in Naples,

8. Cf. P. Lejeune, *L'autobiographie en France*, quoted by S. Costa, *Alfieri autobiografo e l'autocoscienza narrativa*, in «La Rassegna della letteratura italiana», LXXXII (1978) 3, p. 392.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 395.

10. M. Cottino–Jones, *L'autobiografia vichiana: il rapporto vita–scrittura*, in *Vico e Venezia*, p. 141.

and imposing its power of innovation in many schools and academies. And this is not all. As many illustrious scholars have highlighted, Giambattista is more Renatist of how it seems — following the comfortable, but not always adequate, oppositional layout of derivative matrix. The very declared stylistic juxtapositions, also concerning method and life in comparison to Descartes, seem to be meant to mark a difference with the French philosopher that is almost at all apparent, if we take into consideration the common problems (issues concerning method and *mathesis universalis*, relations between science and philosophy, unity of meaning of natural sciences and civil life, *in primis*). This is worth to mention, if the contrast is with some interpretation of metaphysics in terms and formulas that aren't adequate to the modern anthropology. In this frame, Vico occupies a place of great relevance, and very critical upon the western philosophical tradition, resolute in making of the *logos* the only possible actor in the beginning and in the end of the story. After the *Orazioni inaugurali*, full of stoic-platonic themes and platonic-agostinian issues, caught in the persistent call for the *verum*, far from the senses, in the germinal presence of every knowledge in the 'I', all the way to exalt enthusiastically the initial position of the Cartesian *cogito*<sup>11</sup> — the speculative course of the Neapolitan philosopher comes to an original direction. And, unlike Descartes, the principium — this is the comment of Verene — becomes «l'idea della favola» applied to his own existence in order to «express the truth of his action of philosopher» founded on fantasy<sup>12</sup>, in opposition to the Cartesian model. It stays anyway undeniable that the *Vita* of Vico can be inscribed in a path that moves closer to — and at the same time does not — that atmosphere that made the 1700 «a century that with no doubts can be considered 'autobiographical'»<sup>13</sup>. Whatever the subject in question is, the aim to persecute is the knowledge of oneself, the evaluation of one's own skills of judgment, the deepening of one's own inclinations. And the writing of his very modern *confessioni* uses a skillful rhetoric technique, willing to involve and comprehend the reader, sometimes giving the impression of letting oneself to a stream of diverse ideas, some other times using a more structured style, meant to underline the ethic-pedagogic nature of his work, rich of quotations of Greeks and Latin classics.

11. «Anche se la mente umana è incerta e dubita di tutte le cose, assolutamente non può dubitare di questo: del suo pensiero; difatti lo stesso dubbio è un pensiero (...). O meravigliosa potenza della mente umana, che osservando se stessa, ci conduce per mano alla conoscenza del Sommo Bene, di Dio Onnipotente» (G. Vico, *Oratio I*, in Id., *Le Orazioni inaugurali I–VI*, edited by G. G. Visconti, in *Opere di Giambattista Vico*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1982, vol. I, pp. 85, 87).

12. D. Ph. Verene, *Vico nel mondo anglosassone*, edited by M. Simonetta, Naples, La Città del Sole, 1995, p. 9 and chap. III «L'Autobiografia di Vico e il *Discours di Descartes*. Il problema della conoscenza di se stessi», pp. 31–36. Cf. also the well know work on *The New Art of Autobiography. An Essay on the Life of Giambattista Vico Written by Himself*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991.

13. C. De Michelis, *L'Autobiografia intellettuale e il «progetto» di Giovanartico di Porcia*, p. 106.

Vico takes, on his side, another way, deciding to write his *Vita* with a precise objective, given by the exigency to transfer to the youngest a new knowledge. *L'Educazione del genere umano* seems to be the *leit-motiv* of the *Vita* of Vico, in tight connection with the needs of the European culture, which will find a significant expressions in the well known works of Lessing and Herder — to whom is due the discover of Vico in Germany<sup>14</sup>, although within the limits signaled by Auerbach: «Quanto lo Herder fosse stato investito dalla storia col preciso compito di ignorare Vico. La sua concezione rousseauista della natura primitiva permeata di ininterrotta bontà doveva costituire una barriera invalicabile alla fantasiosa e sensuosa, ma politicizzata barbarie degli eroi vichiani»<sup>15</sup>. Reflection, this last one, that might open to the confrontation more than to an encounter between the *Autobiografia* of Vico and the innovative spirit of Rousseau that — Cassirer writes — «doesn't aim at the problem of God, but the problem of the law and of the society»<sup>16</sup>. For Vico, as well as for the philosopher born in Geneva, a study upon man and his *societas* needs to precede any philosophical theory. If Rousseau is the first one to secularize explicitly the Absolute, historicizing it at the point of elevating the social being higher than the individual, Vico's will is to reshape the role of philosophy «his duty (that) is exactly the exploration of the human world, the interrogation of the human for its being human»<sup>17</sup>, setting all the premises for a philosophy of the existence able to break, finally, with the philosophy of the nature. Obviously the *Autobiografia* is completely different from the *Confessions*, but a common issue, studied by illustrious characters 1900's philosophy (Garin e Cassirer) is represented by the theory of language. The thesis along which «the human language derives from some sounds of purely emotional sounds (...) can be found somehow precisely in thinkers such as Vico and Rousseau»<sup>18</sup>. Upon the relation between Vico and Rousseau, some people insisted pointing on the themes in common, of the origin of language, of the relation language–writing — also with relation to the issue of passions. Some also wondered if Rousseau had got to know directly the *Scienza Nuova* when he was in Venice in quality of secretary of the ambassador of France between 1743 and 1744. At this concern, Nicolini assumed that the philosopher from Geneva underwent the influence of the texts by Vico, although maybe not directly, since the similarities, and not only for the

14. E. Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (1932), italian traduction by E. Pocar, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1973, reprint 1977<sup>2</sup>, p. 293.

15. Cf. D. Della Terza, *Auerbach e Vico*, in Id., *Forma e memoria saggi e ricerche sulla tradizione letterarie da Dante a Vico*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1979, p. 320.

16. E. Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, p. 218.

17. Cf. A. Perrucci, *L'etica della responsabilità. Saggio su Pietro Piovani*, Naples, Liguori, 2007, p. 15.

18. E. Cassirer, *Saggio sull'uomo*, new edition, Rome, Armando, 2009, p. 211.

theory of language, are very many and very unique. Cassirer, with a tone that might appear desperate, arrived to the conclusion that the scholar from Geneva «first shaped this doctrine, and tried to elaborate it»<sup>19</sup>.

After this, Derrida, treating *De la grammatologie* (1967), precised a series of detailed confrontations concerning the origin of the language with precise reference to Vico and Rousseau, read by Cassirer:

L'idée du langage originariamente figuré était assez répandue à cette époque : on la rencontre en particulier chez Warburton et chez Condillac dont l'influence sur Rousseau est ici massive. Chez Vico : B. Gagnebin et M. Raymond se sont demandé, à propos de l'*Essai sur l'origine des langues*, si Rousseau n'avait pas lu la *Science nouvelle* lorsqu'il était secrétaire de Montaigu à Venise. Mais si Rousseau et Vico affirment tous deux la nature métaphorique des langues primitives, seul Vico leur attribue cette origine divine, thème de désaccord aussi entre Condillac et Rousseau. Puis Vico est alors un des rares, sinon le seul, à croire à la contemporanéité d'origine entre l'écriture et la parole : « Les philosophes ont cru bien à tort que les langues sont nées d'abord et plus tard l'écriture; bien au contraire, elles naquirent jumelles et cheminèrent parallèlement. » (*Scienza Nuova* 3, I.) Cassirer n'hésite pas à affirmer que Rousseau a «repris» dans l'*Essai* les théories de Vico sur le langage. (*Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*. I, I, 4)<sup>20</sup>.

Finally, the Italian scholars also, after Croce and Nicolini, retrieved the question of the possible approach between the “primitives” of Rousseau and the “great beasts” of Vico. This is the case of Garin, that, taking advantage from the pages quoted by Derrida, concentrated the attention on the fortune of the relation Vico–Rousseau, analyzing the work of Gian Francesco Finetti; not only the *Apologia del genere umano* (1768) but more than all the *De principiis juris naturae et gentium* of 1764 and the *Trattato de' linguaggi di tutto il mondo* of 1756 — those allowing to underline the encounter/ confrontation between the *ipotesi* of Rousseau about the primitive animal and the *tesi* of the *Scienza Nuova*<sup>21</sup>.

One more possible ‘confrontation’ on the plan of the narrative style was proposed in an essay by Roberto Gatti, about the *Confessioni* of Augustine and Rousseau: «In questo singolare scritto — scrive il Gatti riferendosi ai *Dialoghi* — Rousseau sdoppiandosi diventa fonte di un immaginario terzo (il “Francese”) giudice e difensore di “Jean– Jacques”, la difficoltà che denuncia è di parlare di se stesso con giustizia e verità»<sup>22</sup>. If the Rousseauist

19. E. Cassirer, *Filosofia delle forme simboliche*, vol. I, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1961, p. 108.

20. J. Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, Paris, Les éditions de Minuit, 1967, p. 156, but on Vico cf. also pp. 307, 384–385, 393, 395, 421, 422, note. On this theme cf. N. Perullo, *La scena del senso. A partire da Wittgenstein e Derrida*, Pisa, ETS, 2011, chap. IV: «Topica, critica, grammatologia. Vico attraverso Derrida» (pp. 113–152).

21. E. Garin, *A proposito del rapporto fra Vico e Rousseau*, in «Bollettino del Centro di studi vichiani», II (1972), pp. 61–63.

22. R. Gatti, *Storie dell'anima. Le confessioni di Agostino e Rousseau*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2012, p.

subjectivism places the individual in a nature with no God, between nature and history, and if this can appear at a first glance a common theme with the thought of Vico and attuned with the theme of the education of the humankind, the issue gets more complex when it comes to autobiographies. At this regard, the two thinkers are deeply different, corresponding the differences that feature — in this literary genre, the *Vite* of the beginning and end of 1700. In particular in the «*Confessioni* by Rousseau (...) have to be searched not only the antecedents of the sciences of man, but also the announcements of a method implying the ways reformed by the approach of subjectivity»<sup>23</sup>.

Confession, diary, history of the soul are all pseudonyms that in the diversity of the denominations, do signal the evolution of the story itself for the reconstruction of the modern identity in western culture. The story of a *Vita* is a way to track the coordinates of the story from the point of view of the author: a description of the macro cosmos, starting from the micro cosmos of the writer, an understanding of the universal — starting from what is not such. Positioning the *Vita scritta da se medesimo* among the *Confessioni* of Augustine and the ones of Rousseau consent — within the respect of evident differences — to outline an history of the western thought. Following a method — shared by Giannone and Muratori, the *Autobiografia* corresponds entirely the style of the first 1700. Here, the told anecdotes are a specious way to show how his whole life was marked by an heroic destination, giving to the work some memoir features, with didactic aims.

The lack of distance between formation and philosophical issue, justifications and misfortunes that mark the philosopher's life, unknown and isolated in a city (Naples) invaded by metaphysic (Cartesian) philosophers («Vico didn't only live as a foreigner in his homeland, but he was also unknown») gives to the text an unity in terms of logic and ethics apt to elevate it from the sphere of the *confessioni* and raising it the world of the philosophical texts *out-court*: «in the *Vita* by Vico — that is Battistini's comment — aren't missing elements of pathos, but they are conveyed into behavioural models inspired by a neostocic firmness which, throught the thought of Giusto Lipsio, recall the imperturbability of what sits in "his high inexpugnable fortress"»<sup>24</sup>. The adversities of life are solved responding to the providential law on the christian model, in accordance with the platonic philosophy. And if Augustine turns towards God («Tu, però che hai piena certezza fino al numero dei capelli nostri, tu riuscivi a volgere a

132.

23. P. Piovani, *Principi di una filosofia della morale*, Naples, Morano, 1972, p. 12.24. A. Battistini, *Lo specchio di Dedalo*, p. 85. Cf. *Aggiunta 1731*, in *Autobiografia*, p. 96.



mio vantaggio l'errore di tutti quelli che mi stavano a dosso perché imparassi» [I.12,19]) the Neapolitan philosopher, victim of adverse fates, is, along with the christian tradition, the martyr that, in a letter of October 25<sup>th</sup> 1725, confesses: «Sia sempre lodata la Provvidenza! che quando agli infermi occhi mortali sembra ella tutta rigor di giustizia, allora più che mai è impiegata in una somma benignità! Perché da quest'Opera io mi sento avere vestito un nuovo huomo»<sup>25</sup>.

The call for inwardness typifying the *Confessioni* of Saint Augustine is historicized by Vico, and recalled as «his particular protector»<sup>26</sup>. And a few are also the synchronisms, both biographical and intellectual, between the two authors. Starting from a pedagogical aim common to both of them, we still remember how much the cultural ambient they were living in, was shaped by a different and difficult atmosphere in forms and contents. If in the *Tagaste* by Augustine was present and alive a strong encounter between two religious realities, (the late paganism and the Christian religion), in the Naples of Vico could be especially felt the intellectual divergence caused by the transition from the 'late-baroque' to the Arcadic rationalism. The conversion that will separate Augustine from the Manichean materialism provokes the same cultural and psychological upsetting in Vico, who has a strong interest in freeing himself from Cartesianism — a less abstract idea of self and the relation of this last with the divine and with the complicity of a Providence, aimed to widely transform, in the sense of general historical trace, any difficulty in an opportunity:

Il fondamento dell'identità personale viene spostato dal piano della relazione ipostatica con Dio al piano della *syngéneia* e *synérghēia*, con una Provvidenza che storicizza il "vero astratto" vichiano nell'anima bella non privo ormai di presagi di ciò che un settantennio più tardi diverrà, sotto altra costellazione culturale, il luminoso spazio novalisiano, paradiso di eternità contrapposto alla tenebra esteriore del sociale<sup>27</sup>.

Vico takes his place between those two models, the cosmological Augustinian one and the anthropological one of Rousseau, although we cannot avoid to mention one peculiar divergence: the history of the soul told by the philosopher from Geneva, especially in the beginning of the second part of the *Confessions*, is a complete commending to feelings in order to recover one's own existence. The feature represents a strong detachment

25. So G. Vico to B. M. Giacco, Naples, 25. 10. 1725, in G. Vico, *Epistole con aggiunte le Epistole dei suoi corrispondenti*, edited by M. Sanna, in *Opere di Giambattista Vico*, Naples, Morano, 1992, vol. XI, p. 114.

26. Quoted by F. Nicolini, *Introduction to Scritti autobiografici*, in G. Vico, *Opere*, Milan-Naples, Ricciardi, 1953, p. 103.

27. So M. Del Serra Fabbri, *Eredità e Kenosi tematica della «Confessio» cristiana negli scritti autobiografici di Vico*, in «Sapienza» XXXIII (1980) 2, p. 109.

from the autobiography of Vichian style, where the narration goes «*fil filo con chiarezza*», using as benchmark the chronological chain of the writings: the stand out of the autobiography by Vico — this is a comment made by Simona Costa — in comparison to other *récits de carrière*, is recoverable in the proliferation of twilight, behind the works, of the rising silhouette of the author whose mythicization is drawn by the underlined theme of his own isolation and marginalization of autodidact figure in the Italian scenario: where this theme and its assumptions were already in the Cartesian falling apart, facing all the previous available cultural orientations, and bound to come back in the *Vita* signed by Alfieri, in the same perspective of exceptional individual parabola, widely overstepping his own birth context<sup>28</sup>.

The *Vita scritta da se stesso* of Vittorio Alfieri, written between 1790 and 1803 (published posthumous), is an homage to the posthumous memory («*morto io*»); it means to be, first of all, a tentative way to put together, in the fictional order of the writing, a process of disintegration and dispersion that had given shape to the first half of the author's life, and contrasting with the shift marked by the will of the author of devoting himself to studies and literature. *The Vita* shares with the autobiographical model of Vico not only a conception of writing of oneself as a description of a formative path, able to give value to the acquisition of an intellectual and professional maturity, but also a vision of the existence divided into stages, and based on an evolution model featured by the 1800 myth of progress — which — in the work of Vico, original philosopher of the decadence as recurrent possibility, is solved in the heterogenesis of the aims. Merit of the lesson of the philosopher from Geneva, is the ability to describe a disintegrated and disquieting conscience that is put back altogether at the very beginning of the forth stage, in that *Virilità* identified with the literary work. The *fil rouge* of the autobiography goes on more or less underground, and already along the whole course of the literary apprenticeship of Alfieri, at the same time responding to both the canonical external solicitations of the aristocrat education of a *homme de qualité* of 1700, and an introspective aim matured in first person throughout the knowledge, not casual, but very intentionally searched, of the thought of the French moralists<sup>29</sup>.

## 2.

In short, an intense work upon the Autobiografie, in here shortly hinted, and beginning from the *Vita* of Gianbattista Vico, can become one of the *fil*

28. Cf. S. Costa, *Alfieri autobiografo e l'autocoscienza narrativa*, p. 396.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 401.

rouge of the culture of the times, and working as a stimulus to understand — all the way to the *grafie* of the unconscious of 1900, what Montaigne underlined with prompt elegance: «È una vita rara quella che si mantiene in ordine fin nel suo intimo. Ognuno può aver parte alla commedia e rappresentare un personaggio onesto sulla scena; ma di dentro e nel suo petto, dove tutto ci è permesso, dove tutto è nascosto, mantenersi in regola qui, questo è il punto»<sup>30</sup>.

A theme that needs to be documented and considered from close in the *Autobiografia* of Vico, is for sure the philosophical one concerning the method. All modern philosophy was born as an opposition to scholastics, and the renewed syllogistic logic inherited from Aristotle become to be the very base of the Thomistic philosophy, bound to root out, with a new research method, an *ars inveniendi* that found its first formulation in Bacon, *autore* of Vico. Bacon himself, man of his age, feels compelled to clarify the question of his own method in a century where the sciences, with Galileo and Cartesio, had conquered the primate of research. The *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* of 1623, to which Vico dedicates the *Dissertatio* of the *De ratione* is the manifesto of this new exigence, in opposition to the *cogito sum* that Descartes used to consider first truth, immediate and intuitive certainty. Fabrizio Lomonaco observes: «L'ammirazione per il filosofo inglese è subito anche critica rivolta alla sua fiducia senza limiti nel progresso delle scienze in vista della "totale perfezione"»<sup>31</sup>.

What Vico recognizes in Bacon is an anthropological and social "naturalism" that sets the man in the same order of nature and, as such, imperfect, aimed to perfection. The simple intuition of Bacon will find concrete form in the resolute method of Galilei — along whom the experience assumes another value finding its fundament in the mathematical theory.

Ai pensieri metodici comuni a Bacone e a Galilei, Cartesio aggiunge un postulato di grande importanza affermando che il metodo risolutivo deve portare ad un *principio unico di suprema e assoluta certezza*, muovendo dal quale, in virtù del metodo compositivo sia possibile spiegare poi tutta intera la sfera dell'esperienza. (...) Per Cartesio il primo compito della filosofia è *analitico* il secondo *sinтетico*<sup>32</sup>.

The Neapolitan philosopher is anxious to communicate to the reader that the cultural climate in Naples, concerning the years where, involved in

30. M. de Montaigne, *Essais*, edited by F. Garavini with an essay of S. Solmi, Milan, Adelphi, 1966, Book III, 2, p. 1072.

31. F. Lomonaco, *Introduction to G. Vico, De nostri temporis studiorum ratione dissertatio* [1709], reprint with italian traduction, edited by F. Lomonaco, Naples, Scripta Web, 2010, p. 10 (hereafter as *De ratione*). For the discussion on the critical literature cf. this introduction.

32. So W. Windelband, *Geschichte der Philosophie* (1892), italian traduction by C. Dentice D'Accadia, Palermo, Sandron, 1967, pp. 56, 57.

the academic teaching, he was mainly aware of how much the Cartesianism had invaded schools with its fake philosophy.

E in questi tempi, praticando spesso il Vico e'l signor don Paolo Doria dal signor Caravita, la cui casa era ridotto di uomini di lettere, questo egualmente gran cavaliere e filosofo fu il primo con cui il Vico poté cominciare a ragionar di metafisica; e ciò che il Doria ammirava di sublime, grande e nuovo in Renato, il Vico avvertiva che era vecchio e volgar tra' platonici<sup>33</sup>.

Cartesianism in Naples had great diffusion also thanks to Pierre Gassendi; this last one, influenced by Montaigne, had recovered Epicure and excluded the sphere of the supernatural from the one of the phenomenal knowledge. Saving both dogma and revelation, he refused Descartes' metaphysics in its claim to extend the method of mathematics to the knowledge of God: «Nel tempo nel quale egli partì da Napoli, si era cominciata a coltivare la filosofia di Epicuro sopra Pier Gassendi e due anni dopo ebbe novella che la gioventù a tutta voga si era data a celebrarla». Vico read the lesson of Epicure through Lucrezio, protesting that, «for lack of good metaphysics», the reduction of the *mens* to body, and the consideration of this last one «già formato e diviso in parti multiformi ultime composte di altre parti (...) ch'è una filosofia da soddisfare le menti corte de' fanciulli e le deboli delle donniciuole»<sup>34</sup>.

In 1707, change of century, change of dominator, Naples turns over a new leaf and Charles III of Austria is the new king of the city. The cultural world is fermenting, the political perspectives of the Neapolitan civil class collapse because of a cultural–political disorientation, in action from way back. Just in this setting, professor Vico is asked to give the inauguration speech of the academic year 1708, published with the title *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* in 1709. Willing to concentrate in one expression only a level of lecture to investigate, we could speak of a new *cogito* – as both, activity and intention. The human *mens* does not reveal the being of the world, but tries to understand the sense of it, opposing to whatever is *necessary* the way of what is to be considered *probable*, in order to contribute to the new science based on the «plausible», versus the assumptive absoluteness of any scientific statement. A revaluation of the «probable» is fundamental in both the formation and the activity of the *mens*, assuring an alternative to the Cartesian model of reason. The relation with the *verum* is realized with the discover of the «second true ones, this to say, the ones likely to be true», of knowledges — therefore — which have to be considered median

33. *Autobiografia*, p. 54. On the polemic against Descartes and the cartesianism cf. the well known studies of Amoroso, Battistini e Verene in *Autobiografia*, pp. 269–284.

34. *Autobiografia*, p. 46.

between truth and falsity, object of the *topica* «art of the productive oration» to which the education of the youngest is entrusted to. It is not all about considering the *topica* as an alternative to critics, but reconsidering, since the origins of the educational process, the primate of the 'machines'. It is necessary to oppose to those machines a knowledge that — through an ideational moment of *inventio* — prepares to an activity of critics, if it is true that the «*topica* as a subject of teaching should precede critics»<sup>35</sup>. In order to be consequential to this methodological implant, Vico insists on his *autore* Bacon, and on the pages of *De dignitate et augmentis scientiaru*, used in order to sustain it thesis of unity of knowledges of the contemporary man. Through the proposal of a confrontation between the method of the ancients and the one of the moderns, there is not only the bring up of a new method in its notorious fundamental articulations (*strumenti, sussidi e fine*); there is a choice of cultural models, the Baconian ones, and the ones related to the anglosaxon culture, alternatives to the lesson of the French and — first of all — of Descartes and Cartesianism in general. On the carpet is, at this point, the Cartesian criterion of the *verità chiara e distinta*, came up from a diverse metaphysics of the *mens* that doesn't use any longer the analytical procedure, because it comes into relation with the modern geometry, the synthetic one of the ancients, able to reproduce the creative act of the origin of the world in the shape of intuitive constructions and along with a procedural affinity with the activity of fine mind. Therefore, *topica* and *geometria* can merge and come together in a new study of mathematics, real watershed between Vico and the contemporary Cartesians: «E così l'algebra si affligge l'ingegno perché non vede se non quel solo che gli sta innanzi ai piedi; sbalordisce la memoria, perché ritrovato il secondo segno, non bada più al primo; abbacina la fantasia perché non immagina affatto nulla; distrugge l'intendimento, perché professa di indovinare»<sup>36</sup>.

Confronting the question of the method for Vico is not only matter of reevaluating Bacon against the Cartesian geometry, but at the same time discuss himself. As in the *Aggiunta* of 1731, written upon request of Muratori, Vico feels the exigence to clarify — first to himself and afterward to the reader — the evolution of his thought, that led him from the *Diritto Universale* to the *Scienza Nuova*, from the languages to the ideas, along an order pursued «fil filo» looking for the *comune natura* based on the language. Comes to the light, in this way, a method of the *universale concreto* for anthropology and not applicable to cosmology. He dislikes the books of the *Diritto universale*, because in the ones of Plato's mind and other famous philosophers he tries to enter the daft minds of the authors of the gentility,

35. G. Vico, *De ratione*, p. 71.

36. *Autobiografia*, p. 45.

although he should have kept the contrary path; there from, his erring in several subjects. In the *Scienza nuova prima*, if not in the subjects, he erred surely in the order, because he considered the principles of the ideas separately from the ones of the languages, which were united for their same nature, and still separately from both he considered the method through which it would have been opportune to look at the subjects of this Science. Those subjects, with other method, should have come out of both those principles. This is how many errors in the order occurred<sup>37</sup>. The issue of the method is integrated part of the *Autobiografia*, that Vico himself highlights with reference to the historical contest, also, where he elaborates and gives a sort of publicity to the new ideas. Vico understood that in the world of letters didn't exist, yet, a system of accordance between the best philosophy, which is the platonian one subordinated to the christian religion, with a philology bringing the necessity of sciences in both its part, which are the two histories, the one of the languages, the other of the things; and from the history of the things, the one of the languages could be retrieved, in a way that a system of this kind could friendly compose both the principles of the savants of the academies and the *praxeis* of the savants of the republics. And in this understanding, he entirely separated from the mind of Vico what he had been looking for in the first augural orations and had refined — although roughly — in the dissertation *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* and with a little refining, in the *Metafisica*<sup>38</sup>.

In the culture of 1800 and 1900 the subjects open up to possible 'encounters' with Vico, in the light of two big constellations of theories and historiographical practices: on one side, the not-metaphysical *historismus* of Dilthey. On the other, the ontological hermeneutics of Gadamer. Both contend to each other the Neapolitan philosopher, privileging, respectively, Vico author of the *Scienze nuove* and Vico author of the *De ratione*. The "relativistic" historicism of Dilthey takes the moves from a profound and renewed reflection upon the subject and his *Erlebnis*, identifying precisely in the *Scienza Nuova*, as signaled by Cacciatore, the benchmark of that «connection between psychological and grammatical interpretation» with in the middle the issues concerning the historical individuality and the «uniform and general permanencies of the human nature»<sup>39</sup>. Furthermore, in perfect accordance with the approach of Vico, Dilthey underlines the importance of autobiographies and biographies as sources of historical knowledge, angle of the entire human existence, written along with a pedagogic approach

37. *Aggiunta*, p. 92.

38. *Autobiografia*, pp. 32–33.

39. Cf. G. Cacciatore, *Vico e Dilthey. La storia dell'esperienza umana come relazione fondante di conoscere e fare* (1979), in Id., *Storicismo problematico e metodo critico*, Naples, Guida, 1993, p. 31.

in order to exalt the sciences of the spirit as an alternative to mathematics: beginning from the critic of the dominant scientific atmosphere, somehow adverse to their addresses of research, both agree in setting the congenity of both interpreter and object, in the field of the *human studies*, the convertibility of creation and knowledge with relation to the products of history (made by men) and the necessity of introspection in the comprehension of them<sup>40</sup>. The phenomenological implant of the new “ontological hermeneutics” takes the moves from the Hegelian objective spirit (costumes and institutions) adapting it to the times of the socialized man in order to set the language as the center of the reflection. This concept of spirit — this is the comment of Vattimo — which transcends the subjectivity of the I and finds its real correspondent in the phenomenon of language, as today it as come to be more and more at the very center of the contemporary philosophy; and this, because (...) the language as a phenomenon has an advantage that is adequate to our finiteness, of infinite being in the spirit, and although finite as any happening<sup>41</sup>.

In the relations between Vico and Gadamer at least two options need to be kept into consideration: on one side, the predilection of the *De ratione* in comparison to the *Scienza nuova* is also caused by the difficulty of interpretation of the language, so that the approach to the work, for confession of Gadamer himself, was directed through the reading of Croce. Second of all, the critical reservations towards Dilthey lead the *hermeneut* to take distances also from that Vico that the German historicist had praised with enthusiasm. In the need of summarizing — says Piccinini — the double-edged nature of the deep relation between Gadamer and Vico, not only within the limits of the pages of *Verità e metodo*, but in all its work, we could detect the contemporary coexistence of two antithetic visions of the Vico-philosopher. The first one — that he looks sympathetic with, individuated in the strong opposition to the ideal of knowledge of Descartes, fought with the call to ethic, social and politic values of the human community. The other one, adverse, recognizable in the theory on convertibility of action and historical knowledge, of *verum factum, theory and praxeis, subject and object*. Finally, this is the conclusion of the scholar: «Non saremmo troppo lontani se definissimo tutta la sua ontologia ermeneutica in fondo come il tentativo di opporre il Vico ‘umanista e retore’ del *De ratione* al Vico ‘idealista e storicista’ della

40. D. Piccini, *Il ruolo di Giambattista Vico nell’ermeneutica di Hans-Georg Gadamer*, in «Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa», Classe di Lettere e Filosofia, s. IV (2003), vol. VIII, 1–2, p. 133. Cf. also A. de Simone, *Gadamer tra Hegel e Vico. Ragionevolezza pratica e figure della coscienza interpretante*, in *Humanitas. Studi in memoria di Antonio Verri*, vol. I, edited by A. Quarta and P. Pellegrino, Galatina (Lecce), Congedo, 1999, pp. 183–206.

41. G. Vattimo, *L’ontologia ermeneutica nella filosofia contemporanea*, in H. Gadamer, *Verità e metodo*, Milan, Bompiani, 2010, p. IV.

*Scienza nuova*»<sup>42</sup>.

Dilthey, taking up Vico author of the *Scienza Nuova*, definite as a “civil theology of the providence”, considers that the «coscienza storica, non tanto è una rinuncia a se stessi, quanto piuttosto un modo intensificato di possedersi, che la distingue da tutte le altre forme dello spirito. *La coscienza storica è una forma di conoscenza di sé*»<sup>43</sup>. In this definition, surely is contained, for Gadamer, all the limit of the historicist, uselessly concerned with determining the essence of the «self–conscience», of «chiarire in “base alla vita”, come si sviluppi la coscienza scientifica». From here, probably, the prejudice of the German hermeneut against the *Scienza Nuova*. Therefore, if it is all about refusal, the field of comprehension is to be circumscribed to the historiographical aspect, but doesn’t cross the issues of hermeneutics. In relation to this, a pleasant comparison between *Verità e metodo* and *Scienza Nuova* has been object of a deep study led by Christoph Jerman; Jerman, analyzing both the settings, the one of Gadamer and the one of Vico, underlines a higher relevance and actuality of the German philosopher. Vico has the problem of the interpretation of the archaic cultures under the paradigms of *storia ideale eterna*, of *Provvidenza* and of *universale fantastico*, which become a guide to find in ourselves traces of the universal historical laws.

For the Neapolitan philosopher, to interpret, means to understand rationally. «Come voleva Descartes, razionalità del comprendere significa in Vico, tanto una fondazione idealistico filosofica nel senso di Platone quanto una spiegazione scientifico–sociale e scientifico–culturale nel senso di Bacone». If the problem of Vico is «the exact contrary of Gadamer hermeneutics», it is possible, anyway, to favor a comparison between the two interpretative models which, in the analysis of the scholar, are put together by a lack of reflexivity. If Vico contradicts himself in the theory of the *ricorsi*, Gadamer does the exact same, when discussing of the historical principle of the *storia degli effetti*: «La filosofia della storia della *Scienza nuova* non è applicabile alla *Scienza nuova* stessa. Invece di autofondarsi, si contraddice. Se la legge storica dei ricorsi è vera allora la *Scienza nuova* non può essere spiegata; se la scienza nuova deve spiegare anche se stessa, allora quella legge deve essere falsa». In the same way, the *storia degli effetti* — that in Gadamer is a universal and structural moment of the understanding, all the way to make him invent the formulation of “understand “better” the universal of understanding» —, becomes contradictory when considering that «la storia degli effetti non può essere oggettivata in senso metodico e razionale»<sup>44</sup>.

42. D. Piccini, *Il ruolo di Giambattista Vico nell’ermeneutica di Hans–Georg Gadamer*, pp. 166–167.

43. H. Gadamer, *Verità e metodo*, pp. 264, 279.

44. C. Jerman, *La recezione di Vico in Gadamer*, in «Bollettino del Centro di studi vichiani», XXII–XXIII (1992–1993), pp. 330, 333, 334.



The complex study of Jerman opens the way to reflections related to the historical interpretations that were excluded by Gadamer himself with precise reference to Vico, since the recall to the “delayed” humanist was to be circumscribed to the *sensus communis* only. Wanting to start a study upon the role of the language in the Gadamerian hermeneutics, this would be very complex for the relief reserved to a metaphysics of the *mens*: «L'essere che può venir compreso è linguaggio. Il fenomeno ermeneutico riflette per così dire la sua propria universalità (...) Ciò che viene ad espressione nel linguaggio è qualcosa altro della parola stessa»<sup>45</sup>. If for Gadamer the language is an instrument, useful in order to proceed in the historical knowledge, hermeneutics comes over to give an essential fundament to the relation between man and world, that can be identified in the universal function that the hermeneutics itself does perform. From this point of view, an approach to Vico does exist for what concerns the problems of the philological knowledge, interpretation of the human *mens*, expression of ideas that look indispensable in the comprehension of the new metaphysics — that is the *metafisica del genere umano*:

Con sí fatti princípi sí d'idee come di lingue, che vuol dire con tal filosofia e filologia del gener umano, spiega una storia ideale eterna sull'idea della provvidenza, dalla quale per tutta l'opera dimostra il diritto naturale delle genti ordinato; sulla quale storia eterna corrono in tempo tutte le storie particolari delle nazioni ne' loro sorgimenti, progressi, stati, decadenze e fini<sup>46</sup>.

Sure it isn't possible to affirm any abstraction between the hermeneutic ontology and the metaphysics of Vico, considering the phenomenological approach of Gadamer, concerned, in the lecture of the *Scienza nuova* of dismantling the interception of Croce gathering much more than what could have been proposed by the idealistic nexus between philosophy and history. All this having been said, and keeping in mind the *Aggiunta* of 1731, where the Neapolitan philosopher thinks about the necessity to correct not the method but the order of the subjects, we can affirm that he represents the common source to the two German thinkers, somewhat unwilling to underline how tiring had been the intellectual itinerary starting with the *Orazione* of 1709 and ending with the complex articulation of the *Scienze nuove* whose *Correzioni, miglioramenti e aggiunte* are an enlightening deepening. If in Vico, the philosophy, tied and allied to philology, finds in the *mens* the expressions of the human ideas, it is possible to come to a comprehension of the metaphysics of the human kind founded on the language as an etymological “dictionary”. There, are given the possibilities of a an

45. H. Gadamer, *Verità e metodo*, p. 42 ff., 542.

46. *Autobiografia*, p. 41.

hermeneutic where ontology is no more the lost old foundation (nature) nor the christian–medieval one (God), but the modern order of a being, which is not parceled nor detailed, whose universal function is solved in the ‘word’, expression of ideas.

The exigence of erudition and of hermeneutics belonging to philology fully appears also, in the study of the law, observing «con quanta diligenza i giureconsulti medesimi esaminavano le parole delle leggi, de’ decreti del senato e degli editti de’ pretori che interpretano». The *jurisprudencia* becomes, therefore, mandatory “station” of the ‘via crucis’ towards the *storia ideal eterna*. The *Beruf* — played by Giambattista in his capacity of professor of *rettorica* — obliges him with «*sommo piacere*» to reflect upon the «*acuti interpreti*», the roman jurisconsults *filosofi dell’equità naturale*, and on their interpretation of the word of the laws, «la cui più difficil parte è il saper diffinire i nomi di legge»<sup>47</sup>. From here, the richness and the philosophical gravity of the *Autobiografia*, coming out principally for what it has to say with concern to the law, and in particular the itinerary of the Vichian education — not only of the juriconsult but also of the philosopher, first of the *verum–factum*, of the *verum–certum*. The relation between law, as rational and universal idea, and the law as *certo* given by history, can be considered the central issue of the education process of the philosopher, exposed “*fil filo e con chiarezza*” in the short passage where he is very concerned of making clear, first to himself, and then to the readers, the reason for which Platone, Tacito, Bacone and Grozio were all four called *auttori*.

Non è dallo studio del diritto in quanto tale che il Vico muove — Guido Fassò observes — in un denso saggio sul rapporto tra Vico e Grozio — (...) Il problema che il diritto pose al Vico non era un problema di natura empirica; era un problema filosofico, quello che non per nulla diede il titolo al primo “abbozzo” della *Scienza Nuova*: il problema del “diritto universale”, dell’idea del diritto naturale o razionale (o della giustizia) e della relazione di essa con i dati giuridici storici<sup>48</sup>.

Vico arrives to the lecture of *De iure belli et pacis* fifteen years after the studies led upon the three first *auttori*. Bacone — that had been for the Neapolitan philosopher the link between the abstract idealism of and the historicity of Tacitus — didn’t make it in generating the big jump, because «intorno alle leggi, egli co’ suoi canoni non s’innalzò troppo all’universo

47. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

48. G. Fassò, *Vico e Grozio*, Naples, Guida, pp. 71–72. He refutes Badaloni’s thesis that «per quanto riguarda il diritto, tutta la trattazione del Vico è volta a rimettere in valore il punto di vista della politica, cioè dell’interesse generale» (N. Badaloni, *Vico prima della «Scienza Nuova»*, in «Rivista di filosofia», LIX, 1968, p. 134). Is also rejected the judgment of De Mas who would sacrifice the role of Grotius to the benefit of Bacon: «De Mas muove dalla constatazione che il Bacone vichiano è quello che riunisce in sé di filosofo e filologo rappresentati rispettivamente da Platone e Tacito» (*ibid.*, p. 63).

delle città ed alla scorsa di tutti i tempi né alla distesa di tutte le nazioni». He still had to search, to study, to find the theoretical keys to enter that system which might have tied together philosophy and philology. And this is what Vico found in the *De iure belli ac pacis*. Reading the related portion of the *Autobiografia* at the moment of presenting the dutch jurist, we have to face, *ex abrupto*, a significant “but”, that doesn’t have the sense of an adversative conjunction: «Ma Ugo Grozio pone in sistema di un dritto universale tutta la filosofia e la filologia in entrambe le parti di questa ultima, sí della storia delle cose o favolosa o certa, sí della storia delle tre lingue, ebraica, greca e latina, che sono le tre lingue dotte antiche che ci son pervenute per mano della cristiana religione»<sup>49</sup>. It is — on the other hand — in the confirmative conjunction that sits all the difficult and controversial relationship. Vico himself admits that the readings marking the turn of his philosophical and juridical education are a big enlightenment, because the jurist of Delft is *gravissimus philosophus et philologus prestantissimus* and gives him the “secret formula” to solve the synthesis between true and fact and applies it in the way of the law. But what happened to jusnaturalism? The Dutch that made history as father of the natural law became the forth *autore* of the anti-jusnaturalist for excellence; the most important, the one that Vico «felt compelled to read»<sup>50</sup>, in order to finish the work of a political–historical biography of Carafa in 1716 and prepare the materials for the writing, of 1720, of the *Diritto universale*. And without the critical confrontation with Grozio he wouldn’t have achieved that *Scienza nuova* «per la quale si ritrovano i principi di altro sistema del diritto naturale delle genti». What did he read in the work of the Dutch jurist where he never saw a hint of jusnaturalism until the 1920s? In the *De iure belli ac pacis* of 1625 the author finds the law on the human understanding only:

L’uomo possiede al di sopra degli altri animali (...) il criterio per valutare le cose (...) appare evidente essere conforme all’umana natura il seguire anche in ciò un giudizio rettamente conformato secondo la norma della ragione umana<sup>51</sup>.

Upon this, the natural law is founded: injunction of the reason, indicating the moral value or disvalue of an action and comparing it to the rational nature of the mankind. The actions laid down by the reason are mandatory in them and would be just as good if God didn’t exist.

Mentre Cartesio, Bacone e Galileo gettano le basi della scienza moderna della natura nel campo delle dottrine etiche, giuridiche e politiche la critica delle concezioni

49. *Autobiografia*, pp. 65–66.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

51. U. Grozio, *Prolegomeni al Diritto della guerra e della pace*, traduction, introduction and notes by G. Fassò, Naples, Morano, 1979, p. 36.

tradizionali e l'elaborazione delle nuove su cui dovrà poi essere edificata la società moderna sono opera della cosiddetta scuola del diritto naturale<sup>52</sup>.

What is conform to the rational nature of man is right and morally necessary; what is detached from it is necessarily unjust and reprehensible. Moral and law find, therefore, an autonomous and rational justification, independent from any principle either metaphysical or theological.

Before arriving to the final conviction of the philosopher from Delft, many critics, in the formula *Elogio a Grozio* that he will make with concern to the *De uno* of 1720 and in the *De Constantia* of 1721, Vico will accuse him to have underestimated the roman law — the one that had been able to individuate a *diritto naturale delle genti*, to be opposed to the *diritto naturale dei filosofi*: «Quel diritto sviluppatosi per le comuni costumanze delle genti, è il diritto naturale dei giureconsulti di gran lunga diverso da quello dei filosofi, il quale è severissimamente ideato a norma dell'eterna ragione»<sup>53</sup>. Recalling this *leit-motiv*, he will write in the *De Constantia*: «Se Ugo Grozio si fosse accorto della diversità che corre tra il diritto naturale delle genti e quello dei filosofi (e su questa diversità molto abbiamo detto nel libro primo) non avrebbe biasimato così spesso i giureconsulti romani ma da sé solo avrebbe proceduto in base ai veri principi di tale argomento»<sup>54</sup>. In the *Diritto universale*, the polemic widens the range to other issues, and in particular to the attempt to separate — as theorized by the dutch thinker — utility and equity: «Anche quando l'*utilitas* dà luogo alla divisione del mio e del tuo lo scambio svolge una funzione necessaria di equilibrio»<sup>55</sup>. Nor is legitimate to make any distinction between the «*giustizia retrice*» this to say — *distributive* — from the one that can be considered *equative*<sup>56</sup>: «Il Grozio dell'*Autobiografia* non è certo quello del *Diritto universale*, i cui rilievi critici, ancora disorganici e frammentari, sono però tutti coerenti con il progetto

52. So G. Fassò, *Introduction to U. Grozio, Prolegomeni al Diritto della guerra e della pace*, p. 9.

53. G. Vico, *De universi iuris uno principio, et fine uno* [1720], in G. Vico, *Opere giuridiche*, edited by P. Cristofolini, introduction by N. Badaloni, Florence, Sansoni, 1974, p. 162, then reprint (Napoli, 1720, ms. XIII B 62), edited by F. Lomonaco, with Préface by F. Tessitore, Naples, Liguori, 2007 (hereafter as *De uno*).

54. G. Vico, *Liber Alter qui est De Constantia jurisprudentis* [1721], in G. Vico, *Opere giuridiche*, p. 678 then reprint (Napoli, 1720, ms. XIII B 62), edited by F. Lomonaco, Naples, Liguori, 2013 (hereafter as *De Constantia*).

55. F. Lomonaco. *Da Grozio a Vico: il «diritto naturale delle genti»*, in *Etica e politica: modelli a confronto*, edited by G. Cantillo and A. Donise, Naples, Guida, 2012, p. 31.

56. Cf. Stahl's comment quoted by Fassò: «La saggia distribuzione di cui Grozio qui parla, in cui si esercita la giustizia distributiva, in quanto oggettivamente applicata altro non è che la politica; e in questo paragrafo perciò Grozio, pur comprendendo anch'essa nel diritto naturale largamente inteso (...) distingue dal diritto anche la politica, per lo meno nei limiti in cui distingue da esso anche la morale» (U. Grozio, *Prolegomeni al Diritto della guerra e della pace*, pp. 37–38, note). On the distinction between the «*giustizia retrice*» this to say — *distributive* — from the one that can be considered *equative* in Vico against Grotius cf. *De uno*, p. 76.

del proprio sistema universale del diritto naturale delle genti»<sup>57</sup>. Anyways, the polemic against the jusnaturalist, in the *Scienza nuova*, acquires another relevance, since, from the very edition of 1725, the detachment from Grozio shall be sided to the one of other jusnaturalists embodying and realizing the reasons of a rationality all-illuminist — that Vico would never have shared, for the abstractness of the positions. In facts, he who doesn't know the posterior developments of jusnaturalism, wouldn't consider the *De iure* of Grozio, one of the masterpieces of the anti-historicism; and it didn't look so to Vico himself as well, that took from there the idea of the unity of the rational law and of the historical law, and only later on, having read Pufendorf and Selden, he took conscience of the abstraction of the school he was «Ugo capo»<sup>58</sup>. Therefore, fascinated by the identification of the *natural* with the *rational*, he refused the dutch, when he found out that his natural law was extra-historical, and therefore, his rationality was abstract. In the *Scienza Nuova seconda* Grozio will be definitively pillored with Selden and Pufendorf because he opposed the *Degnità* C, CII e CIII: «Debbon cadere i tre sistemi di Grozio, di Seldeno, di Pufendorfio. (...) [che] (...) mancano ne' loro principi (...) che 'ncominciano dalle nazioni guardate tra loro nella Società del Gener'Umano. (...) Il nostro Sistema del Diritto Natural delle Genti comincia appo tutte l'anzidette nazioni, dal tempo delle Famiglie sotto i Dei delle Genti Maggiori»<sup>59</sup>. Beginning from the peoples, the ancient families, and going back to the principles is the way that the vichian system follows in open juxtaposition to the jusnaturalism, which claimed to take the moves from the principles, from the rationalizing reason in order to arrive to the history of the peoples.

The guideline idea — says John Rawls in *Theory of justice* of 1971, text, this last one mentioned, bound to change the history of the contemporary culture — is more about this: the principles of justice for the fundament-structure of society are object of the original agreement. Those principle have to regulate all the further agreements: they specify the type of social cooperation that can be performed and the forms of government which can be instituted. I shall call justice as equity this way to considerate the principles of justice<sup>60</sup>. Despite the chronological distance and the cultural historical context of affiliation, the expressions of Rawls, *sense of justice*, *original position*, *reflexive equilibrium*, exposed with semantic fantasy, revive, in a reviewed and corrected edition, the themes of Vico in favor of a justice

57. So F. Lomonaco. *Da Grozio a Vico: il «diritto naturale delle genti»*, p. 43.

58. Cf. G. Fassò, *Introduction* to U. Grozio, *Prolegomeni al Diritto della guerra e della pace*, p. 16.

59. Cf. *La Scienza Nuova 1730*, in *Opere di Giambattista Vico*, vol. VIII, edited by P. Cristofolini in collaboration with M. Sanna, Naples, Guida, 2004, Book I, pp. 165–166, 118, 119.

60. J. Rawls, *Una teoria della giustizia*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1991, p. 27.

meant as *equity* belonging to the state of nature. For Vico, just as for Rawls, at the base of the concept of justice needs to be the sense of *equity*: «La verità e l'equità imposte all'uomo dalla giustizia sieno il doppio fondamento di ogni società»<sup>61</sup>. Although Rawls starts with the objective of bringing to an even higher level of abstraction the theories of the social contractualism of Locke, Rousseau and Kant, his idea of justice, at least in the definition of equity isn't too far from the one of Vico, that he probably didn't even know about, because of his American education. It is although true that Vico himself, again in the *De uno*, persuaded that the truth is the spring of any natural law, would never have shared a contractualism of Lockian or Rousseauist imprinting; which is precisely what the American author does. The contractualism forecast already some reason at the level of the natural state of the men, rationally considered able to sign a social pact. For the Neapolitan philosopher, the man, in the state of nature, is all fantasy, memory, wit and poetical language. The two anthropological models are completely different. Vico is the «poet of the origins», concerned of understanding history from the brute becoming man, and discovering himself *Augustianly* religious, in order to get redemption from sin, and then passing from contemplation to *religio*, in history. The anthropological model from Hobbes to Rawls claims, on the other side, a man in possession of a calculating reason: «Dal punto di vista della giustizia come equità la posizione originaria di eguaglianza come equità corrisponde allo stato di natura della teoria tradizionale del contratto sociale»<sup>62</sup>. Rawls call to imagine what kind of justice men would choose, with one accord, in the original position corresponding to the state of nature. The problem shifts then on the definition of the *original position*; the American philosopher theorizes the need of equality between people undergoing the pact — meant in the Kantian way, as moral and rational entities. This condition of equity can be reached through the «veil of ignorance». This is the essential aspect marking the difference between the Rawls' theory and the classic one, making it closer to Vico. The original position of equality is a necessary and indispensable condition for the choice of the principles of justice. In the *De ratione*, the «opera più napoletana di Vico», there is the «tentativo di riportare l'*aequitas* alla pedagogia civile di un'*auctoritas* giusta e razionale, rinsaldando cultura e politica nella prospettiva di uno stato elargitore di coscienza civile e riformatrice»<sup>63</sup>.

From the *Oratio* of 1709 to the *De Constantia* of 1721, in a little more than ten years, Vico crossed all the standard-places of the reflection upon the

61. G. Vico, *De Uno*, p. 72.

62. J. Rawls, *Una teoria della giustizia*, p. 27.

63. So F. Lomonaco, *Introduction to G. Vico, De nostri temporis studiorum ratione dissertatio* [1709], p. 31.

modern, beginning with the question of the *method* of the studies on the sciences of the nature and of the civil life, and all the way to the «constancy» of the man of law, that translates the *coherence* of it. In the phase of political transition — having intense accents for the republic of the men of letters and of the togaed ones, in the time of the very delicate dynastic change — he proposed a unitarian ideal of significance for culture and politics of his time, remaking, just before the *Scienza nuova*, the human history of the law of the peoples. This last one, considered not-in-contrast with the «sacred history» and made by the «civil law» along with the costumes of the XII tables, is witnessed by the «poetical language» with the «heroic characters» reflecting «significance and mythology» of the costumes of the people whose law is enlightened by history that, along with what told in chapter XIX of the part II of the *De constantia*, is «history of the obscure time»<sup>64</sup>. The fact of facing up the theme of the *time* in the *Autobiografia*, imposes to the scholar several distinctions of category. The first one can concern the semantic-grammatical interpretation of the work; a second aspect is — for the relief given to the author to *memory, fantasy and wit* to be found in the triad of past, present and future; another fundamental category is obviously the theory of the *corsi e ricorsi storici* and therefore the model of the *eternal ideal history*. Finally, another time does exist, the one that could be called of the biographical conscience, where the philosopher communicates to the reader his exigence of introspection for a «sour meditation». Obviously, for all the “Times” of the *Autobiografia* there would be the need of a separate treatment, which in the economy of this work shall be just offered in terms of hints and bits.

The *Vita*, for being written in the third person, has been often said to belong to the *epideictic genre*, underlining the distance of it from other autobiographical forms (memorial or diary). What characterizes the *Autobiografia* and makes it different from many other *Lives*, is the presence of a double enunciation: first of all, an *historical* one, due to the presence of the third person and of the past tense: «Egli dal suo genio *fu scosso* a riprendere l’abbandonato cammino, e *si rimise* in strada...»; second of all, and at the same time, a *discursive enunciation* for the use of the present that set the told event closer to the time of the narration: «(...) Questo bellissimo frutto *rendono* alle città le luminose accademie, perché i giovani (...) *s’infiammino* a studiare per la via della lode e della gloria». Il presente storico — commenta Martone — «sembra istituire un *effetto di presenza* dell’evento narrato rispetto al tempo vissuto storicamente e concretamente da Vico»<sup>65</sup>.

64. G. Vico, *De Constantia*, p. 512.

65. A. Martone, *Il “Tempo” dell’Autobiografia. Uso e funzione della Deissi temporale nella Vita vichiana, in Giambattista Vico nel suo tempo e nel nostro*, edited by M. Agrimi, Naples, CUEN, 1999, p. 470.

The synchronicity of those two verbal forms makes evident in the work some kind of contradiction that makes it at the same time — sticking to the linguistic canons — both autobiographical and historical. Not casually, Martone himself calls «expectation present» this temporal contrast: «Un contrasto talvolta singolare che si manifesta nello stupore e nell'aspettativa, da parte del lettore verso un piano narrativo altro da quello su cui ci si era precedentemente, e prevalentemente, collocati. Proporrrei pertanto di denominare 'Presente di aspettativa' l'occorrenza di questa particolare forma verbale». But if we can speak of contradiction, it is also true that this «wrinkle»<sup>66</sup> is a sort of confirmation of the epideictic form, confirmed by Vico, breaking the narration of the times gone with a kind of present working as a document of his narration. The time as real theme was never object of treatment for Vico, meaning that he never generated a work binded exclusively to the issue, although it is merit of the *philosopher of the origins* the fact of having been able to objectify an anthropological time<sup>67</sup>. Because it is in our mind that some eternal truths are, which we cannot forget or deny, and as a consequence, that do not come from us. But in the remaining part we feel in ourselves a freedom to do, meaning, all the things having dependence with the body, and therefore we make them in time, this to say when we want to apply to them, and all in gaining knowledge, and all of them we contain inside ourselves: just as the imagines with fantasy, the reminiscences with memory, the appetite with passions, the smells, tastes, colors, sounds, touch with the senses. And all those things we do contain in ourselves. But for the eternal truths that do not come from us, that do not depend on our bodies, we shall understand to be the principle of the things, an eternal idea all separated from the body, which in its cognition, where it wants, creates all the things in time and keeps them in itself, and containing them, sustains them<sup>68</sup>. «La nuova trinità antropologica — Botturi writes— di memoria, fantasia ed ingegno rinsalda l'unità delle funzioni, stabilendola in una circolarità produttiva. (...) La temporalità è infatti insita in queste tre forme della conoscenza, in cui l'ingegno svolge il ruolo di unificazione nel presente della somiglianza sia del passato della memoria sia del futuro della

66. *Ibid.*, p. 471.

67. F. Botturi, *Tempo, linguaggio e azione. Le strutture vichiane della «storia ideale eterna»*, Naples, Guida, 1996, p. 27.

68. *Autobiografia*, pp. 46–47. This piece was then inserted by Vico, with explicit mention of the *Autobiography*, in «Correzioni, Miglioramenti e Aggiunte» to the second third *New Science* (1731), with some variations, including the following is of some importance: «... E tutte queste cose le conteniamo dentro di noi, non essendo niuna di quelle che possa sussistere fuori di noi, onde soltanto durano quanto vi teniamo applicata la nostra mente. Laonde delle verità eterne, che non son in noi dal corpo dobbiam intendere esser principio un'idea eterna, che nella sua cognizione, ove voglia, ella cria tutte le cose in tempo e le contiene tutte dentro di sé, e tutte, applicandovi, le conserva» (*ibid.*, p. 47, nota).



fantasia»<sup>69</sup>. Also, the three ages of history mark the origin of time in its anthropological meaning, where the *Age of the Gods* is just like the Freudian unconscious, with no time. If the *Scienza Nuova* in all the three editions is rich of expressions like «*volger dei tempi*», «*correre in tempo*», «*tempi ricorsi*», the *Autobiografia* is the confirmation of it. The issue of the time is faced in two variations. The Neapolitan philosopher gives to himself in the history a plural time that features the different eras, underlined by expressions like «*volger dei tempi*», «*tempi barbari*» with explicit reference to *corsi* and *ricorsi*: «Tutti i tempi scorsi loro dinanzi essi divisero in tre epoche, una dell' età degli dèi, l'altra dell' età degli eroi, la terza di quella degli uomini». In the eternal ideal history «*corrono in tempo* tutte le storie particolari delle nazioni ne' loro sorgimenti, progressi, stati, decadenze e fini»<sup>70</sup>. The philosophical issue coming from it, is the one of the temporal unity: how can coincide the two different conceptions of time in the thought of Vico? The question, beyond the complexity concerning the entire Vichian philosophy, can be synthesized, even risking the reduction of it, with the concept of *metafisica della mens*, theorized in the *Risposta II* to be objections versus *De antiquissima*: «La mente umana viene ad essere come uno specchio della mente di Dio: e perciò pensa l'infinito e l'eterno, e quindi la mente umana non è terminata da corpo, e in conseguenza non è anche terminata da tempo, che è misurato da corpi»<sup>71</sup>. The question also finds confirmations in the *Autobiografia*, where to the conception of cyclic time of the *corsi e ricorsi* another spiral one is overlapped, containing them all: «Ma per le verità eterne che non sono da noi e non hanno dipendenza dal corpo nostro, dobbiamo intendere essere principio delle cose tutte una idea eterna tutta scevera da corpo, che nella sua cognizione, ove voglia, crea tutte le cose in tempo e le contiene dentro di sé e contenendole, le sostiene»<sup>72</sup>. It is probable that Vico thought of his eternal ideal history keeping in mind the *Spira mirabilis*, the marvelous spiral that the Swiss contemporary mathematician Jakob Bernoulli, had carved on his grave just next to the *esergo*: *Eadem mutata resurgo*.

An historical time constantly twisting along its axis is the time of the Providence. «Il tempo allora — Botturi wites — in quanto prodotto della mediazione ideale della mente, è identicamente apertura del campo d'azione della Provvidenza, che si mostra attiva nel comporsi della storia attraverso e

69. F. Botturi, *Tempo, linguaggio e azione. Le strutture vichiane della «storia ideale eterna»*, p. 29.

70. *Autobiografia*, p. 41.

71. G. Vico, *Risposta di Giambattista Vico all'articolo X del tomo VIII del «Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia»* (1712), in Id., *Opere filosofiche*, introduzione di N. Badaloni, a cura di P. Cristofolini, Florence, Sansoni, 1971, p. 162, then in G. Vico, *Sull'antichissima sapienza degli italici*, edited by F. Lomonaco, Afterword of C. Megale, Naples, Diogene, 2013.

72. *Autobiografia*, p. 13.

oltre le intenzioni stesse degli uomini, il che è *una dimostrazione di fatto storico della provvidenza*. Così, *quantunque questo mondo sia stato creato in tempo e particolare, però gli ordini ch'ella (provvidenza) v'ha posto sono universali ed eterni*»<sup>73</sup>.

What is last, is the face the last 'time' of the *Autobiografia*, the one of the *biographical conscience*, a sort of Bergsonian time, thinking to the condition of «*sour meditation*» that the philosopher attributes to himself, when «shrank all his spirit, withdraw into himself». From this point of view, it isn't comfortable to open a window on that 1900 where for Proust, just as for Joyce, «the universe to be redesigned is the universe of the memory»<sup>74</sup>. Stuart Hampshire writes: «Joyce percorrendo a ritroso duecento anni, tornò a Vico, nel suo personale ricorso, verso un umanesimo indipendente dalla storia sociale, e da ogni tipo di storia, tornò ad un giorno in una città e, a un giorno nient' affatto luminoso, ma nella notte del linguaggio»<sup>75</sup>; Vico came back to Naples, foreign in his homeland, to re-think all over the sense of history.

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73. F. Botturi, *Tempo, linguaggio e azione. Le strutture vichiane della «storia ideale eterna»*, p. 54. On the theme, after N. Badaloni (*Tempo e sincronia nel pensiero vichiano*, in *All'ombra di Vico. Testimonianze e saggi vichiani in ricordo di Giorgio Tagliacozzo*, edited by F. Ratto, Ripatransone [Ascoli Piceno], Edizioni Sestante, s.a. [but 1999], pp. 149–160), cf. R. Bassi, *La spirale della storia. Dispiegamento barocco della temporalità nella Scienza nuova di Giambattista Vico*, in «Intersezioni», XVII (1997) 3, pp. 385–394.

74. P. Piovani, *Principi di una filosofia della morale*, p. 13.

75. S. Hampshire, *Joyce and Vico. The Middle Way*, italian traduction by P. Massimi in *Giambattista Vico, Galiani, Joyce, Lévi–Strauss, Piaget*, edited by G. Tagliacozzo, Rome, Armando, 1975, p. 153. Cf. also D. Ph. Verene, (*Vico nel mondo anglosassone*, pp. 21–23), editor of a fundamental collection of studies in 1987: cf. S. Caianiello, *Vico e Joyce: elementi per un confronto*, in «Bollettino del Centro di studi vichiani», XX (1990), pp. 195–203.

## Giambattista Vico's *Discreta domanda*\*

Between cartesian hypothesis, biblical demonstration and *Mathesis politica*

PAVEL V. SOKOLOV

**ABSTRACT:** This article is focused on the epistemological status of the *New Science* XLI Element, situated at an intersection of Biblical hermeneutics, civil science, and Cartesian «hypothetical cosmology». Our study seeks to disentangle the web of polemical contexts coming together in the «diluvian postulate» and to explain the peculiarity of this hybrid political–physical argument within the economy of Vichian *opus magnum*.

«Qui non c'è da confutare, ma da compiangere. Due o tre passi d'autori latini, e il troppo rispetto di tutta sorta tradizioni, in tali sogni smarrirono tale ingegno»<sup>1</sup>. This saying of the great Italian historian, lexicographer, and politician Niccolò Tommaseo (1802–1874) gives a vivid impression of the widely shared attitude towards XLI Element of the *NS 44*, probably one of the most enigmatic Elements in the whole body of Vico's *New Science*. Although Tommaseo concedes that this extravagant Element is not completely nonsensical (*in questi sogni sono tuttavia splendide visioni*, admits Tommaseo) and could even seem plausible by vague early modern standards, he obviously considers it to be a black spot in Vico's allegedly *geometrical* narrative. The Element on trial is formulated as follows<sup>2</sup>:

XLI. Si domanda, e la domanda è discreta, che *per più centinaia d'anni la Terra insuppata dall'umidore dell'Universale Diluvio non abbia mandato esalazioni secche, o sieno materie ignite in aria a ingenerarvisi i fulmini* <sup>3</sup>.

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1. N. Tommaseo, *Storia civile della letteratura: studii*, Rome–Turin–Florence, E. Loescher, 1872, p. 51.

2. All quotations from the Italian text of *Scienza nuova* of 1744 are taken from G. Vico, *Opere*, edited by A. Battistini, Milan, Mondadori, 1990 (hereinafter referred to as *NS 44*).

3. *NS 44*, § 192 (p. 511). In *NS 30*, the axiom is assigned number XXXIX and is formulated in a slightly different way: «Si domanda, e la domanda è discreta, e ragionevole, che per dugento anni la Terra insuppata dell'umidore dell'Universale Diluvio non abbia mandato esalazioni secche, o sieno materie ignite in aria ad ingenerarvisi i fulmini» (*Scienza nuova 1730*, edited by P. Cristofolini e M. Sanna, Naples, Alfredo Guida Editore, 2004, p. 102).

The picturesque scene painted by Vico<sup>4</sup> could seem puzzling not only to Tommaseo: a number of questions arise after close consideration of this Element, even though our vision is no more blurred by a condescending perspectivist attitude typical of nineteenth-century intellectuals. Since Nicola Badaloni's pioneering investigations and, particularly, Paolo Rossi's *The Dark Abyss of Time*, scholarly attention has been called to the natural scientific background of the *New Science*, bracketed off for the most part in earlier Vichian studies (Vico's science being, according to Pietro Piovani's famous formula, a «philosophy without nature»). Element XLI is not the only place where this intriguing term—*discreta domanda*—can be found; at the very beginning of *Degli Elementi*, Vico, marshalling different types of arguments he is going to use, refers to *alcune poche ragionevoli e discrete domande*. Actually, there are, in toto, four postulates in this chapter. Two of them, XLI and XCVII, are connected with the Universal Flood. LXX claims that the *famuli* came out of the natural state later than the heroes, and CIII argues that there was a Greek colony in Latium that had been totally destroyed but is, however, retraceable thanks to its influence on the history of Rome<sup>5</sup>.

The English translation by Th. G. Bergin and M. H. Fisch, rendering *discreta domanda* by «reasonable postulate»<sup>6</sup>, strips the Vichian term of its provocative garment and reintroduces it into familiar, plain, and unambiguous scientific epistemology. As Gaetano Salvemini once said, *l'inglese è una lingua onesta—di Vico non rimarrà nulla*. Salvemini was partly right despite his exaggerated scepticism: the translation, restoring Vico's good name by drawing the link between all-too-vague *discreta domanda* (embarrassing for the modern reader) and such a respectable scientific term as *postulate*, thus eliminates a moment of complexity implied by such an «impure» and contestable usage. Th. G. Bergin and M. H. Fisch's terminological decision should be contrasted to that «naïve» one offered by Andrey A. Guber, who had translated this expression as «humble petition» (*skromnaya pros'ba—umile preghiera*). Paradoxically, this seemingly erroneous intuition

4. Vichian theory of the origin of lightning is quite secondary from the point of view of the history of physics: it goes back to Aristotle (*Meteor.*, II, 9, 369b) and Seneca (*Nat. quest.* II, *De ventis* XII, 2); M. Papini and A. Battistini refer to G.J. Voss and J. Le Clerc as to Vico's immediate sources (see, *Note*, in: G. Vico, *Opere*, edited by A. Battistini, Milan, Mondadori, 1990, pp. 1529–1530).

5. L. Pompa adds to them Element XVI, which in our opinion is actually not assigned with the characteristics presented in XCVII, XLI, LXX, and CIII (L. Pompa, *Vico: A Study of the «New Science»*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 109 n. 2).

6. «We postulate, and the postulate is reasonable, that for several hundred years the earth, soaked by the water of the universal flood, sent forth no dry exhalations or matter capable of igniting in the air to produce lightning» (*The New Science of Giambattista Vico. Unabridged Translation of the Third Edition (1744) with the Addition of «Practic of the New Science»*, translated by Th. G. Bergin and M. H. Fisch, Ithaca, New York, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, p. 72).

of Guber reveals nonetheless a very important aspect of Vico's reasoning that is lost in English translation. In our essay, we shall take the middle way between two modes of understanding the status of the «diluvian postulate»—the stricter one, of Bergin, and the softer one, of Guber.

Vico's diluvian postulate is one of the hinges the whole construction of the *New Science* moves on. Despite its simplistic appearance, it refers to a vast array of hidden contexts inside and outside the *New Science*. First of all, it introduces the reader *in medias res* of the early modern cosmological controversies. We will start by gleaning the pieces of argumentation concerning the Universal Flood and related subjects throughout Vico's *opus magnum*: the status of Sacred History and biblical hermeneutics, the modes of reasoning about the prehistoric that Vico puts aside, the rival diluvian theories. But we will not restrict our goal to sorting out contexts and separate arguments and will make an attempt to understand what picture came out of their synthesis and how it fits into the whole body of *Scienza nuova*.

In fact, Vico's *discreta domanda* emerges at the intersection of a multitude of competitive epistemological programs; some of them are better known while others still remain almost undiscovered. Let us briefly enumerate the authors who come under fire when Vico speaks of the Universal Flood:

- Cartesian cosmologists represented by Thomas Burnet;
- apologists of biblical demonstration (S. Bochart, D. Huet, J. Selden);
- «atheists» denying the antiquity and universality of the Flood and thus preparing the way for the Epicurean political philosophers (I. Le Peyrère).

Bracketing off and glossing over the Sacred History while speaking of the absolute beginning of the civil world was a strategy tested, for example, by Thomas Hobbes, but the disparate remnants and half-deleted traces of the Mosaic account are still recognizable in the Latin *Leviathan* of 1668 (where Cain's history is cited as an illustration of the state of nature) and in the *Elements of philosophy*, as well as in the *New Science*. Thus, Hobbes in the *Elements of philosophy*—consciously or not—actualizes the biblical background of his «state of nature»: «Consider men without covenants or subjection, one to another, as if they were but even now all at once created male and female»<sup>7</sup>. One of the most authoritative historians of early modern political thought, Sheldon Wolin, once called Hobbes's state of nature «a kind of political version of Genesis, without sacred overtones and without sin, but a fall nevertheless, from the highest level of human achievement,

7. Th. Hobbes, *De Corpore Politico, or the Elements of Law*, in «The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmsbury», edited by Sir W. Molesworth, vol. IV, London, Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1840, p. 149.

life in a civilized society»<sup>8</sup>. Besides that, we should not lose sight of Hobbes's exegetical *alter ego*, Isaac Le Peyrère, mentioned by Vico more than once in the *New Science*. Hobbes transforms La Peyrère's exegetical hypothesis into a thought experiment. Hobbes's and Vico's contemporaries were much more sensitive to the biblical backing of their *civil sciences* than we are; thus, Robert Filmer opposed to Hobbes's ahistorical fancy «the truth of the history of creation», and Germano Federigo Finetti harshly attacked Vico's exegetical «subterfuges» in his *Diffesa dell'autorità della Sacra Scriptura contro G. B. Vico*. Finetti rejects Vico's treatment of Genesis precisely on exegetical grounds but simultaneously on the epistemological ones; Vico is wrong because, according to him,

*tutto è incertezza, dubbiezza, al più probabilità e verisimilitudine*<sup>9</sup>.

Cartesian hypothetical cosmology as presented in *Le monde* had an ambiguous status in early modern intellectual culture. It is not a coincidence that Leibniz and Newton both called Descartes's cosmogony *roman de physique*. Descartes himself in the fifth chapter of *Le monde* called his narration of the origin of the world *fable*<sup>10</sup>. If Descartes was consistently within the limits of hypothetical reasoning by stating that the subject of his thoughts was not the real Earth we are all living on but some possible world<sup>11</sup>, a number of his followers decided to cross the line that separated a mental experiment from historical reconstruction. One of the models of Descartes's historicization of the cosmology can be found in the treatise *Cartesius Mosaizans* by Joannes Amerpoel (1669), which presented the reader with a mechanical compilation of the citations from *Le monde* and the Book of Genesis<sup>12</sup>. But the real potential of Cartesian geogony was revealed in the scandalous treatise *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1680) by Thomas Burnet. In this work, the author often declared his adherence to experimental science and set the rule to use only the facts that were based on observation and consistent with reason and experience (*ex osservationibus in ratione, scientiis et experientia fundatis*). But the thesis of the importance of experiment and

8. See, H. Thornton, *State of Nature or Eden? Thomas Hobbes and His Contemporaries on the Natural Condition of Human Beings*, Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2005, p. 4.

9. G. Mazzotta, «The» *New Map of the World: The Poetic Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999, p. 246.

10. «In order, however, to make the length of this discourse less boring for you, I want to wrap part of it in the cloak of a fable, in the course of which I hope that the truth will not fail to appear sufficiently and that it will be no less agreeable to see than if I were to set it forth wholly naked» (René Descartes, *The World, or Treatise on Light*, translated by M.S. Mahoney, <http://www.princeton.edu/~hos/mike/texts/descartes/world/worldfr.htm>).

11. «For a short time, then, allow your thought to wander beyond this world to view another, wholly new one, which I shall cause to unfold before it in imaginary spaces» (*Ibid.*).

12. J. Amerpoel, *Cartesius Mosaizans seu Evidens & facilis conciliatio philosophiae Cartesii cum historia creationis primo capite Geneseos per Mosem tradita*, Leovardiae, Pro Haeredibus Thomae Luyrtsma, 1669.

science (suggesting, among other things, the reconstruction of the history of the Earth through fossils) contradicted the principles of biblical exegesis and the esthetic preferences declared by Burnet in the same text. Burnet cited a number of traditional arguments for the necessity of the *interpretations of allegories*: the apology of the Christian doctrine against Gentiles and atheists («Poisoned arrows of Julian and Celsus»); the argument of anthropomorphism, well-known through the influence of *The Guide for the Perplexed* by Moses Maimonides; the inadequacy of grammatical interpretation for the reconstruction of the meaning of a sacred text; and finally, the contradiction between the literal meaning of the Book of Genesis and rational cosmology<sup>13</sup>. However, Burnet emphasized that for him, allegory was not fiction but rather what he called «vulgar» or «Plebeian hypothesis», i.e., the accommodation of the Mosaic account of the origin of the world to the intellectual level of the first readers of the Book of Genesis. This reservation notwithstanding, Burnet used the allegorical method perhaps too frequently, provoking a critical response from William Whiston, an author who thought himself to be the heir of the model of the literal exegesis of the Scripture designed by Isaac Newton. Whiston made the priority of literal meaning and inadmissibility of allegorical interpretation of the Hexaemeron one of the fundamental principles of his *New Theory of the Earth*: «The Obvious or Literal Sense of Scripture is the true and Real one, where no evident Reason can be given to the contrary»<sup>14</sup>. Paradoxically, the same thesis can be found in Burnet's work, the pamphlet *An Answer to the Exceptions made against the Theory of the Earth*: «The Rule we go by, and I think all good Interpreters, is this, that we are not to leave the literal Sense, unless there be a Necessity from the Subject-Matter»<sup>15</sup>. The misunderstanding should not be blamed on the author of *The Sacred history of the earth* but rather on the deist Charles Blount, the author of a foreword to one of its editions and of another publication, *The Oracles of Reason* (1692), which contained *ex integro* two chapters from the *Philosophical Archaeology*, another well-known Burnet treatise<sup>16</sup>. It was this contextualization of Burnet's writings that is thought to have provoked the negative reaction of his critics; however, even if one admits that Burnet's exegetic principles did not

13. Th. Burnet, *Archeologiae Philosophicae: Or, the Ancient Doctrine Concerning the Originals of Things*, London, Printed for E. Curll, 1729, p. 21.

14. W. Whiston, *A New Theory of the Earth From its Original, to the Consummation of all things*, London, John Whiston, 1737, p. 95.

15. Th. Burnet, *The Sacred Theory of the Earth. Containing an Account of the Original of the Earth and of all the General Changes Which it hath already undergone, or is to undergo, till the Consummation of all Things*, vol. II, London, Printed for John Hooke, 1722, p. 27.

16. J. E. Force, *William Whiston, Honest Newtonian*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 39.

differ greatly from those of Newtonian literalists, his story of the origin of the world was still in evident contradiction to Whiston's views of scientific cosmogony as the «Historical and True Representation of the formation of our single Earth». First of all, Burnet's text was full of sentences derived from Baroque esthetics, unacceptable for the Whiston-style scientific natural history. When giving a characteristic to the economy and style of the *Sacred Theory*, Burnet said that its text was «clearly discover'd, well digested, and well reason'd in every Part, there is, methinks, more of Beauty in such a Theory, at least a more masculine Beauty, than in any Poem or Romance». Explaining the choice of the epithet «Sacred» for the title, Burnet wrote:

This Theory of the Earth may be call'd Sacred, because it is not the common Physiology of the Earth, or of the Bodies that compose it, but respects only the great Turns of Fate, and the Revolutions of our Natural World; such as are taken notice of in the Sacred Writings, and are truly the Hinges upon which the Providence of this Earth moves; or whereby it opens and shuts the several successive Scenes whereof it is made up<sup>17</sup>.

One often finds the *topoi* of the esthetics of the sublime in the text—for example, the images of imposing ruins or awe-inspiring mountain peaks (*quam immanes res sit grandissimorum montium congeries*). All these passages could have been taken for stylistic embellishments, and no theoretical approach could have been found there were it not for one place where Burnet, although in a polemical context, wrote quite unambiguously that any theory—of Nature or Providence alike—necessarily took the shape of a «Philosophick Romance»<sup>18</sup>. Burnet's investigation, in his own words, aimed at discovering in Nature «a Plot or Mystery (...) made by the Great Author and Governour of the Universe». In a well-turned phrase by Michael B. Prince, «Although admittedly dependent upon the support of fiction, design discovers and does not merely construct the true order of nature. Within this system, which Richard Rorty discussed under the heading “philosophy and

17. Th. Burnet, *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*, p. xxxvii.

18. «Short Thoughts, and little Meditations, and that are apt to distrust every thing for a Fancy or Fiction that is not the dictate of Sense, or made out immediately to their Senses. Men of such Humour or Character call such Theories as these, Philosophick Romances. (...) Where there is variety of Parts in a due Contexture, with something of surprizing aptness in the harmony and correspondency of them, this they call a Romance; but such Romances must all Theories of Nature, and of Providence be, and must have every part of that Character with advantage, if they be well represented» (Th. Burnet, *Archeologiae Philosophicae*, Preface, s. p.). Burnet's philosophical romanticism could not but come in for almost unanimous criticism on the part of the defenders of literalist exegesis and realistic philosophy. Thus, John Keill ranked Burnet among the «Philosophers, who have maintained opinions more absurd than can be found in any of the most Fabulous Poets, or Romantick Writers», who «only cultivated their own wild imaginations, which seldom produce any thing but what is extravagant and unaccountable» (J. Keill, *An Examination of Dr. Burnet's Theory of the Earth: with some Remarks on Mr. Whiston's New Theory of the Earth*, London, H. Clements, 1734, pp. 1–2).



the mirror of nature”, the romance of realism and the realism of romance exist in perfect reciprocity»<sup>19</sup>.

It is worth noticing that while mentioning—just once, in the *Nuova scienza prima*—Burnet's cosmological theory, Vico does not call it a hypothesis, nor does he call his own diluvian postulate a hypothesis. The concept of hypothesis in the *New Science* is explicitly placed in the context of Baconian epistemology; Vico referred directly to the *Cogitata et visa* by Bacon. According to Vico, the truths of the world of nations seen as ideas—set out in «philosophical» axioms I–XIV of the *New Science* and called by a Baconian term «hypothesis»—should then be seen in facts (axioms XV–XXII)<sup>20</sup>. In a famous passage, omitted in the *New Science* of 1744<sup>21</sup>, Vico characterizes Burnet's theory as a «fantasy»:

La quale dimostrazione veramente risolve la capricciosa *risoluzione della terra*, immaginata da Tommaso Burnet; della qual fantasia ebbe egli inanzi i motivi prima da Van-Elmonte, e poi dalla *Fisica* del Cartesio : che, risolutasi col diluvio la terra della parte del *sud*, piucchè da quelle del *nort*, fosse questa restata nelle sue viscere più ripiena d'aria, e in conseguenza più galleggiante, e perciò superiore all'altra opposta, tutta sommersa dall'Oceano; e quindi avesse la terra alquanto declinato dal suo parallelismo dal Sole<sup>22</sup>.

Thus, he refers to a well-established reputation of Cartesian cosmology, characterizing it as *fantasia*, and avoids using the compromised term *hypothesis* in his own reasoning on the Universal Flood. But why not simply use *axiom*? In our view, the peculiar status of the diluvian postulate is due to the fact that Vico opposes here not only Cartesian physics but Protestant hermeneutics as well, taking the floor in a widespread discussion on the epistemological status of Scripture. On this issue, one fragment from Vico's additions to *NS 30*, which remained willingly unpublished until Fausto Nicolini's edition of 1942, seems to be the most representative<sup>23</sup>:

Le quali cose tutte ad un colpo devono rovesciar il sistema di Giovanni Seldeno,

19. M. B. Prince, *A Preliminary Discourse on Philosophy and Literature*, in *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660–1780*, edited by J. Richetti, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 400.

20. «The last propositions, from the fifteenth to the twenty-second, will give us the basis of certitude. By their use we shall be able to see in fact this world of nations which we have studied in idea, following the method of philosophizing made most certain by Francis Bacon, Lord of Verulam, but carrying it over from the things of nature, on which he composed his book *Cogitata [et] visa*, to the civil affairs of mankind» (G. Vico, *The New Science*, pp. 60–61).

21. For probable reasons of this omission, see P. Rossi, *The Dark Abyss of Time: The History of the Earth and the History of Nations from Hooke to Vico*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 107.

22. *NS 25*, § 98 (p. 1035).

23. A. Momigliano, *Terzo contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico*, t. 1, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1966, p. 161.

il quale pretende il diritto naturale della ragione eterna essere stato dagli ebrei insegnato a' gentili sopra i sette precetti lasciati da Dio a' figliuoli di Noe, devono rovesciare il *Faleg* di *Samuello Bocarto*, che vuole la lingua Santa essersi propagate dagli ebrei all'altre nazioni e tra queste fossesi difformata e corrotta; e finalmente devono rovesciare la *Dimostrazion evangelica* di Daniello Uezio, che va di seguito al *Faleg* del Bocarto, come il *Faleg* di Bocarto va di seguito al sistema del Seldeno nella quale l'uomo eruditissimo s'industria di dar a credere che le favole siano sagre storie alterate e corrotte da' gentili e sopra tutti da' greci<sup>24</sup>.

The choice of adversaries in the fragment quoted above is by no means arbitrary. In this condensed passage, Vico reconstructs and rejects in one stroke a tremendous and highly consistent epistemological project of Protestant biblical scholarship (Huet was a Catholic bishop, but Caen, where he had been brought up, was a city of flourishing Protestant erudition): the reconsideration of the literal sense by Samuel Bochart, Daniel Huet's evangelical demonstration as opposed to the Cartesian method, and Selden's rooting of the natural law in the biblical text. Bochart's *Faleg, or Canaan* presents one of the most fascinating historical–geographical embodiments of Protestant literalism<sup>25</sup>. The abundance of historical and etymological details, the variety of characters, and the grandeur of the plot make Bochart's *Faleg* a rival of the *New Science* to be reckoned with in its historical aspect.

If Bochart develops the *history* of mankind in its material concreteness out of biblical text, John Selden draws a consistent picture of a monistic Bible-centered history and theory of *law*. In his treatise *De iure naturali et gentium iuxta disciplinam Hebraeorum* (1640), Selden put natural reason considered in the stoic sense under the guidance of scriptural and Talmudic maxims: *De iure naturali* is stuffed with quotations from rabbinic sources, including such medieval authors as Maimonides. According to Selden, Rabbinic scholarship builds «common ground of Graeco–Roman culture, Judaism, and early Christianity»<sup>26</sup>. Moreover, Selden's juristic construction acquires nearly Averroist overtones; he speaks of an *intellectus agens* by which men could perceive the natural/Edenic/Mosaic law. Thus, the natural law of the Gentiles could be deduced from the biblical text, framed by the traditional Jewish texts.

To top it all, Daniel Huet lays the epistemological foundations of the historical and juridical system, already nearly implemented by Bochart and

24. See *Correzioni, Miglioramenti, ed Aggiunte* published in *Scienza nuova 1730*, edited by P. Cristofolini e M. Sanna, Naples, Alfredo Guida Editore, 2004, p. 415. In an abridged form, this passage could be found in *NS 30* (*Ibid.*, p. 81), but it has been completely omitted in *NS 44*.

25. S. Bochart, *Geographia Sacra seu Faleg et Canaan*, Lugduni Batavorum, Apud Cornelium Boutesteyn, & Jordanum Luchtmans, 1692.

26. J. R. Rosenblatt, *Torah and Law in Paradise Lost*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 124.

Selden. In respect to Vico's, Huet represents a different, sceptical branch of Anticartesianism; according to him, even the law of non-contradiction depends on God's will. Huet blames Descartes for not being consistent enough in his doubt. Once in the 1650s, in the Amsterdam Portuguese Synagogue, Huet promised to Menasseh Ben Israel that he would prove the certainty of evangelical truths to be equivalent to the Euclidian demonstration<sup>27</sup>; the outcome, titled with reference to Eusebius of Caesarea *Demonstratio evangelica*, came off the press some twenty years later when the Cartesian controversy was in full swing. *Demonstratio* reflects the different stages of the intellectual biography of its author and then puts together almost incompatible features: an enthusiasm for geometry (the treatise is written in geometrical form, similar to Spinoza's *Ethics*); a search for certainty in theology, history, and mathematics; and an attempt at a refutation of Cartesianism<sup>28</sup>. *Evangelical demonstration* is a syncretic and contradictory text in many respects; undertaking the rehabilitation of historical proof, it sees the ideal model of the science in the Royal Society experientialism. Huet's geometrical endeavor, despite its revisionist pathos, carries on a long-term tradition, finding its roots already in the reception by the patriarchs of Protestantism (Calvin, first of all) of Proclus's commentary on Euclid's *Elements*. The thesis of the divine inspiration of Scripture has been endowed with the status of an *axioma anapodeikton*<sup>29</sup>. Thus, Huet's ambitious program—focusing geometrical, experimental, and historical certainty on biblical text and corroborated by Bochart's historical and Selden's juridical efforts—makes Protestant literal exegesis no less dangerous a rival for Vico than Cartesianism itself.

Having dismissed the (Cartesian) hypothesis as fictitious and the (Biblical) axiom as threatening the autonomy of the profane history, Vico makes a rather surprising choice. Whereas in the first *New Science* he restricts his goal to the historical-mythological demonstration of the Universal Flood, drawing on the poverty of articulated languages<sup>30</sup>, in NS 44, he divides the argument into two parts. The first one, resumed in XXV and XLII Elements, represents a complicated physical-mythological argument that Vico endows with the highest degree of certainty—«demonstration» (*si dimostra*

27. A. G. Shelford, *Transforming the Republic of Letters: Pierre-Daniel Huet and European Intellectual Life 1650–1720*, Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2007, p. 153.

28. Ead., *Thinking Geometrically in Pierre-Daniel Huet's «Demonstratio evangelica»*, in «Journal of the History of Ideas», 63 (2002) 4, p. 601.

29. Cf., for instance: H. Van Den Belt, *The authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Trust*, Leiden, Brill, 2008, p. 123: «Principium autem Theologicum mihi videtur esse Axioma de rebus sacris *anapodeikton* & *autopiston*. . . cuiusmodi est hoc Axioma: scriptura sacra tota est theopneustos: de quo nulli Christiani dubitant < . . . > Principium Theologicum esse *autopiston*, nec esse petendum ex nuda Ecclesie auctoritate, neque ex humana ratione».

30. Chapter XI: *con certa spezie di medaglie de' primi popoli, con le quail si dimostra l'universale diluvio* (NS 25, § 96–99, pp. 1035–1036).

*con istorie fisiche osservate dentro le favole*). The second one, present in XLI and probably also in XCVII Elements<sup>31</sup>, has the status of a postulate. We find the definition of this type of argument in Vico's *Autobiography*:

Ora, ricevendoci al proposito — scoperto che egli ebbe tutto l'arcano del metodo geometrico contenersi in ciò: di prima diffinire le voci con le quali s'abbia a ragionare; dipoi stabilire alcune massime comuni, nelle quali colui con chi si ragiona vi convenga; finalmente, se bisogna, dimandare discretamente cosa che per natura si possa concedere, affin di poter uscire i ragionamenti, che senza una qualche posizione non verrebbero a capo; e con questi principi da verità più semplici dimostrate procedere fil filo alle più composte, e le composte non affermare se non prima si esaminino partitamente le parti che le compongono<sup>32</sup>.

The category of postulate has been tested in chapter XVIII of *De Constantia jurisprudentis* titled *De Historiae Profanae Elementis*. Introducing in *De Constantia* the constitutive elements of the profane history, Vico, after one definition and several axioms, also refers to three postulates: all the human actions deduced from the foregoing principles should actually take place; the law of nations conforms to natural law; and poetic characters witness the law of nations<sup>33</sup>. A very old (dating back to Proclus<sup>34</sup>) distinction of postulate and axiom is not mentioned by Vico in spite of its constituting a commonplace in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Italy (let us remember that the first treatise by P. A. Cataldi devoted especially to Euclidian parallel postulate appears in 1603 in Bologna<sup>35</sup>).

It is worth noticing that the category of *postulate* emerges in Thomas Hobbes's mathematical as well as political writings. In his second Dialogue of the *Examinatio et emendatio mathematicae hodiernae*, Hobbes gives a traditional definition of *postulatum*: «Neque vero sunt postulata principia demonstrationis, sed constructionis. Necessaria tamen sunt, propterea quod ne

31. Formulated as follows: «Si conceda ciò che ragion non offende, col dimandarsi che dopo il diluvio gli uomini prima abitarono sopra i monti, alquanto tempo appresso calarono alle pianure, dopo lunga età finalmente si assicurarono di condursi a' lidi del mare» (*NS 44*, § 295, p. 532).

32. G. Vico, *Vita scritta da se medesimo*, in Id., *Opere*, edited by A. Battistini, Milan, Mondadori, 1990, p. 18.

33. J.B. Vico, *De constantia jurisprudentis*, lib. alter, Neapolis, Felix Musca, 1721, pp. 102–10: «III. Postulata: Primum; Quicquid ex his principiis confecerimus, primos homines Tempore Obscuro agere oportuisse, nisi adverteretur, & multo magis si adsonet Sacra Historia, ita re ipsa egisse concedatur. Secundum; quando omne Jus Civile est ex jure naturali gentium, & proprio conflatum; quod in xii. *Tabb.* est uniforme jurius gentium, quos ex primo postulato narravimus, id ex jure gentium esse concedatur. Tertium; Cum primarum gentium Poëtica lingua fuerit, ut late supra docuimus, *locutiones Poëticae*, & *Fabulae*, sive Characteres heroici, quae moribus gentium per haec principia narrantes commodas accipiunt significationes, & mythologias; Juris gentium testimonium perhibeant; & ea propria sit earum significatio».

34. R. Bonola, *Non-Euclidian Geometry*, New York, Cosimo Classics, 2007, p. 18.

35. P. A. Cataldi, *Operetta delle linee rette equidistanti e non equidistanti*, Bologna, Presso gli Heredi di Giovanni Rossi, 1603.

prima quidem theoremata demonstrari possunt sine figurae constructione. Nam ex constructione sola, id est, ex generatione sola cognoscuntur constructi affectiones»<sup>36</sup>. In the *Six lessons of the principles of geometry*, he specifies his definition: «The second sort of principles are those of construction, usually called *postulata*, or petitions. These petitions are by Euclid called Ἀιτήματα, such as are granted by favour, that is, simply petitions, whereas by axiom is understood that which is claimed as due»<sup>37</sup>. But, following the line of his *mathesis politica*, Hobbes transfers this category to the political arena, formulating in the *Episola dedicatoria* of *De cive* «two most certain postulates of the human nature» (*duo certissima naturae humanae postulata*). According to the first one, natural cupidity makes men desire common goods; according to the second one, they naturally fear death. Thus, a postulate is a statement that is truthful (*verum*) precisely *qua factum* or, to put it more exactly, *qua constructum*. Hobbes puts forward his two postulates in order to establish anthropological constants, which are the conditions of possibility and the departing point of his whole civil science.

As we have seen, according to Vico, if the statement on the two-century-long insiccation of the Earth is neither a Biblical axiom nor a cosmological hypothesis, it should be a postulate. In fact, postulate XLI constitutes a connecting link between the physical and social worlds, and it thus bridges the gap between the world of necessity and the universe of arbitrary action. The use of a postulate in order to introduce the *dégré zéro* of sociality creates an affinity between Vichian historical construction of the social world and Hobbes's protosociological *mathesis politica*. The constructivist view of the postulate in Hobbes's model of *mathesis politica* presupposes the elimination of both communication and history.<sup>38</sup> Dismissing both the hypothetical reasoning and the "axiomatic" literal exegesis, Vico resolves the *aporia* of the absolute beginning of sociality, disguising it under the cloak of a physical argument (as he needs a heterogeneous—that is, not historical—argument

36. Th. Hobbes, *Examinatio et emendatio mathematicae hodiernae*, in «Thomae Hobbes Malmesburiensis opera philosophica quae latine scripsit omnia», ed. studio et labore Gulielmi Molesworth, vol. IV, Londini, Apud Longman Brown Green et Longman, 1845, p. 66.

37. Th. Hobbes, *Six Lessons of the Principles of Geometry*, in «The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury», edited by Sir W. Molesworth, vol. VII, London, Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1845, p. 210.

38. Cf. the characteristics of the Hobbesian postulates in A. Montano, *Il «fare» nel pensiero di Hobbes e Vico*, in: «Filosofia e Politica. Studi in onore di Girolamo Cotroneo», edited by Guisì Furnari Luvàrà, Soveria Mannelli, Rubettino Editore, 2005, pp. 315–316: «Due fondamentali strutture logiche, a partire delle quali procedure nella costruzione di un modello politico con valore normative-prescrittivo. (...) Hobbes, cioè, per dare un fondamento forte e sicuro alla sua teoria politica, per sottrarre l'etica e la politica a quel « sapere verbifico » che, a suo dire, aveva impedito che esse assumessero uno statuto epistemologico connotato dai caratteri della necessità e della obbligatorietà, aveva matematizzato o, meglio, geometrizzato il metodo di indagine relativo alla persona e al modo in cui questa dovrebbe condursi all'interno della società civile».

to put history in motion). In contrast to Hobbes, Vico's postulate is a rhetorical argument; remember the definition of *postulate* from *De ratione* and the introductions of the postulates in *Degli elementi*. Thus, rhetoric accomplishes its function as a «bridge between human action and natural process» (D. L. Marshall). This mediatory function of rhetoric has been displayed in more detail in Vico's earlier writings, where the Neapolitan connects rhetoric and physics by means of *ingenium*: *ingenium* is the common fount of the best orators and the best observers of nature<sup>39</sup>.

Thus, bringing together physics, rhetoric, and politics, «diluvian postulate» acquires an important communicative dimension. The postulate seems to be oriented not inside but rather outside the NS. The probable reason for this would be the fact that the theory of the Universal Flood was a desperately beaten track, a territory of numerous intersecting rival and invidious «new sciences». Thus, Vico's «discretion»—even modesty and indecision—instinctively felt by the Russian translator turns out to be motivated by a tension between the crucial role the diluvian postulate was meant to play in the NS and the indeterminacy of its epistemological status. The fusion of politics, biblical hermeneutics, and cosmology generates hesitation. Different regimes of reasoning about the prehistoric come into the picture—Hobbes's *mathesis politica*, the Cartesian hypothesis, and the apologetic *demonstratio evangelica*—and each of them fails. Despite all the faults it may be accused of, the Russian translation has caught the particular tone of discretion due to its reasoning on the absolute beginning of sociality, reasoning—despite the persuasiveness of Vico's rhetorical formula—not *mandato in deserto* but addressing a dense intellectual *milieu* of the Republic of Letters. Thus, the epistemological overload of the diluvian postulate is equilibrated by a communicative effort—«a petition of favour» of the citizens of *Respublica litteraria*, endowing Vichian reasoning with an overtone of social convention.

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39. On this point, see: D. L. Marshall, *Vico and the Transformation of Rhetoric in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 119–122.

## Giambattista Vico: Philosophy of Authority

ALEXANDR G. POGONIAILO

**ABSTRACT:** The article's principal thesis: Vico resolves in his own manner the common task of the Modern times Philosophy — to find out a new way for justification of scientific knowledge. His discussion with Cartesian philosophy and his reliance onto rhetoric tradition and Renaissance humanism do not remove him from his contemporaries, but, on the contrary, align him with modern attitudes. His alternative metaphysical principle *verum-factum* was conceptually shaped in polemic with Cartesian way of knowledge justification but leads to similar results.

*L'uomo, per l'indiffinita natura della mente umana, ove questa si rovesci nell'ignoranza, egli fa se regola dell'universo*<sup>1</sup>.

«Because of the indefinite nature of the human mind, wherever it is lost in ignorance, man makes himself the measure of all things»<sup>2</sup>, — such is the first of the 114 «axioms» (*degnità*), preceding the main text of the *New Science* and containing *in nuce* all of its content. It is not by chance that the first axiom holds the prominent first place: like Deleuze's «fold» (*le pli, plica*), it contains implicitly (*complica e implica*) all the future «unfoldings» (*esplicazioni*) of Vico's science: this science itself as well as its future interpretations.

It is a striking phenomenon that this erudite author from Naples, who immersed himself deeply into the most ancient wisdom of the Italics, which he extracted from the origins of the Latin language<sup>3</sup> and opposed to the Cartesian philosophy, just come into vogue at the time, and who seemed alien to his much-enlightened epoch because of that, is perceived as quite a modern thinker today, on the eve of the third millenium of Christian civilization.

That man *faseregoladell'universo* will be contradicted neither by a representative of philosophical hermeneutics nor a follower of Ludwig Wittgenstein; this statement is in accordance with Marx' ideology as well as with the

1. G.B. Vico, *Principj di scienza nuova d'intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni*, in: *Opere*, edited by Paolo Rossi, Milan, Rizzoli, 1959 (hereinafter referred to as *SN*), p. 80.

2. *The New Science of Giambattista Vico. Unabridged Translation of the Third Edition (1744) with the Addition of «Practic of the New Science»*, translated by Th. G. Bergin and M.H. Fisch, Ithaca, New York, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976 (hereinafter referred to as *NS*), p. 54.

3. G.B. Vico, *Deantiqussimaitalorumsapientiaexlinguaelatinaeoriginibuseruenda*. Naples, Felice Mosca, 1710.

idea of language as the house of being or with the dynamic communication model, this last achievement of semiotic studies.

Whether we want it or not, we all make ourselves the measure of the Universe when we «lapse into ignorance» and do not know what to do. Today's thinking, whether it considers itself belonging to philosophy or not, unconditionally gives the greater priority to the deed. First, in the sense that we have always «been and gone and done it», as Merab Mamardashvili used to say (alluding to the adherence to the Communist Party); second, in the sense that an attempt at finding out what exactly we have done is possible only as a deed, a kind of stepping over (transcending) ourselves which makes it possible to look at ourselves from *outside*. From where exactly? — God knows, because, as Mamardashvili put it, there is transcendence, but there is nothing transcendent.

The whole of Vico's work, all of his general principles dispose us to consider the thinker and his works as belonging to the rhetorical humanistic part of the modern European knowledge, more precisely to its branch taking root in the science of Cicero, Varro, Scaliger and others from the Antiquity and the Renaissance, an heir of which Vico himself believed to be, and opposed to its physical and mathematical branch, the science of Galilei, Descartes, Leibnitz and Newton. The distinction made in modern Europe between the exact (natural) science and the humanities (studies of the spiritual) was an external visible symptom of deep changes in the «understanding of being» which affected all the spheres of life and proved to mark an epoch, since these changes made the Modern Time what it was, i.e. a distinct epoch of Western history aptly called the «epoch of worldview». This same distinction supposed a special method of proof of knowledge, created by the metaphysics of the time, and when the natural sciences, in the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, got into a situation in which the continuation of scientific research necessarily required a reformulation of philosophical problems since the existing methods of proof had become inoperative and new changes to the understanding of being began to emerge, just then there was a new surge of interest in authors who for various reasons had remained marginal to the mainstream of science, in particular in Vico, whom Croce claimed as his predecessor and in whom the philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer) saw its forerunner.<sup>4</sup>

4. B. Croce, *Le fonti della gnoseologia vichiana*, in «Atti della Academia Pontaniana», vol. XLII, Naples, Giannini 1912; Id., *La filosofia di Giambattista Vico*, Bari, Laterza, 1965; After Croce Vico became the «real» founder of esthetics as a philosophical science. A. Plebe described in the same chapter the esthetics of Vico and Kant; cf. *Estetica*, edited by A. Plebe, in: «Storia antologica dei problemi filosofici», edited by U. Spirito, vol. 5, Florence, Sansoni, 1965, pp. 351–416. Among the numerous works dealing with Vico let us mention Abbagnano's preface to Vico's selected works (*La scienza nuova e Opere scelte di Giambattista Vico*, edited by N. Abbagnano, Turin, Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1952),



When Benedetto Croce revealed Vico to the wide audience in the first half of the 19th century, the author of the *NewScience* seemed to the learned world a kind of erudite antiquarian of his enlightened epoch, a collector of antiquities who stubbornly refused to follow the thought trend in vogue, particularly the Cartesian trend, and directed his gaze, looking over the learned heads of his contemporaries, to the past, both relatively recent (Renaissance) and ancient (Antiquity) of his native Italy. In a period of rhetorical antirhetoric and destruction of prejudice his voluntarily un-enlightened attitude towards the latter contributed little to the scholar's popularity who taught just rhetoric in Naples and besides used in his principal work a laborious, flowery and pompous language, wrote strange things about giants, witches, the flood and so on, overburdened his text with numerous quotations from famous, obscure, half-forgotten and quite forgotten authors, interpreted and explained words, myths, proverbs and sayings, trying to make up the aforementioned «science» out of all that, in which science he made, as it may seem at first glance, but one concession to his time, exposing his ideas in conformity with the «geometrical method». To those who in the 20th century tried to make philosophy converge to linguistics (and Croce, in his own way, did it also) and the philosopher get closer to the «sphere of life», the figure of the scholar combining «esoteric» and «popular» wisdom, metaphysics and «philology» seemed, on the contrary, very attractive; and thus Vico easily, though not unambiguously, became established in the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics on his 300th anniversary, after having been embraced, not too tightly, by marxism.

Today 45 more years have been added to the three centuries elapsed since Giambattista Vico's birth. Vico is being reedited and read as one of the classics of Modern Europe, yet he seems a peculiar kind of classic who

Loewith's paper (K. Löwith, *Vicos Grundsatz: verum und factum convertuntur: seine theologische Prämisse und deren säkularre Konsequenzen*, Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1968), the collection of papers devoted to Vico's jubilee: *Vico nel terzo centenario della nascita*, Naples, Libreria Scientifica Editrice, 1971; the collection edited by A. Battistini: *Vico oggi*, Roma, A. Armando, 1979 and the comprehensive work by K.O. Apel, *L'idea di lingua nella tradizione dell'umanesimo da Dante a Vico*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1975 [1963]. See also: M. Papini, *Arbor humanae linguae. L'etimologico di Vico come chiave ermeneutica di storia del mondo*, Bologna, Cappelli, 1984. Among the works by Russian authors let us mention the preface by M.A. Lifshitz to the first Russian edition of the *New Science* (Vico G., *Osnovaniya novoj nauki ob obschej prirod'e natsyj*, translated by A.A. Guber, Leningrad, Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1940, p. III–XXVI.; the book by M.A. Kissel, *Giambattista Vico*, Moscow, Mysl', 1980; the chapter on Italian esthetics by A.G. Pogonyaylo, *Italian Esthetics of 17<sup>th</sup> — First Half of 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, in «Lectures on the History of Esthetics», edited by M.S. Kagan, b.I, lecture 10, Leningrad, Izdatelstvo Leningradskogo universiteta, 1973; and his papers: *The Place of the Art in G. Vico's Historical Culturology*, in «The Art in the System of Culture», edited by M.S. Kagan, Leningrad, Nauka, 1987, p. 223–229; *The Eutyfron's Inspiration (Cratylus and New Science)*, in «Akademia. Materials and Investigations on the History of Platonism», Saint-Petersburg, Izdatelstvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 1997, p. 134–161; the chapter on Vico in his book: A.G. Pogoniailo, *Clockwork Toy Philosophy, Or Apology of Mechanicism*, Saint-Petersburg, Izdatelstvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 1998, p. 122–156.

was archaical even in his own time. But is this really so? The fact that Vico was concerned with the past does not make him a reactionary. Does not he call his science new, does he not insist on its novelty despite being based on the wisdom of the Ancients, which he immediately declares to be much overestimated by the vanity of nations and scholars?<sup>5</sup>

His first axiom can in fact be interpreted in the spirit of today's hermeneutics. If the interpretation always depends on the context, if the context defines the interpretation and the context of interpretation is circumscribed by the language we are speaking, which however is speaking through us to a much greater extent, then we are actually caught in a kind of semantic circle; to get out of it and to reach thus the hermeneutic circle means a loosening of the rigid communication patterns and a crisis of language, which crisis ultimately proves to be one of the conditions necessary for interpretation. This means that we cannot avoid making ourselves «the measure of the universe», but, making ourselves its measure, we must at least be aware of the fact and know that the universe, though circumscribed by the horizon of our understanding, exists on its own and has existed before us and does not care a bit about us and our measures.

May we interpret Vico thus? — Why not? We may, if we see something true in such an interpretation, which is immediately convincing without any references to these or those historical circumstances for which perhaps allowances seem due. After Marx we shall call these insights of Vico «sparks of genius» — and were it not for them, why would we need Vico at all? And then if Vico was alien to his epoch, let him be at home in ours.

Have we not, however, fallen into a trap, giving in to the natural desire to see in Vico a scholar who makes up for the deficiency of ideas and extols the old philological knowledge of the «ancient Italics» in order to oppose it to the geometrical *ratio* of the Enlightenment. Does this not mean being deaf to the warning Vico gave us in this same first axiom? Are we not naively making ourselves the measure of the universe while our mind is still lost in ignorance? For we are, whether we like it or not, heirs of the Enlightenment which formed the «intellectual dictionary» of the epoch (as Vico put it) we are using still. It is, therefore, the natural environment of our understanding (being), the air we breathe and do not perceive as long as we can breathe it (can understand). And since we are not perceiving it, we are «making ourselves the measure of the universe». Thus, the modern European classification of knowledge into exact natural sciences (mathematical and physical) and «inexact» humanities dealing with the «spiritual», which has become quite habitual and natural with us, i.e. something self-evident, is extrapolated by us to the times when it was just

5. NS, p. 55.

being formulated as part of the process of finding new proof of knowledge which took place in the early New Time and the Age of Enlightenment itself — due to Vico in particular. Even in the medieval *trivium* and *quadrivium* we manage to see some kind of prototype of the aforementioned classification, and this is clearly overdoing it. Perhaps our general notions of the *ratio* of the Enlightenment need to be corrected also?

Let us remark besides that for a humanist Vico is suspiciously attentive to geometry, combining in a quaint way the «geometrical method» of the *New Science* with the «method» of Plato's *Cratylus*, which he proposed to apply in his *De antiquissima*. This attention may certainly be explained by an inferiority complex occasioned by the dubious scientificity of «inexact» studies. Yet the hypothesis that Vico, in his own way, was doing the same works as his contemporaries, seems more plausible: namely, that he was searching for new criteria of knowledge which in any case had to be based on proof. Geometry was a model of science based on proof for Descartes' followers as well as for Vico. Yet this was explained differently by the former and the latter. That was the reason for the anticartesian polemics, not rare at all in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and almost a must in the learned world of the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Yet still more striking is the fact that there is a basic agreement with Descartes' views of science hidden behind Vico's objections and his refusal to accept the *cogito* as a foundation for sciences, and this agreement is based on the conviction, shared by both thinkers, that no *sympathiauniversalis*, no principle of universal empathy can be a basis for scientific knowledge — that principle which formed the cornerstone not only of Renaissance natural philosophy (for instance in the works of Bernardino Telesio or Tommaso Campanella, Descartes' older contemporary), but also of the whole of modern European occultism.

Descartes states quite openly that we have no reason to believe that heat is the essence of fire, since heat is a perception of the soul, while fire is a movement of particles, a dimensional phenomenon which never can become thought. It is the reduction of external world to space that makes possible its knowledge and the mechanics of the modern Europe start from that. Vico calls mechanics «the mother of all sciences»; besides, he says that «when people do not know the natural causes which create things, (...) they ascribe to them their own nature; thus, for instance, the ignorant crowd says that the magnet is in love with iron».<sup>6</sup>

Why, then, did Descartes displease Vico? N. Abbagnano<sup>7</sup> and Vico him-

6. «Gli uomini ignoranti delle naturali cagioni che producon le cose, ove non le possono spiegare nemmeno per cose simili, essi danno alle cose la loro propria natura, come il volgo, per esempio, dice la calamita innamorata del ferro» (SN, p. 94).

7. N. Abbagnano, *Historiadelafilosofia*, Barcelona, Montaner y Simon, 1955, vol. II, p. 232–234.

self<sup>8</sup> explain that: according to the philosopher of Naples, the *cogito* is a mere *coscienza* (awareness) of one's own existence, an experimental knowledge *aposteriori*, which cannot be a foundation of *science* or, properly, *knowledge*. An *a priori* foundation is necessary. And that is exactly how Leibnitz, the most prominent critic and follower of Descartes among his contemporaries, much esteemed by Vico, understood the *cogito*. According to Leibnitz the *cogito* is the first truth, but it is a truth of fact, not a truth of reason. Representing ourselves thinking or just perceiving *varia* (various things which we are thinking or perceiving), we make certain, in an immediate and perfect way, of our *existence* as perceiving subjects and also of the *existence* of the phenomena perceived as phenomena. Yet the *essence* is another thing.

For Vico, Philology deals with the truth of facts while the truth of reason belongs to the realm of the Secret Wisdom of Philosophers. Vico's «new science» is a special version of Leibnitz' pre-established harmony. It is special because it is the first attempt in the history of European thought at producing a *philosophy of history*. This proposition I am going to try and prove further.

The mill example in the *Monadology* illustrates well Leibnitz' idea that nature is clearly divided into two realms: the realm of acting causes and the realm of final causes. The final causes are those which define the purpose, the acting causes are described by Leibnitz as purely mechanical: push, traction. According to Leibnitz everything in nature can be explained by mechanical causes, but since the chain of bodies mechanically influencing each other never ends going away into infinity, it is necessary to assume some «architectonic principles», namely, the final causes explaining the start of movement. They are also metaphysical points, true substances or *conatus* (efforts). What a true substance is, we know quite well by our own experience, because we are composed of soul and body, which means that the boundary between the two realms traverses every one of us; belonging to the realm of final causes, we are feeling and perception; being bodies, we are mechanisms producing these feelings and perceptions. And if we take such a living mechanism and magnify it so that it can be entered into like a mill, we shall see nothing inside it except parts pushing each other and shall not find there anything resembling perception.

Leibnitz wants to say that movements of the body and movements of the soul, like the corresponding attributes of Spinoza's substance, from whom Leibnitz borrowed its understanding as *conatus* or effort (the start of movement), never transform immediately into each other, and therefore we may explain neither movements of the soul by movements of the body

8. G.B. Vico, *De antiquissimaitalorumsapientiaexlinguae latinaeoriginibuseruenda*. Napoli, Mosca, 1710, pp. 29–36.

nor the other way round. And though it is clear that we suffer pain if we get a wood splinter into our finger because the splinter (a body) has entered our finger (a body), it is absurd to believe that in some link of the chain of mechanically transmitted movements this movement becomes feeling. Let the nerve endings transmit an impulse to the brain; the brain itself is just a mill made up of parts pushing each other... In a word, describing the psychophysiological mechanism of perception we are describing not the perception itself, but just its *mechanism* — and that is what the modern European science is doing whatever it studies, whether it be living or inanimate nature, natural or social phenomena. It is precisely because it refused to recur to movements of the soul when describing any phenomena, including mental ones, that it became science and separated itself from philosophy for the same reason.

In his work *De antiquissima* Vico has elaborated a doctrine of «metaphysical points» which strikingly resembles Leibnitz's *conatus* (monades). Vico, however, makes it stem from «Zeno's school». Basing his reasoning on the meaning of the Latin words *essentia, vis, potestas*, Vico affirms that the metaphysical point of Zeno's followers is «a model according to which human mind may consider something indivisible as extended and potency as movement». He remarks, however, that all the same we cannot grasp how the infinite descends into the finite; this is revealed only to the divine mind for which thinking is the same as creating.<sup>9</sup>

Leibnitz made the division of truths into truths of reason and truths of fact conform to the traditional scholastic distinction between *essence* and *being* as follows: the first, being *analytical* (in fact, tautological: the analysis of the statement is the extraction of the predicate out of the subject) and therefore *a priori* and apodictic, show the *possibility* of the existence of a thing which was *certified* by perception, and the latter were the *credibility of perception* (including the *cogito* as the absolute credibility of my *existence* as thinking of myself as thinking), since they attached *synthetically* the predicate to the subject.

Vico makes the learned world remember that in Latin the words *verum* and *factum*, *true* and *made*, were often used interchangeably and points out that behind this seemingly casual coincidence lies the fundamental truth, the essence of which is that *what is true and what has been done are actually the same, and this or that thing may be truly known only by one who did or made it*. The Latin terms *verum* and *factum*, says Vico, correspond to each other or, to speak the language of the School, converge (*convertuntur*).<sup>10</sup>

We are faced here with the principle *verum = factum* which formed

9. G.B. Vico, *De antiquissima italorum sapientia ex linguae latinae originibus eruenda*, pp. 55–73.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

the basis of Vico's *New Science*. Mentioning the «School», Vico says more than he intended to and at the same time makes the reader follow on the wrong track. The ancient wisdom turns out to be in harmony with the Christian theology, or at least not contrary to it; yet scholasticism does not seem to mention the «convergence» of true and made in the sense of Vico, as Karl–Otto Apel quite clearly pointed out in his book. He also named the real source, little matters whether direct or indirect, of the idea of «convergence»: Nicholas of Cusa.

This puts many things right since it provides the missing link between scholasticism and Vico's concept. Because what Vico says further about human science is meaningful only in the light of that «convergence» the idea of which was developed by the cardinal of Cusa, the idea of the *coincidence of the opposites* (*coincidentia oppositorum*).

The learned ignorance of Nicholas of Cusa was radically different from the traditional ignorance of scholars in that it absolutely deprived any heavenly or earthly hierarchies of metaphysical basis, pointing out one, but unsurmountable boundary dividing the finite human reason, always looking for a proportion, always thinking in terms of more or less, i.e. *knowing everything by comparison*, from the infinite divine reason which is the universal basis for any comparison. The incommensurability of these two reasons, the absence of any «proportion» between them become for Nicholas of Cusa a *positive basis* of human science. Grasping the coincidence of all opposites in the mind of God, making an impossible leap over the wall of coincidence of the opposites (and Cusa calls it also «the wall of invisible vision»), that is, becoming aware that *the immediate and most exact measure of all things is infinity* (divine being and knowledge), man begins to understand the relative nature of one and all boundaries drawn by the *comparing* reason, and this ultimately destroys old metaphysics as a doctrine of *metaphysical places* or a doctrine of a *hierarchy of beings*, and contributes to the appearance of a new metaphysics, the worldview metaphysics. The modern European mechanics, Galileo's new science, is based on such a measuring by infinity. The making of modern European science meant a resolute elimination of «mediators» between the divine and the human, an elimination as resolute as Luther's church reformation. Yet this same measuring by infinity, in the form of an epistemological postulate «know — do» forms also the basis of Vico's science.

Let us read Vico: the human science, he says, a child of the imperfection of our finite human reason, was born thanks to the recognition of that imperfection. Only in God do *verum* and *factum* coincide absolutely, since God is the Creator of everything, but in the human mind they just converge without ever coinciding, because the subject of knowledge is never something completely «made» by us. The human science necessarily proceeds by

abstraction, that is, by an *artificial splitting up of natural things*, because their real sources are to be found only in the divine mind. Thus the body may be considered independently from the soul, the soul may be divided into reason and will, the body into outline and movement. And this *operation of dissecting natural things, which is their knowledge*, is similar to the usual anatomical dissection; instead of a living thing we see before us a dissected corpse. *Yet science has no other way*. Striving for the truth, of which the complete knowledge is denied to him by his nature, man, so to speak, makes a virtue of necessity, creates a whole *universum* of sciences, among which arithmetics and geometry are the most useful, since they produce *the mother of all arts, the mechanics*. The mathematics itself is possible only because man has invented two marvelous things: the point without extension which can, however, be «extended» when various figures are drawn by moving it, and the number one which can be multiplied. Both are fictitious, sheer products of imagination, because a point drawn on paper is not a point any more, and the one «multiplied» is not a unity, is not a monad. Yet when we draw lines, planes and figures by the movement of a point, we are creating a fictitious world out of elements or principles made by us, yet a world resembling the world around us, and this means that we are recreating the universe. In the same way we are making it mathematical and calculating it using numbers. And *since all elements of this world created by us are encompassed by our mind*, our knowledge of it is proven strictly according to the *verum — factum* principle. We can prove propositions in geometry because we are creating it, but to dream of absolute credibility of physical theories means to wish to be equal to God, the Creator of Nature.<sup>11</sup>

Vico's metaphysical points are (mental) «places» in which things mentally grasped and things visually represented, things true and things made, or, as Vico put it in «The New Science», the «esoteric» wisdom and the «popular» wisdom, *metaphysics* and *philology*, converge in an incomprehensible way without ever coinciding.

Vico's theory of metaphysical points as an exposition of the principle «to know — to do» is a method of *ideally reconstructing what is being known*, of folding a thing or a phenomenon into a metaphysical starting point and then unfolding, in a controlled way, this point into a physical world view in which the phenomenon described is put into its own place, now justified. Such is Vico's version of what may be termed modern European «science of phenomenality» (meaning a scientific justification of phenomenality, phenomena, and also meaning that this phenomenality is credible, one might even say true) in which the traditional ancient and medieval «knowledge of causes» is reduced to the *knowledge of the method of producing a thing*.

11. *Ibid.*, pp.18–20; 23–26; 50, 51.

The credibility of knowledge is bought at the price of *consciously reducing a phenomenon (a thing) to the method of its production*. Vico gives himself away unquestionably as a *modern European thinker* when he says, speaking about Pythagorean numbers, that neither Pythagoras nor his disciples really considered things to be made up of numbers: *they were just trying to explain the world outside them by analogy with the world they had inside their minds*. The same, Vico believed, could be said of Zeno and his school.<sup>12</sup>

Yet the principle of *verum — factum* clearly formulated by him as a gnoceological principle of scientific knowledge making this latter depend on the object of science being made by the knower (the true knowledge of a thing belongs exclusively to its creator), opened up other possibilities for Vico. For Thomas Hobbes already this principle justified the view that only the knowledge dealing with the things «created by men» could be considered strictly scientific, that is, the knowledge of purely human things, such as politics, ethics and . . . geometry.

Men can attain knowledge only of things the production of which depends on their will. That is why theorems of quantity can be proved, the science of which is called geometry. The causes of the properties of various geometrical figures are contained in the lines we ourselves are drawing, and the production of figures depends on our will, so that to know the properties of a figure, we need just to consider everything contained in the construction we create drawing it<sup>13</sup>.

It is not Vico who speaks thus, it is Thomas Hobbes, materialist, atheist and anti-obscurantist. Vico repeats Hobbes' words: we are finding proofs in geometry because we ourselves are creating it.

To the darkness resulting from inadequate philosophy and fabulous traditions Hobbes opposed the light of «the Knowledge acquired by Reasoning, from the Manner of the Generation of any thing, to the Properties; or from the Properties, to some possible Way of Generation of the same; to the end to be able to produce, as far as matter, and humane force permit, such Effects, as humane life requireth. So the Geometrician, from the Construction of Figures [the way of drawing them — *A.P.*], findeth out many Properties thereof; and from the Properties, new Ways of their Construction, by Reasoning; to the end to be able to measure Land and Water; and for infinite other uses».<sup>14</sup>

Things are explained based on the way they are generated, or their possible way of generation is reconstructed based on their properties — such an understanding of knowledge (truth) as the knowledge of the method

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59.

13. T. Hobbes, *De homine*, 10.5.

14. T. Hobbes, *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, edited by R. Tuck, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 458.



of generating a thing means that a radical rethinking of the traditional Aristotelian notions of «theory» and «practice» has taken place. Now the theory is a probable hypothesis of a thing's generation, knowledge of the method of its production, and not the traditional «contemplation» of its essence (*eidos*) arrived at by means of Plato's «art of conversion».<sup>15</sup> It is but natural that the sciences the object of which has been generated by men are classified as *a priori* based on proof; for Hobbes such are geometry, politics, ethics. On the contrary we do not know the causes of what has not been generated by us and can only search for them proceeding from their consequences.

Vico was acquainted with Hobbes' ideas, but preferred, as we see, to draw his new European wisdom from the ancient wisdom of the Italics. In the very beginning of his *De antiquissima* Vico declares his intention of following the method found in Plato's *Cratylus*, i.e., as he explains, not to deduce the origins of the language from philosophical doctrines, as did, according to his quite justified opinion, the authors of the Antiquity and the Renaissance, but to search for the wisdom of the ancients by investigating the origins of words themselves.

This sounds a little strange, as if Vico did not know that the conclusion of *Cratylus* is different: one must not proceed from words, the truth is to be looked for not in names, but in the things themselves (436–439b). Yet we must not be surprised: Vico simply does not agree with Plato, or rather he agrees with Plato, but the «uncoinciding convergence» of true and made in human nature makes him consider quite seriously what has been made by people and told by them, thus adding to Plato's «esoteric wisdom» the «popular» wisdom and making the latter the starting point of science.

Thus we can understand Vico's enthusiasm when from «points, lines and figures», that is, from geometrical fictions and conjectural knowledge of nature he passes on to the knowledge of what «has been created by people themselves», to the «world of nations».

In the first book of the *New Science* in the chapter «On the method» he writes that «since the world of nations was made by people, as it was said in the «Principles», the way of its generation may be found in modifications of our Human Consciousness», and then adds that «when the creator of things tells about them, we hear the most credible story. Thus, — Vico concludes, — our Science proceeds in exactly the same manner as Geometry which out of its elements constructs and creates, making for itself a World of Quantities; yet in our constructions there is as much more reality as laws of human activity are more real than points, lines, surfaces and figures».<sup>16</sup>

15. Plato, *Republic*, d 3–4.

16. *NS*, p. 93.

Acting this or that way people are guided by quite selfish interests, by that of survival first of all. Yest the result, the «made», *factum*, is always slightly different from its purpose. The purpose may be selfish, but the result may serve the common good. This is the way the Reason, i.e. the divine Providence, acts in history by means of limited purposes of individuals.<sup>17</sup> It follows that the *verum* is concealed in the «popular wisdom», in the acts and the tales people tell about them, but the *verum* is not only the wisdom of the Providence, it is also a *metaphysical truth*, the «esoteric wisdom» of philosophers personified by Plato (Tacitus and Francis Bacon were experts in both). And the *factum* is everything having to do with the popular wisdom, with trades, languages, myths, legends, stories; with the natural law, with the «credibility of authority», i.e. with the «common sense of mankind». From this (new) perspective Vico's «New Science» is seen as a Philosophy of Authority.<sup>18</sup>

*Auctor* and *auctoritas* are the key concepts of the human history. «We are using the word *authority* in its first meaning, *property*», — Vico says. «In the Roman Civil Law those who conferred to us the right of property continued to be called *auctores* (...) the word is derived from  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$ , *proprius*, *suus*, *ipsius* (...) Initially the authority was divine».<sup>19</sup>

*Auctor* and therefore *auctoritas* have been derived from *augeo*, meaning *to multiply, to increase, to provide, to enrich, to affect*. The main meaning of *auctor* is *founder, constructor, creator*. As S.S.Averintsev explains, the word *auctor* (author) is a *nomen agens*, i.e. designating the acting subject, and *auctoritas* refers to a certain property of this subject, whereas the action itself is designated by the verb *augeo*, one of the «principal verbs» of the Latin language, the many meanings of which it is not easy to explain in a dictionary article; it means «an action proper primarily to gods as sources of cosmic initiative», but also that which an *augustus*, the autocrat of imperial Rome, is capable of, but also a citizen who «“multiplies” the force of a communication by

17. Cf. SN, p. 136: «Laonde cotale Scienza dee essere una dimostrazione, per cosi dire, di fatto istorico della provedenza, perché dee essere una storia degli ordini che quella, senza verun umano scorgimento o consiglio, e sovente contro essi proponimenti degli uomini, ha dato a quella gran città del gener umano, che quantunque questo mondo sia stato criato in tempo e particolare, però gli ordini qu'ella v'ha posto sono universali ed eterni» («Our Science should to be a proof of the historical fact of the Providence, so to speak, because it should be the History of that Order which was imposed on the great City of Mankind in a way quite imperceptible to people and often despite their propositions; for even if this World was created within time and gradually, the Order contained in it is universal and eternal» — NS, p. 91).

18. SN, p.140.

19. NS, p. 109. «Prendendo, — says Vico, — la voce “autorità” nel primo suo significato di “proprietà”, nel qual senso sempre e usata questa voce dalla legge delle XII Tavole; onde restaron “autori” detti in civil ragione romana coloro da’ quali abbiamo cagion di dominio, che tanto certamente viene da  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$ , “proprius” o “suus ipsius”, che molti eruditi scrivono “autor” e “auctoritas” non aspirati» (SN, pp. 162–163).

vouching for it with his name» or «founds» or «constructs» something (a city, e.g.), builds a shrine, proposes a law which later bears his name. It is easy to see, he continues, that the semantic volume of the notions mentioned have two aspects, the religious and mystical aspect and the legal one.<sup>20</sup>

Both these aspects, forming what he terms the «Philosophy of Authority», attract Vico's interest. Besides he is interested also by the verbal meaning, the meaning of *action* retained by these names. For the *Human Authority* originated from the *Divine Authority*: «such is the property of human nature which even God cannot take away from man without destroying him», that is, «the free exercise of will, whereas the reason is a passive force subjected to truth».<sup>21</sup>

The Philosophy of Authority combines into one such notions, basic for the new culturology as regards the *formation* of nations, as «property», «authority», «force», «free choice» and its «application». Also, certainly, *poetry* in both senses, as «making, production» and as «poetical creativity». Vico says that the Divinity (let us remind the reader that it came into being according to the rule of «making oneself the measure of the universe» («poetical» transfer of one's own essence onto the inanimate nature), that is, created by the fear of people who imagined the stormy sky to be a huge living being) «appropriates» to itself the Giants who created it; they were so huge because they wallowed in their own feces (the remains of which, Vico says, are found in Patagonia) containing much *phosphor*. The «made» changes its «maker», *appropriates him*, the «poetical» work reacts back on its «author». The Renaissance notion of «Everybody is the child of his own deeds» (as Cervantes put it<sup>22</sup>) asserting the priority of deeds over «blood» acquires thus a non-trivial meaning of a paradox. I am made I by what I made when I was not yet in the strict sense. The subject of an action *is made by his own action*. He is a consequence of his deeds and acts. The World of Nations originates from such «poetry», from the creation of gods and therefore of itself. Making themselves the measure of the universe, populating the world with gods, the first people are forced by fear to make an effort of will, to curb their wild passions. This is what *makes them*, in a sense, *elect*, though they are not the chosen people which *originally had a Covenant concluded with the true God*; but they are not roaming inordinately about in the «great Wood of the Earth»; instead they, «careful of their survival», are hiding in caverns, forming families (*marriages* are the first human institution, *funerals* are the second and *the belief in the immortality of the soul* is the third), defending their *territory* (the first kind of property),

20. S.S. Averintsev, *Rhetoric and the origins of European literature*, Moscow, Shkola «Yazyki russkoj kultury», 1996, p. 76.

21. SN, pp. 163–164.

22. «Cada uno es hijo de sus obras» (M. de Cervantes, *Don Quijote*, part I, cap. 4).

protecting «weak impious vagabonds» who become their servants, *famuli*, hence *familia*... «The natural law of the nations was established not by laws, but by human customs».<sup>23</sup> «And so, let us consider established, — Vico sums up,— *that in the wild state man loves only his own survival; after taking a wife and begetting children, he loves his own survival along with that of his family; having attained the civil life, he loves his survival along with the survival of his City; after the authority of the State has extended to many nations, he loves his survival along with that of Nations; and when nations have united in war, peace, alliances and trade, he loves his survival along with the survival of Mankind*».<sup>24</sup> That is why Vico's science had to become a proof of the «historical fact of the Providence», a history of the order which was given to people «quite imperceptibly for them» and often «despite their own propositions» (see above). And this order is as follows: first there were woods, then huts and villages, then cities, palaces, academies. The *struggle of classes for equality* brings about various *forms of government* succeeding to each other. The «poetical» epoch is succeeded by the «heroic» and later by the «human» one. Three kinds of law, three kinds of languages and three forms of government correspond to the three epochs.

With the lapse of time an exaggerated reflexion («barbarity of reflexion») corrupts the morals, the comforts of civilization deprave the citizens, people become unable neither to act nor to bear the responsibility for their acts, and then the epoch of «barbarity come back» steps in very quickly, everything returns back to its original state. Such is, according to Vico, the cycle of the «eternal ideal history» which all nations go through in their origin, development, heyday and downfall. The ideal history never (let us not forget that they do but «converge») coincides completely with the real history. Only after discovering and explaining this «eternal return», this *mechanism* of nations' developing, flourishing and dying, having formulated a *law* of history, i.e. something *ever recurring*, could Vico call his knowledge *science*.

Vico's history happens in a twofold way: as an eternal, *ideal* (*comprehensible*) and *actual* («*made*»). The first is a kind of an immutable timeless law for the second. The ideal and the real histories, the order of ideas and the order of things are the same, yet the two orders, the ideal and the actual one, will never and nowhere coincide completely except in God. The ideal history is confirmed by the facts of Philology, but the philological facts are revealed as such only in the light of the ideal history. *Metaphysics*, which tells us about what ought to be, about Plato's *Republic*, bears witness of the *ideal* history. *Philology* deals with the *actual* history, the «sewage of Romulus'

23. SN, pp. 51–52.

24. SN, p. 135.

city»; it provides knowledge which is *probable*, yet quite *credible*, verified by the means of the *New Art of Analysis*, because, as one of the axioms (XIII) affirms, «similar ideas sprung up in various nations not knowing anything about each other should have a common foundation of truth». The *verum* of the ideal history and the *factum* of the real history converge *never to coincide*.

Such all of the European science *will be*: it will pair what *ought to be* with what *is*, test a scientific *hypothesis* against the *factual* reality. Yet the convergence of the «true» and the «made» seen in *retrospection* makes us return to that ancient moment in Western history when they contradictorily «met» in patristic times in Christian theology as the contemplative logos of the philosophy of Antiquity and the «poetical» (because giving priority to the deed) religious discourse, as *Athenes* and *Jerusalem* in Tertullian's terms.

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## «Fancied bodies to be gods»

Ethical aspects of the mind–body relationship in *The New Science*

ROMANA BASSI

**ABSTRACT:** Vico's passage in the *New Science* about the «midway» role of speech, caught in the relationship between mind and body, is re–interpreted in this paper in order to clarify the grounding of mind and body and their mutual shaping by means of the interrelationship within the element of speech. Such relationship is conducive to opening up a dimension that is ethical as well as communicative. This leads to a reconsideration of the dialectic of truth and falsehood, as well as of that concerning necessity and liberty. A redefinition of the notion of authority, starting from the long range implications of the relationship between mind and body, is also brought forth, showing that such implications are not just moral but also political, a conclusion supported by a parallel reading of a passage by Francis Bacon, one of Vico's probably most neglected main sources («four authors»).

**KEYWORDS:** Vico, Ethics, Mind, Body, Language, Speech.

### 1. Beyond dualism

When, in his *Autobiography*<sup>1</sup>, Vico disputes the ideas of Descartes, he is well aware of the difficulties of a dualism between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, or in his own words, between «two kinds of substances, one extended, the other thinking»<sup>2</sup> held in balance by a mysterious “kernel” (the pineal gland)<sup>3</sup>, functioning as a bridge and point of contact between the two. This is certainly not the place to discuss Vico's criticism of Descartes, and yet, anyone looking to explore the mind–body problem, as delineated in the *New Science* of 1744, could indeed — albeit in a manner far from ideal — open up the question of what it is that performs the role of mediation and provides

1. G. Vico, *Autobiography*, trans. by M.H. Fisch and T.G. Bergin, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, (1944) 1975, pp. 128–138; G. Vico, *Vita*, in Id., *Opere*, edited by A. Battistini, Milano, Mondadori, 1990, pp. 20–23. Also the references to the Italian text of the *Scienza nuova* (1744) indicate the page numbers in the Battistini edition.

2. *Ivi*, p. 129; G. Vico, *Vita*, cit., p. 21: «due generi di sostanze, una distesa, altra intelligente».

3. See R. Descartes, *Passions of the Soul*, artt. XXXI–XXXII.

the nexus of conjunction between mind and body, as Vico understands them. If the Cartesian question is inappropriate, for no other reason than the heterogeneity of the two substances, which is implicitly assumed and in no way fits in with the thinking of Vico, the temptation to pose it does however seem that much more plausible, since the answer is well known. In effect, Vico sustains that «a man is properly only mind, body and speech, and speech stands as it were midway between mind and body»<sup>4</sup>. Presented as an incidental comment at the close of the fourth book, dedicated to «the course the nations run»<sup>5</sup>, the affirmation is connected to a snapshot of ideal eternal history which sees the notion of the body as the source of the «certitude of law» in mute times, thereafter giving place to articulate languages, capable of processing «certain ideas or verbal formulae», and finally the mind as fully developed human reason that «reached its end in the truth of ideas concerning justice»<sup>6</sup>. In short, the system of the three ages is reinterpreted here in terms of a civil ethics of justice that progresses through a first, mute age of the body, a second age of articulate language, and a third age of the mind. It seems however, that to see this sequence only as a succession of discrete steps would represent a substantial misunderstanding of the significance and the role attributed by Vico to speech and language. Accordingly, language will be understood here in its broader meaning, not restricted solely to the aspect of speech, so that it will be possible to show how its function, as an element located between mind and body, proper (*proprium*) to man and establishing the line of demarcation between man and the animal kingdom<sup>7</sup>, has resonances both Aristotelian and Baconian. Focusing attention on language has the merit, in particular — and it is the thesis that will be supported here — of revisiting the question of the

4. NS44 (=New Science 1744), § 1045; G. Vico, *The New Science*, trans. by M.H. Fisch and T.G. Bergin, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1948, p. 353; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 930: «non essendo altro l'uomo, propriamente, che mente, corpo e favella, e la favella essendo come posta in mezzo alla mente e al corpo». This well-known passage provides the starting point for the monograph by G. Cantelli, *Mente corpo linguaggio: saggio sull'interpretazione vichiana del mito*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1986.

5. G. Vico, *The New Science*, cit., p. 299; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 855: «Corso che fanno le nazioni».

6. NS44, § 1045; G. Vico, *The New Science*, cit., p. 353; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 930: «Il certo d'intorno al giusto cominciò ne' tempi muti dal corpo; dipoi, ritruovate le favelle che si dicono articolate, passò alle certe idee, ovvero formole di parole; finalmente, essendosi spiegata tutta la nostra umana ragione, andò a terminare nel vero dell'idee d'intorno al giusto, determinate con la ragione dall'ultime circostanze de' fatti».

7. See R. Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, transl. with an Introduction and Notes by I. Maclean, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, pt. V, pp. 47–49, where, in the comparison between men and beasts concerning language, the question of automatons is also discussed. Concerning the role of language in relation to human nature, see S. Gensini, *Linguaggio e natura umana: Vico, Herder e la sfida di Cartesio*, in *Il corpo corpo e le sue facoltà*. G.B. Vico, ed. by G. Cacciatore, V. Gessa Kurotschka, E. Nuzzo, M. Sanna e A. Scognamiglio, in «Laboratorio dell'ISPF» ([http://www.ispf-lab.cnr.it/article/Saggi\\_Atti\\_031104](http://www.ispf-lab.cnr.it/article/Saggi_Atti_031104)), I (2005), pp. 56–78.



relationship between mind and body from the gnoseological perspective, on which Descartes had configured it<sup>8</sup> in dualistic terms, and redefining it in an area which, founded by and in language, becomes effectively a practical, civil and political sphere, and it is only in this that the «integrated structure of the mind/body relationship» can be discerned<sup>9</sup>. This said, it is not the intention here to reflect on language per se, and much less on poetic logic in particular; rather, attention will be given step by step only to those aspects that are important for the purpose of clarifying how it happens — according to Vico, through language — that the relationship between mind and body enables man to perceive the sphere of morality.

## 2. “Speech midway between mind and body”

There is a risk of Vico’s affirmation being interpreted, if emphasized as a key to understanding the tripartite scansion provided by Vico himself, in the sense that language might represent the constitutive trait of a specific and circumscribed stage of human history. If one were then to bear in mind the notional mutually opposed poles coinciding with the barbarism of sense and the barbarism of reflection, language could even be seen in terms of an Aristotelian mean. Between the opposite excesses of being «almost all body»<sup>10</sup> on the one hand, and the intemperances of over-refined and ultra-sharp minds on the other, language would serve as a balancing chamber, the gold standard of a finally virtuous equilibrium between one and the other. In reality, this is not how Vico sees the role played by language in connection with mind and body. The fact of being placed «between mind and body» does not mean, or at least does not mean only, that language occupies a position equidistant from them: *geometrically midway between* the one and the other. If anything, it would seem to indicate language as sharing in the functions of mind and body, «placed between» in the sense of playing a central role, to the extent that all traits of humanity appear to turn on this same hinge. Viewed in this light, it is language that becomes interwoven with mind and body, in varying degrees and in different ways, depending on the dominance of one or the other, and on that

8. R. Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method*, cit., pt. IV, p. 29: «I thereby concluded that I was a *substance* whose whole *essence* or nature resides only in thinking, and which, in order to exist, has no need of place and is not dependent on any material thing. Accordingly this ‘I’, that is to say, the Soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body and is even easier to know than the body; and would not stop being everything it is, even if the body were not to exist».

9. See G. Cacciatore, *Le facoltà della mente ‘rintuzzata dentro il corpo’*, in *Il corpo e le sue facoltà*, cit., pp. 91–105, p. 104.

10. NS44 § 570; G. Vico, *The New Science*, cit., p. 280; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 691: «quasi tutto corpo»; see also NS44 § 819.

changeable balance of compensatory dynamics which characterizes them. Thus, a lack of rational capability is described by Vico in terms of a «wholly corporeal imagination»<sup>11</sup>, of a mind «immersed in the senses», «buffeted by the passions», «buried in the body», whilst the sharpness of a «refined» mind presages the self-referential souring of a form of consciousness in which the body, the senses and the imagination seem to have lost sight of their role.

Language is born spontaneously informing mind and body, given that these are born *in* language and *by virtue* of language. In effect, it would be wrong to see language as a vehicle between a mind and a body understood as entities that are already given, previously formed<sup>12</sup>, constituted independently and irrespective of language, when in reality it is a dynamic element that shapes the one and the other and, in so doing, actually creates them and gives them structure. This process whereby language gives shape and form means that the body and the mind, at their very origin, are already intrinsically interrelated — or in effect, they had no existence before being placed in relation one with another — and that the form of their relationship is to be found, precisely, in language. This is the basis of the «integrative» solution<sup>13</sup>, as it has been called, of the relationship between mind and body as seen by Vico. On the other hand, self-evidently, neither has language any existence prior to its involvement in the relationship between body and mind; thus, the loop of their co-implication is established.

### 3. Body and language

It is worth asking: what does it signify that language creates and shapes body and mind alike, from a purely human perspective? The statement may appear obvious, at least when considering a mind that Vico delineates as nascent and assuming its structure through language, given that

11. NS44, § 376; G. Vico, *The New Science*, cit., p. 105; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 570: «i primi uomini delle nazioni gentili, come fanciulli del nascente gener umano (...) dalla lor idea criavan essi le cose, ma con infinita differenza però dal criare che fa Iddio: perocché Iddio nel suo purissimo intendimento, conosce e, conoscendole, cria le cose; essi, per la loro robusta ignoranza, il facevano in forza d'una corpulentissima fantasia, e, perch'era corpulentissima il facevano con una maravigliosa sublimità, tal e tanta che perturbava all'eccesso essi medesimi che fingendo le si criavano, onde furon detti 'poeti', che lo stesso in greco suona che "criatori"».

12. This element is also discussed by Vico in his criticism of Regius and the Cartesian mechanism, see G. Vico, *Autobiography*, cit., p. 128: «for he [Regius] too sets up in nature a principle falsely postulated: namely, body already formed»; p. 130 «the anatomists do not find the Cartesian man in nature»; G. Vico, *Vita*, cit., pp. 21–22: «egli [Regius] pone in natura un principio pur di falsa posizione — il corpo già formato — e «l'uom di Renato dagli anatomici non si ritruova in natura».

13. V. Gessa Kurotschka, *La morale poetica. Vico, Aristotele e le qualità sensibili della mente*, in *Il corpo e le sue facoltà*, cit., pp. 151–174.

in prelinguistic beasts the mind was not in any sense developed. Less evident, however, is the extent to which this same statement may also apply to the body, given that beasts qualify as «almost all body» and, it would seem, corporeal in a manner describable not only as prelinguistic but also a-linguistic, discerning neither the absence of language nor the need for it. At this pre-communicative and prelinguistic stage, it cannot be sustained that the corporeality of beasts is in reality a human characteristic. The «all body» nature of giants is a bestial trait<sup>14</sup>, enormity, a mark of excess, «sprung from barbarism, which accords well with hugeness»<sup>15</sup>: in view of which one speaks consequently of «disproportionate» giants, and not yet of men. The threshold that marks the passage from the bestial condition to the human condition — binding the two while distinguishing them — seems to be conceived by Vico purely in relation to the recognition, first outside of itself then finally within itself, of the mind alongside the body. This is a realization that must be made necessarily by the mind and is rendered possible at the outset through the imaginative and corporealizing resources of intelligence. Accordingly, a body that does not make room for the mind and for language is a body both bestial and essentially non-human, extraneous to the sphere of freedom and morality<sup>16</sup>. Besides, Aristotle had already established in his *Politics*, connecting human language and notion of justice in a framework of comparison between the animal world and the human, in a passage<sup>17</sup> that

14. See Z. Hanafi, *Vico's Monstrous Body*, in Id., *The Monster in the Machine: Magic, Medicine, and the Marvelous in the Time of the Scientific Revolution*, Durham (N.C.), Duke University Press, 2000, pp. 135–186.

15. NS44 § 45; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 28, G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 763: «parto della barbarie, la quale si comporta col grande», p. 456); see also § 692; «they brought forth from their giant bodies the form of our just corporation», G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 234 («edussero da lor corpi giganteschi la forma delle nostre giuste corporation»).

16. This is one of the motives for criticism of Descartes: G. Vico, *Autobiography*, cit., p. 130 «in respect of the unity of its parts the philosophy of Descartes is not at all a consistent system; for his physics calls for a metaphysics that should set up a single kind of substance, the corporeal, operating, as we have said, by necessity (...) nor did his metaphysics yield any moral philosophy suited to the Christian religion. Certainly the few things he himself wrote on the subject do not constitute such a philosophy, and his treatise on the *Passions* is more useful to medicine than to ethics. Even Father Malebranche was unable to work out from them a system of Christian morality, and the *Thoughts* of Pascal are mere scattered lights»; G. Vico, *Vita*, cit., p. 22: «nell'unità delle sue parti, di nulla costa in un sistema la filosofia di Renato, perché alla sua fisica converrebbe una metafisica che stabilisse un solo genere di sostanza corporea, operante, come si è detto, per necessità (...) né la sua metafisica fruttò punto alcuna morale comoda alla cristiana religione, perché non solo non la compongono le poche cose che egli sparsamente ne ha scritto, e 'l trattato delle *Passioni* più serve alla medicina che alla morale, ma neanche il padre Malebranche vi seppe lavorare sopra un sistema di moral cristiana, ed i *Pensieri* del Pascale sono pur lumi sparsi».

17. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a; Aristotle, *The Complete Works*, revised Oxford Translation, edited by J. Barnes, vol. 2, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 1988. As concerning the influence of Aristotle on Vichian practical philosophy, see E. Nuzzo, *Vico e l'Aristotele pratico*, in «Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiani», XIV–XV (1984–1985), pp. 63–129; G. Cacciatore, *Filosofia 'civile' e filosofia*

presents many aspects of affinity with the words of Vico, as indicated here:

man is the only animal who has the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals (for their nature attains to the perception of pleasure and pain and the intimation of them to one another, and no further), the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and the inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like.

Therefore, even if the body in its bestial manifestation may predate language, it becomes a human body<sup>18</sup> in the true sense only through a process of which the *raison d'être* is, as will become clear, primarily and broadly linguistic.

#### 4. Mind and language

The prelinguistic body of the beast has its parallel on the level of the mind in «wild education»<sup>19</sup> and in «thinking under the strong impulsion of violent passions, as beasts do»<sup>20</sup>. Directing one's gaze toward the first glimmer of humanity, accordingly, means moving away from the consideration of these minds, «entirely immersed in the senses, buffeted by the passions, buried in the body»<sup>21</sup>. From this condition they emerge processing the «first human thinking»<sup>22</sup>, which is the notion of divinity, or rather a thought process whereby they «fancied bodies to be gods»<sup>23</sup>. The mechanism behind

*'pratica' in Vico*, in *La filosofia pratica tra metafisica e antropologia nell'età di Wolff e Vico*, edited by G. Cacciatore, V. Gessa Kurotschka, H. Poser e M. Sanna, Napoli, Alfredo Guida, 1999, pp. 25–44; P. Girard, *Comunidad y política: Vico critico de Aristoteles*, in *Pensar para el nuevo siglo. G. Vico y la cultura europea*, ed. by E. Hidalgo–Serna, M. Marassi, J.M. Sevilla, J. Villalobos, Napoli, La città del Sole, 2001, 3 voll., pp. 797–812; V. Gessa Kurotschka, *La morale poetica. Vico, Aristotele e le qualità sensibili della mente*, cit., pp. 151–174.

18. See G. Patella, *Senso, corpo, poesia. Giambattista Vico e l'origine dell'estetica moderna*, Milano, Guerini, 1995.

19. NS44, § 195; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 65; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 511: «educazione ferina».

20. NS44, § 340; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 90; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 547: «pensare a forti spinte di violentissime passioni, ch'è il pensare da bestie». For the implications relating to the question of the soul of beasts and reasons for affinity with Locke, see G. Costa, *Vico e Locke*, in «Giornale critico della filosofia italiana», XLIX (1970), pp. 346–359; J. Nagy, *Vico contra Hobbes*, in «Información Filosófica», IX (2012), 18, pp. 101–124.

21. NS44, § 378; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 106; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 572: «tutte immerse ne' sensi, tutte rintuzzate dalle passioni, tutte seppellite ne' corpi».

22. NS44, § 338; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 89; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 546: «primo pensiero umano».

23. NS44, § 9; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 7; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 421: «fantasticarono i corpi esser dèi».

this operation is the projective mechanism of animism, whereby the mind finds itself «naturally inclined by the senses to see itself externally in the body»<sup>24</sup>. This represents a form-generating, gestaltic principle, in view of how it is able to structure perception, and on the basis of this same principle Vico justifies the first imaginative activity both ontogenetically and phylogenetically.

Thus there emerges the first thought wherein the mind projects itself into the illusion of divinity:

the nature of the human mind leads it to attribute its own nature to the effect (...) their nature was that of men all robust bodily strength, who expressed their very violent passions by shouting and grumbling, they pictured the sky to themselves as a great animated body, which in that aspect they called Jove (...) who by the whistling of his bolts and the noise of his thunder was attempting to tell them something<sup>25</sup>.

The deity imagined in this way is thought of as existing in relation to, and in some way dependent on man: it is attributed a will, an intention to communicate and an aspect of providence<sup>26</sup>. Vico specifies in effect that the divinities, in the pagan conception, are constructs of the human mind, which projects itself beyond itself into nature, fashioning entities<sup>27</sup> which, unlike the «true God», are «imagined as composed of body and of free

24. NS44, §§ 236–237; G. Vico, *The New Science*, pp. 70; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., pp. 518–519: «inchinata naturalmente co' sensi a vedersi fuori nel corpo».

25. NS44, § 377; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 105; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 571: «la natura della mente umana porta ch'ella attribuisca all'effetto la sua natura (...) e la natura loro era, in tale stato, d'uomini tutti robuste forze di corpo, che, urlando, brontolando, spiegavano le loro violentissime passioni; si finsero il cielo esser un gran corpo animato, che per tal aspetto chiamarono Giove (...) che col fischio de' fulmini e col fragore de' tuoni volesse dir loro qualche cosa».

26. NS44, § 9; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 7; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 421: «fantasticarono i corpi esser dèi, che perciò con segni sensibili avvisassero le cose avvenire alle genti»; NS44, § 385; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 109; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 576: «fondarono le nazioni con contemplare Dio per l'attributo di provvedente».

27. For this reason Vico is able to sustain that «the first science to be learned should be mythology or the interpretation of fables; for, as we shall see, all the histories of the gentiles have their beginnings in fables, which were the first histories of the gentile nations. By such a method the beginnings of the sciences as well as of the nations are to be discovered, for they sprang from the nations and from no other source. It will be shown throughout this work that they had their beginnings in the public needs or utilities of the peoples and that they were later perfected as acute individuals applied their reflection to them. This is the proper starting-point for universal history, which all scholars say is defective in its beginnings», NS44, § 51; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 31; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., pp. 460–461: «la prima scienza da doversi apparare sia la mitologia, ovvero l'interpersione delle favole (perché, come si vedrà, tutte le storie gentilesche hanno favolosi i principi), e che le favole furono le prime storie delle nazioni gentili. E con sì fatto metodo rinvenire i principi come delle nazioni così delle scienze, le quali da esse nazioni son uscite e non altrimenti: come per tutta quest'opera sarà dimostro ch'alle pubbliche necessità o utilità de' popoli elleno hanno avuto i lor incominciamenti, e poi, con applicarvi la riflessione acuti particolari uomini, si sono perfezionate. E quindi cominciar debbe la storia universale, che tutti i dotti dicono mancare ne' suoi principi».

mind»<sup>28</sup>. The mind–body relationship is therefore placed by Vico first of all outside of man himself: well before seeing it in himself, man perceives it in the deified natural world, as a mind imagined to be godly, existing in conjunction with a physical body that appears as an element of nature.

However, since the relationship with the deity is connoted from the outset in terms of communication, the first thought of humanity to evolve is the thought of communicative relation. But the relationship in question is therefore no longer only that between man and an imagined divinity: rather, it is that originating from the first confrontation of the body with the mind (in a movement rising from the dread of the thunderbolt to the thought of Jove) and of the mind with the body (in a mirrored movement descending from the thought of Jove — effectively a projection of the human mind — to the impulse of conation acting on the body): «it humbled not only their bodies but their minds as well, by creating in them this frightful idea of Jove. (The idea was of course not formed by reasoning, for they were not yet capable of that, but by the senses, which, however false in the matter, were true enough in form which was the logic conformable to such natures as theirs.) This idea, by making them god-fearing, was the source of their poetic morality»<sup>29</sup>. This thought, one might also say, is therefore the first thought of the mind perceiving itself as if from the outside, or rather, in its first act of thinking, perceiving itself, the mind begins to shape itself in a relationship with the body on the one hand and with the object of its thought — an object to which it is bound — on the other. And yet, this is a thought that the mind could not originate of itself. Rather, it comes from the body: from the senses that hear the thunder of Jove, and the passion of the fear that this instils. Fear and terror are what moves the mind, not knowing the cause of the phenomenon, to attribute its own character traits to that which is outside itself. In the first thought processed by the «embodied mind»<sup>30</sup>, accordingly, the constitutively integrated structure of

28. NS44, §§ 334–335; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 86; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 543: «Perché tutte le nazioni credono in una divinità provvedente, onde quattro e non più si hanno potuto trovare religioni primarie per tutta la scorsa de' tempi e per tutta l'ampiezza di questo mondo civile: una degli ebrei, e quindi altra de' cristiani, che credono nella divinità d'una mente infinita libera; la terza de' gentili, che la credono di più dèi, immaginati composti di corpo e di mente libera (...) la quarta ed ultima de' maomettani, che la credono d'un dio infinita mente libera in un infinito corpo, perché aspettano piaceri de' sensi per premi nell'altra vita. Niuna credette in un dio tutto corpo o pure in un dio tutto mente la quale non fusse libera».

29. NS44, § 502; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 152; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 643: «non meno che i corpi, egli atterrò le di loro menti, con fingersi tal idea sì spaventosa di Giove, la quale — se non co' raziocini, de' quali non erano ancor capaci, co' sensi, quantunque falsi nella materia, veri però nella loro forma (che fu la logica conforme a sì fatte loro nature) — loro germogliò la morale poetica con fargli pii».

30. Cfr. V. Gessa Kurotschka, *La morale poetica. Vico, Aristotele e le qualità sensibili della mente*, cit., «mente incorporata», p. 166.

the relationship between mind and body is already delineated, and it is a structure in which the mind finds itself externally of itself, not so much as a will moved by passions, but as a linguistic, communicative and relational intention. The bond of such a relationality, thereafter, reverberating through the body, applies control through conational impulse: «from this thought must have sprung the impulse proper to the human will, to hold in check the motions impressed on the mind by the body (...) this control over the motion of their bodies is certainly an effect of the freedom of the human will, and thus of free will (...) to endow bodies with impulse amounts to giving them freedom to regulate their motions»<sup>31</sup>.

### 5. The mind–body relationship: truth and falsehood, necessity and freedom

This original formulation of the relationship between mind and body, which in their typically human form are born and shaped in the process of relating one to another, generates a series of implications that can be mentioned here only in brief. First of all, this is a relationship which, in the forms that determine its structure, resides at the origin of humanity and sets in motion the dynamism of history. This means that ideal eternal history can also be understood in terms of a relationship between the modifications of the human mind and the demands of the body, and their mutual crystallization into the linguistic forms that reflect this same relationship. It is also, in effect, an exchange of communication and language, leading to the vertical relationship between man and deity, at the same time disclosing the social and civil dimension of the relationship with his own kind. Language presents itself constitutively as a mode of readiness to relate, and even before this, as the perception of a relational and communicative intentionality<sup>32</sup> attributed to the deity; in short, as the indispensable prerequisite for any possible relational engagement. Thus, the human mind comes into being at the moment and for the purpose of allowing relations, or rather with the will and intention of understanding them. But also, at the same time, a readiness to be drawn into the dimension of relationality, of community, which becomes ethics and politics. These traits are elements that connote

31. NS44, § 340; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 90; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 547: «da cotal pensiero dovette nascere il conato, il qual è proprio dell'umana volontà, di tener in freno i moti impressi alla mente dal corpo (...) questo infrenar il moto de' corpi certamente egli è un effetto della libertà dell'umano arbitrio, e sì della libera volontà (...) dar conato a' corpi tanto è quanto dar loro libertà di regolar i lor moti».

32. Vd. R. Bassi, *Tra natura e mito: la genesi dei costumi nella Scienza nuova*, in *Ethos e natura. Ricerche sul significato dell'etica per la Modernità*, edited by F. Biasutti, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 2009, pp. 321–357.

and characterize the human being — that which distinguishes man from beast. Outside of the linguistic sphere that establishes the structure of the human as member of a community, there is no possibility — according to Vico — for development of the human mind, and above all, no way that it can become perspicuous to itself, to achieve consciousness.

Man emerges from the pre-human condition of isolation by way of the relationship with a deity, of which the communicative nature is attribution on the part of the human mind, and this creates the common basis allowing relations with other bodies and other minds. But this relationship is established through an act of deictic and pronominal naming<sup>33</sup> (the secular homologue of Adamic naming) of which the subject is nature and the partners in dialogue are others of the same kind (in effect, those who become similar by virtue of being named), with whom a form of common language is established. The first form of language through mute actions, which is the divine language of the Jove thunderbolt, is followed by the theory of gods qualified by their names<sup>34</sup>, i.e. by the linguistic act<sup>35</sup> of naming that brings them into being and establishes a shared symbolic code.

The resulting language shares the characteristic of corporeality, and in the *New Science* this methodologically becomes a hermeneutical and philological principle on the basis of which it is established that the metaphors taken from the body are the original metaphors<sup>36</sup>. This then is a language which, spurred by ignorance, gives being to things, is imaginative, fanciful, figurative and poetic: it uses words to denote things perceived by the senses, animating them, embodying them. Minds that are «preoccupied with particulars»<sup>37</sup> take in every reality in its aspects of perceptibility, individuality and concreteness, to the point of raising the particular to the fantastical

33. NS44, § 450; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 136; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 618: «S'innoltrarono a formar i pronomi, imperocché l'interiezioni sfogano le passioni proprie, lo che si fa anco da soli, ma i pronomi servono per comunicare le nostre idee con altrui d'intorno a quelle cose che co' nomi propri o noi non sappiamo appellare o altri non sappia intendere. E i pronomi, pur quasi tutti, in tutte le lingue la maggior parte son monosillabi; il primo de' quali (...) dovet'esser quello di che n'è rimasto quel luogo d'oro d'Ennio: "Aspice hoc sublime cadens, quem omnes invocant Iovem" ov'è detto "hoc" invece di "coelum", e ne restò in volgar latino "Luciscit hoc iam" invece di "albescit coelum"».

34. NS44, § 175; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 62; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 507: «Varrone ebbe la diligenza di raccogliere trentamila nomi di dèi, i quali nomi si rapportavano ad altrettante bisogne della vita o naturale o morale o iconomica o finalmente civile de' primi tempi».

35. Cfr. J.L. Austin, *How to do things with words*: the William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955, edited by J.O. Urmson and M. Sbisà, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980.

36. NS44, §§ 404–405; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 116; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 588: «somialtanze prese da' corpi a significare lavori di menti astratte (...) 'n tutte le lingue la maggior parte dell'espressioni d'intorno a cose inanimate sono fatte con trasporti del corpo umano e delle sue parti e degli umani sensi e dell'umane passioni».

37. NS44, § 629; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 210; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 728: «menti particolarissime».



universal, a universal incarnate in the particular and constituting one of the modalities whereby the mind–body relationship takes shape, where the mind succeeds in perceiving the uniformity<sup>38</sup> of the universal having available only the particulars detected by the senses.

The “fables” generated by this perception go beyond the falseness of content that connotes them, showing themselves to be «true in form». In posing the question of «falseness in content» of such notions, Vico addresses the gnoseological and epistemological aspect, affirming that, understood on this level, the content of truth in the «first thought of humanity» is non–existent. In the relationship between mind and body originally constituted, through a linguistic and metaphorizing process, an accumulation of falsehoods is built up, strictly speaking. The mind recognizes nothing there that is true. Nothing that is clear and distinct in Cartesian terms. Nothing that is demonstrable, or dependable. And yet this non–existence of truth for Vico becomes a criterion for action and reveals itself to be functional for the guidance of moral conduct<sup>39</sup>. That which is epistemologically false may have inferences of truth on the moral level: the relationship between mind and body, as configured in the development of thought concerning myths, arises not as true on the gnoseological level (because it cannot be so), but as valid on the moral level. The demand of the mind for knowledge is met by a response which, while false on the level of cognitive value, is nonetheless poetic and credible, a «credible impossibility — it is impossible that bodies should be minds, yet it was believed that the thundering sky was Jove»<sup>40</sup>. This is a «generative error»<sup>41</sup> in which truth is furnished by the recognition of the relationship. «Truth in form»<sup>42</sup> has the effect of binding

38. NS44, §§ 204–205; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 66; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., pp. 512–513: «D. XLVII: La mente umana è naturalmente portata a dilettersi dell’uniforme. Questa dignità, a proposito delle favole, si conferma dal costume c’ha il volgo, il quale degli uomini nell’una o nell’altra parte famosi, posti in tali o tali circostanze, per ciò che loro in tale stato conviene, ne finge acconce favole. Le quali sono verità d’idea in conformità del merito di coloro de’ quali il volgo le finge; e in tanto sono false talor in fatti, in quanto al merito di quelli non sia dato ciò di che essi son degni. Talché, se bene vi si rifletta, il vero poetico è un vero metafisico, a petto del quale il vero fisico, che non vi si conforma, dee tenersi a luogo di falso. Dallo che esce questa importante considerazione in ragion poetica: che ’l vero capitano di guerra, per esempio, è ’l Goffredo che finge Torquato Tasso; e tutti i capitani che non si conformano in tutto e per tutto a Goffredo, essi non sono veri capitani di guerra».

39. See F. Botturi, *Ermeneutica del mito ed esperienza etica in Giambattista Vico*, in *Pensar para el nuevo siglo*, cit., pp. 275–293; R. Bassi, *Favole vere e severe. Sulla fondazione antropologica del mito nell’opera vichiana*, pref. by A. Battistini, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e letteratura, 2004.

40. NS44, § 383; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 108; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 575: «impossibile credibile, quanto egli è impossibile ch’i corpi sieno menti (e fu creduto che ’l cielo tonante si fusse Giove)».

41. Cfr. H. White, *L’errore creativo e la logica poetica: Vico e la produzione del genere*, in «Iride», XV (2002), 37, pp. 513–519.

42. Or also «ideal truths», see NS44, § 205; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 66; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 513: «verità d’idea».

man (to a society, to a language, to a symbolic system of meanings, to a political model, to a religious belief) and represents the productive element of this falseness.

It opens the door to a moral dimension in which, if the body is an agent constrained by necessity, the mind is definable as free, and only from their relationship<sup>43</sup> can there emerge the thinking that processes, as moral truth, the acknowledgement of a relationship where man is dependent, with respect to the needs and utilities personified by deities. The true form of the first thought of humanity would therefore consist in the recognition of this relationship of subordination to divine authority, understood thereafter as the principle and source of human authority. Only this recognition is a guarantee of freedom, no longer natural but strictly moral, in the eyes of Vico. The fact that the relationship in question may be improperly identified is a mere question of content, as in the case of Diana, for example, where in reality, it would be on the water of the eternal springs that man depended: but what matters for Vico is the recognition of the bond of dependence, and it is this that impacts on the resulting sphere of action, social relations and moral freedom.

If we look to reflect on the implications associated with this recognition of a relationship involving dependence on authority, we will see that it is first and foremost the recognition of a form of relationship. The beast emerges from the condition of solipsism (and solipsism, in the eyes of Vico, is a malaise affecting not only isolated beasts but also those who live in the condition of modernity) and the relationship, once recognized (and shaped) by the mind, bears fruit<sup>44</sup>. Indeed, even a relationship with anything that has a false content of truth is generative, because far more important than the content itself, is that there should be «ideal truth». And the first such truth processed by the mind — given the impossibility of knowing itself — is that which enables it to see itself in relation to a mind located outside of itself,

43. NS44, § 819; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 280: «in that human indigence, the peoples, who were almost all body and almost no reflection, must have been all vivid sensation in perceiving particulars, strong imagination in apprehending and magnifying them, sharp wit in referring them to their imaginative genera and robust memory in retaining them. It is true that these faculties appertain to the mind, but they have their roots in the body and draw their strength from it»; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 827: «in tal umana bisogna i popoli, i quali erano quasi tutti corpo e quasi niuna riflessione, fussero tutti vivido senso in sentir i particolari, forte fantasia in apprendergli ed ingrandirli, acuto ingegno nel rapportargli a' loro generi fantastici, e robusta memoria nel ritenergli. Le quali facoltà appartengono, egli è vero, alla mente, ma mettono le loro radici nel corpo e prendon vigore dal corpo».

44. Here Vico overturns the argument of Bacon which, accompanied by quotations from the Holy Scriptures, had taken the want of fruits delivered by a theory, or by knowledge, as proof of its falseness (see F. Bacon, *De Augmentis scientiarum*, I). Neither does he refrain from levelling at Polybius and Bayle the accusation that, with their theories on the possible existence of an atheistic society, they had fed a falsehood that does not bear fruit.

which is divine and shapes man as a being who, as his first act of germinal freedom, seeks of himself to relate to something other than himself.

However, with regard to this notion of divine authority, one is bound to observe that the aspect of most interest to Vico is the connotation that makes such authority the source of civil order<sup>45</sup> and of the dimension of community. It is thus that, in the course that nations run, this authority is increasingly taken by humanity upon itself and, being no longer delegated to a mind outside of itself, becomes effectively the authority of the mind which, in the self-knowledge now acquired by the main, is exercised first on the body, then on the will, and ultimately on itself. It will not perhaps be irrelevant to mention that Vico found in the writings of Francis Bacon a passage likewise discussing the question of authority and prompted by ethical considerations, which reaches a similar conclusion:

From morall vertue, let vs passe on to matter of power and commandement, and consider whether in right reason, there be any comparable with that, where-with knowledge inuesteth and crowneth mans nature. We see the dignitie, of the commandement, is according to the dignitie of the commaunded: to haue commaundement ouer beasts, as Heard-men haue, is a thing contemptible: to haue commandement ouer children, as Schoole-Masters haue, is a matter of small honor: to haue commandement ouer Gally-slaues, is a disparagement, rather than an honour. Neither is the commaundement of Tyrants, much better ouer people, which haue put off the Generositie of their mindes: And therefore it was euer holden, that honors in free Monarchies and Common-wealths, had a sweetnesse more, than in Tyrannies, because the commandement extendeth more ouer the wils of men, and not only ouer their deeds and seruices. (...) But yet the commandement of knowledge, is yet higher, than the commandement ouer the will: for it is a commaundement ouer the reason, beleefe, and vnderstanding of man, which is the highest part of the minde, and giueth law to the will it selfe. For there is no power on earth, which setteth vp a throne or chaire of Estate in the spirits, and soules of men, and in their cogitations, imaginations, opinions, and beleefes: but knowledge and learning<sup>46</sup>.

The turning point in Vico from the ethical and communication standpoint, when considering the relationship between mind and body, thus delineates the dimension of the relationship and the recognition of authority as the «bounds of human reason. And let him who would transgress them be-

45. NS44, § 1100; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 378; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 963: «essendo usciti dall'ordine naturale, ch'è quello della giustizia, quivi i clienti loro si ammutinarono. Ma, perché senz'ordine (ch'è tanto dir senza Dio) la società umana non può reggere nemmeno un momento, menò la provvidenza naturalmente i padri delle famiglie ad unirsi con le loro attenenze in ordini contro quelli».

46. F. Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. with introduction, notes and commentary by M. Kiernan, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2000, pp. 50–51. Vico could have read the passage in the Latin version of *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, I, 47. See Aristotele, *Politica*, 1254b.

ware lest he transgress all humanity»<sup>47</sup>. The danger of which Vico seeks to raise awareness is that earthly decline of people into a state whereby «in the midst of their greatest festivities, though physically thronging together»<sup>48</sup>, fuelled by selfishness, they live, in a sort of Dantesque *contrappasso*, «like wild beasts in a deep solitude of spirit and will». The problem of a barbarism of reflection is detected into secluded minds ruling each over itself, without acknowledging any other source beyond itself for the criteria of moral and civil life. This was a risk already known to the Latins, who defined it in the aphorism: *magna civitas, magna solitudo*. But Vico saw that the root of the problem is not at all existential, rather moral<sup>49</sup> instead. The «deep solitude of will» brings about a loneliness that is not the mark of self sufficiency and independence that Aristotle might have attributed to a deity. Lack of participation in a common moral world throws humans back into a life more suited to wild beasts, because the regression is made possible and brought about by a loss of freedom stemming from the failure to participate in the civil conversation. The end of the moral community is this reduction to a mass of bodies sharing no common language, no common will anymore.

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47. NS44, § 360; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 94; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 555: «confini dell'umana ragione. E chiunque se ne voglia trar fuori, egli veda di non trarsi fuori da tutta l'umanità».

48. NS44, § 1106; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 381; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 967: «maggiore celebrità o folla de' corpi».

49. The question had in fact already been addressed from this aspect by Aristotle (*Pol.* 1253a), and Vico also found it discussed by Francis Bacon in his essay *On friendship*, which has strong lexical as well as thematic parallels with Vico's exposition. See R. Bassi, "Either a wilde Beast or a God": Francis Bacon interprete di Aristotele, in *Aristotele e la storia*, edited by C. Rossitto, A. Coppola, F. Biasutti, Padua, CLEUP, pending publication.

## Impersonality, Shame, and Origins of Sociality\*

Or Nova Scientia ex Constantia Philologiae Eruenda

JULIA V. IVANOVA

**ABSTRACT:** This article examines the key notions of G. Vico's doctrine of nature, anthropology and historical process using the category of modality in its interpretation by Nancy S. Struever. Our study is focused on the semantic shifts of *socialitas*, a concept extremely important for Vichian anthropology and philosophy of history, which occurred between Vico's earlier *De Constantia jurisprudentis* and the *NS 44*. These shifts are placed in the context of a more general process, that of transformation and complication of the modality of the Neapolitan's texts, conceptualizing the notion of history. In our opinion, this approach might not only explain the contradictory character of the sociality in the latest edition of *New Science*, but it could reveal a larger perspective in Vichian studies. It seems that the comparative analysis of conceptions put forward in Vico's earlier writings, and modal characteristics of the texts where these conceptions are laid down would be promising a task for future researchers. Such investigations would substantially enhance the study of the modern political discourses.

In this study we proceed from the assumption that the metaphysical and historical meaning of some passages in *NS 1744* can be clarified by reference to Vico's earlier work *De constantia philologiae*, the final part of the dilogy *De constantia jurisprudentis*<sup>1</sup> (1720–2). J. D. Shaeffer quipped that if «*De uno* becomes Vico's Old Testament», then «*De constantia* is analogous to the New Testament».<sup>2</sup> Indeed, not only does this treatise contain individual

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1. The quotations from *On the Constancy of the Jurisprudent* are taken from: G.B. Vico, *Della costanza del giurisperdente*, Italian version with Latin text by Francesco Sav. Pomodoro, Naples, Stamperia de' fratelli Morano, 1861 (hereinafter referred to as *CJ*). At the beginning of *CJ* Vico provided reasoning for dividing all sciences into two types: the subject of some disciplines is necessity as a property of nature, the subject of others is the free choice made by the human will. Vico referred the natural necessity to the competence of philosophy, and the voluntary choice to that of philology: «Et quando *Disciplinae* omnes ad haec *duo summa genera* revocantur, ut alia circa *necessaria naturae*, alia circa *placita humani arbitrii* versentur, illa pro nostro argumento ad *Philosophiam*, haec ad *Philologiam* retulerimus. . . » — *CJ*, 4.

2. J.D. Shaeffer, *Vico's «Il diritto universal» and Roman Law*, in «New Vico Studies», 19 (2001), p. 53.

passages that have a strikingly major tonality, but is also penetrated by an overall spirit of evangelical optimism, which is particularly evident if one compares the key points of *De constantia philologiae* with those fragments of the last version of *Scienza Nuova* that clearly grow out of this earlier work and contain textual parallels with the text of 1720–2.

*De constantia philologiae* (hereinafter referred to as *CPh*) contains a relatively integral version of what was to become later the linchpin of *Scienza Nuova* (hereinafter referred to as *NS 1744*), although this draft of the Vichian concept of history certainly fell short of the complexity which it assumed in the 1744 treatise. In any case, *CPh* already offered a discourse on the dark, the fabulous and the historic times, on the divine, heroic and civilian epochs. For the *CPh* descriptions of each of these periods, the same is true that social science historians usually say about the latest version of *NS 1744*: in Vico's interpretation, each epoch has its own version of sociology. The social structure of each epoch is not, or only very indirectly, related to the social fabric of the preceding and subsequent stages of human development.<sup>3</sup> In *CPh*, actions of major historic actors are assigned their own local logic that cannot be immediately understood from the perspective of a different historical epoch; its understanding requires not only competence and erudition, but also an ascetic effort. In the 1744 version of *Scienza Nuova*, these «particular logic» of historic actors' behavior (the Fathers of the heroic age, citizens of republics, etc.) underwent no significant changes. However, in a number of very important points, comparison between *CPh* and *NS 1744* shows shifts in the contextualization and the assessment Vico provided for these actors' behavior.

In fact, tracing the changes that Vico's major theses, themes and concepts undergo from work to work is probably one of the most productive strategies for studying the legacy of the Neapolitan thinker. Important changes include added and eliminated contents as well as what Nancy Struever has called the *modality* of texts, emphasizing the role of modal logic elements in her interpretation of early modern socio-political texts. We shall offer some comments on Struever's concept because her ideas inform our method of analysis and can serve as its theoretical justification.

Struever has set herself the task of constructing a structural history of humanistic rhetoric. She believes that this history ought to do more than just describe the evolution of the Renaissance humanistic speech craft, because the Early Modern Age between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries saw a radical renewal of the ways of thinking about society, history and man as

3. He [Vico — J.I.] has for every type of society an entirely different social theory and that for the best of reasons: because they are in fact so different in their basic constitutions — S. Werner, *The Theoretical and Practical Relevance of Vico's Sociology for Today*, in: «Social Research», 43 (1976), 4, p. 821.

their subject. The language of inquiry plays the central role in this paradigm shift of ethical and socio-political thinking. The historical sequence constructed by Struever begins with Petrarch and ends with Vico. It includes Lorenzo Valla, Nicholas of Cusa, Niccolò Machiavelli, Michel Montaigne, and Thomas Hobbes. The researcher defines *relocations of inquiry* as the driving principle of this history, meaning such transformations of language — and, of course, simultaneous metamorphoses of research subject — that offer the best opportunity to grasp and explain the spatial (both in the literal and metaphorical sense of the word) components of change: the shifting of the research focus from person as abstraction in classical ethics to one's own inner world (in Petrarch's works), the shifting of genre (Petrarch's breaking the university thought monopoly and traditional genres of academic culture by discussing moral issues in private correspondence that was overtly intimate, even if prepared for publication), the shifting of disciplinary boundaries (applying philology and its methods to the study of ethical issues in Lorenzo Valla). Petrarch opened up new territory for research in ethics; Valla and Cusanus were experimenting with a conceptual apparatus and a language suitable for such research, and referring to disciplines that were traditionally not associated with ethics; Machiavelli and Montaigne were looking for ways to communicate the results of such a study to a Significant Other.

According to Struever, Modernity in ethical and political thought began when «the widening of the realm of possibilities»<sup>4</sup> took place in these areas and the fact that an experimental approach was also practicable there was realized (even though this awareness was not articulated theoretically, it was consistently implemented in thought practice). In terms of disciplinary language this means that Modernity began when necessity and obligation stopped being the unique modalities in political and ethical judgments. The idea emerged that political and moral judgments could correlate with the reality in many different ways: they could be shaped and understood as predictions, hypotheses, assumptions, speculations concerning alternative versions of events, etc. Such judgments could have various degrees of accuracy. Moreover, accuracy itself could also be understood in many different ways<sup>5</sup>.

4. N.S. Struever, *Rhetoric, Modality, Modernity*, Chicago — London, The University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 11. The author uses a term introduced by Jaakko Hintikka, the founder of possible worlds semantics, a theory that had a significant impact on her own ideas which she developed in her two major books: the one mentioned above and *Theory as Practice: Ethical Inquiry in the Renaissance* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992).

5. Illustrative in this respect is the contemporaries' perception of Machiavelli's manner of writing. Machiavelli, with whom Modernity in political science began, was reproached, among other things, for his *Il Principe* and *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* being written in a new, incomprehensible

The concept of multiple modalities explains both the difficulties experienced by social science reformers when trying to express their ideas, and the contradictory interpretations of their texts. Thus, some researchers view Lorenzo Valla as an atheist and libertine, others as a Christian humanist and a forerunner of the Reformation; some regard him as an honest and competent critic of scholastic doctrines, others as a merely unprincipled rhetorician ready to sacrifice whatever truth in order to demonstrate the power of his own eloquence. Machiavelli's *Il Principe* is read by some students as «the lore of tyranny» composed by a disgraced official in an attempt to regain the benevolence of the ruling dynasty, while others regard it as an instruction for the people to identify a future tyrant and take timely action against him; still others believe the treatise was an addenda to the classical *Specula principum*, filling the gaps left by ancient writers in the lore of government.

The «modalist» approach seems to be productive for studying not only the authors mentioned above, but also a range of other less illustrious political writers whose biographies might well add to Struever's «structural history of humanistic rhetoric», as they fit in the chronological interval between Machiavelli and Vico. In particular, the method proposed by Struever seems to make it possible to clarify a lot about the structure of texts written in the last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Machiavelli's papal opponents<sup>6</sup>. In

and very imperfect language. Educated people of the sixteenth century who had enjoyed a good rhetorical training believed that *Machiavel's* writings were not just immoral but also breaking the basic rules of rhetoric and, therefore, difficult to understand. One example of this attitude is the negative reaction to *Il Principe* shown by the educated humanist and lawyer Innocent Gentillet, author of political essays, which was outlined and analyzed by Victoria Kahn (V. Kahn, *Rereading Machiavelli: Innocent Gentillet's Discourse on Method*, in: «Political Theory», 22, 1994, 4, pp. 539–560). The researcher explains why «In Gentillet's view, Machiavelli is not the consummate political realist, but rather an armchair theorist — an uninformed and simple-minded reader of classical texts». According to Gentillet, in his political arguments Machiavelli proved unable to consistently implement any of the *methods* recommended by Aristotle (Aristotle wrote that *method* can mean either proceeding from causes and general provisions to consequences, or from particulars to maxims, i.e. to generalizations); Machiavelli demonstrated an inability to properly relate maxims to specific events, which testified that he was a poor thinker and an untalented and inattentive reader of classical texts. Besides, his argument was messy, repetitive and full of irrelevant passages. In other words, Gentillet protested not only against Machiavelli's neglect of existing moral standards, but also against his refusal to comply with the existing rules of reasoning and to use the traditional disciplinary language.

6. Here is one possible line of such analysis: in *Il Principe*, and sometimes also in *Discorsi* (for example, at the beginning of Book III of *Discorsi*, where the author speaks of the necessity to carry out repression every ten years for the state regularly to return to the moral grounds on which it was created), the recipes for seizing power, retaining it, and maintaining the state are always provided against the background of possible and often even inevitable collapse and death. In a way, the threat of collapse and death, which the reader was supposed to always bear in mind, became a *modality* of Machiavelli's reasoning. The pervasive threat of death and annihilation in Machiavelli was a transcendental condition of his political thinking. Opponents of Machiavelli, who, while denying some of its theses, remained forever «infected» by him, substituted this threat (which implied the need for saving the state and the government), with the need to save the souls of all the citizens of



«impartial» research literature, these authors usually are described as more Machiavellian than Machiavelli himself. In conservative Catholic literature, until recently they were, as a rule, characterized as loyal defenders of religion eager to restore the patristic thought in the time particularly hard for the church. However, in the era of discourse analysis and ideology critique one cannot help thinking that both interpretations are too simple to be true.

The approach suggested by Nancy Struever might also allow a new look at some Enlightenment debates over «ambiguous» works whose authors were suspected of an ironic or hypercritical attitude toward traditional social norms (such as religion, morality, etc.) just because their texts were full of exaggeratedly traditionalist apologetic phraseology. A striking example of this is the famous controversy of 1751–1752 over a theological bachelor's thesis with a pious title *La Jérusalem céleste* written by one of the *Encyclopédie* contributors, Jean–Martin de Prades. The de Prades's thesis was completely approved by Sorbonne theologians. However, after a very short time, the defense of de Prades's thesis was declared to have been the quintessence of a conspiracy of Encyclopaedists who, by means of such theses written by libertines, allegedly were striving to surreptitiously infect the Sorbonne, the stronghold of the true religion, with atheism and ungodliness, and thus to strike the Catholic Church in the heart<sup>7</sup>. Probably,

Christendom. The totality of this task led them to favor totalitarian measures in the social policy and to manipulatory governance techniques, which were justified by the urgent and unconditional character of the goal.

7. The Sorbonne theologians who were present at the defense of de Prades's thesis and had read the text were unanimously concluded that the erudite abbé had created a brilliant new apologia for the Christian religion against the atheists of the time (Buffon and Montesquieu, in particular), and that in his work he had put forward a number of admittedly new and somewhat unconventional but still quite orthodox solutions for many major theological and exegetical issues that were very complicated and fraught with the danger of falling into heresy (e.g. the relationship between sensory perception and contemplation; the nature of the relationship between soul and body; the equality and inequality of people's rights and the acceptability of violence; the Revelation religion and the natural law; the place of the Mosaic Law in the history of salvation, etc.). In fact, the reading of the thesis makes it clear that it contained points that any scholastic who lived 400 years before de Prades would have gladly agreed with as well as ones that even the most Vatican–loyal Counterreformation writer 150–200 years before him wouldn't have contradicted to. At that, dozens of educated persons, both laymen and clerics, regarded de Prades's thesis as a work of a dangerous libertine. The scandal quickly assumed a mass, virtually nationwide, character, and Pope Benedict XIV issued a bull against the (failed) Bachelor of Theology. After so dangerous accusations the story of abbé de Prades continued as a tragicomedy. The Sorbonne doctors suddenly fully recognized the validity of the charges against him and adduced the most ridiculous reasons to justify their previous positive attitude towards his thesis (e.g. the font size being too small for them to be able to detect the heterodoxy of the author's ideas in the process of reading). Abbé de Prades was forced to flee to the court of Frederick II. In a short time he published *Apologie* (1752), in which he tried to prove the orthodoxy of his views. The story ended only in 1754, when, having renounced his controversial writings, the abbot was reconciled with the Catholic Church. Today, a number of researchers believe that Denis Diderot actively participated in writing de Prades's thesis and especially *Apology*: see, S. Goyard–Fabre, *Diderot e l'affaire de l'abbé de Prades*, in «Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger», 174 (1984), 3, pp.

the hermeneutics of modalities would help to explain the controversial reception of de Prades's text. In this case, it might be helpful to consider not only theological and apologetic writings (from which the author borrowed a substantial part of his philosophical and theological issues and ideas), but also the fiction and journalism of the time, especially satirical texts. One should analyze the modality of theological and moralistic discourse in those numerous libertine writings where the context of these statements provides an ironic setting for them, making impossible their literal and unambiguous reading. Suspicious contemporaries had every reason to view de Prades's thesis against the background of such literature. However, interpreting the text by political means (such as the author's excommunication) instead of hermeneutic ones would not answer the question of what exactly happens to an orthodox theological or moral statement if it is ironically pronounced by a libertine.

Thus we have a range of cases where the context of the author's statements of principles affects the audience's assessment of how these statements are related to reality — that is, the context calls for analyzing the modalities of these statements, which could clarify the author's attitudes towards the truths he/she articulates and determine the degree of credibility ascribed by the author to the meanings articulated (e.g. does the author believe that this or that moral truth actually *can* exist in reality? Or that it *should* exist? Or that *it would be desirable* for it to exist?). However, the latter is not always possible to establish unambiguously, because many authors deliberately made modality the subject of their experiments. When historical matters, especially the ones approached from a theological perspective, become a laboratory for such experiments, very interesting semantic conflicts can be observed. After all, the ability of both historical and theological propositions to be true is problematic in its own right.

We believe that the «modalist» approach could be productively applied to the entire body of Vico's historical and history of jurisprudence writings. In each of his works of the 1720s, Vico considers only one side of the historical process, taking a close look at one or a few of its numerous possible projections: theological, metaphysical, legal, ethical, empirical, etc. Vico seeks to explore and reveal the full cognitive potential of each of these projections for the understanding of the course and meaning of human history, so that he could piece them together again to provide *NS 1744* with a synthetic explanation of the «nature of nations» and the meaning of their historical path. This explanation was supposed to include theological, metaphysical, history of jurisprudence, and many other terms and explanations. In Vico's early writings, each projection took the form of a

completely self-sufficient reality, within which any event could be provided with a certain status, evaluation and interpretation. But, of course, the nature of a projection influenced the selection and the content of the events that might possibly take place in each of the possible «realities». For example, the history of the Fall in the history of jurisprudence world of *De Uno* looked very different from the theological world in the early chapters of *CPh*. Different key concepts were relevant to each of the «possible worlds» emerging this way, and even if in some projections the names of these concepts happened to be the same, their content would, in many cases, require different interpretation. At the beginning of this essay we said the semantic shifts that took place from text to text in Vico's concepts are of particular interest to us. Now we can offer a more precise explanation of these semantic «shiftings»: they are caused by the fact that the same phenomena are considered in the contexts of different segments of the historical world and intellectual life, and languages of different disciplines are applied to explain them. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that we run the risk of misunderstanding some semantic constants of the final version of *NS* — and that means misunderstanding Vico's entire doctrine of the driving forces and the meaning of human history, whose progress is guided by Providence — if we fail to take into account the ideas that were expounded in Vico's writings of the 1720s and are present in a reduced form in the final version of *NS* without losing any of their impact.

As an example, let us take Vico's key characteristic of historical action, which such researchers as N. Struever<sup>8</sup> or D. Marshall (whose interpretation of this concept differs from that of Struever)<sup>9</sup> have called *impersonal*. They draw attention to the fact that, on the one hand, historical action in Vico appears generalized, being the result of shared intentions and collective efforts of a community of people, not just of one or a few specific actors. Moreover, Marshall's analysis shows this to be also true of Vico's narrative about contemporary events (in *De coniuratione Principum Neapolitanorum* dedicated to the Conspiracy of Macchia of 1701), with the names of the subjects of historically significant actions being well known. On the other hand, as an axiom of his doctrine, Vico puts forward the thesis (which he then repeatedly insisted on) that mythical heroes, state founders, poets, etc. should, too, be regarded as collective subjects, i.e. communities of people sharing similar interests and performing typical actions.

The impersonality of the human action necessarily follows from Vico's view on human nature: in his writings of 1720–s, sociality (*socialitas*) consti-

8. N.S. Struever, *Rhetoric, Modality, Modernity*, pp. 42–58.

9. D.L. Marshall, *The Impersonal Character of Action in Vico's "De coniuratione Principum Neapolitanorum"*, in: «New Vico Studies», 24 (2006), pp. 81–128.

tutes the definitive anthropological characteristic. It is worth noticing that in *NS 1744* this term, as far as we are aware, does not come into picture. At least, this word is not present in two key passages of the final version of *NS* where Vico cites the fundamental definitions of the human nature:

Gli uomini vengono naturalmente alla ragione de' benefizi, ove scorgano o ritenero o ritrarne buona gran parte d'utilità, che son i benefizi che si possono sperare nella vita civile<sup>10</sup>.

Ma gli uomini, per la loro corrotta natura, essendo tiranneggiati dall'amor proprio, per lo quale non sieguono principalmente che la propria utilità; onde eglino, volendo tutto l'utile per sé e niuna parte per lo compagno, non posson essi porre in conato le passioni per indirizzarle a giustizia<sup>11</sup>.

In contrast, Vico frequently refers to *socialitas* in *De uno*, this “Old Testament” of his history of institutions (let us quote once again J. Shaeffer's well turned formula); here *socialitas* acquires a theoretical–juridical dimension<sup>12</sup>. The New Testament part of this history is made, as we remember, by *CJ*. It contains a comprehensive theological preamble — a sort of «Prologue in Heaven», revealing the initial prehistoric conditions, prerequisite to the positive sense of the history of mankind and to all the institutions that the humankind would be establishing throughout its existence. At the beginning of the *De constantia philosophiae* (the first part of *CJ*, hereinafter referred to as *CPhs*), Vico gives a somewhat unequivocal definition of sociality: *Homines natura sociales; et hoc societatis ingenium a Deo nobis ingenitum per ideam aeternam juris aequi, cuius studio homines coierunt in civitates*<sup>13</sup>.

Further, he examines this notion in more detail: in fact, the category of sociality is particularly important for the understanding of the whole *NS*, but, paradoxically, it seems to be opposite to Vico's understanding of social behavior, given in his *opus magnum*. Vico defines *humanity*, i.e. the human essence proper of a human being, as an inherent desire to help one's neighbor (*Humanitas est hominis hominem juvandi affectio*<sup>14</sup>). The two main principles of *humanity* are *pudor* (shame) and *libertas* (freedom), of which, in turn, *liberalitas* is born, which guides human actions and makes

10. *NS 1744*, § 260 (p. 523). The quotations from the Italian text of *Scienza nuova* of 1744 are taken from G. Vico, *Opere*, edited by A. Battistini, Milan, Mondadori, 1990.

11. *NS 1744* § 341 (p. 548). It is noteworthy that one of these two quotations is included in the list of the *axioms* of the «new science», and the second in the section about its *method*. In other words, the first assertion have status of key principle of the Vico's doctrine, and the second is its methodological guidance.

12. *De uno*, § L — LX. G. Vico, *De universi juris uno principio, et fine uno*, edited by Fabrizio Lomonaco, presented by Fulvio Tessitore, Naples, Liguori, 2007, pp. 32–37.

13. *CPhs*, XVI (*CJ*, p. 29).

14. *Ibid.* II 1 (*CJ*, p. 50).

them perfect<sup>15</sup>. Shame is the form of humanity, while freedom is its matter<sup>16</sup>. Shame is the first of God's three penalties for the original sin. Since the sin consisted in an effort to acquire an infinitely great knowledge instead of the true one, the punishment had to be symmetrical and in proportion to the fault: it consists in the awareness of a mistake *already* made or an evil deed *already* done. In other words, shame is a paradoxical feeling, it is remorse (Vico points out the etymological relation between *poena* and *poenitendum*) that arises in human beings as a result of their awareness that the truth exists but neither does it belong to them, nor do they know what it consists in<sup>17</sup>.

In *CPh*, it is shame that causes people to hide from the wrath of imaginary gods and avoid *promiscuam venerem*, choosing instead one partner for the lifetime<sup>18</sup>. Thus shame becomes the dominant form of the fallen man's relationship with God, who, logically and historically, is the first Other in his life. Shame takes the place of man's love for God, which was lost with the Fall, and becomes an imperfect and non-genuine external substitute for the perfect and genuine inner experience. It should be noted, however, that shame inherits the social nature of love: like love, shame is a *way of communication* between people. According to Vico, shame has been the most solid and profound basis of sociality in human society since the Fall. This was facilitated by the paradoxical temporal and spatial nature of shame that combines contrition for what has been already done, fear of the unknown future, hostility towards the external world, and painful experience of one's own imperfection. A human, regarded as a member of a human community, owes all basic principles of human sociality to shame: it is shame that makes one keep promises and believe them, it is shame that urges one to avoid public disgrace (*infamia* was the second of the three divine penalties for Adam and Eve's sin); it is shame that generates the force which subjects the activity of one's mind and body to the spirit; it is shame that makes people respect the *sensus communis*. As a property which emerged as a reaction to an attempt to deviate from the correct path of knowledge, *pudor ignorati veri* leads to *curiositas* (which was the third *salutory* punishment), out of which,

15. Sed ex latiori genere Humanitas heic a nobis accepta e duobus principiis constat, *Pudore* et *Libertate*; ex quibus ambobus *Liberalitas* coalescit, quae virtus hoc hominis ingenium dirigit perfectique. — *CPh*, II, 2 (*ibid.*).

16. Igitur ex vi ipsius humanae naturae de duobus his Humanitatis principiis disseramus, quorum unum ceu *forma* erit, *Pudor*, alterum veluti *materia* erit, *Libertas*. . . — *CPh*, II, 3 (*CJ*, p. 51).

17. Igitur is quando veram scientiam, qua, prae Dei beneficio fruebatur, contempsit, et infinitam discere concupivit, condignam eum plexit Deus poenam, erroris, seu *malefacti conscientiam*, quae nihil aliud est, nisi *veri ignorati pudor*. Atque haec fuit *prima* omnium *poena*, et quidem Divina, proprie a *poenitendo* appellata, quam Plato unam *Nemeseos*, sive Divinae ultionis poenam esse statuebat. — *CPh*, III, 2 (*CJ*, p.53).

18. *Ibid.*, III, 8 (*CJ*, pp. 55–56).

in turn, *prudentia* is born that redeems humans from vices and prevents them from misdeeds<sup>19</sup>.

Thus, shame becomes a power that builds the society, but, at the same time, it ensures the progress of knowledge. Thereby, the social character of life — one of the constants of Vichian doctrine — is provided with a genetic explication: both social and intellectual life spring from the same source. But they also have the common form of existence and dissemination in the history of mankind, because after the Fall the cognition of truth, *cognitio veri*, becomes impossible, and the era of certainty, *certum*, comes. This «secondary» knowledge (in respect to the perfect Paradise condition) is produced in the forms of certain customs, rites and *formulae verborum*, that is — in communicative forms<sup>20</sup>. But as the mankind is unable to produce and translate knowledge without communication, it follows that together with the production of knowledge it generates social interaction. There cannot be one without the other. As if, having lost the integrity (*integritas*) of his uncorrupted nature after the Fall, the man can restore it by a new kind of integrity — the social one. The emergence of knowledge as well as the formation of institutions is due not to the concrete individuals — discoverers or founders; they come to existence in the intersubjective space (in the language of phenomenological sociology) due to collective — and indispensably anonymous! — efforts of the multitude of people. Therefore, the correlation demonstrated by Vico — in the fallen men the purity of mind and piety of mind are substituted by philosophical and civil wisdom, that is by theoretical and practical knowledge, which establishes connection between the subject endowed with this knowledge and a multitude of his predecessors (as he inherits their knowledge), descendants (as he communicates his knowledge to them), and contemporaries (as he improves his knowledge while communicating with them and takes part in the decision-making, shaping the social life).

The measure of human perfection, that is the measure of his closeness to the nature of the uncorrupted (*integer*) Adam depends, first, on his wisdom, and second, on his ability of perfect communication and establishing of perfect relations. Vico brings together two quotations, from Polybius and from Aristotle. Polybius says that if there were philosophers in the world, there would be no need of religions or laws, and Aristotle claims that there were no need of Justice or laws and states if all the men respected and maintained friendship<sup>21</sup>. As well as *cognitium veri*, perfect *socialitas* is lost, but not completely: it is transformed into less perfect forms. The fourth

19. *Ibid.*, III, 9 (*CJ*, p. 56).

20. *CPhs* IV, 11 (*CJ*, p. 14).

21. *Ibid.*, IV, 4–5 (*CJ*, p. 11–12).

punishment for the original sin is the emergence of *industria* (it is the way Vico understands Biblical dictum *in sudore vultus tui vesceris pane tuo*)<sup>22</sup>. Its salutary effect consists in ensuring safe communal life of all men: those adapted to survival and those lacking elementary skills, the strong, and the weak. (The fact that *industria* like *infamia* and *curiositas* turns out to stem from *pudor*, allows Vico to state that in the end, it is due to *shame* that God permanently ensures the safety of all the members of the civil society)<sup>23</sup>.

The foregoing deduction allows Vico to make a «statement of principles», dismissing the theories of Epicurus, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Spinoza and Bayle. The efforts of a number of people working for the benefit of others— the efforts of craftsmen, traders, seafarers — who produce goods for the public use, and the abundance and variety of goods at the disposal of the whole mankind prove, first, God’s mercy, and second, the fact that the human action is not restricted to the private benefit, but serves the interests of humanity. However, a single person is obviously unable to produce all the goods for all men: they are created, as the Italian translator of *CJ* puts it, by the man in general (*ma non tutto per opera di questo o del quello in particolare, sibbene dell’uomo in generale*). And in this world, consisting of an infinite number of workers for the common benefit and an infinite number of goods emanating from the same source and directed to the same goal — that is, to contribute to the Salvation of the mankind (*ab uno Principio in unam generis humani salutem*), human nature dictates to the man not to be, according to Machiavelli’s and Hobbes’ claims, a wolf for his neighbor, but to be a god to him<sup>24</sup>.

At the very beginning of his work, Vico says that the subject of philological studies is a *choice of the human will* — *placita humani arbitrii*. A choice of the human will — in contrast to the natural necessity (*necessaria naturae*), which is in the competence of philosophy, as well as the will of God and other subjects belonging to the domain of theology. Vico does not call into question the role of Providence — in his design of *historia profana*, it constantly guides the mankind in its actions to the good, though in more or less subtle way. But we should pay attention to the fact that in *CPh* Vico’s subject is not Providence: it is the *human will* and the *choice* made by this will. Or, rather, the author is going to consider *historia profana* in the aspect of manifestations of the human will. So his task is to show the dependence of the positive outcomes of certain historical events on the human will. Therefore, a reader who makes the acquaintance of the *CJ* after the final version of *NS*, will inevitably be surprised to encounter exaggeratedly positive

22. *CPh*, III, 11 (*CJ*, p. 57).

23. *Ibid.*

24. *CPh*, III, 13 (*CJ*, pp. 57–58).

sociology in the early work, especially in comparison with the *NS* 1744.

In *NS* people act on the grounds of their own selfish interest, and only an invisible and inconceivable Providence finally crowns really negative actions with positive results – «unintended consequences», in N. Struever's terms. And positive consequences are always delayed, distant in time from the actions which produce them. The trope of irony serves to both the author and the reader as a tool of understanding and explaining to themselves the difference between the imperfection of human intentions and actions, on the one hand, and their positive results arranged by Providence, on the other hand<sup>25</sup>. In *CPh*, on the contrary, people's actions are initially motivated by rather positive reasons, or, if the reader cannot avoid evaluating these actions as negative, they still show their positive effect very soon. For example, the Fathers' cruelty with their families is interpreted as a condition necessary for keeping public order and piety, and the very brutality of the Fathers is understood as the reverse side of their own pious behavior in public space. For plebs had to esteem Fathers when they saw Fathers showing their reverence for the Law by killing their own sons for the sake of Republic<sup>26</sup>. The first cities emerge «because of kindness towards the unfortunate» which guided actions of the strong men<sup>27</sup>. First states appeared on earth not because of the passion for domination but because of the humane desire to protect the weak from the power unfairly used against them<sup>28</sup>. Roman patricians were brought up to have mercy towards the defeated enemy by. . . *nexum*, and glorious Roman justice to the conquered peoples grew up from *nexum*<sup>29</sup>. Greatness of the Romans is the fruit of the plebeians' desire to become equal with the patricians — desire embodied in the *order* of the plebeian demands, in succession of which each next achievement had a higher spiritual sense than the previous one (the first requirement was equality of rights with the patricians, the second was solemn nuptials, then *imperia* and finally, *sacerdotia*)<sup>30</sup>. Where religions were neglected, the nature itself arranged it so that the fear of severe punishments executed by other men forced people to remain in human communities. The plebeians oppressed by Fathers appealed to both gods and other people, and, as a result, the kings, or the strongest Men, were elected by collective voting. These virtuous elected chiefs were trying to recuperate all that was destroyed by corrupted mores. They founded world's first Monarchical

25. N.S. Struever, *Rhetoric, Modality, Modernity*, pp. 53–58.

26. *CPh*, XXVIII, 7 (*CJ*, pp. 332–333).

27. *CPh*, XXI, 12 (*CJ*, p. 255).

28. *CPh*, XXI, 14 (*CJ*, p. 257).

29. *CPh*, XXIV, 7 (*CJ*, pp. 393–394).

30. *CPh*, XXXIV, 3 (*CJ*, pp. 391–392).



states<sup>31</sup>. Sometimes the wisest Men sought to restore the ancient customs by means of the cruelest laws concerning penalties, that is to bring the Optimates' Republic to their initial principles. Therefore, the cruelty of ancient laws should not be taken literally. For example, the law ordering dissection of the body of inveterate debtor was never brought into action. But the very existence of this law provoked the rise of *industria*, *frugalitas*, and *fides*, due to which the ancient virtues of Optimates' Republics were restored in the period of the corrupted customs<sup>32</sup>. Genuine Optimates were the protectors, not oppressors, of the plebs<sup>33</sup>.

Such a simplified and too positive, though very pious, version of the “new science”, which we can see in the *CPh*, needs no irony as a hermeneutic tool. For here there is no gap between the baseness of the human characters and the greatness of the design of Providence. The work of Providence in the historical narrative of the author of *CPh* is not yet hidden, as it will be in the final version of *NS*. In this work about the goodness of the *choice carried out by human will* the role of Providence becomes visible to the reader, who, in turn, consciously makes the right choice while accepting a correct hermeneutic strategy. This strategy seems to be originating in the “general rule” of Christian exegesis — the *regula generalis* formulated by St. Augustine: whatever the Sacred Scripture be speaking of, it always speaks only of divine love<sup>34</sup>. And if the reader does not find this unique sense in some of the biblical passages, or if he has doubts about interpretation accomplished by him, let him examine his conscience (and purge it). Only now the St. Augustine's rule should be modified so that it could be applied to the historical process, considered as a series of manifestations of the human will directed to the good.

31. *CPh*, XXVIII, 2 (*CJ*, p. 330–331).

32. *CPh*, XXVIII, 4–5 (*CJ*, pp. 331–332). Characteristically in the *NS* 44 Vico says quite the contrary: «Dalla legge delle XII Tavole condannati ad esser bruciati vivi coloro ch'avevano dato fuoco alle biade altrui, precipitati giù dal monte Tarpeo li falsi testimoni, fatti vivi in brani i debitori falliti: la qual pena Tullo Ostilio non aveva risparmiato a Mezio Suffezio, re di Alba, suo pari, che gli aveva mancato la fede dell'alleanza; ed esso Romolo, innanzi, fu fatto in brani da' padri per un semplice sospetto di Stato. Lo che sia detto per coloro i quali vogliono che tal pena non fu mai praticata in Roma» (*NS* 44, § 1021, p. 919).

33. *CPh*, XXVIII, 7 (*CJ*, p. 332).

34. «Sed quoniam proclive est humanum genus non ex momentis ipsius libidinis, sed potius suae consuetudinis aestimare peccata, fit plerumque ut quisque hominum ea tantum culpanda arbitretur, quae suae regionis et temporis homines vituperare atque damnare consueverunt; et ea tantum probanda atque laudanda quae consuetudo eorum cum quibus vivit admittit. Eoque contingit ut si quid Scriptura vel praeceperit quod abhorret a consuetudine audientium, vel quod non abhorret culpaverit, si animum eorum iam verbi vinxit auctoritas, figuratam locutionem putent. Non autem praecipit Scriptura nisi caritatem, nec culpat nisi cupiditatem, et eo modo informat mores hominum. Item si animum praeoccupavit alicuius erroris opinio, quidquid aliter asseruerit Scriptura, figuratum homines arbitrantur. Non autem asserit nisi catholicam fidem rebus praeteritis et futuris et praesentibus» (Augustinus Aurelius, *De doctrina christiana*, III, 10, 15).

Despite the *socialitas* of *CJ* — perfectly positive and close to the social doctrines of Counter-Reformation — being far from Hobbesian sociality of *NS 1744*, now we can see a source to which the impersonal of the last *NS* is to be traced (and more detailed comparative analysis of selected fragments of the two works would provide a more accurate vision of this issue). The impersonal is grounded in the paradoxical nature of the fallen man, who seeks to make up for his earlier *integritas* by helping his fellow man, and follows the way of salvation together with his neighbors and with the assistance of Providence: it is a purely theological, not sociological, understanding of the subject of historical action. Just as mankind, expelled from Paradise, keeps, albeit in a distorted form, memory of *homo integer*, its dignity and mode of behavior — the egoistic man of the final version of *NS* retains, in a distorted way, the nature and behavior of the «theological» man of *CJ*. The impersonal of the latest *NS* dates back to the *integritas* of the first man by passing the middle stage: the man of *CJ* — an imperfect human being, though striving to correct both himself and his conditions, the man constantly consumed by shame.

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## History, Poetry, and «New Science» of G.B. Vico

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**ABSTRACT:** The point of the matter is to compare two phenomena of culture and of human self-cognition: history and poetry, the most important ones for comprehension of Vico's conception. These phenomena could be interpreted from the point of view of their relation to philosophy and of their methods of generalization. The poetry, that is in fact by Vico, every artistic work, is synonymous to the first stage of human knowledge when abstract ideas are being expressed through concrete objects. This poetry is historical, because she speaks about real, or true matters; at the same time the objects of poetry are products of fantasy which represent general concepts in form of allegory or myth. In the scientific history the distinction between fiction and truth is traced more rigorously. The history is concerned only with stating facts; parable in history, or expressing general meanings, is somewhat secondary. Vico in his *New Science* shows historical and logical affinity between history and poetry as means of self-cognition and assimilation of the world by human beings.

I am going to speak about two, or more exactly three quite abstract terms: history, poetry and philosophy.

The point is the affinity and difference between history and poetry which could be well understood properly with their regard to philosophy; it seems to be essential also in the context of ideas of G.B. Vico and of his conception of the *New science*<sup>1</sup>.

As «history» in a large sense we understand the past and the science about the past, systematic knowledge primarily on the society evolution. History is the cognition oriented towards time.

«Poetry» in a large sense could be called every artistic work and, following closer to the meaning by Vico, a special kind of perception, reproducing of «reality» in sensual forms. By Vico the poetry is a central concept, a synonym of creative work and the form if not the source of human culture<sup>2</sup>. At the same time the poetry by Vico is a term designating a stage in the

1. All quotations from the Italian text of *Scienza nuova* of 1744 are taken from Vico G.B. *Principij di scienza nuova d'intorno alla comune natura delle nazioni, in questa terza impressione. Dal medesimo Autore in un gran numero di luoghi. Corretta, Schiarita, e notabilmente Accresciuta*, in Id., *Opere*, edited by P. Rossi, Milan, Classici Rizzoli, 1959 (hereinafter referred to as NS 44).

2. «La poesia non è che imitazione, e le arti non sono che imitazioni della natura, e 'n conseguenza poesie in un certo modo reali. Così i primi popoli, i quali furon i fanciulli del gener umano, fondarono prima il mondo dell'arti; poscia i filosofi, che vennero lunga età appresso, e 'n conseguenza i vecchi delle nazioni, fondarono quel delle scienze: onde fu affatto compiuta l'umanità» (NS 44, p.

evolution of humanity, i.e. «poetic wisdom», a special way of cognition and world perception. From this derive poetic politics, economy, morality, astronomy and so on.

Those who wrote about Vico often note that he speaks in the *New science* about repeating cycles in the history of civilizations<sup>3</sup> (and from this point of view he is a direct successor of antique and Renaissance theories). But to no lesser and rather to a greater extent Neapolitan scholar is concerned with the constructing of a stadial scheme of the human evolution.

In other words, (as is already clear from the title of his work) he is arguing not so much about single peoples and civilizations as about common and regular path they follow.

This path is understood by Vico as a cognitive evolution, common for single persons in their moving from childhood to maturity, and for the nations. This path leads from simple and rough forms of knowledge to more subtle and reflexive ones. First forms are called by him poetic, second philosophic and scientific.

Therefore, in the base of Vico's evolutive scheme lays the exploring the world by the mankind through knowledge and improving modes of this knowledge and self-knowledge. This process generates all other cultural forms — political organization, religious cults, economic structure, moral rules, art, jurisprudence etc.

As a key concept for characteristic of this development from simple to more sophisticated forms I would choose the term «generalization», in part associated to the idea of philosophy. Every knowledge is bound to generalization through abstraction from certain properties of an object in favour of other ones (*verum et factum reciprocantur*, says Vico in *De antiquissima italorum sapientia*, and explains, in the discourse of blazonry of the *Scienza Nuova*, that said and depicted is the same, another form of metaphor)<sup>4</sup>. One

101. «Poetry is nothing but imitation, and the arts are only imitations of nature and consequently in a certain sense real poetry. Thus the first peoples, who were the children of the human race, founded first the world of the arts; then the philosophers, who came a long time afterwards and so may be regarded as the old men of the nations, founded the world of the sciences, thereby making humanity complete» (G.B.Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, translated from the third edition (1744) by T.G.Bergin and M.H.Fisch, Ithaca–New York, Cornell University Press, 1948, p. 150; hereinafter referred to as *NS 44a*).

3. Particularly in Russian tradition this was the way of interpreting Vico of M.Stasulevich, R.Vipper and specially P.Sorokin, see V.M. Dianova, *Conception of the Cyclical Development of the Culture by Giambattista Vico and His Followers*, in «*Studia culturae*», 2 (2002), pp. 45, 51–55.

4. *Verum et factum reciprocantur*, says Vico in *De antiquissima italorum sapientia*. Something similar is said in the section of the *New Science* on the heroic emblems: said and expressed — represented in visual form — are the same, another kind of metaphor: «Per le quali cose dette si dimostra ad evidenza, nell'Imprese Eroi che contenersi tutta la Ragion Poetica; la quale si riduce qua tutta: che la favola e l'espressione siano una cosa stessa, cioè una Metafora comune a'Poeti, ed a' Pittori; sicché un mutolo senza l'espressione possa dipinguerla» (*NS 44*, p.195).

can add that the way of progress is predetermined, according to Vico, for every people, but the nations follow it without knowing final aims and putting before themselves only immediate tasks. The only exception is Hebrews who know the way to the good thanks to Revelation. Nobody but God has knowledge equivalent to the creation; humans are acting in some contrary way.

For our context important are three kinds of generalization spoken about by Vico.

Firstly, it is a generalization of historical kind, a story about events really happened; secondly, poetic generalization mixing the real with the fiction and representing it in images or parables; thirdly, scientific or philosophic generalization expressed in abstractions, universal and metaphysical constructions<sup>5</sup>. In essence, these are three forms of knowledge mentioned by Vico — further I consider their specificity from the point of view of generalization (philosophy in a large sense), as it were, developing his thought.

The most important form of cognition for Vico, original core of his theory, is poetry, poetic wisdom or poetic knowledge, as was already said above. This is a stage of human evolution when men are almost similar to animals and perceive the world through sensual images of concrete things. Designating a thing, giving to it a name man makes first step on the way to abstract concepts<sup>6</sup>. In doing so he is abstracting himself from the wholeness of sensual perception and at the same time turning to the generalization according to similarity of single traits of things.

Proceeding to such a creation of his own world, the world of culture, men are imitating the nature, but at the same time performing a creative act which would be impossible if they wouldn't have fantasy, hence a share of fiction inherent to every «poetic wisdom», that is to every artistic work<sup>7</sup>.

5. Referring to Aristotle Vico says: *Scientia debet esse de Universalibus et Aeternis* (Metaphysics 1003a 15, NS 44, p. 43)

6. It is worth to note that logically and historically Vico is not completely right in focusing his attention almost exclusively to the opposition of different stages of cognition. In fact, the earliest known records concern accounting that is abstracting of properties of an object (numbers) from the concrete thing (and not invention of letters) and this kind of thinking, as however every thinking, mythological included, is a generalization, although in a special form. Rudiments of this kind of thinking are proper to animals too which Vico also was used to oppose to humans.

7. «Iddio, nel suo purissimo intendimento, conosce e, conoscendole, crea le cose; essi, per la loro robusta ignoranza, il facevano in forza d'una corpulentissima fantasia, e, perch'era corpulentissima, il facevano con una meravigliosa sublimità, tal e tanta che perturbava all'eccesso essi medesimi che fingendo le si criavano, onde furon detti "poeti", che lo stesso in greco suona che "criatori"» (NS 44, p. 71). «For God, in his purest intelligence, knows things, and, by knowing them, creates them; but they, in their robust ignorance, did it by virtue of a wholly corporeal imagination. And because it was quite corporeal, they did it with marvelous sublimity; a sublimity such and so great that it excessively perturbed the very persons who by feigning did the creating, for which they were called "poets", which is Greek for "makers"» (NS 44a, p. 105).

This is exactly the difference between poetry and history under categorical plan of verity: history is reflecting of the past, account of the past, investigation of the past which can be and from the beginning is equally concrete as the poetry, but is strictly oriented towards factual truth. From this notions on the «poetic falsehood» mentioned in the *New Science* and going back to Aristotle; also largely widespread in the Middle Ages<sup>8</sup>. Generalization in the proper sense using abstract notions, pure philosophy is alien, strictly speaking, both to the poetry and to the history. History and poetry immersed in empiric matter are narrating about individual, about what happens only in this instant of time. However their connection to *universalia* and to the philosophy is different. Poetry expresses her idea through a sensual image; in particular, according to Vico, poetic or mythological thinking represents ideas in characters of anthropomorphous gods, in the form of subjects who never existed really. These are abstract concepts generalized in the sensual and verbal form, and in the course of development of abstract thinking they maintain only its symbolic shell.

The history, if we look aside from its mythological or artistic component, has to do only with real characters, by definition she has to investigate only precisely «how it was». The poetry shows how it could be on the basis of common ideas «how it happens». The history also on the basis of common ideas shows how it was. That's why the well-known phrase of Aristotle states that «poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars»<sup>9</sup>. But Vico does not cite this phrase, whereas

8. «Ma di più appartengono ad Omero per giustizia i due grandi privilegi, che 'n fatti son uno, che gli danno Aristotile, che le bugie poetiche, Orazio, che i caratteri eroici solamente si seppero finger da Omero. Onde Orazio stesso si professa di non esser poeta, perché o non può o non sa osservare quelli che chiama "colores operum", che tanto suona quanto le «bugie poetiche», le quali dice Aristotile; come appresso Plauto si legge "obtinere colorem" nel sentimento di "dir bugia che per tutti gli aspetti abbia faccia di verità", qual dev'esser la buona favola» (*NS 44*, p. 187). «But more than ever to Homer belong by right the two great preeminences which are really one: that poetic falsehoods, as Aristotle says, and heroic characters, as Horace says, could be created only by him. On this account Horace avows himself to be no poet because he lacks the knack or the wit to maintain what he calls the colors of works, colores operum, which means the same thing as the poetic untruths of Aristotle's phrase, for in Plautus we find *obtinere colorem* in the sense of telling a lie that under every aspect has the appearance of truth, which is what a good fable must be. Cf. on Dante who is mixing true with fictitious, as poets use to do, for allegorical admonition (*sic veris falsa remiscet*, *Hor. de art. poet.*, 151). But first poets who were not acquainted with reflexion, according to Vico sincerely believed in what they song of» (*NS 44a*, p. 292).

9. «The poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e. what is possible as being probable or necessary. The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse—you might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it would still be a species of history; it consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. By a universal statement

sometimes he is referring to the *Poetics* of Aristotle. Probably for him more important was to show the affinity of history and poetry: in its primordial form history was poetical (and therefore, mythological) and first historians were poets<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, poetry and history, according to Vico, are an expression of «vulgar», one might say, primordial wisdom and as such they are opposed to philosophy with her metaphysic verities<sup>11</sup>. It does not mean, nevertheless, that the poetic wisdom in all concedes to the scientific one; on the contrary, exactly primordial poetry represents, particularly, in the person of Homer (although before him passed two or three generations of other poets) a pattern of vigour and elevation unachievable afterwards.

For the right understanding of Vico's concept of poetry, history and philosophy we must touch another aspect of epistemology which is, as was said above, underlying all his ideas about social evolution. This is, in a manner of speaking, predictive or prognostic aspect of statements or actions which is the basis of every conscious act: Vico deduces its origin from the necessity of comprehension of ways outlined by the Providence: «Their poetic wisdom began with this poetic metaphysics, which contemplated God by the attribute of his providence; and they were called theological poets, or sages who understood the language of the gods expressed in the auspices of Jove; and were properly called divine in the sense of diviners, from

I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily say or do—which is the aim of poetry, though it affixes proper names to the characters; by a singular statement, one as to what, say, Alcibiades did or had done to him» (Aristotle, *Poetics*, transl. by I. Bywater, IX. <http://www.authorama.com/book/the-poetics.html>).

10. «Ne' tempi barbari ritornati essi storici latini furon poeti eroici, come Guntero, Guglielmo pugliese ed altri» (NS 44, p. 95). «In the returned barbarian times the Latin historians were heroic poets, like Gunther, William of Apulia and others» (NS 44a, p. 142). «Essendo stati i poeti certamente innanzi agli storici volgari, la prima storia debba essere la poetica (...) i primi poeti latini eroici cantaron istorie vere, cioè le guerre romane. E ne' tempi barbari ritornati, per sì fatta natura della barbarie, gli stessi poeti latini non cantaron altro che istorie, come furon i Gunteri, i Guglielmi pugliesi ed altri» (NS 44, p. 176–177). «Inasmuch as the poets came certainly before the vulgar historians, the first history must have been poetic (...) Since barbarians lack reflection, which, when ill used, is the mother of falsehood, the first heroic Latin poets sang true histories, that is, the Roman wars. And in the returned barbarian times, in virtue of this nature of barbarism, the Latin poets like Gunther, William of Apulia and others again sang nothing but history, and the romancers of the same period thought they were writing true histories» (NS 44a, p. 278–279). «E noi nel libro secondo dimostrammo i primi scrittori delle nazioni così antiche come moderne essere stati poeti» (NS 44, p. 181). «And in the second book we showed that the first writers of both ancient and modern nations were poets» (NS 44a, p. 284).

11. «La metafisica astrae la mente da' sensi, la facultà poetica dev'immergere tutta la mente ne' sensi; la metafisica s'innalza sopra agli universali, la facultà poetica deve profundarsi dentro i particolari» (NS 44, p. 176). «Metaphysics abstracts the mind from the senses, and the poetic faculty must submerge the whole mind in the senses; metaphysics soars up to universals, and the poetic faculty must plunge deep into particulars» (NS 44a, p. 281). «I poeti teologi furono il senso, i filosofi furono l'intelletto dell'umana sapienza» (NS 44, p. 170). «The theological poets were the sense and the philosophers the intellect of human wisdom» (NS 44a, p. 264).

divinari, to “divine” or “predict”. Their science was called Muse, defined above by Homer as the knowledge of good and evil; that is, divination<sup>12</sup>. In this quotation is interesting not only has that Vico identified first poets, poets–theologians, with augurs pointing out divine origin of every (authentic) wisdom and poetry. Interesting is also that he identifies the science of predicting with the science about good and evil, without separating here desirable from due.

In practice it means that a moral statement is inherent to the true art, that is, the art corresponding to its objectives<sup>13</sup>, but not as direct moral preaching: «Nevertheless, if the purpose of poetry is to tame the ferocity of the vulgar whose teachers the poets are, it was not the part of a wise man, versed in such fierce sensibilities and customs, to arouse admiration of them in the vulgar in order that they should take pleasure in them and be confirmed in them by that pleasure. Nor was it the part of a wise man to arouse pleasure in the villainous vulgar at the villainies of the gods, to say nothing of the heroes<sup>14</sup>. Homer didn’t have the «secret wisdom» of philosophers, he described morals of his time and therefore he himself was an embodiment of collective mentality of Greeks<sup>15</sup>. In other words, if we omit now Vico’s diffuse judgments on the «discovery of true Homer», briefly one can state that the value of a work of art is commensurable to the special artistic truth inherent to it and determining its structure. Just here Vico speaks about the affinity of history and poetry, he says that first

12. «Incominciarono la sapienza poetica da questa poetica metafisica di contemplare Dio per l’attributo della sua provvidenza; e se ne dissero “poeti teologi”, ovvero sappienti che s’intendevano del parlar degli dèi concepito con gli auspici di Giove, e ne furono detti propriamente “divini”, in senso d’“indovinatori”, da “divinari”, che propriamente è “indovinare” o “predire”: la quale scienza fu detta “musa”, diffinitaci sopra da Omero essere la scienza del bene e del male, cioè la divinazione» (NS 44, pp. 72–73).

13. «Che sono gli tre lavori che deve fare la poesia grande, cioè di ritrovare favole sublimi confacenti all’intendimento popolare, e che perturbi all’eccesso, per conseguir il fine, ch’ella si ha proposto, d’insegnar il volgo a virtuosamente operare, com’essi l’insegnarono a se medesimi; lo che or ora si mostrerà» (NS 44, p.70). «Now this is the threefold labor of great poetry: (1) to invent sublime fables suited to the popular understanding, (2) to perturb to excess, with a view to the end proposed: (3) to teach the vulgar to act virtuously, as the poets have taught themselves» (NS 44a, p. 105).

14. «Essendo il fine della poesia d’addimesticare la ferocia del volgo, del quale sono maestri i poeti, non era d’uom saggio di tai sensi e costumi cotanto fieri destar nel volgo la meraviglia per dilettersene, e col diletto confermarli vieppiù. Non era d’uom saggio al volgo villano destar piacere delle villanie degli dèi nonché degli eroi» (NS 44, p. 172). «Nevertheless, if the purpose of poetry is to tame the ferocity of the vulgar whose teachers the poets are, it was not the part of a wise man, versed in such fierce sensibilities and customs, to arouse admiration of them in the vulgar in order that they should take pleasure in them and be confirmed in them by that pleasure. Nor was it the part of a wise man to arouse pleasure in the villainous vulgar at the villainies of the gods, to say nothing of the heroes» (NS 44a, p. 270)

15. «Essi popoli greci furono quest’Omero» (NS 44, p. 320). «The Greek peoples were themselves Homer» (NS 44a, p. 290).



poets were historians and first historians were poets and that the meaning of the word «myth» is «true narration»<sup>16</sup>. The poetry represents this myth initially in a sensual form, because means for abstract statement have not yet been formed. Therefore the poetry is allegory by anthropomorphous means, expression of the truth with the help of imaginary objects and people. The history tells about real events happened to real people, but she is also allegory or parable, because common truths she states through concrete facts. If the aim of philosophy and of sciences in the whole, as the aim of religion is to give precepts to the human and foresee the future, history and poetry give nothing but food for philosophy.

General conclusions: the affinity of history and poetry is connected to their subjectivity. Scientific knowledge is based on concepts comprehensible for all the people, on the *universalia* abstracted from concrete things. All the sciences express and describe relations between the subject and the object through generalizations. Humanities are describing the subject, i.e. humans themselves. History makes use of concepts, but tells only about what has really been and never repeated. Poetic knowledge represents *universalia* in sensual images.

An image in a work of art seems to be wholly concrete, but in fact it is an invented, that is exemplar, expression of the same abstract concept. If any thinking, according to Vico, derives from historic and poetic perception, in higher culture the history as a science and the poetry as an art continue to exist as forms of self-knowledge and self-expression of individuals. Their maxims they express in a parabolic form. They don't moralize, but give food for judgments.

Initially history and poetry were, according to Vico, a whole. In general, Vico showed the historicity of the poetry and poetical qualities inherent to the history, and today this second point seems to be especially actual.

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16. «Nella prima propria significazione della voce μύθος, che da essi greci è diffinita “vera narrazione”» (NS 44, p. 174). «The word mythos, as defined by the Greeks themselves, being “true narration”» (NS 44a, p. 277).



## Giambattista Vico's philosophy of history in Russian opinion journalism of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

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**ABSTRACT:** One of the very first phases, when Vico's name is legitimized falls exactly on the border between the last years of the 1840s and the early 1850s. This time Russian historians and philosophers actively discussed the attitude of «the national spirit toward universal human enlightenment», and when the foundation for university philosophy of history was laid, which later evolved into academic philosophy of history. Timofey Granovsky was the key mediator in exploration of Vico's ideas by Russia. The public of the 1850s was attracted by Vico's intellectual opposition, his uncompromising opponency to cartesianism and skepticism, his nonconformance to his time, revolutionary novelty of his ideas, his sufferings and sometimes his martyrdom in science. From that time (the early 1850s), Vico's name and ideas are firmly consolidated in studies of Russian historians, and his system is preserved in their research as the only possible foundation for any subsequent superstructures. Vico as a reference point in philosophy of history is the axiom common for historians of truly diverse schools, such as V.I. Guerrier, M.M. Stasyulevich, P.N. Milyukov, B.N. Chicherin, N.I. Kareev. With all minor discrepancies, Vico was inevitably regarded as a pioneer and, most importantly, as a teacher. Russian Westernizers considered themselves inheritors of the type of Renaissance humanism represented by Vico. This was one of the main reasons for their attention and turning back to the Italian philosopher again and again.

This problem was defined as a result of my long-standing attention towards how the 19<sup>th</sup> century's culture gave birth to specific forms of scientific and belletristic narrative related to the formation of philosophy of history, a special discipline that was so critical for intellectual, political and social life in Russia. The problem is naturally associated with and conditioned by the context of the epoch, namely the following factors: 1) the nature of discourse balanced between scientific knowledge and literature, 2) the process of conception and elementary localization of this discourse in Russian universities and near-university milieu, and further circulation and diffusion of this specific language and thinking patterns in the social mind,

and, finally, 3) its actualization in discussions of the 1850–1860s reflected in opinion journalism of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This research is primarily focused around the practices of those Westernizers, «Russian humanists»<sup>1</sup> — mostly medieval historians, *hommes de lettres* and opinion journalists — who can be referred to the pleiad of Moscow and Saint Petersburg professors. It's their oeuvres, educational and teaching activities that provided the ground for the school of Russian thought, which was in many ways oriented at developing Russian concepts of philosophy of history. The process of exploring European intellectual experience was hard and sometimes even painful, since it inevitably provoked heated debates between those who regarded national identity as a sphere protected against any invasion or intrusion from outside, and their opponents.

Paradoxically, the figure of Vico takes on paramount significance in the defined context, although his actual presence in Russian culture and politics is relatively small at that time. On Russian intellectual stage, he was rather an unseen character, though a very powerful one. In my research, I study these transitions from shadow into the light, and first of all those forms of Vico's philosophy of history that were most favored by Russian thinkers. Besides, I was very interested in drawing a «roadmap» of Vico in the Russian mind of that time, i.e. in showing and analyzing when and how his name and oeuvres become demanded, and what forms further actualization takes.

Analysis of a great number of documentary sources of the 1800–1860s (the best part of which is archives) — memoirs, letters, opinion articles — allows for tracing his Russian intellectual itinerary.

It appears that the history of perception of Vico's ideas in Russia is inconsistent, contradictory, and selective. Its real start is rather late, falling on the early / mid-1840s, more than twenty years after Vico's works became popular in Germany and France (translations by W.E. Weber, 1822 and J. Michelet, 1827). Thus, Europe witnessed this adaptation bordering on distortion in the 1820–1830s, while in Russia the process coincided with the quite mature period when identification of the Russian history phenomenon had already passed its acute initial phases by surviving the hottest debates in the 1820–1830s and had been openly realized in various complementary practices. This period is characterized by numerous memoirs, historical notes by witnesses and participants of major historical events, which was so important for close and efficient interaction between philology and historiography, history and literature, the two neighboring areas that often discover their nature, limits and scope through resolving mutual disagreements and internal conflicts. Therefore, it is no coincidence that

1. V.I. Guerrier, *P.N. Kudryavtsev in His Scientific and Literary Works*, in «Vestnik Evropy», 5 (1887), p. 19.

Vico's name is strongly associated with historical novel in Russian intellectual context. It is quite symptomatic that Giambattista Vico's image was formed when the Russian society had experienced one of the strongest obsessions of the 1830s: developing the national model of historical novel by adopting European romantic archetypes and based on them. This historical and literary epidemic ran dry and died out very quickly, but it provided a powerful intellectual and emotional boost and, what's most important, created a solid precedent of experiencing history as an intimate, private subject and demonstrated possible ways of treating it. As Russian cultural and political system has never seen saw any sunny days, history has always been treated in a specific, tragic way. The genre of historical essay in Russian context is always something more than just a literary genre. It takes a special, cross-functional place in the genre hierarchy by synthesizing the principles of science and literature. That's why some political catastrophes and crises are marked by new comebacks, outbreaks and epidemics of this genre. Thus, this form has experienced two clear climax phases in Russia: after the 1830s, it came back even more powerful in the 1869–1870s, in Vico's logics of describing lives of civilizations and cultures that develop cyclically, from rise to fall.

«Barthold Niebuhr, historian of our century, established historical criticism, the method used in creating of the overwhelming part of history, under the influence of Vico, who wasn't appreciated in the last century», wrote Valerian Maykov (1823–1847), opinion journalist and literary critic, who died very young<sup>2</sup>. There is a sketch of an article in his papers, where he is drawing parallels between Niebuhr and Vico, explaining the reasons for Vico being poorly studied and understood, for his, in Maykov's words, balancing on borders, and for his nonconformity to his time or to any other epoch. In a very personal, concerned, even irascible juxtaposition of Vico's scientific spirit, different from anyone else's including his followers and disciples, to that of Niebuhr, Maykov is telling about his affinity with Vico, some spiritual kinship between them: “he was eager to become a scientist like Vico. However, this requires properties and tools to make the dry language of precise facts intelligible and captivating for someone inexperienced in philosophical thinking.”<sup>3</sup>

A similar idea was verbalized by Maykov more insistently: «I've never thought of becoming a critic to evaluate literary works; (...) I've always dreamed of a scientific career, but how to make people read scientific oeuvres? I have always seen criticism as the only means to make science

2. V.N. Maykov, *Literary Criticism*, Leningrad, Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1985, p. 211.

3. V.N. Maykov, *To Evgenia Tur*, September 12, 1843, Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, fund 447, storage unit 1, sh. 1.

interesting for the public. There are many people who will read a scientific treatise in *Kritika* but will never read the science section in a magazine, not to speak of a scientific book».<sup>4</sup>

Vico's Russian way begins in the late 1840s and includes a few discovery phases.

One of the very first phases, when Vico's name is legitimized and comes to surface from the abyss of oblivion, falls exactly on the border between the last years of the 1840s and the early 1850s. This resurrection of Vico and his integration into the Russian culture could be called an intellectual gesture, emotional and sympathizing.

We cannot ignore one more political factor that raised the Italian issue as vital and topical for Russian politics. What I talk about is the 1860s, the epoch of great reforms in Italy and Russia. Coupled with certain similarity of social problems in the two countries, this epoch provided for the closest attention of Russian people to what was going on in Italy, made them draw parallels, and served as a source of inspiration or criticism. The Russian public was widely impressed by the bright figures of the Risorgimento epoch, first of all by Garibaldi, Mazzini, and Cavour. Peripeteia of the struggle for Italian unity became the object of attention and concerns of the Russian public, of correspondence and discussions. Combat operations against Austria in 1859 and 1866, defeat of Italian troops, the 1860 revolution in the Kingdom of Naples and annexation of southern territories to the united Italy — all of this was suffered by Russia's thinking society as their own home troubles.

This is especially important to consider because it was in 1830–1850s when Russian historians and philosophers actively discussed the attitude of «the national spirit toward universal human enlightenment», and when the foundation for university philosophy of history was laid, which later evolved into academic philosophy of history.

It should be noted that Timofey Granovsky was the key mediator in exploration of Vico's ideas by Russia. It was as if the Russian mind received Vico directly from Granovsky's hands; in this sense, he was the first to offer the perspective of interpretation. Above all, Granovsky appreciated the unique human qualities and the spacious mind of the Italian thinker that allowed him to plumb the mysterious depths of history and to arrive at the higher view of the history. Granovsky's reservations are not that important, their conceptual discrepancies are minor, while the forefront is occupied by admiration and worship of Vico, which will persist ever after, in everyone who will remember Vico and read his works. Individual and local disagreements in Granovsky's interpretation are compensated by the

4. V.N. Maykov, *To Turgenev*, February 14, 1846, in Id., *Criticism Experiments*, Saint Petersburg, 1891, pp. XXXVIII–XL.

unconditional acknowledgement of Vico's priority and pioneering role in developing philosophy of history. Granovsky's Vico is «one of those scientists who suffered from non-recognition of their new ideas by the public»,<sup>5</sup> though recognized only after his death. It seems that the characteristics of Vico defined by Granovsky are essential to consider, since further intellectual integration of Vico in the Russian culture and adaptation by it preserved, apart from any nuances, the original impression predetermined by the idol of the Russian thinking public of the late 1840s. His attitude towards Vico is characterized primarily by unconditional acknowledgement of his priority, by treating him as an intellectual point of reference in scientific historical studies, and by feeling deeply sorry for the non-recognition and the long-lasting oblivion. The public of the 1850s was attracted by Vico's intellectual opposition, his uncompromising opponency to cartesianism and skepticism, his nonconformance to his time, revolutionary novelty of his ideas, his sufferings and sometimes his martyrdom in science. All of this was quite within the model of a cultural character proposed to Granovsky's contemporaries and successors.

From that time (the early 1850s), Vico's name and ideas are firmly consolidated in studies of Russian historians, and his system is preserved in their research as the only possible foundation for any subsequent superstructures. Vico as a reference point in philosophy of history is the axiom common for historians of truly diverse schools, such as V.I. Guerrier, M.M. Stasyulevich, P.N. Milyukov, B.N. Chicherin, N.I. Kareev.

With all minor discrepancies, Vico was inevitably regarded as a pioneer and, most importantly, as a teacher. Russian Westernizers considered themselves inheritors of the type of Renaissance humanism represented by Vico. This was one of the main reasons for their attention and turning back to the Italian philosopher again and again.

An obvious parallelism between the humanisms of the 16th and the 19th centuries was born, as all sciences and disciplines were dominated by historical aspect and genetic explanation of all phenomena. The history itself was granted the highest status of a social science that governed the major issues of the age.

«After Granovsky and his disciples», the way of Vico on the Russian ground is divided between a few branches. First of all, he is addressed by those who search for a theory and a method in history.

Beginning with the mid-19th century, speculation about the scientific form of history provides the ground for active development of theoretical and methodological problems of historiography. Courses in philosophy of history are given in universities (M.M. Stasyulevich, Saint Petersburg Uni-

5. T.N. Granovsky, *Lectures on Medieval History*, Moscow, Nauka, 1986, p. 310.

versity, 1860–1861; VI. Guerrier, Moscow University, 1865–1866). Academic survey courses of the 1860s are a novelty, a discovery, a new framework that brings together academics and journalists.

That is why Vladimir Guerrier, Russian historian, public figure, corresponding member of the Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences (1902), professor of world history in Moscow University (1868–1904), appeals to Vico so «eagerly»<sup>6</sup>. In his research, he follows Vico's thinking patterns focused in many ways around studying and explaining the phenomenon of the Roman Empire as the heart and the core of all subsequent processes in Europe.

It was Guerrier who insisted on the fact that intelligent nature of people in the 1840s was similar to that of Italian humanists, Vico's contemporaries. By drawing parallels between these generations and justifying the similarities between the Russian Westernizers and Italian intellectuals of the 17th and 18th centuries, Guerrier was developing a new typology of the historic thought and of interpretations of the philosophy of history, exploring the Italian ground as a possible prototype for the Russian roots.

It is no coincidence that Guerrier, who went through «Granovsky's school» (his professional and intellectual development was strongly influenced by his teacher P.N. Kudryavtsev, who, in his turn, was the closest disciple of Granovsky. P.N. Kudryavtsev will be discussed below), conceived and outlined the intellectual pedigree of his teachers, having integrated their biographies into the European context and having explained their pre-determined connection to the tradition, or, more precisely, to the unique form of argument about the historical process introduced by Vico and later by Niebuhr, his disciple, mediator, successor and representative in the European culture, who reinterpreted Vico's ideas in the German manner. First of all, Guerrier considered the term «Westernizers» scientifically inaccurate and proposed calling them «Russian humanists» instead, referring to Vico. «Adherents of the European and universal human values», he argued, «were dubbed *Westernizers*. This tag is incorrect and one-legged, since it only points to the external characteristic of the phenomenon, ignoring its fundamental nature. The tag is also unfair, since it is reproaching, while reproach can only be applied to obsession by or abuse of the new method that do not necessarily flow out of the method itself, which is inherently correct. Westernizers of the 1830–50s had the right for a totally different

6. VI. Guerrier, *Essay on the Development of Historical Science*, Moscow, Universitetskaya tipografiya 1866; Id., *Leibniz and His Century*, Saint Petersburg, Pechatnya V. Golovina, 1868; Id., *Willigis, Archbishop of Mainz* (based on a 12<sup>th</sup> century manuscript), Moscow, Universitetskaya tipografiya, 1869; Id., *On Scientific Movement in the Earliest Roman History*, in: «Collection of the Historical Community of Moscow University», Moscow, 1898, pp. 37–74; Id., *Fundamentals of Roman History* (lecture textbook), Moscow, Pechatnya S.P. Yakovleva, 1899.



name. They were *Russian humanists*.<sup>7</sup>

Westernism mostly attracted Guerrier by the philosophical dimension brought to historiography for the first time ever. Two trends influenced the historian more than anything else: idealist philosophy and liberalism. Guerrier explained that two new intellectual waves were sweeping over the European humanism at that time. These were idealist philosophy, which enriched the human inner world with understanding of the history and with the idea of a lawful, peaceful, organic development and progress, and political liberalism, which had received a firm foundation from the Revolution of 1789. That humanism of the 19th century, enriched and ennobled with the new ideas, that European product of the universal human civilization — that's what Russian humanists, the so called Westernizers of the 1840s, were trying to take over to our society. They didn't aim to replace the national values with the European ones, but to educate the Russian society on the universal European culture in order to raise the national development to the level of universal humanity and assign it a global significance. Speaking more definitely, one can say that the humanism of the 19th century promoted historical sciences. Historical focus and genetic explanation of phenomena became predominant in all scientific fields. The history itself was nominated as a social science, a compass in all arguments of that time. The high mission of history resulted from the strictly scientific methodology it was restricted to.

Continuing Vico's thought, Guerrier points out three impacts of the Roman Empire: world-historical, political, and critical.

At different times, Guerrier would date the first historiosophical doctrines 18th century (referring to Vico) or associate them with the Christianity. Modern philosophy of history feeds on a number of sources. On the one hand, there are demands of today's life; on the other hand, there is an insurmountable subjectivity inherent to any historical studies. Guerrier believed that justification of the scientific character of historical inquiries remained the highest priority, and that Vico's oeuvres were the primary source for speculations of the «Russian humanists». Historiosophical problems derived from the world-historical viewpoint. To this effect, Russian history also had an explication of its own in terms of philosophy of history. The problem was that of interrelations between Russia and the West, which created favorable conditions for development of history of culture or civilization. However, this mental picture requires a more detailed insight into it. Despite the fact that originally Guerrier associated the origins of philosophy of history with Vico, later he nevertheless pushed the birth of the science back to an earlier epoch, assigning the Christianity with conditions that made a philosophical

7. VI. Guerrier, *Essay on the Development of Historical Science*, p. 73.

view on history possible. From that viewpoint, philosophy of history was pioneered by Augustine of Hippo, whose works turned out to reflect the conflicts of the historical process of his day. Thus, Guerrier believed that St Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, the major medieval work in philosophy of history, was written «under the influence of antagonism» between the two worlds: Roman paganism and European Christianity. «Augustine of Hippo himself, in terms of his inner time and personal development», specified Guerrier, «embodied the fundamental antagonism between the Ancient Roman world and the younger Christian one. He lived through and overcame this antagonism inside, which made him the father figure in guiding his society from the old world into a new one». <sup>8</sup> Medieval historiosophy owes its existence to Augustine of Hippo. However, St Augustine's oeuvres do not belittle in any way the importance of Vico for philosophy of history. Guerrier's works present a curious material to trace those historical, cultural and philosophical horizons and contexts that serve the background for interpretation of Vico's ideology by Russian history professors. That is why there was nothing surprising in a more profound perception and in appearance of the new associative line Augustine — Vico, which was a vital concern of the Russian mind of the mid-19th century.

Another aspect in adopting Vico's eccentrically evolving worldview by the Russian culture was Vico's «synthetic poetics» and that specific intelligent language that implied a mosaic of various layers of knowledge and descriptive dimensions: economical, artistic, political and even technical. Such «collage» of elements (if I am allowed to use this industry-specific term belonging to a totally different age and genres) was formed by a material object, Vico's oeuvres, his poetic philosophical prose, outstandingly classical and at the same time virtually blown up from the inside by the chaos of existence, known to scientist Vico and hard to describe.

To this extent, not only does Guerrier, as a disciple of Kudryavtsev, simply mention Vico in his works, paying a tribute to his merits and calling him symbolically the «early father» of philosophy of history, but he also points to the fundamental internal similarity between the lessons taught by Vico but not digested or even completely deciphered by his contemporaries and subsequent generations. Identically, Kudryavtsev as a historian was rarely understood and appreciated. His historical oeuvres bear the traces of «heart-to-heart conversations», vivid pictures that are able to bring the reader closer to the events described, literally making her/him a witness or even a participant thereof. His oeuvres create an intricate optics and a comprehensive perception of history by combining different language layers

8. V.I. Guerrier, *Philosophy of History from Augustine of Hippo to Hegel*, Moscow, Pechatnya S.P. Yakovleva, 1915; Id., *Medievalism, its Origins and Ideal*, in: «Vestnik Evropy», 1891, I, pp. 177–178.

and various dimensions: those of linguistics, imagination and everyday life. Philosophy of history in its Russian version inevitably borrowed its tools from literature and appealed to literary experience.

Thus, the 1840 — mid-1850s, exactly when Kudryavtsev was creating his works, were characterized by rapprochement between historiography and literature. Every scientist of those days mirrors the specific features of the epoch more or less. Likewise, Kudryavtsev's articles «serve a remarkable manifestation of the epoch where historiography was mostly of a literary nature and where it represented a branch of belles-lettres to a certain extent».<sup>9</sup>

It should be noted that Vico always plays a role of a touchstone and of a reference point in Guerrier's speculations. Quite naturally, the background is occupied by Vico's ubiquitous «satellites». Illustrating his words by examples from German historiography, Guerrier points out the influence the epoch had on Niebuhr's oeuvre: «That epoch, i.e. the last quarter of the 18th century, had two specific features in Germany: the phenomenal worship of the Ancient times and the bloom of German literature».<sup>10</sup>

Literature of that time was specifically characterized by an interest towards folk poetry. Having unintentionally transferred that popular literary trend to historiography, Niebuhr suggested that Roman epic poetry could be used as a historical source. In this issue, Niebuhr is a direct inheritor of Vico's ideas and an experienced guide for all Russian humanists.

Finally, there is one more Vico's principle adopted by the Russian thought. I am talking about variability of philosophy of history, its dependence on conditions and circumstances. One of the most important features of this science is flexibility and ability to take various forms depending on social, cultural or political context. This was explicitly confirmed by Guerrier, who regarded it as another example of «Vico's impression» that overwhelmed the minds of Russian thinkers of the late 19th century.

Problems, goals, methodological strategies of historical studies vary from epoch to epoch due to personal attitudes and aptitudes of scientists. Therefore, there cannot be a universal philosophy of history as a methodology established once and for ever. Philosophy and methodology of history are based on the power of persuasion, not on the objective truth. They can be accepted or declined, approved or disputed, but they should never be ignored. «Each of these epochs in human existence», Guerrier wrote, «has its own view on history; each of the epochs had its own aims and questions

9. VI. Guerrier, B.N. Chicherin, *Russian Amateurism and Communal Ownership of Land. Inquiry into «Land Ownership and Land Science»* by Knyaz A. Vasilchikov, Moscow, Tipografiya A. I. Mamontova, 1878, pp. 175, 221.

10. VI. Guerrier, *Historical Community Goals*, in *Publications of the Historical Community of the Emperor's Moscow University, reviews delivered in 1895*, Moscow, Pechatnya S.P. Yakovleva, 1896, p. 14.

in investigating history; and, as soon as only inner beliefs form the standard of truth here, each of the epochs was satisfied with different answers».<sup>11</sup>

To summarize on interpretation of Vico in Guerrier's works, we should note that, as Guerrier believed, Giambattista Vico laid the foundation for the new development of philosophy of history. This foundation consisted of rationalism and regularity principle. Vico based his speculations on the question of reliability of the Roman history. Realization of the need to create a critical history resulted in the new philosophy of history. «*Critica de vero*, as he would say», wrote Guerrier about Vico, «aims at establishing common laws of the mind (...) Vico gets involved in philosophy. He insists that historical events occur under the commonly known laws»; «Vico's merit consists first of all in his idea of close interdependence between various human activities»,<sup>12</sup> summarized Guerrier Vico's significance for philosophy of history. These statements became both the «common idea» and an object of disputes in historian milieu.

Another branch in Vico's interpretation was distilled in a violent dispute about reliability in history (T.N. Granovsky, P.N. Kudryavtsev, S.S. Uvarov) between historians of Moscow and Saint Petersburg, including the debate of M.M. Stasyulevich vs. P.M. Leontyev and I.K. Babst about objectives and methods of history as a science<sup>13</sup>. Stasyulevich made reference to Vico's intellectual experience especially often in his arguments.

If scientific full age of historiography started in the 18th century, philosophy of history develops as a methodological phase of it. «From this point of view», explained Stasyulevich, «philosophy of history may be regarded as one of the earliest sciences and as the youngest one at the same time. Philosophy of history is ancient because the man has long realized the need to regulate the variety of accidental events with some common laws; at the same time, philosophy of history is rather young because the first official attempt to solve the problem methodologically was made as late as in the beginning of the last century, while the modern name was given to the science in late 18th century, in a Herder's work created in Riga in 1784».<sup>14</sup> Stasyulevich called Vico the «father of philosophy of history»<sup>15</sup>, arguing that the Italian scientist was the first to develop a complete system of philosophy of history.

Philosophical and historical reasoning in academic philosophy of history

11. V.I. Guerrier, *Philosophy of History from Augustine of Hippo to Hegel*, p. 2.
12. V.I. Guerrier, *History of Rome. Lectures (...) given in the academic year 1901–1902*, pp. 21, 24.
13. I.K. Babst, *Some Remarks on Stasyulevich's Criticism of the Book «Abbot Suger, Historical Speculation by T. Granovsky»*, in «Otechestvennye Zapiski», 71 (1850), section VII, pp. 54–67.
14. M.M. Stasyulevich, *A Historical Review of the Key Systems of Philosophy of History*, Saint Petersburg, Tipografiya F.S. Sushinskogo, 1866, p. 2.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

was based on speculating about the scientific form of history or even on trying to create philosophy of history as a science (M.M. Stasyulevich). These speculations brought history closer to other scientific disciplines and at the same time to the search of uniqueness of historical method and specific features of history scope. It was actually the dispute of the decade that involved magazines like *Vestnik Evropy* and *Otechestvennyye Zapiski*. M.M. Stasyulevich (1826–1911) was a Russian historian and opinion journalist, editor of *Vestnik Evropy*, who formed one of epicenters for heated debates where he used appeals to Vico's oeuvres as one of his polemical strategies. Stasyulevich usually referred to Vico when he had to defend against critics or to attack others' point of view.

In fact, Stasyulevich opposed universalism of scientific research to popularity and entertaining function as well as to utilitarianism in historiography. According to Stasyulevich, source critical ground for historical research is formed by texts, written sources. That is why he recommends the method of historical criticism, which has two aspects: philological and philosophical.

In his speculations on historical cognition, Stasyulevich was guided by François Guizot, referring to him when he needed to prove his point. While Guerrier built the pattern Augustine — Vico — Niebuhr, Stasyulevich, paradoxically, saw Guizot «grow out» of Vico, which brings us to a totally different path of European thought. Thus, the scientist would single out three requirements of historical cognition and three responsibilities of a historian, referring to Vico — Guizot. The first one is finding facts: there is no history where there are no accurate facts, where facts have lost their power. Vico and Guizot called the factual basis of historical inquiry «history anatomy». The second one is establishing causative relationships between facts, or what the Italian and French historians called «history physiology». The third one is breathing life into facts, or «history art». As a result, a historian may be regarded as an anatomist, a physiologist and an artist. Stasyulevich completed the list with one more requirement for historians — being a philosopher. A historian should «rise above the viewpoints of their contemporaries and be not only an anatomist, a physiologist and an artist, but at the same time a philosopher of history».<sup>16</sup>

The polemical context of Stasyulevich's speculations made him resolve theoretical and methodological issues of historiography through opposing various approaches of methodology.

Each epoch creates its own «theory of philosophy of history»<sup>17</sup>, Stasyulevich believes. Therefore, diverse philosophical and historical schools appear.

16. *Ibid.* p. 23; M.M. Stasyulevich, *General Course in Medieval History*, Saint Petersburg, Tipografiya I. Ogrizko, 1863–1865, p. III.

17. M.M. Stasyulevich, *General Course in Medieval History*, p. VI.

However, their seeming diversity may be restricted to two key concepts only. «However diverse techniques and viewpoints different theories in philosophy of history may have, they still apply mostly two methods: some of them refer to the past as to something finished and deduce the perfect future out of it; others regard the past only as a stage in human development and thus see the perfection of this development in a far future. Thus, we have two principal schools of philosophy of history».<sup>18</sup> The most outstanding representative of the first school was Giambattista Vico, who regarded a certain epoch and social system as a norm of historical development. This school in philosophy of history may be called «the theory of eternal historical cycle».

Stasyulevich opposed synthetic method of research based on rhetorical processing of facts and popularization to analytical method oriented at precise verification of facts.

Basing on Vico's oeuvres, Stasyulevich also defined the key historiographical issues: those of history laws, of getting the idea of the uniform historical subject (humanity), of what historical cognition is. With reference to Vico, Stasyulevich pointed to such requirements of historical cognition as establishing facts and cause-and-effect relationship between them, reviving these facts by means of «history art» and also approaching history philosophically. Philosophy of history supports subjective, i.e. reasonable approach to the past. Philosophy of history implies putting the past in a reasonable order, i.e. in conformance with the «pure reason» principles. To be more precise, Stasyulevich compared the «social reason» manifested in history to the «pure reason». As a result, society appears as a system of ideas, and history appears to be a history of ideas.

To apply the finishing piece to the puzzle of Russian interpretations of Vico, we need to go back to one more perspective, the sociological one. It belongs to Pavel Nikolayevich Milyukov (1859–1943), politician, historian and publicist, leader of the Constitutional Democratic Party (Party of People's Freedom, informally Kadets), Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Provisional Government of 1917, honorary doctor of Cambridge University since 1916. His major historiographical work was the book called *The Key Tendencies of Russian Historical Thought*, which represented a revised and expanded course of university lectures. The book analyzes the evolution of Russian historical science in the 17<sup>th</sup> — the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Interpretation of Vico's ideas in this book had its roots.

The very idea of social or national organism, suppressing the viewpoint of world history in sociology, has a historical origin and is associated with the «idea of national history» conceived in Ancient times and later reborn in

18. Id., *A Historical Review of the Key Systems of Philosophy of History*, p. 25.

«Italian Renaissance republics». It is curious that of all developers of this idea, Milyukov only rests upon Vico, reckoning him explicitly among «Italian humanists of the renaissance of classicism». «He knew quite well how it was scientifically important to explore national histories in parallel in order to discover similar patterns that could be explained by the common rules», commented the historian on Vico's «sociological argument».<sup>19</sup> Milyukov was strongly impressed by the idea of national history, since, despite its respectable age (it appeared even earlier than the idea of world history), it was «lucky to avoid theology and metaphysics».<sup>20</sup> Systematic approach elaborated during the development of national history reveals recurrent, homogeneous stages in development of different peoples. In Vico's oeuvres, these are the age of gods, the age of heroes and the age of people, which Milyukov perceived as a prototype for the positivist theory of theological, metaphysical and positive stages in history.

Our survey of appeals to Vico's thinking patterns is far from being comprehensive, as is discussion of his Russian integration in the 19th century. However, we have tried to mark the key points on the map. Yet, we have only been dwelling on Vico's concepts and representations that are consolidated in the public space.

In the final part of my survey, I would like to come back to the key period of Vico's «Russian way», i.e. to the 1850s when Vico was carefully transferred by Granovsky for Russian intellectual use. The first and closest successor of this precious discovery was Pyotr Kudryavtsev (1816–1858), Granovsky's favorite disciple, historian and writer, professor of Moscow University. His interpretation of Vico didn't receive any comments from researchers. Nonetheless, it was quite significant. In fact, Kudryavtsev's numerous oeuvres are divided into three parts: published and unpublished, which also includes the third part, the «spoken» one. Memories about Kudryavtsev, a man of great depth, were kept by his friends and disciples and found in correspondence of third parties.

We have discovered at least three evidences.

There are unpublished memoirs about Kudryavtsev by Elizaveta Vasilyevna Salias De Tournemire (Sukhovo-Kobylyna by her birth name), owner of a famous Moscow literary salon, publisher of the *Russkaya Rech* magazine (1860–1861), whose pen name was Evgenia Tur. Kudryavtsev was close to Evgenia Tur's social circle, they communicated a lot in the 1850s. Evgenia Tur remembers in details one of their long conversations in summer 1853 that Kudryavtsev devoted to meticulous and thorough analysis of Vico's

19. P.N. Milyukov, *The Key Tendencies of Russian Historical Thought*, Saint Petersburg, Izdanie M.V. Averianova, 1913, p. 46.

20. *Ibid.*

works he had in Italian. He was also talking about how French and German translations weakened and flattened Vico's style of writing.

Evgenia Tur remembers Kudryavtsev reading extracts from *Scienza Nuova* and commenting on them at length. Kudryavtsev was mainly interested by the multilayer structure of the text, by the labyrinth of Vico's conclusions and sophisticatedly intertwined metaphorical trains of his thought, which were easily defined by Kudryavtsev. He saw their intertwining and patterns, he felt transitions and the hidden center of attraction. Just as Virgil in *Divine Comedy*, he would explore all the turns and layers of this structure in an inspired and enthusiastic but still so simple way.

The most important challenge that inevitably appealed Kudryavtsev was plunging into the «vague» lines where Vico explained the structure of natural languages that had formed as rocks throughout centuries by absorbing lots of soils. This language is universal and includes fundamental metaphors and myths. «Like storages of knowledge and experience, they keep all the symbols and images related to universal relations». <sup>21</sup> It is interesting that almost the same dialogue was later published in the notes of Yevgeny Feoktistov, graduate of Moscow University (1851), historian, opinion journalist, editor of the *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosvescheniya* magazine (1871–1883), head of the Chief Administration for Press Affairs (1883–1896), appointed as senator in 1896. At that time, young Feoktistov was a close friend of Evgenia Tur and a co-editor of *Russkaya Rech*, he was in close communication with Kudryavtsev. Feoktistov kept a diary for many years; part of it was published in 1930s under the title *Behind the Scenes of Literature and Politics*. However, the best part of his memoirs is only known to archivists and is kept in the Pushkin House. The part written in the early 1850s contains the proof of Evgenia Tur's evidence. Feoktistov points out how strongly he was impressed by Kudryavtsev's analysis of the Vico's text: «As if the imagery came back alive and Vico's words were incarnated». <sup>22</sup>

Kudryavtsev was obviously going to write a biography of Vico around the time when he was working on the biographical sketch about Dante, which was published in *Otechestvennye Zapiski* in 1855. There are preserved sketches that even allow to suggest that Kudryavtsev had a few parallel conceptions: to write a scientific paper dedicated to Vico, full of detailed analysis of his ideas and texts, and to create a historical and biographical story about him with elements of a novel, since one can discern a plot, fictional and historical characters in these sketches. <sup>23</sup>

21. E.V. Salias De Tournemire, *Memories. Fragments*, Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, fund 447, inv. 1, storage unit 1, sh. 17.

22. E.M. Feoktistov, *Notes on the Heard and the Seen*, Manuscript Department of the Institute of Russian Literature under the Russian Academy of Sciences, fund 318, storage unit 29, sh. 45.

23. Documents of P.N. Kudryavtsev, Manuscript Department of Research Library under the



I see a number of reasons for Pyotr Kudryavtsev's appeal to Giambattista Vico, not published but only partially preserved in archival evidences. Apart from close cooperation with Granovsky, Kudryavtsev actually had some professional motives of his own. First of all, it had to do with his permanent and deep studies of Italian history. He presented brilliantly his master's thesis *The Fates of Italy from the Collapse of the Roman Empire to its Restoration by Charles the Great*. In 1852, he started publishing his articles — *Carolings in Italy* — in *Otechestvennye Zapiski*; these articles became a continuation of his thesis. When the famous oeuvre on Roman history by Albert Schwegler was published in 1854, Kudryavtsev introduced it to the Russian public in his article *The Earliest Roman History in Schwegler's research* (*Otechestvennye Zapiski*, v. XCIII).

However, there is also another motive for Kudryavtsev's appeal to Vico, which unites him with participants of historian battles, of the dispute between the schools of Moscow and Saint Petersburg. In 1851, Kudryavtsev presented his article *On Reliability of History* in *Otechestvennye Zapiski* magazine, where he defended his subject from the note by S.S. Uvarov, President of the Academy of Sciences: *Does History Become More Reliable?* Standing up for the right of historians to use a vivid language, defending the unique nature of reliability and evidence base of the historical knowledge, Kudryavtsev was referring to historian Niebuhr, a disciple of Vico's school. In rough sketches of the article that were not included into the final version, he analyzed in detail the revolutionary, though underestimated, turning point that Vico provoked by allowing imagination to take part in the scientific research. «I should not be suspected of Pythianism or prophecies that are so alien to the science of history. However, prophecies and assumptions are typical of historians working with living witnesses and sources just as strokes of genius are typical of artists». <sup>24</sup> By these fragments, one can trace how subtly and precisely Kudryavtsev experienced everything related to Giambattista Vico, sometimes approaching him even too close, to the extent of identifying himself with the Italian thinker. Kudryavtsev was very close to be called «the Russian Vico» by his contemporaries.

Thus, if we summarize, we will see how rich Vico's heritage is of potencies and connotations in Russian culture of the 19th century. Vico pioneered development of philosophy of history; Vico provided the argument in intellectual collisions and wars, the guarantee of rightness for opponents of all parties; finally, Vico proved the non-detachability of philology and historical knowledge, of entertaining belles-lettres, language arts — and history. The latter one was welcomed enthusiastically and tested repeatedly in Russian

Moscow State University, fund of P.N. Kudryavtsev, storage unit 34, sh. 34–37.

24. *Ibid.*, storage unit 37, sh. 54.

context of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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## Vichian approach to Homer in Giulio Bajamonti\*

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**ABSTRACT:** Although an important precursor of polygenetic theories in the Homeric studies and sensitive to the problems of this approach, from technical point of view G. Vico was far below the 18<sup>th</sup> cent. scholarly standard as a scholar of ancient literature and Homer. However, his definitely positive influence on Homeric scholarship can be seen in the work of his follower Giulio Bajamonti (1744–1800). In the 1797 paper entitled *Il morlacchismo d’Omero* Bajamonti compares Homeric poems to the oral poetry of Morlachs (a South Slavic people) in advance of the famous 20<sup>th</sup> cent. studies of M. Parry and A. Lord, and even comes very close to formulating the notion of oral «formula». The reason why Bajamonti chose this fruitful alternative approach, very different from the trends of austere German scholarship exemplified by the influential F.A. Wolf’s *Prolegomena ad Homerum* of 1795, is that, though abandoning Vico’s careless manner of working with text and empirical evidence, he follows general Vichian tradition of approaching the past as if we could plunge into it and understand it.

Viewing Vico from a scholarly philological point of view is problematic. Not that anyone would doubt that his approach to Homer in *Discoverta del vero Omero* was original, interesting and important for the history of Homeric scholarship. Vico certainly was an early pre-Wolfian oralist in Homeric studies; though not the only one or the first one (the information on the canon of «predecessors of Wolf», from Perizonius to d’Aubignac, has been recently collected in Luigi Ferreri’s book)<sup>1</sup>, he seems to be independent in his theories. Besides, he was sensitive enough to the problems posed by the oralist approach to look for some way to recompense the failure of «polygenetic» theories to account for the artistic unity of the poems: his solution, it appears, was to state that he denies Homer *per la mettà* and that Homer actually existed, but only as equivalent to *popoli greci*<sup>2</sup>. However,

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1. L. Ferreri, *La questione Omerica dal cinquecento al settecento*, Roma, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2007.

2. See discussions in G. Perotta, *Le teorie omeriche di Giambattista Vico*, in E. Barie (ed.), *Italia e Grecia: Saggi su le due civiltà e i loro rapporti attraverso i secoli*, Firenze, Felice Le Monnier, 1939, pp. 21–58; F. Nicolini, *Sugli studi omerici di G.B. Vico*, in «Atti dell’Accademia nazionale dei Lincei», 5 (1954), pp. 469–520; A. Pagliaro, *Omero e la poesia popolare in G.B. Vico*, in A. Pagliaro, *Altri saggi di critica*

this is true only if we speak of his theoretical speculations on the general problems of imagining the Homeric tradition, and in this paper I am going to speak of how Vico fits the context of contemporary classical scholarship in the field of direct work with ancient texts. From that point of view Vico himself unfortunately turns out to be himself a rather poor scholar.

I would like to quote a very acute formulation by Arnaldo Momigliano in his article on the antiquarian movement in the early modern studies of ancient history:

The juvenile essay published by Vico in 1710 — *De antiquissima Italorum sapientia* — was concerned with metaphysics and had little relation to ancient times, except in the title. One point is worth bearing in mind about Vico. Very conversant with the linguistic, theological and juridical learning of his age, he was practically untouched by the methods of Spanheim, Mabillon, and Montfaucon. He admired Mabillon, and refers at least once to Montfaucon, but did not assimilate their exact scholarship. He was isolated in his times partly because he was a greater thinker, but partly also because he was a worse scholar than his contemporaries. The antiquarian movement of the eighteenth century passed him by<sup>3</sup>.

An example adduced in another article by Momigliano shows clearly that Vico was on similar terms with the studies of ancient literature, where the standard of scholarship was by then equally high. In the *New Science*, he makes a statement about the beginnings of Roman literature that sounds strange for a modern reader: «(...) e Livio Andronico, il primo Scrittore Latino, scrisse la *Romanide*, ch'era un Poema eroico, il quale conteneva gli Annali degli antichi Romani» (capov. 471)<sup>4</sup>. To be sure, Livius Andronicus still remains the first author in the Roman canon, but nowadays the students learn that he translated *Odyssey* and wrote several dramatic pieces; what is this *Romanid*? As Momigliano points out<sup>5</sup>, Vico's source here was the text of late Roman grammarian Diomedes as printed in the early editions (GLK I.484):

epos Latinum primus digne scripsit Livius is qui res Romanorum decem et octo complexus est libris qui et *annales* inscribuntur (...) vel *Romanis*, quod Romanorum res gestas declarant.

*semantica*, Firenze, Casa editrice G. d'Anna, 1961, pp. 445–474; G. Cerri, G.B. Vico e l'interpretazione oralistica di Omero, in B. Gentili, G. Paioni (eds.), *Oralità: Cultura, letteratura, discorso*, Roma, Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985, pp. 233–252.

3. A. Momigliano, *Ancient History and the Antiquarian*, in Id., *Contributo alla storia degli studi classici*, Roma, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1979, p. 93.

4. Hereafter I refer to quotations from G. Vico's *New Science* by number of *capovolgimento* according to the edition of Fausto Nicolini: G. Vico, *Opere*, 8 voll., ed. by F. Nicolini, Bari, Laterza, 1911–1941.

5. A. Momigliano, *Perizonius, Niebuhr and the Character of Early Roman Tradition*, in Id., *Secondo contributo alla storia degli studi classici*, Roma, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1984, pp. 70–71.

The first to write a Latin epic in a worthy manner was Livius, he who covered the deeds of the Romans in 18 books, that are also called *Annals* (...) or *Romanid*, because they speak about the deeds of the Romans.

Already Franciscus Modius in the 16<sup>th</sup> cent. proposed (perhaps correctly) to delete the end of this phrase (on the title *Romanid*) «as giving the impression of a gloss» (*ut glossam resipientia*)<sup>6</sup>, but, more importantly, in 1627 Gerhard Vossius in his famous *De historicis Latinis* proposed a virtually certain correction of this text deleting the name *Livius*<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, the person we do know to have written the epic *Annals* in 18 books is Quintus Ennius, and the name *Livius* is absent from the manuscripts of Diomedes and appears only in the first editions: perhaps some editor wanted to clarify, who was the first Latin epic poet, and made a mistake. So Vico appeals not just to some outdated theory, but to a rather silly error denounced some hundred years before: imagine a scholar today who refers to, say, the existence of luminiferous ether or Japhetic languages as to established truth. To be sure, the statement fits well into Vico's own theories that the first Latin epic should be a historical one, because Vico claims that poetry always emerges as historical everywhere. He seems simply to choose from historical treatises the information that suits his conception better, not the information that stands criticism better (or even just stands criticism at all): for Vico certainly knew Vossius and does quote him sometimes, and *De historicis Latinis* was a very popular book, so there actually could be no difficulty for Vico about finding out what Vossius thought about Diomedes' passage — if only that was what interested Vico. In the field of strict scholarship Vico's theoretical insights are seriously undermined by his lack of conscientiousness in arguing his point.

This is why here I am going to focus on a different aspect of Vico's interaction with classics, throwing, I suppose, a much more positive light on Vico's place in the history of classical scholarship: on a case when another scholar stimulated by Vico's ideas produced a work on Homer that was

6. C. Schoppe, *Casparis Scioppi, Franci, Suspectarum lectionum libri quinque...*, Amstelodami, Apud Jodocum Pluymer Bibliopolam, 1664, p. 262: «(...) Nisi quod postrema illa verba: vel Romanis etc. ut glossam resipientia, cum Modio delenda censeo».

7. G. Vossius, *Gerardi Ioannis Vossii De historicis Latinis libri tres*, Lugduni Batavorum, Apud Ioannem Maire, 1627, p. 6: «Qui autem historiam a se signatam exire, atque emanare in vulgus, primi iuberent, poetae fuerunt. Atque hos inter princeps sit Livius Andronicus; si recte legitur apud Diomedem lib. III "Epos Latinum primus digne scripsit Livius, qui res Romanorum decem et octo complexus est libris; qui et Annales inscribuntur, quod singulorum fere annorum actus contineant". Ita hunc locum in editione sua expressit Io. Caesarius, vir eruditus, sed audax nimis Diomedis interpolator. De Livio sane nihil huiusmodi veteres prodiderunt; sed "qui res Romanorum decem et octo complexus est libris, qui et annales inscribuntur", is non alius est, quam Ennius: ut omnino pro Livio legendum sit "Ennius": vel poetae nomen debeat praeteriri: ut quod satis ex *periphrasei* sua cognoscatur».

really very good and interesting from scholarly point of view. This case is not something nobody knows about, and the present paper is no innovative enquiry, but I suggest that its object deserves special attention none the less.

The work I am going to speak about is a paper published by Giulio Bajamonti in March 1797 in the *Nuovo Giornale Enciclopedico d'Italia* and entitled *Il morlacchismo d'Omero*<sup>8</sup>. The word *morlacchismo* is derived from Italian *morlacco* (English *Morlach*), a South Slavic ethnonym. Nowadays this ethnic group is nearly extinct: they numbered 22 people in 1991 Croatian census. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> cent., however, they were the most fashionable group among Southern Slavs, and even Prosper Mérimée in 1827 attributed the compilation of his forgery called *La Guzla* to an Italianized Morlach<sup>9</sup>.

Giulio Bajamonti (1744–1800) from Split<sup>10</sup> was extremely versatile: he was a musician, he wrote on medicine, he promoted Morlach culture, he wrote several interesting texts such as, for instance, *Se al medico disconvenga la poesia e la musica*<sup>11</sup>. In the *Morlacchismo*, after a brief reference to the theories of non-single authorship of Homeric poems (Bajamonti mentions by name Vico and another Italian *vichiano*, Ciro Saverio Minervini, or Minervino, as Bajamonti calls him), he proceeds to suggest a close analogue to Homeric poems, as created by multiple rhapsodes, in the Morlach oral poetry: an idea strikingly similar to the approach of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, whose famous «oral–formulaic theory», based on analogy between Homeric poems and South Slavic oral poetry, became the dominant approach to Homer in the 20<sup>th</sup> cent. Although Bajamonti's article does not seem to have influenced contemporary academic scholarship, it appears to have had a serious impact on the (self)–representation of the Dalmatians, so as to provoke a treatment unexpected for a scholarly article: in 1799 *it was translated into Latin hexameters* by Ragusan poet Đuro Ferić. Ferić also translated into Latin Slavonic oral poetry<sup>12</sup>, so when I first met the statement that he translated Bajamonti, I thought that it was probably some

8. G. Bajamonti, *Il morlacchismo d'Omero*, in «Nuovo Giornale Enciclopedico d'Italia», 1797, marzo, pp. 77–98.

9. See in general L. Wolff, *The Rise and Fall of "Morlacchismo": South Slavic Identity in the Mountains of Dalmatia*, in N.M. Naimark, H. Case (eds.), *Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003, pp. 37–52.

10. See S. Roić, *Giulio Bajamonti, un vichiano dalmata*, in «Bollettino del Centro Studi Vichiani», XXIV–XXV (1994–1995), pp. 195–203; L. Ferreri, *La questione Omerica dal cinquecento al settecento*, pp. 265–266; M. Martin, «*Il morlacchismo d'Omero*» di Giulio Bajamonti, Trieste, Edizioni digitali del CISVA, 2010.

11. G. Bajamonti, *Se al medico disconvenga la poesia e la musica*, in «Nuovo Giornale Enciclopedico d'Italia», 1796, luglio, pp. 93–120.

12. See Đ. Ferić, *Slavica Poematia Latine Reddita: Eine frühe südslavische Volksliedersammlung*, ed. by G. Wirtz, Köln, Weimar, Wien, Böhlau Verlag, 1998.

mistake and that it must have been songs discussed by Bajamonti that Ferić translated, not the article. However, when I checked it up, this proved not to be the case: Ferić's poem is indeed an almost literal translation of the *Morlacchismo*. Look, for instance, at the following passage from Bajamonti and the corresponding text in Ferić:

Così per buone osservazioni critiche si dee credere che Omero sia vissuto in un tempo in cui non per anco i greci avevano lettere, e che i di lui poemi da principio non fossero stati scritti, ma ch'egli cieco e povero andasse cantandoli per i mercati e per le feste della Grecia, e che lo stesso andassero poi facendo i rapsodi, i quali, siccom'è noto, connettevano varj canti secondochè loro cadea più in acconcio<sup>13</sup>.

Idcirco a doctis vixisse putatur Homerus  
Tempore, quo nondum modo dictas Graecia formas,  
Sive elementa habuit: proin nullis carmina primum  
Scripta viri in tabulis, sed ei caecoque, inopique  
Grajugenum in ludis solemnibus, emporiisque  
Decantata ferunt; eademque egisse deinceps  
Quos *consutores* recte appellare latina  
Voce licet, varios quod pro re texere sueti  
Cantus, et plerumque alienos (...)<sup>14</sup>.

(Note, however, that the statement that rhapsodes normally did not compose new songs and preferred to use those composed by others is a new idea added to Bajamonti's text by Ferić himself.) The underlined expression by Bajamonti clearly reminds us of Vico; cf.:

(851) Che i Rapsodi partitamente, chi uno, chi altro, andavano cantando i Libri d'Omero nelle fiere, e feste per le Città della Grecia (...)E finalmente, ch'egli fu povero, ed andò per li mercati di Grecia cantando i suoi propj poemi (capovv. 851, 872).

Though this is supposed to be only Vico's rendering of others' statements, it sounds rather strange: to be sure, in other traditions market places can well be an appropriate place for oral epic performance<sup>15</sup>, but the idea that this was the context of Homeric poetry does not really seem to find support easily in ancient sources. Vico might have meant the Panionic festival mentioned in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo (146–150), but again this seems rather to be an instance of his usual inaccuracy in quoting his sources: perhaps he was influenced by the role of markets in the social life of Italy.

13. G. Bajamonti, *Il morlacchismo d'Omero*, p. 79.

14. Đ. Ferić, *Ad clarissimum virum Julium Bajamontium Spalatensem Georgii Ferrich Ragusini epistola*, Ragusii, excudebat Andreas Trevisan, 1799, p. 4.

15. See e.g. B. Putilov, *Epicheskoe skazitelstvo*, Moscow, Vostochnaja literatura, 1997.

But it deserves attention that this unsubstantiated statement by Vico acquires new quality in Bajamonti's texts, for the latter uses an empirically evidenced typological parallel to support it:

Anzi si ha per probabile che Omero medesimo cantasse anche dei versi altrui, talchè non esso solo, ma varj sieno stati e non tutti in un tempo gli autori de' canti a lui attribuiti. . . Ora nè pure i canti de' Morlacchi furono scritti in origine, ed i più belli non lo sono per anco; ma costumossi già e costumasi tuttora (benchè alquanto meno, perchè le buone usanze si vanno perdendo) di cantarli alle fiere specialmente campestri della Dalmazia ed in occasione di rustici conviti, nel quale musico uffizio d'ordinario s'impiegano i ciechi. Quanto agli autori di questi canti, non v'è memoria di chi abbia composto i più vecchi, passati per tradizione di bocca in bocca e di età in età, ma si tiene per certo che tutti non sieno lavoro d'una stessa mano. Ed anche oggidì v'ha, benchè più rari, degli Omeri illirici, che all'occasione di qualche duello di qualche ratto o di altro simile avvenimento arricchiscono la nazional musa di queste produzioni, le quali ordinariamente si cantano all'improvviso e sogliono essere pezzi vecchi rifatti ed adattati al caso<sup>16</sup>.

Although Bajamonti does not specify what his empirical evidence was, it clearly existed (Bajamonti was actively engaged in the ethnographic activity, as becomes clear from references to information received from him in Alberto Fortis' *Viaggio in Dalmazia*): in particular, it sounds quite plausible that he should have met *blind* singers in Dalmatia, because the research of Milman Parry and Albert Lord has shown that this phenomenon was still extant in 20<sup>th</sup> cent. Yugoslavia<sup>17</sup>. Once again, this feature draws a neat contrast between Bajamonti's approach and that of Vico, who found a different explanation for Homeric blindness — a speculative one: *Ed è proprietà di natura umana, ch'i ciechi vagliono maravigliosamente nella memoria* (capov. 871). This is exactly what makes Bajamonti's treatment of the oral nature of Homeric poems (in principle already postulated by Vico) so interesting: even though quotations are rare, it is always clear that he means something specific when making statements about the text. His description of the features of oral poetry in fact anticipates the «formulaic theory» in many points. First, however, he singles out not classical «*formulae*» (repetitions removed far from each other in similar situation and metrical position) but long fragments repeated almost literally soon after one another, as when a message commissioned to a herald is repeated by him word by word. This is indeed perhaps the most striking kind of repetition in Slavic poetry<sup>18</sup>, and

16. G. Bajamonti, *Il morlacchismo d'Omero*, pp. 79–80.

17. A.B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1960, pp. 18–20, adduces two examples contemporary to Parry's expedition plus the famous Montenegro singer Ćor Huso, who was blind on one eye.

18. For instance, the examples in C.M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry*, London, Macmillan, 1952, chapter 7 will give a clear impression for those unfamiliar with this poetry.



corresponding repetitions are extant in Homer as well. The example Bajamonti uses is the orders by Hera repeated almost literally for Odysseus by Athena (9 lines: *Il.* 2.157–165, 173–181). From this type of repetition Bajamonti passes to similar repetitions not «inside the same episode» (*nel continuato racconto di un medesimo affare*)<sup>19</sup>, as when the description of a feast after returning his daughter to Chryses in book 1 is repeated almost exactly in the description of the sacrifice before renewing the battle in book 2 (12 lines: *Il.* 1.458–469, 2.421–432). In Albert Lord's terms this is not a formula either, for only «a line or half line» can be labeled formulaic expression: «to the repeated incidents and descriptive passages in the songs» he «refers by theme»<sup>20</sup>. However, one important feature that unites such cases with formulae is that they cannot be explained with the notion of repeating long fragments from fresh memory: strictly speaking, this is not exactly a repetition, but a reproduction of a construction element that is always stored in the mind of a singer (or singers). Bajamonti understands this well, and even uses the same image as Parry, once calling the phenomenon «formula» (though, of course, this is not exactly how Parry uses this term):

Ora lo stesso appunto si trova nei canti morlacchi, ne' quali non solamente si ripetono alla lettera le cose riportate per ordine altrui, ma questo suol farsi eziandio allorchè si risponde partitamente a qualche domanda. Ed oltracciò v'hanno certe sentenze o frasi di alquanti versi, delle quali i Morlacchi senza cambiarvi sillaba si servono come di formole comuni in molti de' loro canti o per introduzione o per transizione o per elogio o per commiato o per qualunque altra opportunità. Che se ne' poeti d'altre nazioni, come fra latini in Virgilio e in Lucrezio, uno o più versi in più d'un luogo delle opera loro immutati si leggono, ognun vede che tali ripetizioni sono ben diverse dalle omeriche e dalle morlacche<sup>21</sup>.

Note that Bajamonti consciously insists on focusing on *extensive* repetitions: perhaps this is a means of insuring against basing theory on coincidence. Why does Lord insist on the brevity of formulaic expression? First of all to leave the connection of formula and metrical position always clear<sup>22</sup>, and thus make formulaic theory not just an empirical description, but an explanation of how oral poetry is created «from the inside». Bajamonti does not make the step to this interpretation of Homeric repetitions: he then proceeds to *epithetum constans*, which, combined with the noun it defines, makes a particular case of Parry and Lord's formula, but Bajamonti does

19. G. Bajamonti, *Il morlacchismo d'Omero*, p. 83.

20. A.B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, p. 4.

21. G. Bajamonti, *Il morlacchismo d'Omero*, p. 84.

22. According to Parry's definition (used by Lord as well), formula is «a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea» (M. Parry, *Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making. I: Homer and Homeric Style*, in «Harvard Studies in Classical Philology», 41 (1930), p. 80; A.B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, p. 4).

not discuss its connection with metrical position; and then the treatment of common stylistic features of Homer and Morlach poetry ends. It means that cases like *ton d' apameibomenos prosephe* («and in response to him he said») or its Serbian analogue *a besjedi* (not a pair of noun and epithet, but clearly a formula in modern terminology) remain uncovered by Bajamonti's account. The famous Morlach (in Fortis' terminology) poem *Hasanaginica*, certainly familiar to Bajamonti (it has been suggested that Bajamonti was even the source for Fortis' publication of *Hasanaginica* in 1774)<sup>23</sup>, contains such cases as well, e.g. the expression *sirotice svoje* («her orphans») or *sirotice moje* («my orphans»): it always appears in the end of a line (thrice), and can scarcely be considered a group of *epithetum constans* (at least as Bajamonti understands it) plus noun. In all probability, Bajamonti left such cases out as less impressive; and besides, the very point of his work seems to be strict adherence to empirical data, he is not fond of generalizing about the deep reasons behind the coincidences of poetic techniques. Nevertheless, as we have mentioned, he seems to understand quite well that these reasons have to do with mnemonics.

The rest of Bajamonti's article was dedicated to the *morlacchismo morale*, that is, features common to Homer and Morlachs in customs and everyday life. One unexpected (and perhaps «Vichian») feature of this section is that now the life described in the Homeric poems is compared not to the life described in the Morlach poems, but to the life of Morlachs themselves: what Bajamonti means is that Morlachs have preserved certain aspects of the «heroic» way of life. As in Vico, some remarks on the uncivilized features of Homeric life sound funny to us: while Vico was scandalized by the fact that Homeric gods and heroes tell each other things «that could hardly be said even by servants in comedies nowadays» (*ch'appena ora direbbesi da' Servidori nelle Commedie*, capov. 782), Bajamonti, after a long demonstration that Telemachus does indeed sleep without a shirt in *Od.* 1.437 and 15.60, points out that this custom is attested among noble Morlachs as well<sup>24</sup>. We see, however, that here again Bajamonti's remarks are based on the empirical data on the customs of Morlachs, not just speculations. Note what both authors say on the use of roasted meat:

Bajamonti:

Quanto alle carni, queste si preparavano arrosto per solo gusto cucinario di quelle nazioni, siccome tuttora presso a' Morlacchi, non già per mancanza di vasi da

23. M. Martin, «Il morlacchismo d'Omero» di Giulio Bajamonti, p. 1; Ž. Muljačić, *Od koga je A. Fortis mogao dobiti tekst Hasanaginice?*, in «Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta u Zadru. Razdio lingističko-filološki», 7 (1972/73), pp. 277–289.

24. G. Bajamonti, *Il morlacchismo d'Omero*, pp. 93–94.

lessare, dacchè allora v'aveano caldaje, le quali da' Greci, e da' Trojani d'ordinario erano adoperate ad altri usi. Ed è da notare che i gran signori ed eroi d'Omero si diletta vano di macellare colle proprie mani la carne per la loro tavola, come appunto fanno i Morlacchi di non bassa condizione<sup>25</sup>.

Vico:

E quantunque egli narri i suoi Eroi sempre cibarsi di carni arroste; il qual cibo è 'l più semplice, e schietto di tutti gli altri, perchè non ha d'altro bisogno, che della brace; il qual costume restò dopo ne' sacrificj (...) ond'è che Achille, ove dá la cena a Priamo, esso fende l'agnello, e Patroclo poi l'arroste, apparecchia la mensa, e vi pone sopra il pane dentro i canestri; perchè gli Eroi non celebravano banchetti, che non fossero sacrificj, dov'essi dovevan esser i Sacerdoti (...) tanto allora era magnifica cotal idea, ch'ora ci sembra essere di beccajo! Appresso dovettero venire le carni allesse, ch'oltre al fuoco hanno di bisogno dell'acqua, del caldajo, e con ciò de' treppiedi: delle quali Virgilio fa anco cibar i suoi Eroi, e li fa con gli schidoni arrostit le carni (capov. 801)<sup>26</sup>.

Although Vico's memory retained some minor details of *Il.* 24.621–626 like bread in canisters, he commits here an error possible only if one does not remember what the poem is about at all: Priamus comes to Achilles for the body of Hector, slain by Achilles in vengeance for the death of his friend Patroclus; so how could Patroclus attend upon Achilles at that moment? Vico appears to take interest solely in the contents of the meal, as soon as it interacted with his theoretical constructions. And Bajamonti in his remark seems to respond to Vico's no less strange implied idea that Homeric Greeks had no cauldrons or tripods. This is what makes Bajamonti's text an interesting, stimulating and qualitative piece of classical science: contrary to Vico, he invariably displays deep attention and attachment both to Homeric texts and Morlach reality.

But at the same time (here is finally the promised positive aspect of Vico's influence I shall end my paper with), if we compare Bajamonti not to Vico but to Friedrich August Wolf and the 19<sup>th</sup> cent. Homeric scholars, it is

25. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

26. L. Ferreri, *La questione Omerica dal cinquecento al settecento*, p. 266, who knows Bajamonti in quotations only, argues against the thesis of F. Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, vol. 2, Torino, Einaudi, 1990, pp. 411–413, that Bajamonti's approach to Homer is rather influenced by M. Cesarotti's reception of Vico than by Vico's own text. I find Ferreri's case convincing (Bajamonti certainly argues for a «polygenetic» view of Homer, contrary to what Venturi claims), and the statements I quote clearly react to Vico, not to Cesarotti's exposition of Vico's views. This is what Cesarotti writes on roasting meat in Homer in 1787, disputing against Vico (M. Cesarotti, *Ragionamento storico-critico, in L'Iliade d'Omero, volgarizzata. . . dall'abb. Melchior Cesarotti*, t. I, in Padova, a spese di Pietro Brandolese, 1798, p. 29): «Un tale stato di società ripugna poi esso cotanto all'usanza degli Eroi di cuocer l'arrosto? usanza che nel loro spirito avea nulla di basso, perchè nobilitata dall'idee di religione annesse costantemente ai conviti». No mention of caldrons at all here; neither does Cesarotti mention market places, for he imagines legendary rhapsodes singing «nei giuochi pubblici e nelle solennità» (*ibid.*, p. 16).

striking how he glanced at the future over their heads. While all the canon of the «precursors of Wolf» (d'Aubignac, Perizonius, Vico) simply spoke of plural and oral authorship of the Homeric poems, Bajamonti, as later Parry, found a loophole allowing the crossing of the border between the living world of the present and the inconceivably alien Homeric antiquity, a loophole that instead of bodiless abstractions fills Homeric studies with vivid and exciting questions. This is where the contrast is most obvious between Bajamonti and Wolf, who wrote:

Abiecta ergo spe, fore unquam, ut Carminum Homericorum quae primitus fuerit forma, alibi quam in mente nostra, et id quidem rudibus lineis, fingi queat, experiendum videbatur, quo nos in expoliendis his aeternis et unicus Graeci ingenii reliquiis vestigia antiquitatis ducerent<sup>27</sup>.

So, abandoning any hope to be able sometime to imagine what the original form of the Homeric poems was, anywhere but in our own mind, and that only in rough outlines, we decided to try where the traces of antiquity should lead us in polishing these eternal and unique vestiges of Greek genius.

Bajamonti, however, transports us miraculously above the impenetrable wall between us and Homer, erected by the austere Wolf. And the reason why he chose this way is clearly that he follows Vichian tradition, not that of Wolf and scientific classical scholarship; the tradition of approaching the past as if we could plunge into it and understand it, not the «antiquarianist» tradition of chilly «archaeological» reconstruction. And it was exactly the inspiration Bajamonti got from Vico's texts (however poor from the strict scholarly point of view they probably were) that he needed to half-open the door to the Homeric studies of the future, the door that people would begin to pass through only a century and a half later.

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27. F.A. Wolf, *Prolegomena ad Homerum, sive De operum Homericorum prisca et genuina forma variisque mutationibus et probabili ratione emendandi*, vol. I, Halis Saxorum, E librario Orphanotropei, 1795, p. VIII.

## The ideas by Giambattista Vico\*

Within the theoretical framework of the studies of eastern Russian (the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century)

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**ABSTRACT:** The author scrutinizes the theoretical framework of the Russian Oriental and Slavic studies of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Concerning this she revealed archival documents contained the evidences that Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico's ideas were well-known in Kazan University. Kazan scholars' rendition of Vico's works came to be arguments for anthropological approach to the study of «exotic» and «eastern» peoples.

In 1828 Vladimir Bulygin, professor and dean of the faculty of moral and political studies in the University of Kazan, delivered a speech textitOn the Use of Historical Studies at the annual meeting of the University members. In front of the colleagues from other faculties and invited guests he justified the unique philosophical qualities of history and its ability to analyze and interpret the data of other disciplines<sup>1</sup>. Bulygin proved his conclusions by references to the works of Western intellectual authorities and Giambattista Vico in particular.

Bulygin was one of the first graduates of the University of Kazan founded in 1804. At that time Kazan was the most eastern University City in the Russian Empire and in the whole of Europe. According to the university statutes, its professors were obliged to patronize and inspect schools of a huge educational district, which stretched from the Volga to the Far East of Russia including Siberia and the Caucasus. They were also responsible for reporting to the state authorities and to the European academic world about the new knowledge on the local communities of this territory, and for devising general systems to help govern them. Thus the meetings of the professorial board of the University of Kazan often discussed the projects to organize the studies of «Oriental peoples», to collect data about them, and

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1. V.Y. Bulygin, textitA textitSpeech on the Utility of Historical Doctrine [Delivered at a Solemn Assembly of the Imperial Kazan University in 1828], in: «Kazan Bulletin», 35 (1832), 5, p. 564.

the ways to interpret this information. One of the projects was proposed by Bulygin.

In this article I will focus on the reception of the works by Vico that presented a base for Bulygin's historical approach to the study of various ethnic groups of the heterogeneous Empire.

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Vladimir Yakovlevitch Bulygin (1789–1838) was not a specialist in ethnic history, anthropology or ethnography. He got the position of adjunct professor for the study textitThe most important events of navigation in relation to the global discoveries made through it (unpublished) in 1817. At that time he lectured on history, statistics and geography of Russia at the Faculty of Arts, and on diplomacy and political economy at the Faculty of Moral and Political Sciences. In 1822–23 he was promoted first as a non-tenured and then — as a tenured professor.

Bulygin has never published books. The list of his publications contained several articles in University editions: textitThe Kazan Herald, textitProceedings of Kazan textitUniversity, textitThe Journal of the Ministry of National Education. Their themes are varied. It is hardly possible to define one unifying research idea. Bulygin wrote on trade issues in the Middle Ages, on the textitTurukhansky region, on the etymology of the terms textitknyaz and textitboyar, on the payment by textitshlyagas, and on the inhabitants of North-Eastern Russia<sup>2</sup>. Being fluent in French Bulygin introduced his colleagues to the latest publications on history, philosophy and anthropology that had appeared in Paris bookshops.

By referring to the works by Giambattista Vico, Johann Gottfried Herder and Jean-Pierre Frédéric Ancillon Bulygin justified the principle of historicity in the studies of human societies. «The current order of things that exists in the most enlightened countries could have not corresponded to the period in the life of peoples when they have barely crossed the line between barbarity and civil society»<sup>3</sup>. The cited writers were considered by him as fellow-thinkers. The Kazan professor thought that they all recognized specific qualities of ethnic culture and the universality of the stages («ages») of development for all peoples. Thus «barbarity» and «civility» (government) constituted two poles of one time scale.

Bulygin used (and thus simplified and reinterpreted) the theories of Western authors to justify a unique role of historical discipline in Russia.

2. N.P. Zagoskin, V.Y. Bulygin, textitBiographical Dictionary of Professors and Lecturers of textitthe Imperial Kazan University (1804–1904), part 1, Kazan', Tipografiya Imperatorskogo universiteta, 1904, p. 48.

3. V.Y. Bulygin, textitA textitSpeech on the Utility of Historical Doctrine, p. 564.

He thought that by placing a man into the centre of all disciplines history accumulated their results and created a coherent narrative on the past and the present of all the humankind, and some peoples in particular.

From Frédéric Ancillon (1767–1837) he borrowed a romantic version of nation/ethnicity, the idea that national literature, art and philosophy expressed the «spirit of nation», that is, its essence<sup>4</sup>. From Herder he took the principle of causality and the idea of the organic evolution of phenomena<sup>5</sup>. The Weimar philosopher thought that world history consisted of the lives of various nations, and their early stages found in rural folklore.

However the general framework of the whole ideal construction by the Kazan' professor was provided by the prophecies of the Neapolitan thinker Giambattista Vico<sup>6</sup>. To judge by his references Bulygin studied them from the French translation of 1822<sup>7</sup>. There the Kazan' theorist found arguments to support the idea that human communities («nations») were created by men and should therefore have been referred to the category of «culture» —the phenomenon accessible for human understanding. Bulygin liked Vico's thoughts on the relevance of humanities as opposed to natural sciences, since the latter's object had been defined by Divine providence and thus concealed.

It was this suggestion that seemed to enable the professor to justify the priority of historical discipline in the correct interpretation of the date of natural history, medicine and legal studies concerning the human resources of the Russian Empire. Moreover, Bulygin adopted Vico's idea of ceaseless continuity of human cultures («ages»). Following the respected philosopher the professor stated that each culture had its own view of reality, world, itself, nature, and it was embodied in and expressed through its words,

4. F. Ancillon, *textitNouveaux essais de politique et de philosophie*, Paris, Librairie de Gide fils, 1824.

5. In his manuscript Bulygin referred to: I.G. Herder, *textitIdées sur la Philosophie de l'Histoire de l'Humanité*, trad. par Quinot. This edition has not been found in the catalogue of the library of the Imperial University of Kazan'. By 1832 the library had got the following editions: J.G. Herder *textitIdeen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Th. I–III, Riga und Leipzig, Bei Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1784–1787; J.G. Herder, *textitZwei Preisschriften. I. Über den Ursprung der Sprache. 2. Ursachen des gesunkenen Geschmacks bei den verschiedenen Völkern, da er geblühet*, Berlin, Bei Christian Friedrich Voss, 1789; J.G. Herder und A.J. Liebeskind, *textitPalmblätter. Erlesene morgenländische Erzählungen*, neue Aufl. durchgesehene v. J.A. Krummanner, Bd.I–IV, Berlin, Gotha, Jena, Akad. Buch., 1788–1816; J.G. Herder, *textitVolkslieder*, neue Ausg., Th. I–II, Leipzig, Weygand, 1825; J.G. Herder, *textitVom Geist der hebräischen Poesie*, 3 Ausg., Th.I–II, Leipzig, Barth, 1825; J.G. Herder, *textitSämtliche Werke*, Stuttgart und Tübingen, J. G. Cotta, 1827–1830.

6. Bulygin cited the following edition of Vico: D. Vico, *textitPrincipes de la Philosophie de l'Histoire*, Paris, Chez Jules Renouard, 1822. Apart from it, the University library had a German edition published in the same year: G. Vico, *textitGrundzüge einer neuen Wissenschaft über die gemeinschaftliche Natur der Völker*, Leipzig, F.A. Brockhaus, 1822.

7. The reference to Vico in the speech's text looks as follows: «Vico, principes de la Philosophie de l'Histoire. Traduit. De l'Italien».

formulas of speech, institutes, architecture, and artifacts. Accordingly, all these phenomena could serve as sources to find out the cultural specific of an ethnic group.

Having been a member of the school board — a committee that controlled all schools of the district — in 1830 Bulygin proposed to debate his «opinion on the detailed study of the tribes living in the Kazan district»<sup>8</sup>. He explained the necessity to implement the project by the needs of the government and by the changes of world-views that had taken place in the academic world. This conclusion was reached after the publication of the results of the studies by the Thierry brothers, Antoine Desmoulins, an advocate of polygenism, Bernard-Germain de Lacépède, and the tract by William Frederick Edwards. The speed of the circulation of ideas in Europe of that time could not fail to surprise. The famous monograph *On the physiological qualities of human races in connection to their history* [*Des caractères physiologiques des races humaines considérés dans leurs rapports avec l'histoire*] by a British physician Edwards was published in Paris in 1829. The following year it has been discussed in the remote Kazan in order to find a research method to determine anthropological frontiers of the Oriental peoples.

The above-mentioned Western natural historians created a new trend in the studies of human diversity. Contemporary scholars describe its emergence as a «scientific revolution». Unlike Karl Linnaeus who wanted to unite all inhabitants of Europe in one race, textitHomo Europaeus, Augustine and Amadeus Thierry emphasized the physical diversity of European population. Edwards agreed with them when he created a sensation by pronouncing that the French did not belong to one race. He provided statistical results of comparisons to prove his conclusions. The scholar was convinced that the most reliable signs of race were the size and the form of skull; the colour of skin, the type and the colour of hair also played their part but were of secondary importance for the determination of a racial group. To differentiate between collectives of people he used both biological and cultural parameters, for instance, the data of Italian studies in the field of comparative phonetics.

The attractiveness of these scientific discoveries enabled the professors of Kazan University not only to disseminate this knowledge in the local cultured audience but also to produce their own new knowledge about the human diversity of the Russian Empire. Bulygin said to his colleagues: «Our University has a great number of tribes in its district, and could do a huge favour to the scholars of other enlightened nations by studying the above

8. National Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan (hereinafter — NART), fund 977 «Department of Letters and History», storage unit 164, f.1.



mentioned tribes»<sup>9</sup>. This production of knowledge also had political profits because it helped to «improve the historical data of the Russian state»<sup>10</sup>.

In the spirit of Vico, Bulygin attempted to avoid viewing the past of Russia as a process of state-building (the version by the historian Nikolay Karamzin) but rather interpreted it as the past of its peoples reconstructed through its written and other sources. As a result of implementing this project Russia, Bulygin thought, could claim a higher stage of civilization simply because «detailed studies of religious ideas and beliefs of various tribes of Russia, the studies of their traditions, feats, games, the notifications of the time when the latter take place, could in some cases reveal the similarities of these tribes to the most important peoples that had set, so to speak, the direction of the events of the political world»<sup>11</sup>. That is, the data by natural scientists could help historians to justify the similarity of the peoples of Russian to the «political» nations of Western Europe.

To judge by his words, Bulygin recognized the existence of the demarcation line between civilization and barbarity, defined by the use of written language. He thought that all reading and writing nations (involved into the civilization of written word) should be referred to as «nations» while other groups could be called «tribes of peoples» (the category of «people» is divided by him into sections — «various tribes of peoples»).

Bulygin reproached Russian natural scientists for the lack of the «full knowledge» about Russians in general and about the tribes that lived in the Eastern parts of Russia in particular. This lack of knowledge, he thought, resulted from the fact that scholars had never formulated questions that were now of such interest to his contemporaries. They could not have formulated these questions since to answer them meant to imply new techniques of research. Previous practice of collecting ethnographic data through expeditions had given scholars a sum of fleeting observations and fragmentary impressions. «Meanwhile many subject imply constant living at one place for a long period of time», — Bulygin stated<sup>12</sup>. His suggestion was to turn from field notes of peoples to participant observation.

The intention was to collect written sources, folklore, to describe domestic and public «customs». It had certainly been done before by the members of special expeditions and even school teachers, especially in connection to the «Russians»<sup>13</sup>. Now Russian professors and their students were to create

9. NART, fund 977, inventory «Department of Letters and History», storage unit 164, f.1.

10. *Ibid.*, f.106

11. *Ibid.*, f.506.

12. *Ibid.*

13. N. Knight, textitEthnicity, Nationalism and the Masses: Narodnost' and Modernity in: «Imperial Russia, Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practice», edited by D.L. Hoffman and Y. Kotsonis, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.

historical mythology and to produce linguistic and cultural foundations for the solidarity of the «non-Russian» groups of the country's inhabitants.

It is remarkable that Bulygin, following his Western colleagues, thought it necessary to study «physiology» (physical anthropology) of the peoples. Its scientific value was seen in a suggested link between it and political activity, and the moral condition of a group. To implement this part of the project Bulygin suggested engaging the teachers of design from the schools. They could have made «true portraits of all tribes, dispersed in our district». Unlike the engravings of the so called «costume genre», these drawings should have been of large size, and represent a typical member of its «people» or «tribe» in a full-length portrait «with all characteristics of the tribes: external shape, colour of skin, hair, cloths etc.»<sup>14</sup>

Bulygin recommended the participants to avoid cities and towns: attention «should be paid more to the inhabitants of the country where the traces of people living without considerable influence of civility are easier to be discerned»<sup>15</sup>. Referring to anthropologists the professor believed that contemporary urban culture produced new human communities that consisted of ethnically mixed «bastards»<sup>16</sup>. Its opposition was to be found in «people» understood as ethnic purity and originality.

The suggested participants of the project set it outside of academic framework and turned it into an activity of public importance. The planned study was not limited to university professors and their assistants the teachers and wardens of the gymnasiums of the Kazan' educational district also were to take part in it. Their duties were defined according to their disciplines in the following order: historians were to collect written and folklore information, the teachers of design were to produce graphic types, and physicians were to provide osteological and physiological data. Their join efforts were to create a syncretic study of the Russians and to thus to establish frontiers between its peoples in the North, South and East of the Empire.

The University board admitted that the project by Bulygin was useful for the development of Russian historical studies and asked its author to provide an example of such study or to produce detailed instructions for all participants<sup>17</sup>. Thus Bulygin composed an extended plan and described the concept of the project in detail. Now it was focused on the collection of physiognomic and physiological data. It was expected that physiology would reveal mysteries of the peoples — it would «produce main ideas of

14. NART, fund 977, inventory «Department of Letters and History», storage unit 164 f. 106.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, f. 9. According to Vladimir Dal', «a bastard is a mixture of two animal species, an illegitimate offspring» (V.I. Dal', textitThe Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language, vol. IV, Moscow, 1914, Izd. Tovarishestva M.O. Wolf, p. 912.)

17. NART, fund 977, inventory «Department of Letters and History», storage unit 164, f. 2

the differences between the tribes in their temper, abilities physical and spiritual within the duration of natural history, in their natural inclinations to one kind of diseases or another, etc.»<sup>18</sup>

Having decided against writing individual instructions, Bulygin described research methods to be implemented. With this in mind, he studied the works of contemporary colonial anthropology. He suggested that when interpreting the artifacts the participants should have referred to the information on the tribes of the Indian Ocean collected by a Leipzig botanist Wilhelm Gottlieb Tilesius, to the observation of the calendar terms of the Muisca people made by Charles Hyppolite Paravey<sup>19</sup>, and also to the works of the European researchers of America. Methods offered by him are now thought to belong to the sphere of cultural studies that reveal semiotics and pragmatics of the traces of the past in a local culture.

Unlike the expeditions of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the early 19<sup>th</sup> cc. the focus of the project shifted from typology to «differences», from the search of common roots to the causes of «separation» between peoples. In the spirit of Wilhelm von Humboldt's thoughts Bulygin believed that comparing the grammars of vernacular languages would provide a key to the understanding where their differences had come from.

As for the collection of graphic data, that is, visual images, here, on the contrary, a painter/researcher was required to produce a correct typization: «faces to be portrayed should be chosen carefully, so that a characteristic of the whole tribe could be found in this face». Such generalization could not be reach on one's whim: «physiognomic knowledge requires experienced and steady hand», that is, a knowledge and ability to implement artistic conventions in depicting of «costumes» (the images of peoples) and a gift for observation. The latter, according to Bulygin, was to be achieved by a painter's deep immersion into the life of an object of his study in order to reveal «all what is general, typical for the whole tribe»<sup>20</sup>.

Bulygin believed that the collection of skeletons, skulls and stuffed bodies would help reveal osteological typology by establishing correlations between the parts of human body. Quantitative parameters had first been introduced to anthropology by a Dutch anatomist Peter Camper (1722–1789). But Bulygin did not use his methods but rather the results of the studies by Lambar received when analyzing the Dresden collection of skulls. His method of measuring skulls and facial angles consisted in the following,

18. *Ibid.*, f. 306

19. Bulygin could have read the following editions of the works by Charles Paravey: *textitApercu des Mémoires sur l'origine de la sphère et sur l'âge des zodiaques égyptiens* (Paris, A. Belin, 1821), *Nouvelle considération sur le planisphère de Dendera etc.* (Paris, Treuttel et Wurtz, 1822), *Essai sur l'origine unique et hiéroglyphique der chiffres et des lettres de tous les peuples* (Paris, Treuttel et Wurtz, 1826).

20. *Ibid.*, f. 806.

according to Bulygin: «a pentagon is made of lines: a horizontal, drawn from a forehead at hair roots; two other sides of the pentagon are made of vertical lines going from temples down to the corner of the lower jaw, and the last two go from the above mentioned corner of the jaw to the point of a chin where they meet. He has provided the images of all the tribes of Germany with these pentagons, together with the descriptions of various forms of noses, eyes, hair, eyebrows, cheeks, chins, and skin colour»<sup>21</sup>. In 1820s the German physiologist stated that the German nation had consisted of various tribes and peoples, basing himself on the results of the measurements. Bulygin, however, did not offer the Lembar's method to his colleagues in order to reveal heterogeneity of the Russian nation. It had been already evident to his contemporaries. He suggested that this method would help discover the cultural communities of peoples that lived at the territory of the Kazan' district. The professor called them «tribal peoples».

The Kazan' scholar believed in the Lembar's conclusion on the established link between physiology and «spiritual abilities» — the key point of any racial theory. It seems that he believed that after physicists and biologists revealed the «tribal peoples», linguists and historians would describe (and thus prescribe to them) their constant cultural and psychological qualities that should be taken into consideration by political and intellectual elites.

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The Bulygin's project had not been institutionalized and had not been implemented in the way the professor had intended it. But the theoretical framework produced by him, and research methods taken from various disciplines and adopted to the study of the peoples of Eastern Russia were used by the Kazan researches in 1840s. At this period the University founded the faculty of Oriental studies, with departments for the studies Oriental languages and cultures, and the department of Slavonic studies. The Kazan orientalist and historians of Slavonic peoples worked at expeditions, collected data and interpreted it while deeply immersed into a studied culture, according to the suggestions made by Bulygin<sup>22</sup>.

The most important point here is that unlike their predecessors they saw a research expedition as a way to solve a major scientific problem (what is the «East», the «civilization», or the sought for «Slavic world»? is there a universal way of human development?). The human communities under study, seen in this context, were viewed as «case studies». Combined tech-

21. NART, fund 977, inventory «Department of Letters and History», storage unit 164, f. 11.

22. E.A. Vishlenkova, textitThe Problem of Human Diversity in the Local Perspective: «Big Theories» and Empiric Knowledge, in: «Ab Imperio», 36 (2009), pp. 245–345.

niques were used to analyze them — participant observation, interviews, the analysis of literature and other cultural artifacts. Generalization was reached through typization and the justification of the importance/choice of a particular object for the understanding of the whole problem. This approach made the orientalists and the historians of Slavic peoples from Kazan' a part of European academic world.

The works by Giambattista Vico played a part of a catalyst in this breakthrough of the Kazan school of the studies of the peoples by initiating fruitful debates. The Kazan scholars studied the works by the Neapolitan author of the late 17<sup>th</sup> — early 18<sup>th</sup> cc. at the same time as they read works by the German romanticists of the late 18<sup>th</sup> — early 19<sup>th</sup> cc., and even that of the French anthropologists of the early 19<sup>th</sup> c. This context made the Kazan scholars to read Vico's complex historical and philosophical constructions in such way that enabled them to find there a justification for cultural autonomy of a nation, and the criticism of the civilizational concept of the world — point that are not really present there. Perhaps such interpretation of Vico's works became possible because his ideas were studied only superficially, and the Russian intellectuals lacked experts on his ideas. Simplified and modernized Vico was used by the Kazan scholars to cover the breaches in understanding found in contemporary theories of civilization that resulted from revisions made by field and participant observations.

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## «Rischiare la mitologia contemporanea attraverso l'antichità»

Vico's theory in Giuseppe Ferrari's concept of political periods

DARIA S. FARAFONOVA

Incessantemente la storia si scrive con la prosa magniloquente; spesso coi punti ammirativi, spesso coll'invettiva, coll'acrimonia, colla recriminazione: benché sia irrevocabile (...), lo si invade con un torrente di elogi e d'imprecazioni che vi trasportano i deliri del presente.

GIUSEPPE FERRARI, *Teoria dei periodi politici*.

**ABSTRACT:** In the years of the *Risorgimento* Giuseppe Ferrari, the first editor of Vico's complete works and one of the most acute interpreters of his thought, elaborates his own cyclical theory of the history on the basis of Vichian philosophy, revealing in it *un principio di fondamentale coerenza che rende la storia una vera e propria scienza dell'umanità*. This article focuses on analysis of his last work, *Teoria dei periodi politici*, 1874, which represents an attempt to conceive the human history as a circular four phases movement with the apex in the second, «revolutionary» phase. Taking the cue from Vico's postulation that it is possible to cognize what is created by men, Ferrari puts into effect some of the Neapolitan philosopher's premises, applying them to the analysis of his epoch, placing the principle of the ideal eternal history not anymore beyond the human affairs, but in the very heart of the historical being of the humanity.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the area of Italian political and philosophical thought grows considerably the influence of the cyclical theory of history (*teoria dei corsi e ricorsi storici*). Its outstanding popularity was mostly related to the necessity to comprehend the phenomenon of the *Risorgimento* on a large historical scale and to define the phase of the «circle» the Italian nation was passing through at the moment.

Giuseppe Ferrari (1811–1876), politician and philosopher, author of some original sociological conceptions, played an important role in propagation of Giambattista Vico's ideas in Italy: he was the first to take up editing the complete works of the Neapolitan thinker; he also dedicated a number of essays to his historical conception, rethinking it in the context of the

present-day reality. Among those works are to be mentioned *Vico et l'Italie*<sup>1</sup> (published in French), *La mente di G. Vico*<sup>2</sup>, and also *Cenni sulle «Opere» di Ballanche in relazione alla «Scienza nuova» di G.B. Vico*<sup>3</sup>.

Ferrari is one of the representatives of the early Italian positivism. His views were being developed under the influence of the French Enlightenment heritage, of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's ideas and of the experience of the French revolution of 1848; Hegel's philosophy had also a big impact on their forming. Just in the light of these ideas, consonant to the needs of the moment, reconsidering of Vico's theory takes place: this is how it finds new life in this historical context.

In his studies Ferrari examines the society as a living organism whose vital activity is cognizable. His positivist approach and rather precise method in some ways imparts completeness and almost a scientific accuracy to the poetic vagueness of Vico's ideas. In his work *Teoria dei periodi politici* (1874), which could be considered the apex of his political and philosophical thought and which an Italian thinker and politician Giovanni Bovio called «la seconda *Divina Commedia* degli italiani»<sup>4</sup>, Ferrari carries out detailed research of different nations' history for the purpose of revealing common regularities of the historical development, and also with the view of showing the phenomenon of revolution as its central and inevitable stage. It should be noted that the revolution here is to be conceived as a conventional term, signifying the most politically active phase of the period; this is but a peak which gives a certain rhythm to the social dynamics with its regular recurrence. Pointing out the equality of intervals between the revolutionary peaks in different countries, Ferrari concludes that such interval embraces some stages which endure the invariable number of years. The duration of every stage corresponds to one generation's life period. Considering that according to Ferrari's calculations the whole cycle comes to 125 years, and its dynamics is defined by the activity of four generations, this duration is equal to 31 years approximately.

In the introduction to his book Ferrari emphasizes that it was the historical moment itself to encourage him in this research, and likewise the fresh memory of the French revolution experience, which he considered not only indispensable, but also inevitable to be transported to the Italian ground. Praising the extreme determination and audacity of the French, he

1. See G. Ferrari, *Vico et l'Italie*, Paris, Éveillard, 1839.

2. Id., *La mente di G. Vico*, Milano, Società tipografica de' classici italiani, 1837.

3. Id. G. Ferrari, *Cenni sulle «Opere» di Ballanche in relazione alla «Scienza nuova» di G.B. Vico*, in «Annali universali di statistica», 1834, parte I.

4. *Prolusione al corso di scienze morali*, in which Bovio gives this definition to Ferrari's book, is quoted by A. Ferrari in: A. Ferrari, *Giuseppe Ferrari: saggio critico*, Genova, A. F. Formiggini, 1914, p. 242.



recognizes in them the “ideal” nation which gives the development pattern to the other nations, since it seized and embodied most fully the historical necessity. He declares himself eager to be implicated in this large-scale transformation which engaged not only France, but the whole Europe: «la luce di Parigi si faceva ad ogni giorno sì chiara, che nessun contrattempo, nessuna deviazione, nessuna traversia personale, alterava l’inflessibile mia convinzione che dovesse rinascerne un incendio generale. Volli vivere a Parigi: perché mai scrivendo nella lingua di Voltaire non avrei potuto essere uno dei mille che rivelavano quanto si taceva nella lingua del Metastasio e del Manzoni?»<sup>5</sup> As he didn’t want to content himself with the analysis of two or three nations’ history just to find a solution to the present-day reality problems, Ferrari chooses a large perspective, in which he derives the patterns by which «different nations follow one another in their course». So the very complexity of his approach and its impressive sweep which makes him similar to Vico, were also «suggested» by the moment:

Lo spettacolo dell’Europa si subitamente sconvolta e sul pendio di nuove evoluzioni, era troppo vasto perché io rimanessi nella questione del giorno, negli interessi di una o due nazioni; i problemi nascevano dai problemi, e per misurare una distanza, bisognava misurarne mille ed indagare con quali accelerazioni i popoli sogliono percorrere gli uni gli altri<sup>6</sup>.

Ferrari admires the epic profoundness of Vico’s synthesizing and the acumen of his philological method which could be defined as a real paleontological language analysis (according to the precise definition of a famous Russian philologist B.G. Reizov)<sup>7</sup>; so he uses it as a methodological basis of his own research: «la filosofia del Vico mi rischiarà gli Ercoli, gli Orfei, le Sfingi della mitologia contemporanea»<sup>8</sup>. Aiming to give scientific concreteness to some of the premises of Vico’s system Ferrari tries to release his theory from the «weigh of narrativeness» to make it aspire, *colla precisione dei numeri, all’universalità della scienza*<sup>9</sup>, still being aware of the limits this approach can imply:

Si è forse indagato come le rivoluzioni e le reazioni si succedano, se i grandi avvenimenti formino dei periodi con ritorni prefissi, se questi periodi si facciano strada in modo da essere visibili attraverso i cataclismi e a dispetto degli innumerevoli casi che ne variano le forme? Si è forse tentato di enumerarli almeno colla precisione richiesta dalla statistica, *togliendoli dalla confusione della storia come si toglie il ferro ai*

5. G. Ferrari, *Teoria dei periodi politici*, Milano, Hoepli, 1874, p. vi.

6. *Ibid.*, p. vii.

7. Cf.: B.G. Reizov, *Giambattista Vico*, in «Italian Literature of 18<sup>th</sup> century», Leningrad, LGU, 1966, pp. 37–59.

8. G. Ferrari, *Teoria dei periodi politici*, p. viii.

9. *Ibid.*

*meandri tenebrosi della terra?* La loro statistica circolare sarebbe forse senza risultato o ridotta ad indicazioni abbastanza vaghe per autorizzare tutte le divagazioni? Ecco il problema.<sup>10</sup>

Ferrari proclaims the generation to be the first element of every return, which repeats continuously the same drama in all the epochs and in all the historical conditions. Generation, thus, is considered to be a driving force of the history, determining the peculiar character of the respective stage: «ad ogni trentennio le generazioni si rinnovano coi governi; ad ogni trentennio incomincia una nuova azione; ad ogni trentennio un nuovo dramma si presenta con nuovi personaggi; finalmente ad ogni trentennio si elabora un nuovo avvenimento»<sup>11</sup>.

The period of one generation's social activity coincides with the life of the respective government, and is marked by dominance of a certain ideology which it expresses. Every new generation produces thus its own value system, normally antagonistic towards the previous one. But the circular dynamics inherent to the social processes impedes its eternal dominance: «Non v'ha eccezione: ad ogni generazione esplosiva succede una generazione riflessiva, meditativa, impicciolita, sottile (...) Ma si cerca il passato in modo forzato, fittizio, disastroso; il governo si discredita lentamente e finisce per sciogliersi»<sup>12</sup>. The very imperfection of the human nature — in this Ferrari follows faithfully Vico's thought — guarantees the perpetuity of the reiteration: a human being is not capable of consolidating the existing order of things in eternity. And exactly from the state of decline, where the exhaustion of reflection turns into barbarian savagery, Ferrari says together with Vico, the humanity derives its strength for passing through the next historical circle.

Ferrari divides period in four phases — a so-called preparatory, revolutionary, reactionary and conciliatory phase. A generation dominating during the first, preparatory phase, formulates the principle which will be realized by the next three generations. In this period theoretical thought flourishes, new doctrines are elaborated, some ever concealed truths are revealed. Theorizing has an abstract character and doesn't threaten the existing order of things. But it contains the word of the future which in the next phase will turn into action.

Then there follows a revolutionary generation which embodies principles declared by the previous one. This is a period of demolishing the old foundations, a time of total energy renewal. But the source is not inexhaustible: the revolutionaries pass to each other «il ferro caldo della

10. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

rivoluzione, fino al momento in cui la demolizione intacca le condizioni vitali della società. Allora il moto si ferma tragicamente come il vascello sui banchi della costa africana»<sup>13</sup>.

This is the exact moment when the reactionary forces revive, working for extenuating the consequences of the revolution. Representatives of this generation make their best effort to avoid a new peril, to maintain the existing regime. This is why every government, even the «revolutionary» one, ends up always being reactionary in its essence:

Ogni governo è adunque necessariamente conservatore, si fonda sulla forza, si sostiene coi gendarmi, il carnefice è il suo personaggio più necessario, e se talora sembra novatore, rivoluzionario o liberale, ciò devesi ad un errore di prospettiva, a causa della sua inimicizia contro un governo anteriore, contro la generazione che spellisce per sempre.<sup>14</sup>

The forth phase is the time of ultimate consolidation of the claimed principle, which finally becomes part of the tradition, embodying basis of the existing system. Revolution and reaction flow together, neutralizing the inner contradiction which nourished the motion of the society. This phase is characterized by stagnancy, inertness and general indifference which govern the society conducting it to the completion of the circle.

Ferrari interpretes this state of things in the sense of Hegelian dialectic: renewal is the result of dialectic struggle, in which the absolute idea unfolds itself. The period is a manifestation of the supreme expediency:

il periodo è una legge, una necessità, a causa della impossibilità in cui siamo messi di giungere al vero senza lottare contro l'errore. (...) *il meccanismo stesso, per cui la verità si sostituisce all'errore, determina i quattro tempi del periodo*<sup>15</sup>.

It is evident that the fundamental premise of Ferrari's system has its roots in Vico's conviction that the principle of the human being's development can be traced from the absolute laws of his thought<sup>16</sup>. This is also what provides a circular nature of the historical development, which becomes a sort of projection of the unfolding spirit on the finite material world. The laws of narration define this movement:

13. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 189. (The italics are mine)

16. This is what makes a fundamental difference between Vico's and Herder's philosophy, according to T. Jouffroy: for Herder a human being is but a slave of the nature, from which his laws and ideas derive, whereas for Vico the man creates his being independently on the nature. Jouffroy is quoted by M. Martirano in his book dedicated to Ferrari as an interpreter of Vico. Cf.: M. Martirano, *Giuseppe Ferrari editore e interprete di Vico*, Napoli, Guida Editori, 2001, p. 101).

supponiamo che si voglia riunire una serie di epopee per dare una forma poetica o leggendaria alla storia; allora si desterà ancora l'interesse della narrazione immaginando un'azione superiore, e come un'epopea delle epopee, di cui i tentativi le lotte, i rovesci, i trionfi abbracceranno più generazioni, e vi sarà come una caduta o una redenzione a traverso i secoli, e *si rientrerà nel sistema del periodo per l'unica forza dell'arte*<sup>17</sup>.

Ferrari earnestly illustrates his theory with numerous examples of European and Oriental history, to whose comparative analysis he dedicated several decades. Nevertheless he does acknowledge the limits of his system: resorting to it one should take into consideration the individuality, the peculiarity of every nation's character, and therefore admit its possible deviation from the common scheme. The law of four periods has an ideal nature which is completely realized exclusively in the history of those states which fulfill the principle of the unfolding truth in their course with the minimal deviations.

Like Vico's concept of ideal eternal history, Ferrari's system represents an attempt to unify the historical necessity with the supreme expediency. Ferrari likewise proceeds from the conviction of cognizability of what is created by men (like the jurisprudence or the history of the humanity). But whereas Vico asserts the divine nature of ideal eternal history and so the principle of providentialism, Ferrari underlines the immanence of the development principle inherent to all the social processes, as according to him society derives from its own depths strength for the subsequent motion. This view is completely coherent to the deterministic conception: humanity creates its own being in time, and the laws of its development are determined by the principle of society self-regulation. In philosophical sense every circle, even on an individual scale, repeats exactly the pattern of coming-to-be of the truth through negation:

I quattro momenti della verità che spunta, che si afferma, che lotta coll'errore e che lo vince, scorrono rapidi nell'individuo, ma la società pensa col governo, passa da un'idea all'altra colle mutazioni politiche; ogni errore si costruisce i suoi altari, trae seco i suoi sacerdoti, chiede monumenti, ed il *si* ed il *no* dei plebisciti che si alternano per giungere alla verità relativa delle nazioni, occupa quindi quattro generazioni<sup>18</sup>.

Ferrari's determinism doesn't have a total nature: in the conclusion of his book he says that despite the endeavor to describe pretty accurately the laws of historical development, he admits that his theory cannot have pretensions of the scientific precision. It is related to the element of uniqueness and

17. G. Ferrari, *Teoria dei periodi politici*, p. 248. (The italics are mine).

18. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

unpredictability which the reality holds and which no system could ever embrace.

The terms «revolution» and «reaction» are conventional and rather denote the respective tendencies than really signify two poles of social dynamics. In actual fact, as Ferrary asserts, the stages can often have transitional nature, and in the same historical moment there can coexist the features of different phases of the period<sup>19</sup>. A theory has to resort to generalizations and to the universalization, and what in reality is slightly signed as a tendency, acquires an absolute value in the limits of system.

Still many of the statistic and chronological facts, quoted by Ferrari, impress with the degree of their correspondence to the postulates of his theory. In contrast to Vico, who took the history of the Roman Empire as a model of realization of the ideal eternal history, Ferrari discovers in every epoch its own exemplary nation. Despite the fact that in its main aspects Ferrari takes over from Vico the key concept of his system, ideal eternal history, he points out that the origin of this notion is traceable in the Roman history: *il fantasma della storia romana che ne usurpa le veci*<sup>20</sup>; the other nations are thus valued by the degree of their proximity to this immutable model.

Ferrari attributes the role of exemplary nation, which gave the rhythm of development to the adjacent nations in the late Middle Age, to Italy, which opened the era of revolutions in Europe<sup>21</sup>. Once the Italian «golden age» was over, in the Modern Age the center of revolutionary pulsation moves to England. Its rhythm determines the following epochs: the English Reformation which started in 1509 and was completed in 1603, in the end of the four-staged cycle; the so-called Noble Reform (1603–1727); and finally the Bourgeois Revolution, whose preparation, culmination and conclusion fell on the period from 1727 to 1867 (this is how all the cycle is defined by its central event, since *l'esplosione chiarisce tutto il periodo, and tutta la soluzione rimane nelle linee dell'esplosione*<sup>22</sup>). The other nations repeat this pattern with the chronological interval corresponding to the degree of their backwardness compared to the exemplary nation. In this respect the French revolution is the effect of mechanism launched by the Bourgeois Revolution in England<sup>23</sup>.

19. See *ibid.*, p. 578.

20. G. Ferrari, *La mente di G. Vico*, p. 146.

21. What is meant here is the epoch of 500 years embracing four cycles. By Ferrari, the four periods of Italy's best performing in the sense of historical dynamics were the following: the «church reform» (1002–1122), the «consul epoch» (1122–1250), the «tyrant epoch» (1250–1378) and the «plebeian epoch» (1378–1530).

22. G. Ferrari, *Teoria dei periodi politici*, p. 417.

23. Ferrari describes minutely the reasons and the character of the chain mechanism by which the nations repeat the experience of the exemplary one. Particularly French revolution, by Ferrari,

The *Risorgimento*, according to Ferrari, is in its turn an Italian version of the model set by the French Revolution. The generation of intellectuals who prepared ideological basis of this movement (Filangieri, Beccaria, Alfieri, Parini, Gozzi, Goldoni) was formed in the conditions of the powerful influence of the French thought. Contradictory consequences of the national liberation struggle and of the unification are related to the fact that the movement in the form which it took was not a spontaneous manifestation of the historical necessity but was, as it were, imposed from above on the people. Discoordination of the centralized government's actions after 1861 (dissensions between the liberals and the democrats, between the monarchists and the republicans) revealing the inconsistency of primary arrangements, turns out to be a fruitless fuss, which excludes the possibility of purposeful changes in the recently formed country. Ferrari recognizes in it the features of the last, fourth phase<sup>24</sup> of the period, which corresponds to the stage characterized by Vico as a *barbarie della riflessione*.

The fourth phase of the period is a moment of the insight, when all the force lines of the period «come to a legibility» (resorting to Walter Benjamin's striking formula), and when the whole experience of the completed historical cycle is reconsidered in the light of its conclusion. It's the time of reflection prevailing over the action. The last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, according to Ferrari, was exactly the case ideally conforming to Vico's description of the final stage of any large historical transformation process. This thought, as well as many other Ferrari's ideas expressed in his book, will be keenly and fully perceived by Luigi Pirandello, who illustrates in his novel *The Old and the Young (I vecchi e i giovani, 1913)* the action of the principle deduced by Ferrari from a minute comparative analysis of different nations, on all the levels of the existence — on the individual one, on the social one, on the historical one. The individual and the society are moved by the same principle of the truth's affirmation through negation, and the motion is provided by a continuous alteration of illusions and disillusion, which on the society scale take form of dominating ideology. All those mechanisms, as Ferrari discovers, are derivable from the single human being's nature: «in traccia dell'uomo libero trovai l'uomo macchina, le leggi del suo mutarsi e rimutarsi, la forma del suo *ingannarsi e disingannarsi*»<sup>25</sup>. This will become the key motif of *The Old and the Young*, where the drama

is but a result of adopting of the English Bourgeois Revolution experience: the teachers of the French Encyclopaedists, of Voltaire, of Rousseau (the theorists of the «preparatory» phase) were the Englishmen Collins, Toland, Mandeville, who rejected divine intent and predestination, asserting the primacy of the human reason in creating one's destiny; Hume who elevates the philosophy of the doubt to a system; Adam Smith, who formulated the concept of the natural order.

24. G. Ferrari, *Teoria dei periodi politici*, p. 122.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 22. (The italics are mine).

of the whole generation becomes the symbol of the ruin of the illusions as a timeless, universal law of existence — a state to which every single being aspires, independently on the epoch and on the concrete historical circumstances.

Despite the fact that Ferrari didn't accept some single moments of Vico's philosophy (for instance, he substituted Vichian providentialism with the principle of society self-regulation and considerably rethought the content of the ideal eternal history notion), he based his scientific thought on the premises of Vico's theory. He reckoned that Vico's method embodied «un principio di fondamentale coerenza che rende la storia una vera e propria scienza dell'umanità»<sup>26</sup>, elaborating «il criterio di confluenza dei segmenti epocali e delle civiltà per ricondurle a un piano unico di sviluppo»<sup>27</sup> — and this was the aim of the large-scale study which he undertook in his fundamental work *Teoria dei periodi politici*.

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26. M. Schiattone, *Alle origini del federalismo italiano*. Giuseppe Ferrari, Bari, Edizioni Dedalo, 1996, p. 154.

27. *Ibid.*





## Edward Said and Giambattista Vico

ANDREY A. ISÉROV

**ABSTRACT:** The article is devoted to the influence of Giambattista Vico on Edward Said. It claims, first, that Vico inspired Said to engage in the intellectual–political project of Postcolonial Studies, and second, that Saidian reading of Vico is the most sophisticated, detailed and fresh left interpretation of the great Neapolitan philosopher in the twentieth century.

The great thinkers of the past always provoke contrasting interpretations that often endow their writings with opposite meanings. The obscure Giambattista Vico definitely belongs to this class of philosophers<sup>1</sup>. My paper is devoted to the often overlooked or underestimated influence of Giambattista Vico on Edward Said (1935–2003), one of the most influential cultural theorists of the late twentieth century, an outstanding philologist, the founder of a booming field of Postcolonial Studies, an often unjust critic of the so-called «Western» perception of the «East», an amateur musician and musical critic of the highest level almost extinct nowadays, a cosmopolitan New Yorker and a Palestinian activist. His criticism of the modern European epistemology and hence of the Eurocentric world order described first of all in *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) is usually explained by the influence of *discursive regime* (*régime discursif*) of Michel Foucault (1926–1984) and *cultural hegemony* (*egemonia culturale*) of Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), but as I will try to show below, for Said himself it was Giambattista Vico<sup>2</sup> who inspired him to engage in the intellectual and political project to which he devoted the second part of his life and for which he is mostly remembered today<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, Saidian reading of Vico is the most sophisticated, detailed and fresh left interpretation of the great Neapolitan in the twentieth century.

1. Friedrich Meinecke (1862–1854) in *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (1936) prophetically noted that Vico may inspire new interpretations among every new generation (p. 46 of the 2004 Russian edition).

2. Said mentioned the importance of Vico for him in one of his last texts: E. Said, *Living in Arabic*, in «Al Ahram Weekly», 12–18 (2004).

3. Unfortunately, the sometimes simplistic and partisan patterns of the *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* blur the complex nature of Edward Said's personality and thought and confine him to the politically correct and easily understandable ghetto of the «Third World» critics of «Imperialism».

In the beginning I should start with a very brief overview of the background of Said's reading of Vico. This Marxist (or more precisely — Neo-Marxist) tradition of Vico's perception is an exciting chapter in the thick book of various creative (one may say, reductionist) perceptions of this philosopher<sup>4</sup>. In general, the influence of Vico on Marx, Marxism, and Critical Theory is often difficult or even impossible to trace, document and prove — usually a researcher has to limit himself by the statement of coincidence of ideas. The situation may get blurred because by the beginning of the twentieth century many Vichian insights such as the ideas of development and of cyclical parallels became common heritage (and common knowledge) of European thought and thus were often perceived indirectly, like in the case of Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937)<sup>5</sup>. Here I consciously limit myself by the enumeration of *direct* mentions and citations.

In 1940 Edmund Wilson started his outline of the development of Communist ideas from January 1824 when young Jules Michelet discovered Vico and «a whole new philosophical–artistic world was born: the world of re–created social history»<sup>6</sup>. Several years later, Vico's English translators referred to Marxism as «one movement of international proportions in which [Vico's] name and ideas have constantly recurred, and which may, more than others, have his future reputation in its hands»<sup>7</sup>.

Karl Marx admired Vico and briefly mentioned him in the letters to Ferdinand Lassalle and Friedrich Engels dated April 28, 1862, and — which is the most important — referred to him in a footnote in *Das Kapital* underlining that «as Vico says, human history differs from natural history in this, that we have made the former, but not the latter»? (*Vico sagt, die Menschengeschichte sich dadurch von der Naturgeschichte unterscheidet, daß wir die eine gemacht und die andre nicht gemacht haben?*)<sup>8</sup>. Edward Said even declared that Marx took

4. See an anthology, *Vico and Marx: Affinities and Contrasts*, edited by Giorgio Tagliacozzo, Atlantic Highlands, N.J., Humanities Press, 1983. Cf., J.V. Ivanova, P.V. Sokolov, *Krome Dekarta: razmyshleniya o metode v intellektualnoy kulture Evropy rannego Novogo vremeni, Gumanitarnye discipliny* (Besides Descartes: Reflections on Method in the Intellectual Culture of Early Modern Europe. Humanities), Moscow, Kvadriga, 2011, p. 171.

5. See, E. Garin, *Vico in Gramsci*, in «Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiani», 6 (1976), pp. 187–189; M. Vanzulli, *Gramsci su Vico: la filosofia come una forma della politica*, in «Verinotio: Revista on–line de educação et ciências humanas», V (2008), 9, pp. 35–46.

6. E. Wilson, *To the Finland Station*, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1940, p. 4.

7. Th. Bergin, H. Fisch, *Introduction*, in *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1944, p. 104.

8. F. Lassalle, *Nachgelassene Briefe und Schriften*, edited by G. Mayer, vol. III, p. 387; *Marx/Engels Gesamtausgabe*, 3 Abt., Bd. 3, p. 63; *Karl Marx — Friedrich Engels — Werke* (Berlin, Dietz Verlag, 1968), Bd. 23, p. 392. The footnote in *Das Kapital* juxtaposes Vico with Charles Darwin («Darwin has interested us in the history of Nature's Technology, i.e., in the formation of the organs of plants and animals, which organs serve as instruments of production for sustaining life. Does not the history of the productive organs of man, of organs that are the material basis of all social organisation, deserve

from Vico «the idea that human beings make their own history» — people «make history possible, because human beings [and not God or anything metaphysical] make history»<sup>9</sup>. Maybe the recent revitalization of the MEGA (*Marx–Engels–Gesamtausgabe*) project would throw new light on this theme «Marx and Vico».

The development of Giambattista Vico by the Marxist (and more broadly, critical left thought) belongs to György Lukács (1885–1971) and his work *Reification and the Consciousness of Proletariat* (*Die Verdinglichung und das Bewußtsein des Proletariats*, Овеществление и сознание пролетариата) published in German and Russian in 1923 from his magisterial *History and Class Consciousness* (*Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*), one of the founding texts of the twentieth century non-dogmatic Marxism. In this work Lukács extracts Marx's footnote from obscurity and puts this phrase near the reference to Immanuel Kant's well-known claim in his Preface to *Critique of Pure Reason* (rev. ed. 1787) that he made a Copernican revolution in epistemology by locating the cognizing subject before the cognizable object<sup>10</sup>.

Consequently, the Frankfurt School and the 1960s Critical Theory in general showed genuine interest towards Vichian studies which had attracted the two most original Marxist thinkers of the twentieth century. In 1976 in New York a conference devoted to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Scienza Nuova* assembled both the «old-school» philologists like Isaiah Berlin, and the new generation of scholars influenced not only by Karl Marx and György Lukács, but also by Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), Theodore Adorno (1903–1969), and Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979)<sup>11</sup>. Interestingly enough, the only Soviet book on Giambattista Vico by Mikhail Kissel' (1980) does not mention Lukács at all, which I believe, is symptomatic for the situation of the Soviet philosophy in 1970s: Marxism has lost its appeal being vulgarized by official ideology, there were fewer and fewer real Marxists, and Kissel' probably engaged in Vichian studies more likely to escape Marxism than to find new affirmations of its vitality.

equal attention?»). In the second paragraph of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* Marx writes: «Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past» (*Die Menschen machen ihre eigene Geschichte, aber sie machen sie nicht aus freien Stücken, nicht unter selbstgewählten, sondern unter unmittelbar vorgefundenen, gegebenen und überlieferten Umständen*).

9. Edward Said talks to Jacqueline Rose, in «Critical Quarterly Review», 40 (1998), 1 p. 81.

10. G. Lukács, *Istoriya i klassovoe soznanie. Issledovaniya po marxistskoy dialektike* (*History and Class Consciousness. Studies on Marxist Dialectics*), translated by S. Zemlyanoy, Moscow, Logos–Alterra, 2003, p. 205. It is important to note similar patterns of referring to Vico in Marx and in Lukács — near «Copernican revolutionaries» who changed the modern understanding of reality and nature, Darwin and Kant.

11. See its materials in, «*Social Research*», 43 (1976), 3–4. Among the Frankfurt philosophers only Horkheimer mentioned Vico in his writings. See, J. Maier, *Vico and Critical Theory*, in «*Social Research*», 43 (1976), 4, pp. 845–856.

A native of Jerusalem raised in the wealthy Palestinian–Egyptian family of Anglican (!) Arabs, Edward Said studied English Literature at Princeton and then at Harvard where he developed his doctoral dissertation on Joseph Conrad (1964, published in 1966). Since 1963 and till the end of his life he taught at Columbia University. Said first encountered Vico not through Karl Marx or György Lukács but evidently through a great scholar of Vico Erich Auerbach (1892–1957) whom Said intensively studied as a graduate student at Harvard. E.g., in one of his first published academic works Said demonstrated his interest towards Marx and dialectics referring to *sciences humaines* of Dilthey, Vico, and Auerbach («Vico’s principal and most profound literary student»<sup>12</sup>) — without mentioning Lukács who greatly influenced the reviewed book by Lucien Goldmann (1913–1970)<sup>13</sup>. In his analysis of Vico we also encounter references to such authors as Erich Auerbach, Benedetto Croce, Fausto Nicolini, Yvon Belaval, Jules Chaix–Ruy, Edmund Leach, and Elizabeth Sewell, but not to the already mentioned Lukács whose work Said knew very well.

Said did feel a special affection and affinity towards Giambattista Vico whom he called both «a great Zionist» (since he divided the human race between the Jews and Gentiles) and «an outsider too, a Neapolitan: you might say he was an Italian Arab»<sup>14</sup>. It seems that this Mediterranean Southerner loved Vico’s dramatic intensity, sensual (baroque!) richness of details, strength of emotions and his passionate struggle with the intellectual establishment (though I should say that in his struggle Said, just like other left intellectuals educated in 1960s *im weitesten Sinne*, won, at least in Anglo–American and French universities becoming, unlike Vico in his lifetime, an integral part of the new left–liberal intellectual establishment).

The Vichian writings of Edward Said include four texts devoted to Vico

12. E. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, New York, Basic Books, 1975, 363.

13. E. Said, *A Sociology of Mind: Review of*: [Lucien Goldmann, *The Hidden God: A Study of Tragic Vision in the Pensées of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine*, London, Routledge, 1964], in «Partisan Review», 33 (1966), 3, pp. 444–448. On Said and Lukács, see, T. Brennan, *The Critic and the Public: Edward Said and World Literature*, in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, edited by A. Iskandar and H. Rustom, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2010, p. 113 and *passim*. Stressing the importance of Vico for Said, Brennan claims that «core ideas of Said’s critical work on the political implications of scholarship as an act of intellectual will and consciously chosen influences and emulations are based directly on his readings of Lukács’s critique of Vico»; nevertheless, Brennan (who studied Lukács with Said at Columbia in 1981) rightly acknowledges that there is no evidence of this influence of Lukácsian reading of Vico on the Saidian interpretation — *Ibid.*, 114.

14. *Edward Said talks to Jacqueline Rose*, p. 81; *Edward Said: Bright Star of English Lit and P.L.O.*, in «New York Times», 22 (1980). In his interview to «Ha’aretz» (August 18, 2000) Said characterized himself, a self–professed Palestinian advocate and anti–Israeli activist, as «the last Jewish intellectual», «a Jewish–Palestinian» (in a sense that Jews are homeless cosmopolitan exiles, people «out of place», if we use the title of Said’s memoirs published in 1999). Quoted in, *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, p. 6.

or inspired by him: the articles *Vico: Humanist and Autodidact*<sup>15</sup>, *Vico on the Discipline of Bodies and Texts*<sup>16</sup>, and *On Repetition*<sup>17</sup>, and a large and breakthrough book *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (1975) which starts with the epigraph from Vico, mentions Vico throughout the text and concludes with a chapter on Vico that represents the revised and enlarged article from the *Centennial Review*. Apart from these texts, the references to Vico intersperse almost the whole body of Saidian literary heritage.

Edward Said belonged to the Anglo–American academic world, thus, it is important to stress that he read Vico in Italian and Latin<sup>18</sup>. He used the classic edition of *Opere* prepared by Fausto Nicolini (Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1953) and the 1854 *Opera Latina* prepared by Giuseppe Ferrari, and — while citing the colloquial English translation of *Scienza Nuova* and *Autobiografia* (1725–1728) by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch — was eager to correct the translation.

The article *Vico on the Discipline of Bodies and Texts* stands apart in the Said's Vichian writings. Here the author skillfully stresses the baroque nature of the great Neapolitan: Vico's project included «anthropomorphization of knowledge (...) even if civilization progresses (if that is the word) from the body to impersonal institutions (...) Vico's unhappy style also communicates a loss of immediacy, as if the prolixity of descriptive language trying to recapture the bodily directness of "poetic" thought were a demonstration of mind trying unsuccessfully and inelegantly to recover glad animal movement»<sup>19</sup>. In another work, Said develops this thesis, saying that for Vico «in becoming more definite, more accurate, more scientific, the human mind in time became less grounded in the body, more abstract, less able of beginning at the beginning, less capable of defining itself», thus, «rational description is by definition a less accurate, more indefinite means than is imagery for describing certain concrete things»<sup>20</sup>. We may guess that this emphasis on the bodily, baroque essence of Vico reflects implicit critique

15. *Centennial Review*, 11 (1967), 3, pp. 336–352.

16. *Modern Language Notes*, 95, 1976, 5, pp. 817–826 (reprinted in, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000, pp. 83–92.

17. *The Literature of Fact: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, ed. by Angus Fletcher, New York, Columbia University Press, 1976, pp. 135–158 (revised version in: E. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 111–126).

18. Cfr.: the *Habilitationschrift* of Jürgen Habermas *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, Neuwied, Berlin, Luchterhand, 1962) is probably even more influential in the United States than in Germany, but this influence came only after the publication of this book's translation in 1989, 27 years after the original work was printed. Edward Said lamented about the loss of mastery of languages, first of all Classical, among his contemporary colleagues. See, E. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, New York, Basic Books, 1975, pp. 7, 198.

19. E. Said, *Vico on the Discipline of Bodies and Texts*, pp. 85–86.

20. E. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, pp. 347–348, 352.

of the residues of Victorian culture still present in literary scholarship and education by 1960s, but as will be shown further the latter phrase seemingly belonging to the tradition of *Lebensphilosophie* develops into the wide epistemological and in fact ontological project.

The six chapters of *Beginnings: Intention and Method* are devoted to subjects as diverse as, among others, Milton, Coleridge, Swift, Dickens, Rousseau, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Freud, Thomas Mann, Joyce, Yeats, Lawrence, Levi-Strauss, Foucault, and Derrida. Some of the chapters had been published before, but the book nevertheless retains unity, sophistication and elegance being tied by one design that emanates directly from Vico's epigraph — «Doctrines must take their beginnings from that of the matters of which they treat» (*Scienza Nuova*, par. 314). This design is explicitly laid down by the author:

Perhaps my decision to quote Vico in the epigraph and to make his work the subject of my conclusion makes my (circular) point best namely, that beginnings are first and important but not always evident, that beginning is basically an activity which ultimately implies return and repetition rather than simple linear accomplishment, that beginning and beginning-again are historical whereas origins are divine, that a beginning not only creates but is its own method because it has intention. In short, beginning is *making* or *producing difference*; but — and here is the great fascination in the subject — difference which is the result of combining the already-familiar with the fertile novelty of human work in language<sup>21</sup>.

The main thesis of the book is the distinction between *origins* and *beginnings*: origins are theological, sacred — and beginnings are historical, secular. In the *Scienza Nuova* Vico divides the course of history into two parts: the history of Jews guided by God, and the history of Gentiles who made their own history. And Vico is more interested in the history of Gentiles. Said does not claim after Jules Chaix-Ruy that Vico was an atheist, but he systematically underlines Vico's secular preferences: «Vico's understanding of "divine"» always veers eccentrically toward divination, to which he would connect fabulation or poetization»; «Like Kierkegaard, Vico sees things in a double perspective, aesthetic and religious. And like Kierkegaard's writing, he is more at home in the former than at the latter»<sup>22</sup>. For Said this loss of divine, transcendental Origin that «commands, guarantees and perpetuates meaning» (Weber would have said *Sinnverlust*) is seen already in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Giambattista Vico, Johann Gottfried Herder (in his *Über den Ursprung der Sprache*, 1770), biblical scholars of late eighteenth — nineteenth centuries (like Friedrich Schleiermacher or Ernest Renan), and

21. *Ibid.*, p. XIII.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 92.

great Romantic rebel poets<sup>23</sup>. Thus, Said sees Vico as the «the first philosopher of the beginnings»<sup>24</sup>, who questioned the universalism of knowledge and preferred history over metaphysics. An etymological method of Vico «recovers the conscious choices by which man established his identity and his authority: language preserves the traces of these choices, which a philologist can then decipher»<sup>25</sup>. History is made by a multitude of men (Said underlines Vico's interest towards human collectivity)<sup>26</sup> who departed from a certain situation and made their choices.

Every man's beginning (prototypically the Original Sin and Flood which was the beginning of history), «a moment when the mind can start to allude to itself and to its products as a formal doctrine», creates «another order» and is always a transgression: «When Vico said that man achieves rationality when he conceives the gods as chaining the titans (in a gesture he sees as paving the way for the historical, linear procession of human life, and also for a narrative account of that life), Freud's text [*Interpretation of Dreams*], as he says, serves to release those repressed forces»<sup>27</sup>. Vico's «Giants» became humans (i.e. acquired history) when they started to bury their ancestors (*Scienza Nuova*, par. 13, 401): Said reads this metaphor stating that history started when «giants» matured enough to understand that they were not supernatural creatures but just ordinary people. Thus, «[b]eginning is a consciously intentional, productive activity (...) activity whose circumstances include a sense of loss»<sup>28</sup>. Here a reader can't but recall the first text in the history of human civilization, the dramatic story of Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Said's emphasis on the human agency, subjectness (men make their history!) would lead him later to the disenchantment in Michel Foucault who was, as he thought, more interested in the description of the immovable machines of social and political domination than in those who fight with these machines and in the possibilities to overturn them<sup>29</sup>.

Said views Vico as «the prototypical modern thinker, who (...) perceives beginning as an activity requiring the writer to maintain an unstraying obligation to practical reality and sympathetic imagination in equally strong parts». By obligation Said means «the precision with which the concrete circumstances of any undertaking oblige the mind to take them into account» which implies that «there is no schematic method that makes all things

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 213–222, 279–281, 315, 385 n. 7.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 350.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 352, 357.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 357, 353, 170.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 371–372.

29. See, K. Racevskis, *Edward Said and Michel Foucault: Affinities and Dissonances*, in «Research in African Literatures», 36 (2005), 3, pp. 83–97.

simple». The tri-sect scheme of Vico is full of diversity which shows the irreducibility of human experience to prescribed laws and simultaneously endows itself with significance since all these diverse choices that make history may be reduced to meaningful cycles<sup>30</sup>.

Said presented his original and profoundly humanist reading of Vichian *corsi* and *recorsi* of the history of Gentiles in a special article. Unlike Leon Trotsky who viewed the Vichian theory of cycles solely as a characteristics of pre-industrial, pre-Capitalist age<sup>31</sup>, Said characterizes the Vichian mind which — almost like Hegelian Absolute Mind — is «often diverse, at times quite contrary, and always superior to the particular ends that men had proposed to themselves» (*Scienza Nuova*, par. 1108) as the «force of inner discipline within an otherwise disorganized series of events»: the irony is that irresistibly men act out «the uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor» [William Butler Yeats, *The Magi* (May 1914)], even while, just as irresistibly, mind illuminates the darkness by giving birth to sensible patterns, endowing man with a history that his fierce lusts seem otherwise determined to expend wastefully”. «[R]epetition is gentile because filiative and genealogical», and since it is not divine, it shows both the vices and the dignity of men who manage to save humanity from sometimes seemingly inevitable self-destruction. «Take history as a reported dramatic sequence of dialectical stages, enacted and fabricated by an inconsistent but persistent humanity, Vico seems to be saying, and you will equally avoid the despair of seeing history as gratuitous occurrence as well as the boredom of seeing history as realizing a foreordained blueprint». «[R]epetition connects reason with raw experience» also presenting possibilities of scholarly understanding through comparison. An avid music connoisseur, Said compares the Vichian theory of cycles with the tradition of *cantus firmus* and with the *Goldberg-Variationen* of Johann-Sebastian Bach where elaborate and eccentric variations nevertheless animated by one and the same theme<sup>32</sup>. I would just add that for a non-believer this way of seeing history seems probably the only possible one endowed with meaning, sense and duty. In this view of Vichian *corsi* and *recorsi* Said goes far away from dogmatic Marxism and very close to such philosophers of history and interpreters of Vico as Benedetto Croce (1866–1952) and Robin Collingwood (1889–1943). Unfortunately, Said refrains from giving examples and clarifying further his understanding of this force that provides meaning of history. I think Said gave an answer to this question in his later essay for the Egyptian weekly

30. E. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, pp. 349, 354, 363, 368.

31. L. Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. by Max Eastman. Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2008 (first ed. — Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1932; first Russian edition — Moscow, Terra, 1997), p. 4.

32. E. Said, *On Repetition*, in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, pp. 111–118.



*Al-Ahram* when he spoke of humanism as «disclosure», «agency» that is «immersing oneself in the element of history (...) recovering rationality from the turbulent actualities of human life and then submitting them painstakingly to the rational process of judgment and criticism»<sup>33</sup>.

Said develops his thought epistemologically and thus ontologically in a revolutionary, subversive (from the other viewpoint, emancipatory) manner. Beginning is available to everybody, «no one could really be the first, neither the savage man nor the reflective philosopher, because each made a beginning and hence was always *being first*». Vico's critique of Cartesian logic is developed by Said in a manner that resembles Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and other French «New Critics». Vico's etymological method shows «susceptibility of language to divination and poetry» which employs such methods as «adjacency, complementarity, parallelism, and correlation» «in the interests of a genealogical goal» (though Said does not deny the existence of genealogical succession). Beginning «intends meaning» but results in «orders of dispersion, of adjacency, and of complementarity» leading to «nonlinear development, multileveled coherence of dispersion» so evident in Freud, modernist writers, and Foucault. Said endows with great value the often criticized fantastical rendering of Zeno's<sup>34</sup> theory of points from Vico's *Autobiografia*. For Said, it proves the existence of the «beginning point which is neither entirely mind (or abstraction) nor matter (or concreteness)», and this conation is what Said called «beginning intention — which in history is human will, understood both temporally and absolutely». And this fantastical metaphor is relevant since «it is human and therefore inadequate»: a human will (conation) separates human being from nature and equals him to God but humans create only their mind and not reality. Thus, since all systems of knowledge are, as Vico would say, «poetical», then there are no such hierarchies «as a spirit higher than body, a meaning higher than evidence, a father who because he is older is wiser than his son, a philosopher or a logician who is more «rational» than a poet, an idea that is higher than cluster of words», and finally, novel as higher than other literary genres<sup>35</sup>.

33. E. Said, *Millennial Reflections: Heroism and Humanism*, in «Al-Ahram Weekly», 6–12 (2000).

34. In his work Vico confused Zeno the Eleatic and Zeno the Stoic.

35. E. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, pp. 350–352, 361, 362, also 357, 373, 379–380. Timothy Brennan notes that by his reading of Vico Said transformed Foucauldian *régime discursif* into «colloquial truth of profound and unimpressive normality». See, T. Brennan, *op. cit.*, p. 116. A recollection of Said's daughter Najla about her studies at Princeton gives a personal and just seemingly non-conventional view of Said's struggle with hierarchies: «I only disappointed him once during my academic career when I signed up for an English class on "Postmodernism", a class whose required texts included, among other "atrocities", Batman comic books. Oh, how Daddy was outraged! "No daughter of mine is going to Princeton to read comic books; my daughter reads Shakespeare and Virgil. That class is a waste of time; it's utter rubbish. I will not allow it!" (...) "Daddy! You are so old! The reason the class has comic books is because it's a class on *Postmodernism*. You don't even

Said underlines the epistemological value of Vico for the contemporary science. He parallels Vico and Nietzsche for whom «every text (. . .) stands between the scholar and the historical past — or rather, the text, in its didactic simplicity, is often interpreted (because of its seeming clarity) as the reality of a past that its linear textual form misconstrues» to the extent that both wanted to start their research programs without books, with Thomas Kuhn who criticizes the simplistic narrative form of scientific textbooks which presents an obstacle to understanding the real challenges of developing contemporary knowledge<sup>36</sup>.

So Vico acts as a comrade-in-arms of Said in the struggle against what Jean-François Lyotard would call in 1979 the *metanarrative* (*métarécit*)<sup>37</sup> but not as a proponent of Deleuze's and Guattari's amorphous *rhizome* since even nonlinear development and dispersion has its beginning and is endowed with a certain meaning of *corsi* and *recorsi*<sup>38</sup>. Here again, as in his argument with Foucault, Said stresses the subjectness and meaning of human agency.

On the concluding pages of *Beginnings* Said calls to begin from one's own beginning, and not from the place prescribed by tradition and then develops a positive program of a new beginning which «methodologically unites a practical need with a theory, an intention with a method»<sup>39</sup>. *Beginnings* inspired by Vico show the «conditions of possibility of the intellectual-political project in hand»<sup>40</sup>. It is an appeal to shift from contemplation to secular and worldly (an important term of Said) action which he showed implicitly in the first five chapters and explicitly in the concluding chapter on Vico. Epistemological and consequently ontological critique leads to the political project: in his interview to the *Diacritics* issue, almost entirely devoted to *Beginnings*, Said stresses that «each critic needs in some way to fashion for himself a point of departure that allows him to proceed concretely along a given course of work» and speaks mostly not about his published *Beginnings* but more about the design of his new book in progress, the one that will establish a field of Postcolonial Studies and will make his name known in the circles much wider than a narrow community of literary scholars — it

know what that is". "Know what that is, Najla? I invented the field!». See, N. Said, *Tribute to My Father*, in *Edward Said and Critical Decolonization*, edited by Ferial J. Gazoul, Cairo, American University of Cairo Press, 2007, p. 23 (first published in «Mizna», 6 (2004), 1, pp. 1-5).

36. E. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, p. 203.

37. J.-F. Lyotard, *La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*, Paris, Minuit, 1979.

38. G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *Rhizome*, Paris, Minuit, 1976.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 380.

40. C. McCarthy, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edward Said*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 57.

is obviously *Orientalism* (1978)<sup>41</sup>. Relying on Vico, *Beginnings* articulate the themes that became pivotal for Said throughout the rest of his life: human agency and humanism, secularity and wordliness, rationalism, criticism.

Later Said did not develop but rather reiterated his interpretation of Vico whom he called at the end of his life — then, after rediscovering the Arabic intellectual tradition, along with Ibn Haldoun (1332–1406) — «the great founder of the science of history»<sup>42</sup>. In *Orientalism* Said again relates to his favorite Vichian idea that «men make their own history» and extends this thought to the domain of geography thus making a great *Napolitano* his co-author in the main starting point of the *Orientalism* argument — the idea of the socio-historical construction of geography<sup>43</sup>.

In one of his January 2000 lectures at Columbia Said stated that «[t]he core of humanism is the secular notion that the historical world is made by men and women, and not by God, and that it can be understood rationally according to the principle formulated by Vico in *New Science*, that we can really know only what we make or, to put it differently, we can know things according to the way they were made», thus eliminating metaphysics and theology from the scholarly analysis. In another lecture he stressed the relevance of philology and close reading for the humanist undertaking:

In Europe, Giambattista Vico's *New Science* (1744) launches an interpretive revolution based upon a kind of philological heroism, whose results are to reveal, as Nietzsche was to put it a century and a half later, that the truth concerning human history is «a mobile army of metaphors and metonyms» whose meaning is to be unceasingly decoded by acts of reading and interpretation grounded in the shapes of words as bearers of reality, a reality hidden, misleading, resistant and difficult. The science of reading, in other words, is paramount for humanist knowledge<sup>44</sup>.

Vico wrote his *Scienza Nuova* as a passionate critic of the growing Modern European Cartesianism which would largely define the contemporary *Weltanschauung* and *status quo*. His criticism of Descartes and his alternative epistemological program seemed clumsy and archaic for his contempo-

41. *Interview with Edward Said*, in «Diacritics», 6 (1976), 3, pp. 39, 41–47. This issue includes reviews of the *Beginnings* by J. Hillis Miller, Hayden White, Joseph N. Riddel, and Eugenio Donato, *ibid.*, pp. 2–29. Ironically, In *Beginnings* Said cites examples from medieval Islamic tradition through Western scholars (pp. 199–201) exactly a kind of stroke which would have been decried in *Orientalism* as a disgraceful case of cultural hegemony. In spite of Said's secularity and persistent critique of religion (see, e.g., W.D. Hart, *William Said and the Religious Effects of Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), he was buried as a Christian on the Quaker cemetery in Lebanon after a funeral service in the Riverside Church in New York.

42. E. Said, *Timeliness and Lateness*, in *On Late Style: Music and Literature against the Grain*, New York, Pantheon Books, 2006.

43. E. Said, *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage Books, 1978, pp. 4–5.

44. E. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. 11, 58.

raries but, as we see, some of the twentieth-century interpretations of his oeuvre from György Lukács to Edward Said served to undermine this *Weltanschauung* not from the conservative but, vice versa, from the opposite, left side of the intellectual spectrum<sup>45</sup>. Simultaneously, Vico's apparently outdated baroque sensuality and corporality in the age of abstract rationalism appealed to the conservative and left anti-Modern critics like Joseph de Maistre and Edward Said.

As I said before, *Beginnings* became (and most probably were intended to become) the new beginning for Edward Said who left philology for the newly established field of Postcolonial Studies and political activism in support of the Palestinian movement. *Incipit vita nova*. If we agree with an argument that we live in a secular, non-metaphysical, anti-hierarchical and anti-traditional world formed by the cultural revolutionaries of 1960s, then, according to Said, this world was conceived by Giambattista Vico.

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45. Cf. Abdirahman A. Hussein thinks that Edward Said has made a «Copernican» revolution by undermining metaphysics and theology — and in this achievement he should be positioned alongside Giambattista Vico and Immanuel Kant, but «Kant's view of historical change (...) lacks Vichian-inspired sense of drama, multiplicity, occasionality, and interactiveness that animates Said's conception of history». See, A.A. Hussein, *A New «Copernican» Revolution: Said's Critique of Metaphysics and Theology*, in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, p. 422. Kantian influence on Said may be implicit; Said himself quoted Kant very rarely.

## Philology and modernity

Vico, Auerbach, and us

VITALIJ L. MAKHLIN

ABSTRACT: The question to be discussed in the essay is this: In what sense, and why, Vico's idea of «Philology» he maintained and defended has been relevant ever since for the humanities, and is still relevant after the end of the modern times, that is, today? In an attempt to answer the question the author dwells upon three singular and yet similar historical experiences of what might be called *the humanities' resistance to theoretism*. Three very different and yet comparable «tensions» of the problem are: 1) Vico's defense of the *mondo civile*, i.e. reality of social and historical world, against the «vanity» of sciences and scienticism of the Enlightenment; 2) Erich Auerbach's defense of the concrete phenomenal factuality or «facticity» of the subject matter of the human studies against abstract generalizations as a method to perceive socio-historical and textual reality; 3) the relevance of both Vico and Auerbach to our own historical situation and experience, that is, to the ancient-post-modern challenge to the disciplines of «philology». Thus, what is of primary interest here seems to be historical continuity of experience in its very *discontinuity* as the permanent task of «Philology».

The unity of sciences or, rather, studies that Vico called «Philology», is what is traditionally defined today as the «humanities» or, more specifically, the «disciplines of interpretation».<sup>1</sup> The subject-matter of these disciplines (ranging from theology to economics) is actually socio-historical experience as such — a notion that seems to be very close to what Vico called *mondo civile*, and, in Husserl's terminology, is known as the «world of life», *Lebenswelt*. What interests me here, is the continuity and interconnection between Vico's project of the *New Science* and the modern projects of *epistemology of the humanities*. Vico's idea of «Philology» as opposed to both «Philosophy» and scientific idealism of the Cartesian Age, may serve as the model of the phenomenon in the history of science and thinking in general that I will call *philological resistance to theory and theoretism*. This «resistance» is

1. Cf. R.S. Leventhal, *The disciplines of Interpretation: Lessing, Herder, Schlegel and Hermeneutics in Germany 1750–1800*, Berlin–New York, Walter De Gruyter, 1994.

always historical, but it cannot be reduced to this or that «history» or to a *single* moment and place in the past. The heart of the matter seems to be (meaningful) «facticity» or *phronesis* of philological activity, with its specific «conditions of possibility».

What is «Philology», or the body of interpretative disciplines, is actually doing? In any case, it studies some past experience, i.e. it deals with words, deeds, signs or events that are prior to, or precede, the present or the «modernity» of a philologist or a «scholar». In other words, one might say that a meta– or *transhistorical* tension exists between philological appeals to history as *past* experience, on the one hand, and the existence and status of philology and the humanities within particular *modern* experience, on the other. It is this dimension of «absolute historicity» (Husserl) that gives us ground for a comparative study like the one below.

## I.

Vico seems to have been the first epistemological thinker of the new or modern times who, long before Dilthey and Gadamer, tried to describe the specificity of the humanities and the idea of «Philology» in an epoch, when scientific *Zeitgeist* was systematically opposed to historical experience in general and to methodological problems «besides Descartes»<sup>2</sup> in particular. Vico was certainly quite «modern» in his scholarly opposition to «modernity», that is, in his project to meet the challenge of the so-called experimental sciences. Vico's attack on theory or, to be more precise, on «theoreticism»<sup>3</sup> was personally addressed to *Renato delle Carte*, or simply *Renato*, as the Italian thinker personified and modified Descartes' name in order to identify the dominated scientific spirit or trend of the early Enlightenment.<sup>4</sup>

Is it still correct to say that what is most original and important in Vico's approach to history, can be reduced to his philosophy of history? It seems to me that this image or genre, i.e. the very notion of what has been called, since Voltaire, the «philosophy of history», is not what is most valuable and still «*modern*» in Vico's defense of the «ancients» against the

2. J.V. Ivanova, P.V. Sokolov, *Krome Dekarta: razmyshleniya o metode v intellektualnoy kulture Evropy rannego Novogo vremeni, Gumanitarnye discipliny* (Besides Descartes: Reflections on Method in the Intellectual Culture of Early Modern Europe. Humanities), Moscow, Kvadriga, 2011.

3. We derive this term from Mikhail Bakhtin's philosophical project from the early 1920s. See the American translation from the Russian original: M.M. Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, edited by V. Liapunov and M. Holquist, translation and notes by V. Liapunov. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1993, p. 11–13 and *passim*.

4. See an excellent depiction of this opposition in: J. Trabant, *Neue Wissenschaft von alten Zeichen: Vicos sematologie*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1994, pp. 13–33.

«moderns». Vico, I will argue, was *not* a philosopher of history insofar as the philosophy of history in the new times was based on the idea of the progressive emancipation of the present and the future from the past, the «moderns» from the «ancients» — a notion quite alien to Vico's idea of «Providence» and, particularly, to his idea of «Philology». This, I believe, a decisive point within the «tension» of problems discussed in this essay, and I'd like to develop the argument.

It seems to be quite normal and noble, even today, to speak about «freedom» *in general*, i.e. theoretically. But what would this generality of «freedom» mean for the disciplines of interpretation, that is, for «Philology»? It would mean, naturally, progressive emancipation of the scholar and scholarship from his or her subject matter; and one could easily perceive that this idea or ideal of emancipation or freedom — the legacy and the meta-imperative of the Enlightenment — has become reality or, rather, an absurdity by the end of the last century. It is for this reason the fall of the «philosophy of history» as a genre of discourse, coincides, logically and historically, with the «end» of the Enlightenment and *die Neuzeit*.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, Vico's idea of «Philology» seems to imply that *no modernity* (not to mention the so-called «postmodernity») *could be free from the past*, neither in the «text», nor in historical reality «behind the text», so to speak. And yet the *New Science* is really «new», even today, insofar as it has discovered, I should argue, a comparatively new epistemological field, namely, *historical experience* as the subject matter of all disciplines of interpretation, that is, of «Philology». That is why, I believe, Gadamer, spoke of the humanities as the sciences or studies of *historical experience* (*Wissenschaften der geschichtlichen Erfahrung*).<sup>6</sup>

The history of Vico's reception itself during the last two centuries testifies to the fact that any «modernity» belongs to the body of history *as a whole*, and for this reason any substantial historical experience is never *only* modern or *only* new. This, I believe, the true essence of Vico's «cyclical» conception of history as experience, a conception that, naturally, corresponds to his idea of philology as opposed to both philosophy and natural sciences. For, philosophy (or «metaphysics»), as well as natural sciences, *can do without* — at least «theoretically» — their own past; the «Philology» *cannot*.

Moreover, the Neapolitan thinker, in my opinion, stressed not so much «sublime» historical experience in the Romantic sense of the word Ankersmit «discovered» for himself after the end of the Structuralist Age (with its cult

5. Cf. O. Marquard, *Schwierigkeiten mit der Geschichtsphilosophie* [1973], 3. Aufl., Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1992, p.16.

6. H.-G. Gadamer, *Was ist Wahrheit?*, in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol.2, Tübingen, Mohr, 1993, p. 52.

of impersonal «theory» and «text»<sup>7</sup>. Rather, Vico's common sense or the *sensus communis*, within the civil world, designates «low» or everyday experience of sociality and history. Vico's belief in the «eternal ideal history», paradoxically, made it possible for him to *approach* common experience as meaningful, but not necessarily «sublime», the latter being typical, no matter how anachronistic, for the Idealist or even «existentialist» aesthetic construction. In contrast to these later trends, Vico discovers and describes a dimension of historical experience, both poetical and political — the «sublime from below», if you wish.

Vico's experience was one of conscious opposition to what in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Heidegger would call «theoretical attitude» (*theoretische Einstellung*) and Bakhtin «fateful theoretism» (*rokovoj teoretizm*), that is, over-general, intellectual or «scientific», approach to meaningful «historical facticity» of the *mondo civile*. «Theoretism» is an attitude in treating experience, particularly, in the humanities, which tends to «efface» historical facticity in some general sign; in this sense, the «vanity» of scientists and intellectuals seems to be «utopian» not in some ideological sense, but, rather, in a methodological sense of the word. On the other hand, Vico's «philological» opposition to theoretism does not only mean a breakthrough to historical experience in both philosophy and the humanities; his thinking, to some extent, *corrects the consequences of the so-called «historicism»*.

In fact, historicism has turned out, at the end of the new times, to be contradictorial to its initial humanistic tradition. It is for this reason, I think, that the reception of Vico's thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the historical materialism or Marxism, has not been very fruitful. Indeed, from the vantage point of *any* «historiosophy» or the «philosophy of history» — whether idealist or materialist — Vico's epistemology of historical experience could be perceived and understood only as an imperfect stage of some perfect or metaphysical narrative of History. This has been, and still is, I believe, the point of difference between history as *image* (in Heidegger's sense of the «picture of the world», *Weltbild*) and history as *experience of meaningful facticity* that can never be completed or «sublimed», that is, between the Hegelian–Marxist and the hermeneutical approach to history.

The Soviet example is here a pertinent and extreme case. In Russia, by the end of the Soviet Age and even more today, the so-called «historical consciousness» (*das historische Bewusstsein*) has proved to be, in a sense, a *trap*: there is almost no approach to historical experience but the Hegelian–Marxist model which has mostly lost its validity. Consequently, Vico's legacy (not to mention the translations) has not been, almost, put to research; in the new century we have but start from where we were some

7. F.R. Ankersmit, *Sublime historical experience*, Stanford, Stanford UP, 2005.



hundred years ago — in philosophical as well as philological and historical thinking.

That is why, I believe, the hermeneutical tradition of Vico's reception in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is particularly valuable; for, in Russia this tradition has almost ceased to exist (with few but important exceptions, and those were in the field of philology, not in philosophy or historiography); in this respect, I believe, we are almost «beginners». The conference on Vico which took place in Moscow in May, 2013, if I see it correctly, is perhaps the first step, after the long decades, to direct attention of the post-Soviet community to the Italian thinker and, specifically, to Vico as an epistemologist of the humanities.

## 2.

The second experience of *philological resistance to «theoretism»* that I'd like to discuss here is that of Erich Auerbach (1892–1957), a well-known representative of the German *romanischen Philologie* in the previous century. After the First World War Auerbach studied classical philology (by Eduard Norden), philology in the so-called «Vossler school», and philosophy and history of religion by Ernst Troeltsch, the author of the *Historismus und seine Probleme*; it was Troeltsch who must have urged Auerbach to read and study Vico.<sup>8</sup> The consequences of these studies are well-known: Auerbach re-translated the *New Science* (1925), and then translated Croce's book on Vico into German; ever since the 1920s he wrote an essay on Vico every five years up to the end of his life.<sup>9</sup> It is in Vico, primarily, that Auerbach found an authority and model for his own conception of what he called *geistesgeschichtliche Tätigkeit*, that is, scholarly activities in the humanities or «philology».<sup>10</sup> I'll briefly dwell upon Auerbach's resistance to theoretism within his own specific socio-cultural situation.

I. What made Auerbach perceive Vico's importance, was, I believe, not so much theoretical arguments, but the «practical seminar in the world

8. L. Wezbort, *Erich Auerbach im Kontext der Historismusdebatte*, in: «Erich Auerbach: Geschichte und Aktualität eines europäischen Philologen», edited by K. Barck and M. Tremel, Berlin, Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2007, p. 282.

9. Auerbach's reception of Vico has been extensively documented and discussed; cf. D. Meur, *Auerbach und Vico: Die Unausgesprochene Auseinandersetzung*, in «Erich Auerbach: Geschichte und Aktualität eines europäischen Philologen», pp. 57–70. See also: *Literary History and the Challenge of Philology: The Legacy of Erich Auerbach*, edited by S. Lerer. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996.

10. Cf., for instance, Auerbach's essays *Giambattista Vico und die Idee der Philologie* and *Vico's contribution to literary criticism* in E. Auerbach, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur romanischen Philologie*, Bern, Francke, 1967, pp. 233–241, 259–265.

history», that is, the new experience of modernity at the moment when the «end» of the new times actually started between the two world wars and particularly after 1945, at dawn of the Structuralist Age and the so-called «postmodernity». That was the experience of the downfall of the liberal and Christian society with its Idealist presumptions, as well as the «historicist» paradigm of thinking, that is, the decades of «ruptures» in both intellectual and methodological traditions, when «the unity of philology (...) was exploded in all its dimensions», as the greatest Russian thinker of the humanities later observed.<sup>11</sup> In other words, historical experience in general and philological–historical research in particular changed their configurations drastically, but the «human condition» did not. The brave new world of science and technology, of scientific and social revolutions — the «modernity», the «moderns» — became a new threat for the humanities, not only from without, but also from «within». This *inner threat* and challenge to modern philology has had its name since the classical scholar Sergej Averintsev defined it at heyday of Structuralism as the «humanities without the human» (*gumanitarija bez človeka*).<sup>12</sup> Auerbach and his generation had experienced this threat and challenge much earlier.

2. The 20<sup>th</sup> century German scholar adopted from Vico the idea of «Philology» as a kind of cognitive practice that deals with the *certum*, that is, with *particulars* of historical experience which contain in its very particularity or «facticity» meaningful generalities of their own, or, in other words, *their own verum*. Auerbach defines his method or *Ansatz* as «historical relativism», by which he means, one might say, an approach to any particular experience which, at the same time, takes into account the scholar's own position *in* «modernity», *in* history. Thus, the task of «philology» is not simply a «comparative», rather a «relative» *unity of cognition* in the humanities. In this sense, Auerbach praised in Vico a «complete historicisation of the human nature» (*eine vollständige Historisierung der menschlichen Natur*)<sup>13</sup> as the triumph of philology (and hermeneutics), that is, one might say, a complete «philologisation» of *verum* through *certum*.<sup>14</sup>

11. S.S. Averintsev, *Philologia*, in: *The Concise Literary Encyclopedia*, vol. 17, Moscow, Sovetskaya entsiklopediya, 1972, p. 979.

12. See his early (1978) review article of Mikhail Bakhtin's collection of literary essays, in M.M. Bakhtin: *Critical Anthology*, edited by V.L. Makhlin, Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2010, p. 97.

13. Cf. E. Auerbach, *Sprachliche Beiträge zur Erklärung der Scienza Nuova von Giambattista Vico* [1930], in Id., *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur romanischen Philologie*, p. 257.

14. In Auerbach's «complete historicisation» of the *verum* (the philosophical or metaphysical truth), Karl Löwith, in his own interpretation of Vico, perceived, not surprisingly, a radical epistemological difference between hermeneutical and metaphysical kind of *verum*; cf. K. Löwith, *Vico' Grundsatz: verum et factum convertuntur. Seine theologische Prämisse und deren säkulare Konsequenzen* [1968], in Id., *Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. 9, Stuttgart, J.B. Metzler, 1986, p. 204.

3. In everything Auerbach did in his own philological studies, he always tried to oppose the tendency to reduce the human element or humanity in the humanities themselves to some theoretical construct pretending to be a *real* being or whole. In his famous 1952 essay *Philology of the World literature* he described this tendency as a worldwide process of dehumanization and standardization both of life and philological work. Philological research, Auerbach argued, is gradually losing a sense (*Sinn*) for historical phenomena — a loss which is historical in its turn, as well as quite «modern». <sup>15</sup> The more *global* the «earth–culture» (*Erdkultur*) becomes, the more abstract or general — that is, indifferent or «objective» — the way a scholar *sees* the phenomena he is supposed to study. Conversely, the more «scientific» philology becomes, the stronger is its «ideological» drive, a tendency to «politicize» the subject matter of philology in order to fill in the lacuna, in other words, to «dress» the emptiness of pure scientific or «theoretical» approach which is the impoverished tradition not of Plato but Platonism, *jenes platonische verum* as Auerbach would call it. «Theory» of this kind, I should argue, seems to be, in a sense, a betrayal of the historical–philological activity or, in Auerbach idiom, *geistesgeschichtliche Tätigkeit*. <sup>16</sup>

4. Following Vico Auerbach tries to do philological research on the intersections where literature, historiography and «everydayness» of the so–called human condition converge. At the same time, Vico’s idolatry of the «ancients» as well as his metaphysical fantasies (in contrast to the idea of Providence) is quite alien to Auerbach. In any case, what Vico had discovered as a kind of a research paradigm — meaningful facticity of the *mondo civile* as historical experience — Auerbach opposed to on-sidedness of linguistics, «theory» or «ideology» in the human studies. It is this opposition to rationalistic and technological thinking of *his* modernity that allows us to see a certain continuity of experience between Vico, Auerbach and us today.

15. Cf. U. Link–Heer, «Die sich vollziehende Standardisierung der Erdkultur» — *Auerbachs Prognose*, in *Erich Auerbach: Geschichte und Aktualität eines europäischen Philologen*, pp. 307–322.

16. An interesting example of such a «betrayal» in the reception history of Auerbach is a shift in Edward Said’ evaluation of Auerbach. The American scholar had earlier been under some influence of Auerbach’ method, but later he changed his mind. What seemed to be decent scholarship in the 1950s, became obsolete in the subsequent decades. For the «later» Said, Auerbach is too much a German professor, ethnocentric and confined to «philological hermeneutics» which Said identified with the method of *Einführung* (empathy) which has very little to do with Auerbach’ «historical relativism». Cf. Said’s Preface to a new American edition of Auerbach’s major work: E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The representation of Reality in Western Literature*, translated by W.R. Trask, Princeton–Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2003, pp. XII–XIII.

## 3.

The third and last case of the experience under question, that is, of philological opposition to theory and theoretism, I shall speak about, is some common experience of our own — after the end of the new times in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The humanities today seem to be on trial again, both without and within the academy. The experience is both very different and very familiar. One could easily remember the old *Querelle* between the «ancients» and the «moderns» in France at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; what is modern nowadays, however, is the fact, that the new–and–old tension between philology and modernity seems to be ontological and technological rather than rhetorical. But the opposition is likely to be the same just as it used to be in Vico's or Auerbach's days.

If I am not mistaken, a new challenge to «Philology» in the 21<sup>st</sup> century implies, among other things, some radical differentiation and self–alienation between *experience* and *speech*, on the one hand, «history» and «modernity», on the other. The «university in ruins»<sup>17</sup> is likely to be an institutional result or collapse of the previous overall development or practice.

The specificity of «Philology», as Vico saw it at the time when the Enlightenment project was under way, has never changed since then; but «conditions of possibility» to *approach* historical experience from self–consciously *modern* situation or point of view (what Auerbach called *Ansatz*) seem to have changed drastically after the «End of the New times».<sup>18</sup> At the same time the disciplines of interpretation are known to be conservative — constitutionally (and more often than not ideologically) conservative; for, as we remember, the «field» of all these disciplines — philological–historical research in particular — is but past or «historical» experience — and not at all modernity. The real problem, then, is less «ideology» (not to mention «politics»), than the *Ansatz* itself, i.e. the way we practically approach and treat any text or, to be more exact, any historical experience «behind the text», so to speak. It is perhaps for this very reason that one of the paradigmatic thinkers of «historical experience» in the 20<sup>th</sup> century wrote: «Less easily does a scholar change his method than nations their religion».<sup>19</sup>

What is specifically «modern» in the socio–cultural situation after the «postmodernism», I believe, might be called a «paradox of emancipation»: a scholar unable to change his or her method is likely to practice «theory» as a method to free oneself from the text as the autonomous other, that

17. B. Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge–London, Harvard UP, 1994.

18. Cf. Romano Guardini's well–known book *Das Ende der Neuzeit*, Basel, Hess Verlag, 1950.

19. E. Rosenstock–Huessy, *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man* [1938], Providence–Oxford, Berg, 1993.

is, as some authority *of* history and *in* history. What was mostly rhetorical gestures of the «death of the author» and the «ends of man» in the 1960s, since then has become a modernity that, actually, excludes any modern perspective except the global technological standardization of the *Erdkultur*. «Philology», as a matter of fact, adheres too much to the *certum* of meaningful things, of past and present, to satisfy the needs of theory and standardization in the global millennium. Therefore, perhaps, «philologists» as a colleague of mine remarked recently, «are running away from the field like rats from a drowning ship». From one point of view, it is, paradoxically, a good sign: the less the number, the better. The question, however, remains, namely: how to oppose a global tendency of losing meaningful contacts with historical experience?

Our modernity seems to lack not so much talented scholars than a dimension of a positive, i.e. «open-ended» future which has been so important (perhaps even decisive) in the disciplines of interpretation during at least the last three centuries. In this situation, I believe, the task of philological-historical research remains the same as it has ever been and yet, to a certain extent, new or «modern». The task is to discover and to develop still hidden *modernity of the previous texts and epochs* — a dimension of temporality that our own modern experience seems to have lost after all the «ends» of the previous centuries and decades. This task or project has of course very little to do with the «topicality» of the day with its innovations and modernization. If so, philology, in a broad sense Vico understood it, it seems, still has a chance to really «survive», as a kind of activity for the happy-or-unhappy few. Thus, *distemporaries* of Vico, Auerbach and many others, we are likely possess our modest «condition of possibility» to become their *contemporaries*, that is, to realize and justify Vico's idea of «Philology» within our own modernity.

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# The fictive persons of a serious poem

On Vico's anthropology of "literature"

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**ABSTRACT:** The present essay will explore legal areas of Giambattista Vico's thought from a rhetorical and literary perspective. In particular, the essay will focus on the idea of «person» as it is investigated in *De uno* and *New Science*. The euristic quality of the notion of *fictio iuris* will be identified as generative core of the imaginative universal theory. The notion of legal person, made to stand for a whole collectivity, is a case in point. It will also be stressed the crucial role Vico awards to *fictio iuris* in the process that allowed ancient Roman law to tame violence while at the same time complying with the sacredness of its form. Vico's conclusions are supported by modern juridical scholarship, which collocates the birth of *fictio* as part of the development of sacrificial practice in symbolic direction. The tie linking *fictio* to civics is thus configured as poietic field open to verisimilitude, an horizon of possibilities that can be narrated and that humans will adopt in their infancy and employ through the long course of centuries.

Reading the history of humanity as told in the *New Science*, from the dark forest to the age of the developed reason, any literature scholar — or, better, any specialist in that field of knowledge we today call literature — cannot but look in amazement at the Neapolitan philosopher's brilliant insights into the sensorial, pre-categorical origin of poetry and rhetoric. Vico's notion of figural activity as the offspring of corporeal and perceptual roots — far from being the «discovery» («ritruovato») of sophisticated and well-read intellectuals, it actually represents the first language used by humankind to express itself — lead us in a single leap through «the long course of centuries» to contemporary theories on the embodied nature of metaphor<sup>1</sup>.

1. The crucial term here is *embodied* (*voploshennyj* in Russian — incidentally, *voploshat'* is a recurring verb in Mikhail Bakhtin's work). See the 'classic' study G. Lakoff & M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1980; also M. Turner, *The Literary Mind. The Origins of Thought and Language*, Oxford — New York, Oxford University Press, 1996; G. Lakoff & M. Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh. The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*, New York, Basic Books, 1999; M. Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body. Aesthetics of Human Understanding*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2007; for an accurate overview on the topic, see R.G. Gibbs (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, Cambridge University Press, 2008; a useful summary of the cognitivist notion of metaphor, see Z. Kövecses, *Metaphor*, second edition, Oxford–New York, Oxford University Press, 2010; for a brief discussion on of the cognitivist notion of metaphor in

The same we could argue to account for Vico's conception of the narration of fables.

With a risky recourse to *epoché*, which forces him to sink deep inside the «crude minds» of the first inhabitants of the Earth, the Neapolitan thinker shows that poetic logic is the wellspring of human culture from out of nowhere. Its expressions — its own “vocabulary” — pertain to the sacred dimension which informs the birth of civilization and its basic articulations. Literature scholars, therefore, confront intriguing views that underline the value of verisimilitude as prolific breeding ground and at the same time overturn traditional hierarchies between reality and fiction; further, they trace back the origin of poetic expression to a primordial anthropological landscape.

In order to map this territory — with particular attention to the “literature” issues, i.e. referring to what one day will be called literature — Vico's background in law, in particular ancient Roman law, is crucial. Thus, as the whole story told in *New Science* is in great part modelled on the history of Rome, in the like manner Vico's idea that «the early gentile peoples, by a demonstrated necessity of nature, were poets who spoke in poetic characters» («i primi popoli della Gentilità per una dimostrata necessità di natura furon Poeti; i quali parlarono per *Caratteri Poetici*»)² rests on an uninterrupted fifty-year long scrutiny of juridical sources, in particular those from the classic and middle Latin tradition, reinterpreted in the direction of the thematic novelty brought about by *ius naturale gentium*³.

connection with literature, see S. Sini, *Cercarsi fra gli sciami: considerazioni sparse sulle attuali teorie della metafora*; in «il verri», L (2012), pp. 68–95; on the evolution of cognitivist theory of metaphor in the field of literary criticism and also on some alternatives to the mainstream position, see M. Fludernik (ed.), *Beyond Cognitive Metaphor Theory. Perspectives on Literary Metaphor*, New York–London, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2011. I have already mentioned the continuities between these theories and Vico's thought during the course of a lecture at IGITI on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2012. See the fundamental M. Danesi, *Vico, Metaphor, and the Origin of Language*, Bloomington–Indianapolis, Indiana University Press 1993; Id., *Giambattista Vico and the cognitive science enterprise*, New York, Peter Lang, 1995.

2. NS44 (=New Science 1744), § 34; G. Vico, *The New Science*, trans. by M.H. Fisch and T.G. Bergin, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1948, p. 49; G. Vico, *La scienza nuova 1744*, a cura di P. Cristofolini e M. Sanna, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2013, p. 31: «i primi popoli della Gentilità per una dimostrata necessità di natura furon Poeti; i quali parlarono per *Caratteri Poetici*».

3. The origin of Vico's work is in fact «informed, in the early 1720s, by the thematic novelty brought about by *ius naturale gentium*: a typology of law seen in the progressive evolution of human certain history, and precondition to that science which would grant a prominent role, in the history of nations, to reason and authority of Universal Law, bringing about “at once both Philosophy and History of human customs” (“ad un fiato e la Filosofia e la Storia de' costumi umani”), “a new critical art according to which uncertain tradition must be subordinated to laws”» (F. Lomonaco, *Introduzione a Giambattista Vico, De universi juris uno principio e fine uno* (Napoli, 1720, con postille autografe, ms XIII B 62), a cura di F. Lomonaco, presentazione di F. Tessitore, Napoli, Liguori, 2007, p. XIII). On Roman references in Vico's juridic writings see G. Crifò, *Ulpiano e Vico, Ulpiano e Vico. Diritto romano e ragion di Stato*, in *Sodalitas. Scritti in onore di Antonio Guarino*, Napoli, Jovene, 1984, vol. V, pp. 2069–2070. By Crifò see also *Vico e la storia romana. Alcune considerazioni*, in *Giambattista Vico nel suo tempo e nel nostro*, a cura di



Because of its sacred origin, poetic characters, or imaginative universals, provide the foundation not only for human communication but also for the right of nations. Picking from the *Wunderkammer* of «boundless antiquities» stored in his erudite mind and sounding critically the origin and evolution of Roman law, Vico questions aural moments in history where the epiphany of the Sacred appears both as legal institution and poetic expression: a single, indistinct mode of perception that only later will gradually split into fixed and separated discursive morphologies<sup>4</sup>.

The indivisible co-existence of religion, law, and poetry in *New Science* defines, in fact, the age of the gods, beginning from the “archetypal scene” of a thundering sky. Here, amidst the stupor of giants «frightened» and «sent underground» ( «atterriti» and «aterrati» ) by thunder, sets off Vico’s history of human people:

they pictured the sky to themselves as a great animated body, which in that aspect they called Jove, the first god of the so-called gentes maiores, who by the whistling of his bolts and the noise of his thunder was attempting to tell them something, And thus they began to exercise that natural curiosity which is the daughter of ignorance and the mother of knowledge, and which, opening the mind of man, gives birth to wonder<sup>5</sup>.

«They pictured (...) to themselves» («si finsero»)<sup>6</sup>: thus, according to the Latin etymology, still quite recognizable in the corresponding Italian word, they created, shaped, constructed for their own use, imagined. Human history is born out of fiction. We notice *en passant* that even the original text generates an entire network of inter-related characters: *Curiosity*, daughter of *Ignorance* and mother to *Knowledge*, and which gives birth to *Wonder*. Here we have the rhetorical strategy of personification, signified also graphically through the use of capitalization (which cannot be suppressed in the

M. Agrimi, Napoli, Cuen, 1999, pp. 589–603. On Vico’s juridic thought, see the detailed R. Ruggiero, *Nova scientia tentatur. Introduzione al Diritto Universale di Giambattista Vico*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2010.

4. On the «topic, central in Vico, of the early pervasive sacralization of the real world — linked to that, no less central, of the “communicative” needs of humans, which define their own social nature», a topic which «asserts immediately the need to think about the early production of communication forms that could express their own links to the sacred», see E. Nuzzo, *Prima della «Prudenza moderna» Giuramento sacro e fondamento metapolitico del potere in Vico*, in Id., *Tra religione e prudenza. La «filosofia pratica» di Giambattista Vico*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007, pp. 149–209.

5. NS44, § 377; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 105; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 105: «si finsero il Cielo esser un gran Corpo animato, che per tal aspetto chiamarono GIOVE, il primo Dio delle Genti dette *Maggiori*; che col *fischio* de’ fulmini, e col *fragore* de’ tuoni *volesse dir loro qualche cosa*: e si incominciarono a celebrare la naturale *Curiosità*, ch’è figliuola dell’*Ignoranza*, e madre della *Scienza*, la qual partorisce nell’aprire, che fa della mente dell’uomo la *Maraviglia*».

6. See for instance G. Paparelli, «Fictio» in *Enciclopedia dantesca*, available on-line: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/fictio\\_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/fictio_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/).

published version of the text)<sup>7</sup>. And here, while talking about the act of *picturing*, about the creation of *personae fictae*, the author himself pictures these “persons”, creates them in his own writing.

Jupiter/*Gius* the thunder — thus, is at one time poetic fiction, interlocutor, religious conscience and juridical authority. It is a person, because the giants picture him as though he «was attempting to tell them something».

Primitive law and Jurisprudence are therefore «a divine wisdom, called, as we have seen, mystic theology, which means the science of divine speech or the understanding of the divine mysteries of divination»<sup>8</sup>. Its forms, its “discourses” are expressed in mute speech, an iconic language made up of gestures and physical objects<sup>9</sup>, solemn rituals and interpretations of the will of the gods («To this first jurisprudence therefore belonged the first and proper interpreting, called *interpretari* for *interpretari*, that is, “to enter into the fathers”, as the gods were at first called as we observed above»)<sup>10</sup>.

Jurists, writes Vico, were called «the oracles of the city»: Cicero himself attests to this practice, and «Among the Latins the answers of the jurisconsults and the answers of the oracles were both called “responses” (*responsi*)»<sup>11</sup>. Further, among the several etymologies that testify to the sacrality of legal vocabulary, we might remind here that of *oratio*, the basic and most widely used word in rhetoric and in Vico’s own investigation on the subject<sup>12</sup>, which

7. See on this topic the fundamental writings by V. Placella, such as *Alcune proposte per la nuova edizione delle opere di Vico (e in particolare di quelle filosofiche)*, in «Bollettino del centro di Studi Vichiani», n. 8 (1978), pp. 47–81. See also A. Battistini, *La funzione sinottica del frontespizio e la semantica dei corpi tipografici nella «Scienza nuova» di Vico, in I dintorni del testo. Approcci alle periferie del libro*, a cura di M. Santoro and M.G. Tavoni, Roma, Ateneo, 2005, pp. 467–484.

8. NS44, § 938; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 309; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 283: «una Sapienza Divina», una «Scienza di divini parlari, o d’intendere i divini misteri della Divinazione».

9. See A. Battistini, *Scrivere per immagini: scienza dei segni e imprese araldiche*, in Id., *Vico tra antichi e moderni*, Bologna, il Mulino 2004, pp. 133–173; G. Cantelli, *Mente, corpo, linguaggio. Saggio sull’interpretazione vichiana del mito*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1986; M. Danesi, *Vico, Metaphor, and the Origin of Language*, cit.; A. Pagliaro, *Lingua e poesia secondo Giambattista Vico*, in Id., *Altri saggi di critica semantica*, Messina — Firenze, D’Anna, 1961, pp. 297–444; Jü. Trabant, *Vico’s New Science of Ancient Signs. A Study of Sematology*, trad. from the German by Sean Ward, London, Routledge, 2004; Id., *Cenni e voci. Saggi di sematologia vichiana*, trad. dal tedesco di E. Proverbio, Napoli, Arte Tipografica Editrice, 2007.

10. NS44, § 938; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 309; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 283: («talché di questa prima Giurisprudenza fu primo, e proprio *interpretari*, detto quasi *interpretari*, cioè *entrare in essi Padri*, quali furono dapprima detti gli *Dèi*»).

11. OO (=On the One 1720) § I CLXXXIII, 9; *On the One Principle and on One End of Universal Law* Translated by J.D. Schaeffer. «New Vico Studies», XXI, 2003, p. 200. *De universi iuris uno principio et fine uno* (1720), cit., p. 150 [*De uno from now on*]: «Citra dubium Romani Jurisconsulti, testimonio Ciceronis, dicti *Oracula Civitatis*; et apud Latinos de solis *Oraculis* et *Jurisconsultis Responsa dicta*».

12. G. Vico, *The Art of Rhetoric (Institutiones Oratoriae 1711–1741)*, trans. G.A. Pinton and A.W. Shippee, Amsterdam and Atlanta, Rodopi Press, 1996; *Institutiones oratoriae*, a cura di G. Crifò, Napoli, Istituto Suor Orsola Benincasa, 1989. See H. Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: a Foundation for Literary Study*, foreword J.E. Kennedy, transl. M.T. Bliss, ed. D.E. Orton and R.D. Anderson, Leide, — Boston — Köhln, Brill, 1998 s.v. «*Oratio*».

even today, in Italian, preserves double semantic value. The words «oratore» (orator) and «orante» (entreater) originally indicate the same person who incarnates the divine authority in the ritual utterance<sup>13</sup>.

In the old word *jus*, explains Vico, «the principle of strict law», where civil equity is the rule, requires absolute strictness, «exemplary chastisements» to the point of cruelty<sup>14</sup>, superstitious respect for formulas, and the obscurity of laws: this is the field of *certum*, where the age of heroes also belongs, where poetry, law, and religion still draw together the boundaries of civilization.

CXI The certitude of the laws is an obscurity of judgment backed only by authority, so that we find them harsh in application, yet are obliged to apply them by their certitude. In good Latin *certum* means “particularized”, or, as the schools say, “individuated”; so that, in overelegant Latin, *certum* and *commune* are opposed to each other.

This axiom and the two following definitions constitute the principle of strict law. Its rule is civil equity, by whose certitude, that is to say by the determinate particularity of whose words, the barbarians, [men] of particular [not universal] ideas, are naturally satisfied, and such is the law they think is their due. So that what Ulpian says in such cases, “the law is harsh, but so it is written” (*lex dura est, sed scripta est*), may be put in finer Latin and with greater legal elegance, “the law is harsh, but it is certain” (*lex dura est, sed certa est*)<sup>15</sup>.

13. NS44, § 957; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 318; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 289.

14. Ibidem: «After such orations (or obsecrations or implorations) and after such obtestations, they proceeded to the act of execrating the criminals.(...) And against them they made vows (this was the first *nuncupare vota*, which means to make solemn vows with consecrated formulae) and they consecrated them to the Furies». «Dopo tali Orazioni, ovvero *obsecrazioni*, ovvero *implorazioni*, e dopo tali *Obtestazioni*, venivan all’atto di *esegrare essi rei* (...): e contro loro concepivano i *voti*, che fu il primo *nuncupare vota*, che significa *far voti solenni*, ovvero con *formole consacrate*, e gli consagravano alle *Furie*». With «solemn vows», ancient humans proceeded to punish culprits, with methods that the philosopher describes in all their cruelty, focusing on the brutal violence of the primitive administrators of justice, and on «the terrible *cruelty* of their *magic formalism*» (cruelty that he somehow Vico «admires», as argued by E. Auerbach (*Vico and Aesthetic Historicism*, in «The Journal of Aesthetics and Art», n. VIII (1949), then in Id. *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, New York, Meridian Books, 1959, pp. 183–98). See E. Bianchi, *Fictio iuris. Ricerche sulla finzione in diritto romano dal periodo arcaico all’epoca augustea*, Pavia, Cedam, 1997, pp. 38–39. To the vicissitudes of *exemplum*, *sententia* and the question of *fictio iuris*, I have already devoted two essays in 2007: S. Sini, *Osservazioni sul passaggio dal ‘ri-uso rituale’ al ‘ri-uso mondano’ nell’opera di Vico*, in *Sul ri-uso: Pratiche del testo e teoria della letteratura*, a cura di E. Esposito, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2007, pp. 25–60; Id., *Dalla formola alla fictio: osservazioni sui primi testi di ri-uso nell’opera di Vico*, in G. Vico e l’enciclopedia dei saperi, a cura di P. Guaragnella e A. Battistini, Lecce, Pensa Multimedia, 2007, pp. 397–428.

15. NS44, § 322; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 83; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 85: «CXI Il *Certo delle Leggi* è un’oscurità della Ragione unicamente sostenuta dall’Autorità; che le ci fa sperimentare dure nel praticarle (...). Questa Dignità con le due seguenti *Definizioni* costituiscono il *Principio della Ragion Stretta*; della qual’ è *regola l’Equità Civile*; al cui *Certo*, o sia alla determinata particolarità delle cui parole i barbari, d’*idee particolari*, naturalmente s’*acquetano*, e tale stimano il diritto, che lor si debba: onde ciò che in tali casi Ulpiano dice; *lex dura est, sed scripta est*; tu diresti, con più bellezza latina, e con maggior eleganza legale; *lex dura est, sed certa est*». On the importance of Ulpianus in Vico’s juridical and political thought, see G. Crifò, *Ulpiano e Vico*, cit. Crifò shows how Vico’s theorization in *De uno*, of «*aequitas naturalis* — and *rigor iuris*, as *formulae vorborum* in opposition to *formula mentis*, as

Providence, states Vico in the Axiom CXIV, allowed Nations «since they had to live for centuries incapable of truth and natural equity (the latter of which the philosophers later clarified), (...) to cleave to certitude and civil equity («per lunga scorsa di secoli (...) incapaci del vero e dell'Equità Naturale, la quale più rischiararono appresso i Filosofi, si conformassero al certo dell'equità civile»)). A synonym for «reason of State»<sup>16</sup>, civil equity needs that the words contained in orders and laws must be scrupulously observed even when «proved harsh» («riuscissero dure»)<sup>17</sup>.

Formalism, therefore, represents the axiological restriction given to the heroes by act of Providence so that they could tame violence and avoid civil entropy, «in order that they should not break out into disputes, quarrels and killings» («perchè non prorompessero in piati, risse et uccisioni»)<sup>18</sup>, and to maintain justice. This last functions, as we read in *De uno*, like an «iron rule» («un regolo ferreo») that, unbending and never fitting the lines of the bodies, coerces them into adjusting to it<sup>19</sup>; an iron rule which is necessary, according to Vico, before a new one could appear, made of very different material, flexible and adaptable, representing natural impartiality and *prudentia*<sup>20</sup>. Heroical wisdom, the harshness of which humanity had twice

*certum*, i.e. as positive attitude of the law, in opposition to *verum*» is completely in line with Ulpianus (*ivi*, p. 2075).

16. On Reason of State, besides G. Crifò, *Ulpiano e Vico, cit.*, see P. Guaragnella, *Dalla «politica poetica» alla «ragion di Stato»*, in «Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiani» («BCSV» from now on), XXXIII (2003), pp. 85–101; Enrico Nuzzo, *Vico e la ragion di Stato*, in *Prudenza civile, bene comune, guerra giusta. Percorsi della ragion di Stato tra Seicento e Settecento*. Atti del Convegno internazionale (Napoli, 22–24 maggio 1996), a cura di G. Borrelli, Napoli, Archivio della ragion di Stato, Adarte, 1999, pp. 313–348; Id., *Aristotelismo politico e Ragion di Stato: problemi di metodo e di critica attorno a due categorie storiografiche*, in «Archivio di storia della cultura», IX (1996), pp. 9–61; M. Riccio, *Nota sul termine «Ragion di Stato» nella «Scienza nuova» 1744*, in «BCSV», XXVI–XXVII (1996–1997), pp. 353–356, and finally R. Ruggiero, *Nova scientia tentatur, cit., passim*.

17. NS44, § 328; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 84; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova, cit.*, p. 86.

18. NS44, § 966; G. Vico, *The New Science*, pp. 321–322; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova, cit.*, p. 293.

19. OO, § I CLXXVII; G. Vico, *On the One Principle*, p. 194; G. Vico, *De uno, cit.*, p. 144: «Citra dubium Romani Jurisconsulti «*Aequitas Civilis Regulae Ferreae similis*. Unde conceptas verborum Formulas religiose custodiebant atque ad eas, tanquam ad *regulam Ferream*, quae ad se corpora, non se ad corpora dirigit, causas accommodabant». «Civil equity similar to an iron rule. The patricians religiously protected the precise verbal formulas to which legal cases had to conform. The formula was like an iron rod used to measure a body. The body had to fit it; it could not be adjusted to the body».

20. It is the famous *topos* of lesbian rule («regolo lesbio»), «... illa Lesbiorum flexili, quae non ad se corpora dirigit, sed se ad corpora inflectit» (*De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* (1709) (*De rat.* from now on), § VII; G. Vico, *Il metodo degli studi del nostro tempo*, introduzione e cura di F. Lomonaco, Napoli, ScriptaWeb, 2010, p. 118. *On the Study Methods of Our Time*. Translated by E. Gianturco. Reissued with a Preface by D.Ph. Verene, and including «The Academies and the Relation between Philosophy and Eloquence», Translated by D.Ph. Verene, Ithaca, N.Y, Cornell University Press, 1990: «the pliant lesbic rule, which does not conform bodies to itself, but adjusts itself to their contours» 42. The same definition can be found in OO (*De uno*), § I CLXXXVII and *The Art of Rhetoric (Institutiones oratoriae)*, § 22. See G. Giarrizzo, «*Aequitas*» e «*prudentia*». *Storia di un topos vichiano*, in Id., *Vico, la*

experimented, belongs to him who respects the letter and, like Ulysses, «speaks so *adroitly* (...) that he obtains the advantages he seeks while always observing the *propriety of his words*». («sempre parla *si accorto*, che consiglia la propostasi utilità, serbata sempre la *proprietà delle sue parole*»)²¹.

The second kind of judgments, because of their recent origin from divine judgments, were all ordinary, observed with an extreme verbal scrupulousness which must have carried over from the previous divine judgments the name *religio verborum*, even as divine things are universally conceived in sacred formulae which cannot be altered by as much as one little letter; whence it was said of the ancient formulae for actions:; *qui cadit virgula, caussa cadit*, "he who drops a comma loses his case." This is the natural law of heroic nations, observed naturally by ancient Roman jurisprudence; and it was the praetor's *fari*, which was an unalterable utterance (...) whence later the name *Fatum* was given to the ineluctable order of causes producing the things of nature, as being the utterance of God. Hence perhaps the Italian verb *ordinare*, as applied especially to laws, in the sense of giving commands which must necessarily be carried out²².

In the natural law of heroes, thus, the formal rule is endowed with the strength to coerce which springs from sacred necessity; the formula, like an iron rule, coerces facts into adapting to it, sanctions deals between men and establishes the content of events. Even a comma cannot be dropped, because no modification is allowed in the tokens of divine *fari*, the unavoidable will, *fate*²³.

It is the principle informing the engraved command of the Twelve Tables: *uti lingua nuncupassit, ita ius esto*. («as the tongue has declared, so let it be binding»). The requirements of ancient justice are thus expressed in the harsh sentence that, while unfolding its meaning, makes itself into law.

It is worth noting that modern scholarship in ancient Roman law con-

*politica e la storia*, Napoli, Guida, 1981, pp. 172–174.

21. NS44, § 939; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 309; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 283.

22. NS44, § 965; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 321, G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., pp. 292–293: «I secondi giudizi, per la recente origine de' giudizi divini, furono tutti ordinarj, osservati con una somma scrupolosità di parole, che da' giudizi, innanzi stati, divini dovette restar detta *religio verborum*; conforme le cose divine universalmente son concepute con *formole consacrate*, che non si possono d'una *letteruccia* alterare; onde delle antiche formole dell'azioni si diceva, *qui cadit virgula, caussa cadit*. Ch'è 'l *Diritto Naturale delle Genti Eroiche*, osservato naturalmente dalla *Giurisprudenza Romana Antica*, e fu il *fari* del Pretore, ch'era un parlar innalterabile (...) donde poi fu detto *Fatum* sopra le cose della Natura l'*ordine ineluttabile delle cagioni*, che le produce, perchè tale sia il *parlare di Dio*: onde forse agl'*Italiani* venne detto *ordinare*, ed in ispezie in ragionamento di *Leggi*, per dare comandi che si devono necessariamente eseguire».

23. «Thanks to his insightful, if sometimes inaccurate, etymologies, Vico demonstrates how from the root *fas* comes also *fatum*, the divine decree, as well as *fas*, which is unchangeable *jus*, issuing from God, containing the whole human law, while *jus*, law created by humans, betrays its divine origin in the etymology itself, if it is true, as Vico would have it, that *jus* is the contract form of *Jous*, a term linked to *Jupiter*» (A. Scognamiglio, *Religione e diritto nel De uno*, in «BCSV», XXXIV, 2004, p. 109).

firms the validity of Vico's insisted arguments about the inalterability of the formula, a binding due to remote religious institutions and pre-requisite for ensuring continuity and certitude in the delivery of justice. For instance, Ernesto Bianchi, explains that «in the field of Roman law studies, it is recognized how the formalism featured in ancient Roman law has to be connected to that which is featured in sacred law» and underlines «the parallelism between formulas and the strict forms of the sacred, sacred law in particular, and the formulas and forms of secular law». These observations are grounded in the idea that «forms and formulas, belonging both to sacred and secular law, originate in magical beliefs or in what were thought to be transcendental forces». Their main features are «the unity of the act and the scrupulous sequence of gestures, sounds, words and silent pauses»<sup>24</sup>.

These bindings have to do with the primordial dimension of orality, because, at the time when the jurists were the prophets («seers») of Rome, «city oracles», verdicts were delivered in speech; sacred formulas were articulated through fixed patterns, thus becoming proper songs: those old laws, we read in *De uno*, were ruled by rhythm and sense of proportion (...) and were accompanied by the sound of musical instruments<sup>25</sup>. If, from songs and meter, as Vico will explain in the second book of last *New Science*, developed the first speech of humanity, in the like manner, from that wild and imaginative age comes the *carme*, destined to be identified as poetic expression throughout the centuries. «Poetic rhythm», which represents the formal framework of versification, is originally associated to the formal binding coming from sacred words, with the unalterable harshness of the verdict.

Not only versification, but theatre is also protagonist in Vico's history of

24. E. Bianchi, *Fictio iuris*, cit, pp. 35–37). Franco Todescan, too, argues that «In ancient Roman law, no principle has been pursued with such commitment as form has been, and no principle has achieved such complete and vast fulfillment. "Form is granted, since the old *ius Quiritium*, a crucial function, i.e. to ensure the certitude of law: this fact highlights a symptomatic motif. The strength of juridic development rests on historical continuity, on the unbreakable connection between past and present. Forms contribute to ensure this conformity: contrarily to the changeable, and sometimes inscrutable, inner features, the form of juridic acts, in its ongoing reproduction of itself, remains visible, and it also instrumental in allowing populations to achieve awareness of themselves." (F. Todescan, *Diritto e realtà. Storia e teoria della fictio iuris*, Padova, Cedam, 1979, p. 19). Thus, attention to the letter of the text, which Vico had seen respected in the ancient formulas, is grounded in the deeply-felt communitarian need for permanence and identity.

25. OO, § I CLXXXIII 10; G. Vico *On the One Principle*, pp. 200–201; G. Vico, *De uno*, cit., p. 154: «Ita prisca *Jurisconsulti carminibus* responsa dabant; ut de legum formulis supra diximus; in quibus si quis hos Poëticos numeros non sentiat, is ne eos quidem audiat in *Carminum Saliarum* fragmentis: quae tamen ad symphoniam canebant. (...) ut *Jurisconsulti* videantur esse *Divini*, seu *Vates Romanorum*». «The first jurisconsults gave their responses in verses or songs, just as we described the legal formulas. If someone does not recognize that the formulas were in poetic rhythms, they would not detect poetic rhythm in the fragments of the *Carmina Salii* either, which were sung with instrumental accompaniment. (...) Thus the jurisconsults seem to be the seers and poets of the Romans».

juridical wisdom : amongst the most beautiful pages in *New Science*, we can include the Corollary to Book Fourth, titled «That the Ancient Roman Law Was a Serious Poem, and the Ancient Jurisprudence a Severe Kind of Poetry, within Which Are Found the First Outlines of Legal Metaphysics in the Rough; and How, among the Greeks, Philosophy Was Born of the Laws». Here the author describes, through his trademark use of etymological links, the origin of the juridical idea of «person», and connects it to the «masks» of family heads meeting in the market square:

Thus there appeared in the market place as many masks as there were persons (for *persona* properly means simply a mask) or as there were names. The names, which in the times of mute speech took the form of real words, must have been the family coats-of-arms,(...) And under the person or mask of the father of a family were concealed all his children and servants, and under the real name or emblem of a house were concealed all its agnates and gentiles.(...) The reason for this springs from the principles of poetry discovered above. The founders of Roman law, at a time when they could not understand intelligible universals, fashioned imaginative universals. And just as the poets later by art brought personages and masks onto the stage, so these men by nature had previously brought the aforesaid names and persons into the forum.(...) The word *persona* must not have been derived from *personare*, «to resound everywhere(...)». It must rather have come from *personari*, a verb which we conjecture meant to wear the skins of wild beasts, (...). To such an origin of the verb *personari* (...), we conjecture, the Italian application of the term *personaggi*, «personages» to men of high station and great representations. And from the masks called *personae* which were used in these dramatic fables, so true and severe, derive the first origins of the doctrine of the law of persons *De iure personarum*<sup>26</sup>.

The question is very important to Vico, and we find hints also in his epistolary. In particular, we mention here a letter to Giuseppe Pasquale Cirillo, dating from August 30<sup>th</sup> 1733, where Vico corrects the younger colleague<sup>27</sup>.

26. NS44, § 1033–1034; 1037; G. Vico, *The New Science*, pp. 349–350. G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., pp. 317–319: «Si portarono in piazza tante *maschere*, quante son le *persone*, ché *persona* non altro propriamente vuol dire che *maschera*; e quanti sono i *nomi*, i quali, ne' tempi de' *parlari mutoli*, che si facevan con *parole reali*, dovetter essere l' *Insegne delle famiglie* (...); e sotto la *persona* o *maschera* d'un *Padre d'una famiglia* si nascondevano tutti i *figliuoli*, e tutti i *servi* di quella; sotto un *nome reale* ovvero *Insegna di casa* si nascondevano tutti gli *agnati* e tutti i *gentili* della medesima (...). La cui ragione esce da' *Principi della Poesia* che si sono sopra truovati; che gli *Autori del Diritto Romano*, nell'età, che non potevano intendere *universali intelligibili*, ne fecero *universali fantastici*; e come poi i *Poeti* per arte ne portarono i *Personaggi* e le *maschere* nel *Teatro*; così essi per *natura* innanzi avevano portato i *nomi* e le *persone* nel *Foro*. (...) Perchè *persona* non dev'essere stata detta da *personare*, che significa *risuonar dappertutto* (...) ma dev'esser venuto da *personari* (...) *vestir pelli di fiere* (...) e da tal origine del verbo (...) congetturiamo che gl'*Italiani* dicono *Personaggi* gli uomini d'alto stato e di grande rappresentazione. (...) e dalle *maschere*, le quali usarono tali Favole Dramatiche e vere e severe, che furon dette *PERSONAE*, derivano nella dottrina *De Jure Personarum le prime Origini*».

27. On Giuseppe Pasquale Cirillo (1709–1776) see entry by R. Ajello, in *Dizionario Biografico degli*

It has been brought to my attention a rumour which has falsely spread throughout the city, according to which I, with a brief offhand argument, had pinpointed some mistakes in the most erudite speech that your honourable person delivered at the Academy (...) What I did was to add three simple details that you, for the sake of brevity, have not mentioned. The first concerned the first mask that appeared on Earth, and I argued that it most likely was that of a Satyr: the second concerned the etymology of the word *Persona*; as the length of its middle syllable preclude the possibility of the word coming from *Personare*, to resound everywhere, and the smallness of early theatres would not call for such a practice: and showed how it came from the ancient word *Personari*, from which had originated *Personatus*, masked, which among the early Latins it meant dressed with animal skins<sup>28</sup>.

Masks and characters «brought by art» onto the stage originate, according to Vico, from «names» and «persons» meeting in the market square to sanction the authority of political choices and draw the boundary inside which those decisions could be implemented. Further, states Vico: from the true and severe masks, called *personae*, present in dramatic fables, originate those persons who are the object of the *De Jure Personarum* doctrine. Before being a concept («intelligible universal»), the person is a mask standing for all the individuals belonging to the same family. The mask is described here as a family coat-of-arms, like an imaginative universal<sup>29</sup>.

From here originates the notion of legal person. And even concerning this topic, modern philosophers of law do not contradict Vico's position. Francesco Galgano, for instance, shows how the modern conception of «legal person», still accepted by contemporary law, is actually a metaphor, originating from ancient fiction: «The notion of person, employed in classic Roman law to designate human beings, during the Middle Ages is broadened in order to include collective bodies, then still known under the Roman name *universitas*»<sup>30</sup>. For example, in the 14th century, Bartolus of Sassoferrato wrote: «*universitas proprie non est persona, tamen hoc est fictum positum pro vero, sicut ponimus nos iuristae*». As Galgano explains, Bartolus moves from a premise «which grants only to human beings the status of proper persons, that is, they are such only in the natural world; hence, the idea that organized collective bodies can be seen as persons is fiction created by jurists, and it has validity only in the restricted field of law, as *fictio iuris*». «It

*Italiani* (vol. 25, 1981) ([http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giuseppe\T1\textendashpasquale\T1\textendashcirillo\\_%28Dizionario\T1\textendashBiografico%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giuseppe\T1\textendashpasquale\T1\textendashcirillo_%28Dizionario\T1\textendashBiografico%29/)).

28. G. Vico, *Epistole. Con aggiunte le epistole dei suoi corrispondenti*, a cura di M. Sanna, Napoli, Morano, 1992, p. 173.

29. See the two essential essays by A. Battistini, *Scrivere per immagini: scienza dei segni e imprese araldiche; Alle origini dell'universale fantastico*, in Id., *Vico tra antichi e Moderni*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2004, pp. 133–173; 175–199.

30. F. Galgano, *Le insidie del linguaggio giuridico. Saggio sulle metafore nel diritto*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2010, p. 25.



is *imago quaedam*, adds Baldus»<sup>31</sup>. «Only between the 17th and 18th century, in the context of the general redefinition of the entire body of jurisprudence undertaken by the School of Natural Law, *persona ficta* effectively becomes a real person: the metaphor — *imago quaedam*, as Baldus had termed it — gets translated into actual reality, and alongside the *persona naturalis*, Grotius places, with a fundamental parity of rights and duties, the *persona moralis*. «Consequently the “as though”, implied in every metaphor, and in every legal fiction, is converted into an “is”: collective organizations may well be regarded as persons, but only for the purposes of law»<sup>32</sup>.

It is precisely on the civil functionality of the «as though» that the «master key» of Vico's Science is based. With time, he writes, violence starts to abate, and a breach is slowly opened which brings about a different way of administering justice. True force is replaced by fictional force, violence is exorcised through its «imitation», through a ritual representation that preserves the memory of old rituals, but forsakes its most brutal effects<sup>33</sup>. Consequently, property rights evolve by discontinuing physical action and using imitative acts as replacement<sup>34</sup>.

Part of the same development that leads from violence to symbolic acts, *fictio* makes its appearance in ancient Roman law, in order to hold off the embarrassment aroused by the brutality of such violent acts, felt to be more and more unacceptable. The part for the whole — in other words, a symbol — compensates the whole of a ceremony that has lost its justification.

The relationship to the sacredness of the formula becomes more and more problematic: historical developments and the new needs of the social

31. I.e Baldus de Ubaldis, *Codicis Commentaria*, Venetiis, 1590, a 7.53.5., n. II.

32. Galgano comments the consequences, which are still up to date, of this “transfer” from «as if» to «is»: «However, it is unreasonable to take the metaphor too seriously and proclaim that always and in effect legal persons are persons, credit instruments are physical objects, immaterial goods are goods. This is not an obvious detail. The greatest masters, and sentences by the highest courts as well, have incurred in the mistake of considering the metaphor as reality, drawing conclusions that had the appearance, but only the appearance of rigorous logical deductions. Such is the case for legal person, which judges and lawyers had considered an actual person for too long, while experience shows how it could be, as it is clear from the etymology of the word, nothing but a mask, concealing unspeakable human interests». F. Galgano, *Le insidie del linguaggio giuridico*, cit., p. 22–35 *passim*.

33. In his investigation, Vico gives a lot of attention to this crucial passage, for instance one chapter in *De uno* devoted to «Substitutes for violence; property, ownership, promises, punishment, combat, contract» (OO, § I CXXIV; G. Vico *On the One*, p. 118); *De uno*, cit., p. 77: «*Imitationes violentiae: mancipatio, usucapio, usurpatio, obligatio, vindicatio, manus consertio, conditio*» (*De uno* I CXXIV, pp. 144–145).

34. See P. Guaragnella, who underlines «the steps of a transition from property law seen as direct concrete and material responsibility towards objects, to a *dominium* which is seen for the first time, in the thought of Roman jurists, as abstract and hence a juridic institution. Therefore, a chronological succession of juridic attitudes that are more and more refined and developed: an early one linked to ‘tangible’ elements, and a later one more mature and allowing for technical rationalizations» (*Dalla «politica poetica» alla «ragion di Stato»*, cit., p. 97).

body make the rule appear excessively strict. But in order not to undermine the formula, to preserve the inviolability of the letter, imaginary situations are created, fictive contexts and figures that act in order to discipline the new needs. Already in the *De ratione*, Vico reflects on the statute of fiction and of its crucial mediating role between new needs that changing circumstances imposed on public and private interests, and the contrasting duty to abide to the law<sup>35</sup>.

Ancient jurisprudence, according to Vico, deserves praise because it had preserved and safeguarded the norms in force without ignoring the call for equity required by changing circumstances. Roman citizens, taken as prisoners in foreign lands, maybe while fighting for their own country, would originally lose every right, starting from citizenship itself. If they died, their will would be automatically made void. The *Lex Cornelia* comes to remedy this injustice: it dictated that the captive who dies in prison «had to be considered «as though» he had passed away as a free man *in civitate*: such a fiction made sure that his will would be executed».<sup>36</sup>

The institution of fiction, according to historians of Roman law, is often closely linked to questions of space, for instance, *fictio* about the *ager Romanus* or *fictio* about the *ager Hosticus*<sup>37</sup>. Here we find an interesting

35. *De rat.* § XI; *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, cit., p. 52: «If, at times, necessity to protect the common welfare, and, at times, private utility, dictated the introduction of some new rules infringing in the law, the jurists resorted to legal fictions and excogitated some formal devices of their own invention so as to avoid amending the law. Examples of fictions were the post-liminius, the fiction of *Lex Cornelia* and others, such as the imaginary sales which were supposed to take place in the emancipation of minors and in will-making. On close inspection, it will be found that legal fictions are nothing but extensions of, and exceptions, to the ruling of ancient Roman law; it was by means of such fictions that the jurists succeeded in adjusting facts to law». G. Vico, *Il metodo degli studi del nostro tempo*, cit., pp. 178–180: «Ita leges ubique rigeabant; adeo ut, si nedum privatorum utilitas, sed ipsa respublica aliquid contra leges recipi suaderet, id Jurisconsulti fictionibus et commentis quibusdam juris expediebant, ne jus quicquam demutaretur. Ex quo genere sunt postliminii legisque Corneliae aliaeque fisiones, et imaginariae in emancipationibus testamentisque venditiones. Ad quae si quis animum recte advertat, iuris fisiones nihil aliud, nisi priscae jurisprudentiae productiones et exceptiones legum fuisse comperiat: quibus prisca iurisconsulti, non, ut nostri leges ad facta, sed ad leges facta accomodabant. Atque in eo omnis priscae jurisprudentiae laus posita erat, nempe aliquod ejusmodi consilium comminisci, quo et leges integrae essent, et publicae utilitati consuleretur».

36. «The *lex Cornelia* is thus at the core of significant developments involving the institutes of *captivitas* and *postliminium*. It testified to a rift that had opened between the perspective of uncompromising «legality» and the one offered by a new ideological perspective, advanced under the pressure of specific philosophical and cultural trends. Several impulses will have a deep impact: in particular, on the one hand a new humanitarian ethos, advocated by stoicism and rapidly circulating in Roman society; on the other, a changing economic and political context» (F. Todescan, *Diritto e realtà*, cit., pp. 28–29).

37. *Fictio* about the *ager Romanus*, created in the context of augural law, consists in «considering portions of “foreign” territory as Roman. This fiction was activated in case of an impediment to the consul, or to the military command, in the context of *dictio dictatoris* or *repetitio auspiorum* respectively, or finally in some particular case of augural *templa* having to be inaugurated». «*Dictio dictatoris* must be performed by the consul in Roman territory at nighttime, while everything all

testimony of the close connection in Vico's thought between the birth of civil forms of organizations, — from embryonic communicative acts to conceptions of time — and the possession of land<sup>38</sup>.

Thus, by adapting «not laws to fit the facts, but facts fit the laws», Roman jurists employ the principle of verisimilitude («as though»), they shape reality (picture to themselves) and ensure the survival of authority as well as of considerate laws. «Ancient law is riddled with fictions»<sup>39</sup>.

According to Vico, then, poetic acts inscribed in fiction are born out of

around is quiet and after the auspices have been taken. These are the ancient forms dictated by *mos*. Of course, *dictio* had to be considered particularly urgent when, with one consul deceased and the other far away on a war campaign, there was the need to convene the assembly and elect the missing consul, and, for this purpose, a dictator had to be appointed (...). The need to fast arrange for *dictio* often clashed, however, with the current situation. Thus, in some cases, it happened that the remaining consul, being in command of the army, was unable to come back immediately to Rome and proceed, in the prescribed forms, to carry out *dictio dictatoris*. An artifice, thus, had to be found in order to allow the consul to take *auspicia* and appoint a dictator when outside Roman territory, thus not requiring him to leave the army to go back to Rome. Such artifice is worked out by considering the portion of territory where the consul happens to stay at that particular moment, as *ager Romanus*. Thus, *dictio* can take place *in castris*, while the other requisites disposed by ancient customs are met». E. Bianchi, *Fictio iuris*, cit., pp. 90–91. Similar to that of *ager Romanus* is the fiction concerning *ager Hosticus*. «Fiction has the purpose to prevent the fetiales from going on a mission to the far borders of the Nation against which war was to be declared. The rigid and complex procedure (...) could require the priest multiple trips from Rome to enemy territory and back. Thus, an enemy soldier is brought inside an enclosed space, for instance the circus Flaminius, and the whole procedure is carried out as though that was enemy territory: “*ut quasi in hostili loco ius belli indicendi impleant*”. *Ivi*, pp. 113–114. In fetial law, thus, fiction is present («The college of fetiales had duties which we might call, with all necessary distinctions, of international law. Among others, the collegium has the responsibility to ensure the formal legitimacy of declarations of war and that, formal as well, of sealing *foedera*». *Ivi*, pp. 111–112).

38. On the different spatialities in *New Science*, see S. Sini, *Figure vichiane. Retorica e topica della «Scienza nuova»*, Milano, Led–Il Filarete, 2005.

39. OO, § I CLXXXII; *On the One*, p. 186: «Ancient Roman law is riddled with fictions, and I include Roman civil law and also praetorian law, since it was obviously part of all Roman law. Thus in many cases one considers the unborn to be born, the living to be dead, the dead to be still living. Sometimes one person is considered under three aspects. In cases of acquisitions sons and servants are considered in the persons of their parents or masters. One individual was considered to be another. Time that has not yet come is regarded as present time; time already passed is treated as still continuing. Disparate time periods are regarded as contiguous; so many fictitious laws, bare names without substance, empty laws with no corresponding benefits; so many imaginary transactions and so much simulated violence in civil law. And in praetorian law so many deeds abrogated and rights restored». *De uno*, cit., pp. 149–150: «*Hinc Jus Antiquum Romanum fictionibus totum scatens: appellatione autem Juris Civilis Romani et ius Praetorium heic amplector, quod sane Juris romani universi pars quaedam fuit. Hinc in quamplurimis causis conceptos pro natis, vivos pro defunctis, defunctos pro vivis haberi; quemque tria capita gerere; filios, servos in acquisitionibus sub parentum vel dominorum persona latere; alios gerere aliorum personas; tempora, quae nondum transierunt, produci; tempora, quae iam transierunt, retroagi; tempora dissita coniungi, tot iura personata, nuda nomina sine re, nuda iura sine honorum commodis; tot imaginarias venditiones et simulatas violentias iure civili, tot actorum rescissiones et in integrum restitutiones iure praetorio celebrari*». On the role of the praetor, see F. Todescan, *Diritto e realtà*, cit., pp. 37–54, on praetorian fictions in particular, see pp. 40–54. On the significance of the praetor in Vico's political thought, see M. Riccio, *Nota sul termine «Ragion di Stato»*, cit., pp. 19; 43 e *passim*.

the need to mitigate the rigidity of law without desecrating it, and even contemporary scholars confirm such origin. Franco Todescan, for instance, referring to the classical research by Gustav Demelius<sup>40</sup>, states that «juridical fiction must have infiltrated “secular” Roman law (...) through *ius pontificium*. The former was natural continuation of the magical–sacred foundation of the latter: through it, in fact, human sacrifices could be gradually turned into “fictional” ones using less valuable objects». This was expression, for Todescan «of a symbolic primitivism, devised by putting wax or clay reproductions in place of “real” animals, because they were considered in the pontifical ritual as equivalent of the object they represented». This process, according to Demelius, shows the religious foundation of fiction. It is interesting to note, however, «that when certain principles scattered throughout the religious ritual became an organic system of simulations, there emerged a character of normative equalization, that marks the passage from “symbol” to juridical fiction in the strict sense. In this perspective are to be understood the famous expressions of the ancient Roman *ius sacrum*: “*in sacris simulata pro veris accipiuntur*” and “*quod dictum est quasi actum, videatur etiam actum*”, that indicate the origin of magical–symbolic representation as they could be preserved, in secular form, also in the *ius civile*»<sup>41</sup>.

Ernesto Bianchi elaborates on the topic, as he traces the origin of *fictio* back to the evolution of sacrifices in symbolic direction. The creation of a «principle of avoidance, real and not just formal»<sup>42</sup> takes place with a series of replacements carried out during most rituals in order to make them bloodless. Scrutinizing the sources that describe those substitutions and focusing on the criteria that regulate them, the scholar, who does not mention Vico, reaffirm the latter’s fundamental discovery.

As to *Procuratio*, for instance, Plutarch, Ovid and Arnobious<sup>43</sup> show that «the purgative ritual that had to be performed after a thunder stroke, with offers of onions, hair and sardines to Jupiter, traces its roots to a negotiation carried out between the God himself, who demanded that expiation had to be made through human sacrifices, and king Numa, who was looking for alternatives». Eventually, Jupiter accepted *capilli* (hair) and *cepa* (onion) for *capita* (heads), κεφαλάι (sardines) for κεφαλάι (heads)<sup>44</sup>.

40. G. Demelius, *Die Rechtsfiktion in ihrer geschichtlichen und dogmatischen Bedeutung*, Weimar, 1858, ptc. § 4. This work is still hailed as a fundamental contribution on the issue of *fictio iuris* by contemporary scholarship, although with some corrections and updates.

41. F. Todescan, *Diritto e realtà*, cit., p. 21 n. (with reference to Kaser, *Das altromische Ius. Studien zur Rechtsvorstellung und Rechtsgeschichte der Römer*, Göttingen 1949, pp. 347 ss.).

42. E. Bianchi, *Fictio iuris*, cit., p. 40.

43. Plutarch, *Numa*, 15; Ovid, *Fasti* 3, 339–44; Arnobious, *Adversus Nationes*, 5, 1

44. E. Bianchi, *Fictio iuris*, cit., pp. 46–47. In the like manner, during *Saturnalia* (which were celebrated between December 17<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>), «a replacement function for human sacrifices is

The paradigm at the core of these replacements, that might be worthy of inclusion Lacan's writings, is clearly of rhetorical nature; in fact, in these cases, as with many other that Bianchi relates, we are dealing with analogical principles, phonetic associations, external resemblance, ambiguity, contiguity, etc.<sup>45</sup>. In order to contain violence without breaking a law that is violent, humans replace, move, play with sounds, find resemblance. Like metaphors and figurative meaning, narrations, brief and simple stories, too, are born out of fear and of the attempt to overcome it. Nonetheless, they respect the law<sup>46</sup>.

*Fictio iuris*, writes Todescan, «is introduced and afterwards used with vigilant awareness by the main bodies of Roman administration: legislator, magistrate, jurists. It belongs in the main fabric of the juridical experience in Rome; it is born and carried out in the multiple forms imposed by historical and social needs». And if these boundless forces of juridical creation demand deep transformations in content, the necessary guarantee of incontestability demands respect of external forms. «In this contradiction is perhaps to be found the original source of the use of *fictio*, which will prove to be a flexible tool in the development of Roman law. By means of *fictio*, the action of jurists and magistrates, in regulating the interests of *cives*, implements, against some problematic points in the ancient *ius civile*, the protection of the new relationships». «The legislator, jurisprudence and the magistrate, thanks to the intelligent use of several technical devices, — fictions in the first place — help law in its development, making it fit to meet changing needs».

recognized to human figures thrown in the Tiber and to burnt candles. (...) According to Varro's version, as told by Macrobius, the Pelasgians, once arrived in Latium, thought they had to obey Apollo's verdict that asked them to sacrifice to Ditis human heads and men to Saturnus: (...). This tradition identifies Hercules as the figure who made possible to change the ritual and make it bloodless; the stratagem suggested by the demi-god was based on the ambiguity in Greek, and even more in Doric, of the word φῶτα which, beside meaning "man", can also indicate "lights". Further, during the ritual of *Fabariae*, celebrated during the calends of June, broad beans, spelt, and lard were offered to Carna, goddess of hell, with the purpose of «keeping off the mythical *striges* birds, avid, according to tradition, of children's blood»: here the replacement, «is chosen in the light of some element of physical resemblance (it is the case of the broad beans, with their shape that reminds of a human foetus. To placate the infernal beasts, instead, Proca's wet nurse asks help to Cranais, who suggest offering the raw interioris of a sow (Hovid, *Fasti* 6 143 ss), a replacement based on the fact that the Latin name of the animal (*porca*) is the anagram of the girl's». E. Bianchi, *Fictio iuris*, cit., pp. 47–50.

45. But before bothering with Lacan, we might recall Aristotle, both *Rhetoric* and *De memoria et reminiscentia* 452a 16–25, where the philosopher shows how memory proceeds «starting from something similar or opposite or strictly connected». This passage has been singled out as the first formulating of the association principle about resemblance, diversity, contiguity. In particular the association by contiguity and resemblance is at work in that analogic-projecting principle that is at the basis of the main rhetorical figures such as metaphor or metonymy.

46. F. Todescan, *Diritto e realtà*, cit., pp. 21–22.

Vico's accomplishment is to have understood that this «technical device» discovered by ancient law is fundamentally imitation of nature, poietic activity, *inventio*. That *fictiones* are born, like imaginative universals, out of sensorial experience, and out of the metaphors («trasporti») in sensorial perceptions; that characters and scenarios present in Roman law are consubstantial to characters and scenarios of poetry. And that therefore the ancient civil *Gius*, through which «truth invades the certain and sure expression of the law», «is a symbolic configuration of the natural *gius*», and «ancient jurisprudence is almost like a poem», as we already read in *De uno*<sup>47</sup>.

In the clash between word and existence, the latter undergoes a complete restructuring. Before the appearance of the lesbian rule, flexible and adaptable, and the iron one is still in full force, it is *factio iuris* that gives flexibility to the real world, extends its boundaries by introducing new ontological configurations; in this hybrid space, kingdom of verisimilitude, natural equity appears<sup>48</sup>. «Thus in all legal fictions that ground all positive law», writes Vico, «there is to be found a truth dictated by reason»<sup>49</sup>. Truth gushes forth, paradoxically, from fiction. From a “possible world”, whose existence is *factum*, it «depends», that is to say, from the «activity» of its creators<sup>50</sup>. Personifications, temporal constructions, imaginary events, i.e.

47. OO, § I CLXXXII; *On the One*, p. 187: «In the introduction to his *Institutes*, Justinian called all these fictions of the ancient civil law “fables of ancient law.” Lawyers protected the certainty of the civil law by means of them, and by means of these same fictions and fables the truth of the natural law emerged. Thus what is said about a particular case of adoption, an imitation of nature, can be said about the ancient civil law in general: that original Roman jurisprudence could quite acutely be called a kind of *poem*. From this poem came the natural law of the gentes and later the natural law of the philosophers. Both developed from a perpetual fable told with innumerable and various characters, yet told with the grace and propriety of Roman law and with the gravity and dignity of the laws and with their constancy and integrity». *De uno*, cit., p. 150: «*Jus Civile antiquum Juris Naturalis Fabula — Per certum erumpit verum — Jus civile antiquum imitatur naturam. Prisca Jurisprudencia Poëma quoddam. Sed per has omnes Juris Civilis antiqui fictiones, quas ex latiori genere, cum Justiniano in Institutionum Proemio JURIS ANTIQUI FABULAS dixeris, et per quas Jurisprudentes Juris Civilis certum curabant, per eas ipsas fictiones et fabulas, Juris naturalis verum erumpebat. Quare quod in specie dicitur de adoptione eam imitari naturam, id ex genere universo de omni Jure Civili antiquo dicere quis potest, et quam acute tam vere conficere priscam Romanorum Jurisprudentiam, POEMA quoddam fuisse, quod primum juris naturalis gentium, deinde iuris naturalis philosophorum, perpetuam fabulam sub innumeris et variis personis egit, cum Romani Juris decoro, sive ipsarum legum gravitate et constantia*». See F. Todescan, *Diritto e realtà*, cit., p. 15 n., where the use of *factio* in juridic practice is attested since the Sumerians, in the second millennium BC, concerning the recourse to adoption with the purpose of circumventing the inalienability of feudal goods.

48. On the «“classical” conception» (which is already present in roman) of *factio iuris*, in which «the close link with the nature of the facts and equity was highlighted (“omnis factio est introducta ex quadam naturali aequitate”, Bartolus stated)», see F. Todescan, *Diritto e realtà*, cit., p. 4, with reference to Bartolus de Saxoferrato, *In primam Digesti Novi partem commentaria*, Ludguni, 1581, *ad l. Si is qui pro emptore, ff. De usucapionibus et usurpationibus* (D. 41.3.15) n. 2.

49. OO, § I LXXXII; *On the One*, p. 90. *De uno*, cit., p. 53: «*Quare vel omnibus fictionibus, quae omnes juris voluntarii sunt (...) subest aliquod verum ratione dictatum*».

50. We are pointing here to the complex question concerning the semantic of fiction and to the Brioschi's argument about «l-esistenza», or linguistic existence (idea taken from Andrea Bonomi, but differently articulated), that «is not proper “objective” existence, “created” by the text but at the

the «fables» populating ancient jurisprudence, thus, explore the real and make it knowable.

On these same principles, because they did not understand abstract forms, they imagined corporeal forms, and they imagined them, after their own nature, as animate. Hereditas or «inheritance» they imagined as mistress of hereditary property, and they recognized her as entire in every particular item of inherited goods, just as when they presented to the judge a lump or clod from a farm, they called it *hunc fundum* in the formula of *rei vindicatio*. Thus, if they did not understand, they at least sensed in a rough way that rights were indivisible. In conformity with such natures, ancient jurisprudence was throughout poetic. By its fictions what had happened was taken as not having happened, and what had not happened as having happened; those not yet born as already born; the living as dead; and the dead as still living in their estates pending acceptance. It introduced so many empty masks without subjects, *iura imaginaria*, rights invented by imagination. It rested its entire reputation on inventing such fables as might preserve the gravity of the laws and do justice to the facts. Thus all the fictions of ancient jurisprudence were truths under masks, and the formulae in which the laws were expressed, because of their strict measures of such and so many words admitting neither addition, subtraction, nor alteration were called *carmina* or «songs». (...) Thus all ancient Roman law was a serious poem, represented by the Romans in the forum, and ancient

same time chained to the text. It relies on our metalinguistic activity, which is an *activity*, performed by *us*. Although bound by language (...) I-existence can take on only a pragmatic character. And if the pragmatic character is constitutive, then the *suspension of belief* is completely legitimate » (F. Brioschi, *Semantica della finzione*, in Id., *Critica della ragion poetica e altri saggi di letteratura e filosofia*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2002, p. 216. On fiction and the question of illusion and substitute, with reference to Vico as well, see A.M. Iacono, *L'illusione e il sostituto. Riprodurre, imitare, rappresentare*, Milano, Bruno Mondadori, 2010; on fiction and semantics of possible worlds, see N. Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1978; K. Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe: on the Foundations of the Representational Arts*, Cambridge (Mass), Harvard University Press, 1990; A. Voltolini, *Finzioni. Il far finta e i suoi oggetti*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2010. On fiction and the semantics of possible worlds in a literature perspective, see M.-L. Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1991; A. Bonomi, *Lo spirito della narrazione*, Milano, Bompiani, 1994; M. Botto, *Personaggio e semantica narrativa*, in F. Fiorentino, L. Carcereri (a cura di), *Il personaggio romanzesco. Teoria e storia di una categoria letteraria*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1998, pp. 171-189; L. Doležel, *Heterocosmica. Fiction and Possible Worlds*, Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 1998; Th. Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, Cambridge (Mass)-London, Harvard University Press, 1986.

jurisprudence was a severe poetry<sup>51</sup>.

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51. NS44, §§ 1035–1037; G. Vico, *The New Science*, p. 350; G. Vico, *Scienza nuova*, cit., p. 318: «Per questi stessi Principj, perché non intendevano *forme astratte*, ne immaginarono forme corporee, e l'immaginarono, dalla loro natura, *animate*. E finsero l'*Eredità signora delle robe ereditarie*; ed in ogni particolare cosa ereditaria la ravvisavano *tutta intiera*; appunto come una *gleba*, o *zolla* di podere, che presentavano al Giudice, con la *formola della Revindicazione* essi dicevano HUNC FUNDUM: e così, se non intesero, sentirono rozzamente almeno, ch' i *diritti* fossero *indivisibili*. In conformità di tali nature l'*Antica Giurisprudenza* tutta fu *Poetica*; la quale fingeva i *fatti non fatti*, i *non fatti fatti*, *nati gli non nati ancora*, *morti i viventi*, *i morti vivere nelle loro giacenti eredità*: introdusse tante *maschere vane senza subbietti*, che si dissero *jura imaginaria*, ragioni favoleggiate da fantasia: e riponeva tutta la sua *riputazione* in truovare sì fatte *favole*, ch' alle *leggi* serbassero la *gravità* ed ai *fatti* ministrassero la ragione: talché tutte le *finzioni* dell'*Antica Giurisprudenza* furono *verità mascherate*; e le *formole* con le quali *parlavan le leggi*, per le loro *circoscritte misure di tante e tali parole* — né più, né meno, né altre, — si dissero *carmina* (...). Talchè tutto il *Diritto Romano Antico*, fu un *serioso Poema*, che si rappresentava da' Romani nel *Foro*, e l'*Antica Giurisprudenza* fu una *severa poesia*».



## Vico and the science of Giants

Implications for the analysis of Brazilian culture

SERTÓRIO DE AMORIM, SILVA NETO

**ABSTRACT:** This essay aims to connect two different traditions of the Western thought from different periods and different geographic areas: the thought of Vico and the Brazilian thought of Buarque and Flusser. Vico's theme which returns to these authors is the investigation of a human nature moulded by the imperatives of the forest, that is, a man moulded by the interaction with a dense and unforgiving natural cosmos. In both cases, the aim is that of supporting theories concerning the nature of nations, with the difference, in the case of Vico, that the *humanitas* moulded in the forest is that of the founders of the gentle nations, while according to Buarque and Flusser that is the nature of Brazil's colonizers, the Portuguese, who left the soil of distinguished European institutions to venture into the tropical rainforest. The objective is that of investigating the concept of barbarian nature in Vico and deducing, then, a theory of the Brazilian's nature.

Dealing with the fortune of Vico's reflection in the third millennium and from the point of view of Brazilian culture, which is certainly not cosmopolitan beyond being almost different from that of our Author, requires we indicate, as a preface, in what standard the philosophical constructions of Vico, produced in a classical country, can be fruitful inside a Brazilian thought or *concerning* the Brazilian, therefore, with regard to a Country which was officially discovered in the 16th century and only became independent in the 19th century; despite all this, now owner of the seventh largest economy in the world. I do not want to underline this last aspect with pride as my intention is another: it is that of highlighting the contradictions of this culture: the precarious coexistence between the economic wealth on one side, and the immaturity of the country and the institutions on the other. In Brazil the inappropriate habit of wealth being managed by «immature people» has been settled. Francis Bacon, in *The Essays or Counsels Civil and Moral* (1623), rejects the monastic disgust for riches and points out that «it is more convenient learning to make a solid use of them»<sup>1</sup>. A little bit more ahead, in the essay 42 «Of Youth and Age», he highlights a

1. F. Bacon, *Ensaio sobre moral e política*. Tradução brasileira de Edson Bini, Bauru, EDIPRO, 2001, p. 119.

series of characteristics of youth which are incompatible with the solid (and cautious) use of riches. «Young men», he writes, «are fitter to invent than to judge; fitter for execution than for counsel [. . .]. Young man [. . .] fly to the end, without consideration of the means and degrees»<sup>2</sup>. As Bacon scrupulously perceives, it would have been missed in this phase of life (of persons or people) an acting we now say is rational, since it was evaluated or focused considering its purposes, means and minor effects, which defines the normal behavior of modern man (Weber). Young men are not good users of riches because they do not evaluate or rationalize their behavior, in other words because they do not act in accordance with that human property which is said by Vico the «fully developed natural reason»<sup>3</sup>. This way, although it is the seventh largest economy of the world, Brazil is still one of the record holders of extreme poverty: approximately 16 million people live with up to 25 Euros per month, and this is only to make an example of the disparity.

## I.

I do not think that there is a philosopher of the European modernity who can be metabolized by the Brazilian thought and concerning the Brazilian better than Vico, and this because nobody better than him, from the most eminent place of civilization — the European learned 18th century, meditated on the tender age of time and on the immaturity of Nations. The reference to the prelude of the *humanitas* occupies a central place in Vico's themes. In his masterpiece, the *New Science*, he gets down to examine, as it is explained in the subtitle, *Concerning the Common Nature of Nations*, «whose nature [typical of men] has this principal property: that of being social»<sup>4</sup>, and, soon after, in the section of the «axioms or corollaries», he clarifies the main implication of this purpose in which we are here interested in close up. According to what is established in axiom 14, «The nature of things is nothing but their coming to being at certain times and in certain fashions. Whenever the time and fashion is thus and so, such and not otherwise are the things that come into being»<sup>5</sup>, this principle deserves to be increased by the second part's conclusion, where we can read that «the origins of humanity [. . .] must nevertheless by the nature of things have been small,

2. *Ibid.*, p. 143–144.

3. G. Vico, *G. Principi di scienza nuova*, edited by F. Nicolini, Milan, Riccardo Ricciardi, 1992, § 394.

4. *Ibid.*, § 2.

5. *Ibid.*, § 147.

crude and quite obscure»<sup>6</sup>.

In this formulation, Vico wanted to express the central thesis of the *Liber Metaphysicus*, of 1710, on the basis of which science is knowledge of the «kind or way [or fashion] in which things are done»<sup>7</sup>, but, anyway, he presented a new feature for this synthetic and composited construct of knowledge, adapting it to the new object of science: the *world of nations*, a universe of things essentially different from that studied in the book of 1710 and that inspired the thesis above: the *world of abstract notions and pure forms* (the mathematics). It would have been operating in the *New Science* the gnoseologic aphorism of the convertibility of *verum* and *factum* with significant adaptations. The investigated *verum* (the object of science) changes and, together with this, the connotation of the *factum* changes, too. The strictly abstract (pure) and not historical mathematical *making* realizes itself in an orderly way, from the simple to the complex, and this way it is *mode* or *procedure*, in other words it is *method* (as Descartes well saw); as opposed to this, it is not possible to reduce the *making* of nations to the mathematical *factum*, it is historical and interactive, it gets movement and assimilates modifications throughout the centuries because it is always open to the environmental factor interference and to the *occasions* it needs as a trampoline, better remembering a living organism which is born and grows. The knowledge of the kind or the way things are done, the *verum*, had acquired a greater complexity and, starting from the *New Science*, it became knowledge of the «particular ways in which they [things] come into being» in certain «times» and «places», «that is to say, their *nature*»<sup>8</sup>. In the case of the world of nations, characterized by the materialization and dynamism of habits and institutions, the learning of *modes* or *fashions* passes through an exercise of *contextualization* or detection, in certain *places* and *times*, of the situations which had offered occasions to the historical *factum*. There it is, one of the problems in defending a simple and linear continuity of the *verum–factum* principle in the formation of Vico's *New Science*: it became necessary for us to understand that a world of inert objects (the mathematics) gives way to an organic reality, demanding an updated perception of *factum* and *verum* got on loan by Vico from the ancient *naturalism* from Aristotelian background. Strengthening this interpretation, Enrico Nuzzo saw in the «ancient naturalistic–organic unconscious», the rising of the structure that allowed Vico to give the shape of science to the history of nations; in other words, the depiction of nature as birth and

6. *Ibid.*, § 123.

7. *Id.*, *Sull'antichissima sapienza degli Italici*. Introduction by F. Lomonaco, Naples, ScriptaWeb, 2011, p. 27.

8. *Id.*, *Principi di scienza nuova*, § 346.

successive steps of development, or as a process of «explaining itself and changing itself», as Nuzzo wrote, Nuzzo, offered the Author of the *New Science* «the explanation paradigm of a very large set of historical phenomena in the wake of an essential criterion»<sup>9</sup>.

Nuzzo shows some consequences from this Vichian «naturalistic unconscious»; in particular, one among them is fully remarkable for this study: we are referring to the possibility of thinking about the world of nations from the point of view of the «latency of being»<sup>10</sup>, of the presence, at the very time in which nations are born, of the «*semi eternal* [...] buried but not disappeared», supposing, with the genetic and logic precedence to the transition that follows from childhood to old age, the «connection between power–act, latency and development and fullness of shape»<sup>11</sup>. In this sense, Vico's *New Science* would objectify the explanation of the «spreading out» of nations, the disclosure of their latent potentialities along the time. A process which, in the case of nations, is not spontaneous and does not occur automatically, but depends on a set of interactions for each step, on the collision of individuals and social groups with certain *occasions* that force the surfacing in them of the latent and buried being; and it is in this sense that — coming back to our theme after a long digression — we can say that the *New Science* has a preeminent proclivity for the *immaturity* of nations. Vico would stand out from the modern authors because he comprehends the enlightened and subtle political institutions of his time starting from his *vir–a–ser*, as *latency of being*. Hence studying the world of nations in the condition of potential reality in the complex process of turning itself present existence, or still as being in a process of growth, and so in its *immaturity*. If, according to what Vico states, «the order of ideas must follow the order of things»<sup>12</sup>, so, being about the world of nations, ideas have to proceed according to the organic dynamism or the concatenation of the phases of nations in its surfacing and development, therefore considering that «first the forests, after that the huts thence the villages, next the cities and finally the academies», and that «the nature of people is first crude, then severe, then benign, then delicate, finally dissolute»<sup>13</sup>. From here comes the unique style of the *New Science* and the difficulties for positioning it in the tradition of modern political thought, because this is a book that mainly rests on the study of pre–political facts — family status, first barbarian religions, marriages and entombments, parental authority, etc. — and, for instance, focused on the classical discussion of the

9. E. Nuzzo, *L'immaginario naturalistico. Criteri e figure della Scienza della Storia in Vico*, in «Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiani», XXXIV (2004), pp. 39–40.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

12. G. Vico, *G. Principi di scienza nuova*, § 238.

13. *Ibid.*, § 239, § 242.

forms of government and its succession in some occasions only.

## 2.

The *modes*, *times* and *places* of birth of nations were those of barbarism and not the civilized, subtle and learned evoked by Plato in the myth of Atlantis, and by Bacon in his *De Sapientia Veterum*. Nations begin its «spreading out» in the small and brutal *times* of the «lost races of the three sons of Noah»<sup>14</sup>, and in the middle of the inhospitable *place* of the postdiluvian obscure and rain forest. According to a free interpretation of the sacred history, in the *New Science* Vico explains that the three sons of Noah (Ham, Japheth and Shem), rising up against their father and rejecting his religion, degenerated their being into a wild condition, so they lost their proper stature and human features in which «God had created Adam, and Noah had begotten his three sons»<sup>15</sup>. On the basis of this degeneration of the «human», it points out, on one side, the degeneration of their habits or their entrance into a condition of immorality, since they had lost sight of their fear of God and of their fathers, which dampens the less elevated passions, and they had dissolved the marriages with «promiscuous intercourse», with shameless carnal unions which are unrelated to the family status and, this way, without generating legitimate sons and without the prohibition of incest. On the other side, it comes into play a sort of immigration, of a change of places or dwellings, that is, they leave the comfort of their father's house to venture into the inhospitable forest; their place is not among men any more, but together with wild beasts. Due to their new living place or location, Noah's sons naturally regressed to a nomadic condition, and «began roving wild through the great forest of the Earth [. . .] By fleeing from the wild beasts [. . .] and by pursuing women who in that state, must have been wild, indocile and shy, they became separated from each other in their search for food and water»<sup>16</sup>. This erratic condition added to the dissolution of families (and legitimate sons) would consolidate the nefarious habit, called by Vico «bestial education», directly responsible for a (corporal) physical radical transformation which defined this uncivilized *humanitas*. As Vico says: «Mothers, like beasts, must merely have nursed their babies [. . .] and abandoned for good as soon as they were weaned. And these children, who had to wallow in their own filth, whose nitrous salts richly fertilized the fields, and who had to exert themselves to penetrate the great

14. *Ibid.*, § 301.

15. *Ibid.*, § 371.

16. *Ibid.*

forest, grown extremely dense from the Flood [. . . ] They must therefore have grown robust, vigorous, excessively big in brawn and bone, to the point of becoming giants»<sup>17</sup>. The man who originates from this process is a *hybrid*, a mix of species: he is the authentic picture of the rough nature, the vegetative life and the behavior of irrational mammals, even if he is next of kin to Adam and immediate descendents from Noah. The barbarian of Vico is the result of the «education» of some irrational mammals (if we can call it education), or of the bestial habit of abandoning their children to their own devices immediately after the weaning; indeed, the barbarian's excessive height results from the identical process of fertilization of the fields — in the same way that nitrous salts inside the filth penetrates the ground, giving force and volume to the growth of the trees, this very nitrous salts, penetrating the filthy skin of those uncared children, would stimulate the extension of their bones and muscles.

This man/nature hybrid being, in relation to whom the *humanitas* we know only could exist as latency, is, to Vico, the first author of the nations, and its gigantism is surprisingly one of the great motives for this. In this way, what is negative discloses itself as positive, since that physical effect, the body reflex of the degeneration of human in beast was, as a last resort, what allowed those «fierce and violent men» to meet again civilization, law and justice. The theme of Giants in Vico has been widely treated from the biblical point of view and there is no doubt about the productiveness of this kind of interpretation, although it is always imperative to consider the freedom (little orthodoxy) Vico uses to appropriate the sacred history, and to avoid of reducing the theme to this kind of interpretation. Another analytical aspect of the theme of Giants and that, to tell the truth, less or nothing depends on that interpretation of biblical inspiration, is that of the Vichian statement of the barbaric, primitive «metaphysics of human mind», or of the «poetical logic» inside whose sphere, as it seems, we find again the object of the *New Science*, the world of nations or the sociable human nature. In fact, the idea of Giants runs into roots in the sacred history, but also has an echo in another important tradition of the occidental thought — hardly ever recalled by the Vichian critics: that of *translatio studii*, which during Middle Ages and Renaissance resorted to the image of the classical antiquity authors (Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, Cicero, etc.) as giants, in whose shoulders it was possible to see up ahead. In such Giants, there is a paradigm of wisdom and this is definitively a proper meaning for a Vichian giant, since the gigantism of his body is also an evidence of the paradigmatic nature of his knowledge: that of the «theological poets» and of the «heroic poets». This exemplariness is confirmed in Vico's agreement to Horace's *Ars Poetica*,

17. *Ibid.*, § 369.

who observes the «desperate difficulty of creating fresh characters or persons of tragedy after Homer», on account of which he advises poets «to take their characters from Homer's poems»<sup>18</sup>: in other words, that they simply lean themselves on Homer the giant's shoulders. Apart from the figurative sense, Vichian Giant refers us to the proper sense of a typical knowledge of a being who is, in his constitution, body in abundance. Between the lines of this Vico's reasoning works as an inverse relationship law, as expressed into axiom thirty-four: «imagination is more robust in proportion as reasoning power is weak»<sup>19</sup>, and so the larger the body is, the smaller the faculty of abstracting will be, in the way that his Giant is like this in a dual sense or as a paradigm, the «giant» of knowledge because of his huge body, of a so much and plentiful substance that suppresses any abstraction of thought. They were not as rational as today, kept busy by planning, precision and truth. Instead of this, they would have maintained a rough and unclear mentality, as they were, completely taught by *body* or blocked by *senses*, and in the implications of *passion* and guided by the faculties of *imagination* and *memory*: «the first wisdom of the gentile world must have begun with a metaphysic not rational and abstract like that of learned men now, but felt and imagined as that of these first men must have been, who, without power of ratiocination, were all robust sense and vigorous imagination»<sup>20</sup>. Vico's giant only acts using the *faculties of the soul*, which commonly had been given to the body, like senses and imagination, and had been rejected by the rationalism as a source of mistakes and a secure path for science. These two models of knowledge are essentially distinct, «so that the former may be said to have been the sense and the latter the intellect of the human race», but they are not hermetic and independent, on the contrary, one is prerequisite to the other, that is the intellect is a *latency* (a power) of the senses, as Vico says when he paraphrases and gives a new meaning to the Aristotelian conception according to «*Nihil est in intellectu quid prius fuerit in sensu*, that is, the human mind does not understand anything of which it has had no previous impression [...] from the senses»<sup>21</sup>, and shows, in historical terms, the truth of Empiricism.

Vico understands that nations were made by these giants, «all robust sense and vast imagination»<sup>22</sup>, at the time they acknowledged to have been perturbed by some climatic phenomenon in their wild environment: «For at the end of this period of time after the flood, heaven must have thundered

18. *Ibid.*, § 806.

19. *Ibid.*, § 185.

20. *Ibid.*, § 375.

21. *Ibid.*, § 363.

22. *Ibid.*, § 6.

and lightened»<sup>23</sup>. Tormented by the roaring sky and inquiring the effects whose causes they ignored, those giants took the first and temporary step towards *humanitas* we know today, they created the «divine ideas»<sup>24</sup> or «the first divine fable [...] Jove, king and father of men and Gods»<sup>25</sup>, and «imposed form and measure on the bestial passions of these lost men and thus transformed them into human passions»<sup>26</sup>. The thundering sky, a physical and climatic phenomenon of the postdiluvian forest, attracted the look and the attention of the giants *upwards*, giving them the opportunity to surface certain features of their sociability which were essential to the «spreading out» of nations. The interaction between that physical opportunity and the hugeness of the bodies, and all that this implies from the point of view of knowledge, would have given life to the divine fables or the first religions of the world, with the inclusion of that *hybrid* in a sphere of modesty and compassion, being now the scale inclined to take Noah's humanity part, with the interruption of nomadism and the introduction of *culture* (of the fields), and with the restoration of matrimony and of the *legal institute* of the family, the parental authority, the legitimate sons and the successions. The importance of the family as a social and legal subject in the *making* of the nations, I think that today it is perceived in the discussion about homo-affective family. Although this question is not actually a Vichian one, it is a strong evidence of the truth of his science of nations, since it shows the Republic and the Rule of Law as developments which had their origin and foundation in the institution of the family, whose creation, says Vico, is possibly the most primordial because it goes back to the barbaric giants of Noah's progeny.

It is truth that, among the little references of the *New Science* to America, one of them — perhaps the essential one, is about travellers' reports concerning the existence of such *giants* in the new continent, in the Strait of Magellan, «the so-called Patagones»<sup>27</sup>. The reference to such reports is considerable not only as an empirical evidence of the existence of that race of «fierce and violent men», which Vico investigates first of all through the meandering paths of the sacred history, but thanks to the evaluation he expresses about the inhabitants of pre-Columbian America, that is, since he situates them in the times and places of the birth of nations, allowing them admission to history, to organic life of nations. This is ensured by the comparison of § 369 where we read that the «gigantic stature of the

23. *Ibid.*, § 9.

24. *Ibid.*, § 345.

25. *Ibid.*, § 379.

26. *Ibid.*, § 340.

27. *Ibid.*, § 170.



ancient Germans [...] which was like that of the Patagonians supposed to exist today» or in § 338 where they are made equal to the «cyclopes of Homer». In both cases, Vico creates the interesting equivalence between the ancient European giants, who founded the European nations, and the American native population of the 18th century. With incomparable lucidity and critical sensibility, this modern author put America on the same equality level of the European initial stages, allowing the discovery of unequalled affinities among the features of the profound differences of these people.

Vico will also identify there, in their own quality of giants, the evidence of the beginning process of the «spreading out» of the nations and the religions, usually a fact not understood by the first European travelers, who, there ran into barbarian habits like cannibalism, thought that natives were men with no faith, decency and religion. Vico exposes the misunderstanding. According to the sociable nature of man — commonly known and beyond the European one — also «the American Indians make a god of everything that exceeds their limited understanding»<sup>28</sup>, and in this sense «Let not our first principle be accused of falsehood by the modern travellers who narrate that the peoples of Brazil [...] live in a society without any knowledge of God»<sup>29</sup>. Vico will say the same thing about families. Talking about the first people's use of hieroglyphics and its practice on the identification of families (and houses), he recalls the example of the masks, «by which families were found to be distinguished among the American Indians»<sup>30</sup>.

The reflection concerning America in the *New Science* has not got more divisions: it stops there. Vico ends his theme with an observation which seems a regret: «in the new world, the American Indians would now be following this course of human things if they had not been discovered by the Europeans»<sup>31</sup>. American and Brazilian people would naturally come to celebrate the popular Republics and the rational positive law, or according to the nations' course of life in their birth and development in the case they would not have been discovered by the Europeans, a hypothesis of interesting implications. Although short, the excerpt which has been mentioned is strong evidence of Vico's awareness about the American colonization, with the distortion of autochthonous people and the transfer of European culture, religion and institutions to the annexed lands. After discovery, American Indians were obliged to renounce their culture, primordial religion, rituals and barbarian habits, not rarely experiencing violence to decimate whole groups; or they were catechized by missionaries, as in the case of Jesuits

28. *Ibid.*, § 437.

29. *Ibid.*, § 334.

30. *Ibid.*, § 1033.

31. *Ibid.*, § 1095.

in Brazil, losing their natural place in the history of nations. Since then — this is what Vico seems to conclude, their history would confuse itself with that of the Europeans, the real founders of the American nations, as they introduced there, at all costs, their «all spread out» nature».

### 3.

One thing Vico did not foresee — and I'm now going to talk expressly about the Brazilian case — is the combination of obstacles and difficulties that the Europeans' mind, technique and very advanced weapons ran into in Brazilian soil, and how their interaction with such obstacles, or *occasions*, would have celebrated one more time the coherence and importance of his *Science*. From this point of the text on, I would like to treat less the exegesis of Vico's work than the free appropriation of his thought. I am here trying to protect myself below the top of the Brazilian avant-gardism of the 1920s, of Oswald and Mario de Andrade, who fought against the artistic, cultural and philosophical deficit of the Country not by a pure and simple import of foreign models, but by a cultural metabolizing or appropriation of the deconstructed, absorbed alien, defining this way a cultural identity of the Brazilian as a secular subject with anthropophagic habits, the Tupinabás. This way, the interpretation which follows is, using paraphrase, cannibal. Using two authors of the 20th century, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda and Vilém Flusser — none of them known to be Vichian, and without direct reference to our author — I am now going to discuss the fortune of the *New Science* in the analysis of some aspects of the process of Brazilian colonization, especially concerning the characterization of Brazil's founders.

A Vico theme which recurs in these two Brazilian authors is the investigation of a *human nature* moulded by the imperatives of *forest* — a topic that was fully discussed in the later editions of the *New Science* and metaphorically recalled in his other works, like in the *Life*, referring to his period of isolation in Vatolla, and to letter of 1725 to Gherardo Degli Angioli when he refers to Eboli — that is, of a man completely moulded by the interaction and mixture with a natural, dense, intact, rough and cruel cosmos. Still, in both cases, the objective was to maintain theories concerning the *nature of nations*, with the difference that, in the case of Vico, the *humanitas* moulded inside the forest is that of the founders of gentile nations, Noah's rebellious descendents «made free» from life in family, while according to Buarque and Flusser it is that of the Brazil colonizers, the Portuguese ones, who left the European cultured and illustrious institutions' soil to *venture* into the tropical rainforest. Although the conclusions in Vico reach the form of a *universal history*, while for Brazilian critics the reflection does not

extrapolate the case of Brazil, in both circumstances the founders of the *nations* were subjected to a transformed human nature, in behavioral and intellectual terms, due to the migration to a primitive environment and to the man/forest integration.

The nature of the arising Brazilian — the Portuguese colonizer — must be a far cry from that observed in the European universities and cities, from where he had left. This, because the Portuguese colonizers must have met a strange Brazilian nature, not suitable for their culture and thousand-year old techniques and, since nature did not bend itself to them, they were obliged, in order to colonize Brazil, to bend themselves to nature. Here is the distinctive feature of the Brazilian case. Contrary to the general conviction and, in some way, to what Vico pointed out, the «discovery», in the case of Brazil, did not save indigenous peoples from the natural course of nations, the «course of human things» and the primitiveness in which they were on; instead of this, overturning the convictions, the object of transformation became the colonizer, thus being obliged to put himself on the same level of the native development and to see his culture substituted by other. As Flusser says, the colonizers must have passed through radical transformations influenced by the natural phenomena of Brazilian land: «because of their deep loneliness, the difficult climate conditions and the cruel nature which surrounds them»<sup>32</sup>. To better specify, they are «people who lost their links with Europe in the centennial fight against the awful nature, mixed themselves during the fight against the indigenous peoples and, during this process, declined to a level a bit higher than the native situation, hence to a secondary primitiveness»<sup>33</sup>. It is interesting to note that the duress the colonizer experienced and that which moulded his being was not from the Brazilian native, but from a higher authority which also asserts itself on natives: *the awful nature*.

Sérgio Buarque, adopting the Max Weber's *ideal* type methodology, established pairs of human types, the *adventurer* and *worker*, and noticed that the superiority of the first in the Brazilian land was an important factor for the colonization of Brazil. The difference between one type and another, he says, is the same there is between people of hunters and pickers, and people of planters. Almost different in their acting, the pickers and hunters (the adventurers) only pay attention to the end or the triumph and neglect the means, that is, they do not perceive the fragments of reality or all what they have to consider in order to achieve the end; on the other hand, the planters (the workers) perceive the fragmented reality, from the point of view of the means, they calculate and measure all the possibilities of wasting and firstly

32. V. Flusser, *Fenomenologia do Brasileiro*, Rio de Janeiro, EDUERJ, 1998, p. 42

33. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

come to them the difficulties to be overcome and not the triumph to be reached. The lack of concern with the means — and of their organization to achieve the end, which we can call irresponsibility — this indolence, says Buarque, would help the colonizers «to face with bravery the asperities or resistance of nature»<sup>34</sup>. Many times we think of what would have happened to Brazil if it had been colonized by another Country like Holland or France, by men of the type of workers. Besides this, Sérgio Buarque is emphatic: they simply would withdraw from this venture, since they perceived the consequences of throwing themselves into a not so friendly environment as the Brazilian is.

It is interesting to see how, to Vico too, the migration of Noah's sons to a postdiluvian primitive environment represents, after all, an irresponsible and indolent attitude, without any evaluation of the consequences and difficulties which descend from this decision. Moral degeneration, primitive isolation, bestial education and loss of human stature with the gigantic growth of the body have the connotation of a punishment because of the encumbrance of dissolving the juridical institution of matrimony and, for this, it is to think that Noah's rebellious sons are «working types» as Buarque conceived, so they would evaluate the risks and avoid the forest at all costs. Their irresponsibility would cost them the hybrid form of a giant, that, in some way, is valid for Portuguese adventurers, too. To adapt themselves to the forest, Buarque notices, Portuguese learnt to eat what they had at their disposal, as the pickers. Lacking wheat bread, they learnt to use tapioca, *manioc's* flour, with skill. They got used to sleeping under nets, as native Indians, for instance, and they also borrowed from them the tools for hunting and fishing, the bark boats or the carved trunk boats and, what is the least interesting, «the way to cultivate soil, first of all setting fire to forest»<sup>35</sup>. The settlers must have lost the references they had come with to the Brazilian coast, a consequence their spirit of adventure had not expected. An example is the way they developed farming in the colony: from a technical point of view, says Buarque, «a thousand-year old regression in many aspects, compared to farming in Europe». The «hard and unexpected obstacles» of the «tropical environment» did not allow even the introduction of a plough in a large part of Brazilian farming, which had to continue with the obsolete use of the «hoe»<sup>36</sup>.

Flusser indicates this first Brazilian as *decadent European*; this definition is correct, since this individual of European descent mentally lives in the Neolithic and takes refuge in magic, he regresses and revives aspects of

34. S. Buarque, *Raízes do Brasil*, 26 ed. São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2009, p. 46.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

36. S. Buarque, *Raízes do Brasil*, p. 50.

an atavistic, autochthonous, little and rough Europe. Flusser will suggestively say that this man lives absorbed in rituals, starting from which he interacts with the inexorable strength of the myth, repeating this way, anachronistically, a form of cognition which is typical of Vico's giants. Contrary to a European (and Northerner), he is not experiencing the empire of self-interest and specious rationality, but «the Brazilian is a man of instinct and not of planning [...] he allows the subconscious, the emotional and the intuition to get a very large space»<sup>37</sup>. Instead of talking about his utilitarian mentality and attempting method and mistakes, we are talking about a man of «brilliant instinct» who is following «an internal voice, coming from unconscious, which fades out and dies when it turns to be conscious»<sup>38</sup>, so he is the subject of a mythic-poetic, sensitive and imaginative mentality, and he lives in the magical and religious universe of paganism.

Hence, he does not resemble the man who fell into savagery in Vichian terms, nor is he the picture of a humankind returning to forest because towns have been transformed into forests — actually, it is about a time and a place with no town, a migration to the early forest similar to that of Noah's sons. From this point of view, Brazil can be said to be a barbarian land, not in the sense of a country that has developed so much into degeneration, but because it is a nation in latency, *vir-a-ser*, a starting point to go down in history.

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37. V. Flusser, *Fenomenologia do Brasileiro*, p. 53.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 54.













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