

ON THE VICHIAN CONCEPTION OF LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

ON THE VICHIAN CONCEPTION OF LANGUAGE

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In this study my main end will be to look into the ground of possibility of constructive value of imagination and the poetic genesis of the first humankind in Vico, first through the principle of *verum-factum*, and second the concept of poetic wisdom (*sapienza poetica*) with respect to the notion of language in particular. The possibility of the originary nature of language will be discussed in a twofold inquiry by introducing the relevance of studying Vico today in the field of philosophy, and through an example regarding “*Chapulling*”.

Keywords: language, poetic wisdom, philosophy of history, history, the principle of *verum* and *factum*

ÖZ

GIAMBATTISTA VICO'YA GÖRE DİLİN DOĞASI ÜZERİNE

Demir, Fisun

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Felsefe Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil Turan

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Bu çalışmanın asıl amacı, ilkin *verum-factum* (bilme-yapma) ilkesi, ikinci olarak şiirsel bilme (*sapienza poetica*) kavramı üzerinden, özellikle dilin doğası dikkate alınarak Giambattista Vico'da hayal gücünün kurucu niteliğinin zeminini araştırmaktır. Dilin üretken doğası bugün Vico'nun düşüncelerini felsefe alanına taşıyan ve *Chapulling* örneğini dikkate alan iki yanlı bir sorgulamayla tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dil, şiirsel bilme, tarih felsefesi, tarih, *verum-factum* ilkesi

In memory of Mercan

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I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to my teachers and friends in the faculty for their worthwhile support during my graduate courses.

Last but not least, my parents who are the beacon of light on myself are the inspiration behind this study. Final love and thanks to Ece Berenis (a.k.a. Bero) who is, and will be always a joy beyond compare.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- NS* *New Science*, trans. T. G. Bergin and Max. H. Fisch from the third ed. (1744) New York: Cornell University Press, 1948.
- MA* *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, trans. J. Taylor. New Haven and London: Yale University, 2010.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Evermore pressing impact of philosophical studies on the future and now of world visions is not a fancy option but a mere exigency, *both theoretically and practically*. Not many theories apropos of human nature accomplished to embrace plurality and diversity of beings of the world within the scope of their focus—primarily in practice, and on the verge of the notion of freedom. Yet its importance presents itself as an unparalleled nature among today's political, cultural, and environmental agenda.¹

It must be pondered carefully upon how we (as human beings) think, speak—and hopefully, understand each other as accurate and as intended as possible, and above all, act accordingly in a society that consists of different members of faith, age, sex, color, etc.—especially when taken into consideration previous centuries' world wars and continuing ones as well. However simple may seem this end, I do not think that a fulfilling answer is given embracing every parties of our society. Yet, I am sure of that it is significant to weigh different facets of the idea of living together in this only world.

And yet, it is a plain fact that, even if most of the people are much fond of pursuing an individual life, one also has to live according to the measures that regards other beings—not only by keeping the notion of an individuals'

¹ It goes without saying that unless otherwise stated, all footnotes are of the author. But, I would like to use this opportunity to express that I will attempt to use these annotations to point out another layer, a subterranean flux as a ground for inspirational, multifaceted viewpoints, evocations and ramifications on the subject in regard to following leitmotifs: heroic-mortal, repetitive-cyclical, theoretical-practical as opposed to conventional reductionistic dualisms.

rights and liberty alive and intact in more than simple social and political levels, but also by including animals, plants, oceans et al.—by gathering animate and inanimate things of the world into a vivid constellation.² The conditions of possibility of our survival as diversely as possible merely depend on our apprehension of us as (human) beings in the first place, or else we would begin to devour not only each other, metaphorically and literally (in the light of the latest news that human DNA was found in meat in South Africa), but just as well the only nature that we can not be able to survive without. The bold question under consideration, here, is how one can *know* oneself and others as well, particularly when the foundations of being a human and being a part of society are nothing but the two sides of the same coin. Being a part of a thing and being apart from everything, no doubt force us to raise an elemental question for us—especially today.

What is striking for today is the pace of stretching of change in every field, i.e., everything is changing as if it has a *natural* incline to change. For our concern, the nature of human beings and its relation to language are the keywords of an understanding that may present a promising horizon for us. It is worth dwelling on the ground whether the nature of human beings is changing with their language, and vice versa? Does it make sense to search for the seeds of change that takes part in language? In this world we are fond of some ideas that should not be mere terms, and that their existence should not be limited only to some texts. It is not possible to have a stand against Hobbs' comment on human condition and command of language: "A healthy civilization requires a rhetoric that can address the whole

² An evocation against the dictum of Protagoras of Abdera: "Man is the measure of all things: of the things which are, that they are, and of things which are not, that they are not" (*Tht.* 152a). I think there has been a mistake of putting human beings in the center of the breaking point of every viewpoint. Human perception of the beings of the world implies a hubristic horizon that conveys the idea of human beings as active agents against an extensively pacificized, more or less instrumentalized nature with rather consequential intentions.

wellspring of human motivation and emotion, a body of eloquence capable of embracing the *sensus communis*.”³ Along with the emphasis on rhetoric, what we are interested in presenting here the nature of the link between language and human civilization. That is perhaps the reason why we would find the true civil nature of human beings by that which is created by humans in Vico. This landscape marks the path of Vico’s *New Science*. Then, let us stress in accordance with Vichian notion of society as true nature of human beings: “to live like men in justice and to keep themselves in society and thus to observe their social nature” which is “the true civil nature of man, and thus that law exists in [human] nature.”⁴

The twofold question with regard to the rationale behind my conviction to explore and reflect on Vico’s ideas, which I will keep in mind all along this study, i.e., the role of imagination on the nature of language is as follows: 1) the relevance of studying Vico’s thoughts today; 2) the possible extensions of this study into a perspective for the relation of language to societal topography in general. In the last two chapters these concerns will be dealt with. To reconsider Vichian way of thinking and ideas with respect to a genuine perspective with due respect to the eloquence and style of a rhetoric professor consort this study. I intend and attempt to read Vico by bringing his ideas closer to our period of time and events.

Here, my main end will be to look into the ground of possibility of constructive value of imagination, and the poetic genesis of the first humankind in Vico, first through the principle of *verum-factum*, and second the concept of poetic wisdom (*sapienza poetica*), with respect to the notion of language in particular—while keeping in mind above questions in a pre-reflective way—in line with Vico’s own maxim that “doctrines must take

³ Catherine Hobbs, 2002: 60.

⁴ *NS*: § 2.

their beginnings from that of the matters of which they treat.”⁵ Therefore, to evoke Vico’s conception of language could be valuable for us to shed a light in a twofold fashion. Since to speak about a theory of language, is to speak within the language itself, like to speak of a theory on human nature is to speak as a human being in the first place.

First and foremost, Vico’s life and works will be presented shortly including echoes and comments on the general elements of his philosophy in the next chapter. Then, the principle of *verum* and *factum* in Vichian thought that plays a distinctive role in providing a reliable perspective by emphasizing the true is made, i.e., the true nature of things can be known only by the maker of them, will be presented and argued to some extent in the third chapter.

The issue about how we could understand Vico’s three ages of history of nations and the cyclical nature of them will be dealt in the fourth chapter dwelling on the *New Science* to a great extent. Vico’s notion of cyclical progress is the basis of his conception of history. Vico regards the life of each nation as passing through a *corso* and a *ricorso*. The course of a nation’s history of all nations passes from an age of gods (in which all human dispositions reflect their nature in terms of gods), to an age of heroes (in which all human landscape is structured in terms of heroes), and to an age of humans (in which all thought becomes abstract, and rational; and societal forms spring from, and base on written law). As the third age progresses the vitality of nation starts losing its vigor, and civilization starts disintegrating and—from its remains it rises up again; and this pattern of three phases repeats itself. It is worth to emphasize that Vico regards the age of gods and the age of heroes occurred before Homer, and thus narrated as *rhapsodes*, myths, and fables. It seems that the age of humans is ended with

⁵ NS: § 314.

the fall of the classical culture, and now we are on our way of returning to the forest once again.⁶

Metaphorical nature of language and poetic wisdom of the Vichian ages will be elucidated by introducing “the idea of work” of the *New Science* apropos of the frontispiece of the book, since according to Vico the engraving represents the worlds (of divine, of nature and of humans) distinguishing the development of humankind and civilization, differentiating the world of nature from human’s.⁷ Indeed, it could be claimed that human beings are makers of the world of humans. And, thus, the true knowledge of human things offers us new connections with the principles not of physical nature but of history and language that stems from human nature. As a consequence, in the fifth chapter, it will be expressed that we can begin to see that the civil world itself is formed of language and it is language that reflects the nature of this civil world in the course of history with Vichian conception of language.

In the last chapter, heavily depending on the principle of *verum-factum*, the basic argument to focus on will be the extent of the claim that the nature of societal institutions, like culture, language and history is man-made and thus be mastered by human beings. We expect that to respond to the challenge of scrutinizing these institutions with this perspective i.e., the reciprocity of language and human landscape would be nothing but revelatory. The possibility to see the genesis of the history and social sciences according to this principle can give us, among other discernments, insightful ideas about the dominant role of human beings as subjects against a degraded, defectively instrumentalized nature (beings of the world). We will focus on the Vichian philosophy in this vista.

⁶ Donald Phillip Verene, 1997: 502.

⁷ *NS*: § 42.

A recent, discerning instance that reflects the creative, even precipitating nature of poetic wisdom with respect to symbolic appropriation (of a word, an image, and an act) will be given accordingly. Our example is for to stress that the power of imagination of the first humankind, in some respects, already exists in our age of history—which we will claim that which could be seen as one nation's. In other words, our argument, in accordance with Vico, accepts the idea that human nature assumes a change, a transformation in our age—or continue to change, to be more precise—presenting with a unifying nature of becoming, and adopting the distinctive features of one nation. Therefore, we will conclude that the cyclical notion of history is collapsing into a flow, which has the potentiality of building a uniform society that consists of technologically enhanced units of human beings.

As a conclusion, it will be presented that the possibility of arresting Vichian cycle of history with the claim that the creative power of imagination and the foundations of poetic wisdom as significant faculties of humankind may open up and sustain a place for a new kind of conception that could reveal itself in language. In other words, the main end that which stemmed from the relation of chimerical nature of language to societal forms, not only in the first two ages of Vichian history, but also in the third age of reason will be our claim, i.e., the power of language focused on itself, questioning to, and thinking of its reflective nature in order to glimps a ground for creative activity on the basis of unveiling its nature proper.

Therefore, the main axes of this study will be to support the idea that in order to appraise our survival as one nation of human beings, we should introduce the poetic wisdom into our civil landscapes. The nature of this reciprocity that reflects the foundations of language will be taken into consideration with regard to the sphere of, and in connection with liberty and plurality with respect to human institutions. Since, according to Vico's own account, his central doctrine of the *New Science* is based on a

distinction between ideas and language.⁸ These two central themes interlace with and depend on one another through out his study.

Vico's thesis is determined by the recurrent cycle of history: "The nations mean to dissolve themselves, and their remnants flee for safety to the wilderness, whence, like the phoenix, they rise again. That which did all this was mind, for men did it with intelligence [...]"⁹ Only this interrelated exegesis could be a first step to shake the rigidity of status quo—both in extreme polarity of academies' intellectual abstraction and today's consumerist apprehension of the world. That is to say, to our mind, what amounts to philosophize should give birth to not only ideas but also practices.¹⁰

Lastly, Introduction is summed up with a citation from Terry Eagleton: "Cultural ideas change with the world they reflect upon. If they insist, as they do, on the need to see things in their historical context, then this must also apply to themselves. Even the most rarefied theories have a root in historical reality."¹¹ It thus seems that in the avenue of notions of postmodern, counter-modern, or even anti-modern, we need an opening move (theoretically and practically) of a broad vision of ourselves of which we carry from behind. Our understanding of what it means to live together,

⁸ NS: § 7.

⁹ NS: § 1108.

¹⁰ Within parenthesis, to illuminate the significance of the relation between the "deed" and the "word", best example would be Damien Hirst's artwork that bears the title *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Some Living* (1991). The title, in itself, is worthy of attention, and has a quality of mesmerizing tones. But—although not without some reservations with respect to the act *per se*—the impact would not be so massive if we would not have known that there was a real living being put to death for it.

¹¹ Terry Eagleton, 2004: 23.

to inhabit the world and to act upon one another will have to be altered imaginatively and radically. In fact, its relevance remains to drive a further sense of human subject and nation, which we see as a humanity of one nation in the world. My conception of language as builder of society, and of understanding the relation between subject and society has been established and flourished with the grand narration of Vico's history of humanity.

CHAPTER 2

VICO AND HIS WORKS: REVERBERATIONS IN PHILOSOPHY

Giambattista Vico, once seen as an obscure Neapolitan rhetoric professor, becomes an intense focus of diverse field of studies under the light that is being shed by the modern scholarship. For the sake of an introduction to Vico's style and impact of his thoughts, a summary of philosopher's life and works will be presented below.¹²

He was born in the old center of Naples, Italy in 1668 and died there in 1744. He spent most of his professional life as a professor of rhetoric at the University of Naples. He was the sixth of eight children in his poor family. As a son of a modest bookshop owner, after tutoring himself in his father's shop, he studied scholastic philosophy and jurisprudence; although never mastered another European language, wrote his books in Latin and later in Italian. On Vico's vast and rich background, it is worth to make a reference to Lucente: "Vico's background not only in the study of history but also in rhetoric, jurisprudence, and philosophy led him to present his ideas of historical development in a turgid, circumlocutory, and at times perversely obscure style."¹³ Even his professional advancement and training of law hardly make any contribution to his acclaimed fame, Vico paves through his path with his unique style.

¹² A full and detailed account of Vico's life and work in relation to the great minds of his time could be find in *Time and Idea* by A. Robert Caponigri, 1953: 11–35. For a full bibliography of Vico's works in English see: Molly Black Verene's *Bibliographies 1884-1994* (Ohio: Bowling Green, 1994) and 1994-2002 in *The Journal of the Institute for Vico Studies*, vol. 20, 2002.

¹³ Gregory Lucente, 1982: 183.

In 1699, Vico received a title of professor of rhetoric at the University of Naples until 1741. In 1709, his first major work on a humanistic education was published *On the Study Methods of Our Time*. Next work was on metaphysics called *On the Ancient Wisdom of the Italians Unearthed From the Origins of the Latin Language*. This work was planned as the first volume of a trilogy but ensuing plots were never completed.

In Venice, Vico's essays were published by a Venetian journal in 1725, which were refined in 1728 and 1731, and were included in his *Autobiography*. In 1725 his magnum opus was published: the *New Science*, on which he studied and continued to revise rest of his life. A second, and radically different edition was published in 1730. In 1744, posthumously, the third edition of the *New Science* was improved stylistically, and in 1928 republished with an editorial contribution of Fausto Nicolini. Vico had sent copies of his works to significant philosophers of his time in Europe with the hope of a rightful recognition, which was never brought in any impact in his lifetime.¹⁴

Berlin is one of the commentators, who acknowledge the genius of Vico by holding: "Vico's claim to originality will stand scrutiny from any point of vantage. His theories of the nature and development of the human mind, of culture, society and human history, are audacious and profound."¹⁵ But, at the same time, Berlin accepts with restraints that: "No doubt Vico exaggerated. Pioneers are apt to do this in moments of creative excitement, particularly when they are largely self-taught and live in self-constrained private world."¹⁶ Therefore, to begin with, we must be aware of Vico's

¹⁴ For a detailed analysis on Vico's impact in his time in relation to Neapolitan and European Enlightenment: cf. David Marshall, 2010: 263–277.

¹⁵ Sir Isaiah Berlin, 2000: 22.

¹⁶ Ibid, 120.

double-edged, fabulous originality and way of philosophizing. But it can be admitted as well to claim that Vico is a modern thinker, if not in his style, but in his attempt to span whole history of humanity in a whirling horizon. We wish to emphasize below with a rather long quotation from Hayden White the expanse of Vico's genius, which may bear a possibility for our understanding of plurality that is most needed for our political climate in particular.

Yet the claims of Vico's "modernity" are justified, if for no other reason than because of a pervading ambivalence in his thought on all the important questions underlying the quest for a science of man, culture, society, and history. Where others saw oppositions, he saw continuities; where others saw unambiguous evidences of either decline or progress, he saw evidences of both. Where others set civilization over against savagery to the advantage of one or the other, Vico refused to choose between them. Where others saw the necessity of an absolute opposition between religion and science, Vico insisted on the validity of both. Instead of being a champion of either the masses or the aristocracy in society, Vico found virtues in both. *Vico's genius and the source of his millennial appeal as a generative thinker must lie in the totality of his vision, its amplitude, his affirmation of both the negative and the positive sides of the dialectical process.*¹⁷

As we said before, Vico as a philosopher has not found a proper understanding and acceptance in his lifetime among the influential philosophers and thinkers of his age—both in his own country and in Europe. However from nineteenth century onwards his ideas begin to receive a great interest among a wider audience, as Haddock states that:

Vico has a peculiar position in the history of thought. Largely ignored in his own lifetime, a figure outside the mainstream of the European intellectual tradition, he has yet been seen by the various schools of thought as a startlingly original anticipator

¹⁷ Hayden V. White, 1976: 202, emphasis added.

of their own positions. Interpretations of Vico read like a compendium of European philosophy of the last three hundred years.¹⁸

Frequently found as complex, controversial, even contradictory accounts of Vico's history of human nature and society in a broad vista, the *New Science*, so elaborate in scope, now gives an affluent impetus and an enduring interest to diverse fields as philosophy, history, philology, aesthetics, education, political theory, psychology, sociology and anthropology.

It should be noted that we hope for the great minds of our modern age will assume Vico as an insightful forefather. Since for Vico, poets who spoke in poetic characters reflect the poetic nature of the first humankind. That could be the keynote of the problem of origins with a careful elaboration of the mythic mentality and the power of imagination. In that early age of humanity metaphor plays an important role in the formation of civil things like art, language, customs, institutions, societal forms and landscapes. In this sense, the creation of civilization could be seen as a process of myth making through which humans come to understand imaginative forms (on which the myths bestow), and to define their life through the reflections (upon which these myths are based). According to Vico, the history of the origins of civilization is a sacred history with which it is possible to glimpse upon the nature of human understanding of the beings of the world in their languages.¹⁹

Not only recent studies by Marcel Danesi, Joseph Mali, Gustavo Costa, Gianfrancesco Zanetti, and Donald Phillip Verene, but also international symposiums, seminars, conferences, and translations that reflect an arresting

¹⁸ B. A. Haddock, 1976: 535.

¹⁹ *NS*: § 161.

scrutiny are now manifesting, and will later prove, beyond doubt, the worldwide appealing of Vico's thoughts.²⁰

His [Vico's] style is notoriously ambiguous and convoluted; and if commentators experienced difficulty trying to unravel the main thread of his argument, this would not be anything to remark upon in a thinker who seems to lose himself almost willfully in his digressions. [...] We meet it in Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, indeed all the leading figures of our intellectual tradition; and far from considering this state of affairs deplorable, we are inclined to see in it an indication of the vitality of our criticism.²¹

From this perspective, it becomes easier to grasp that Vico's ideas are not studied on their own terms, but for suggestive implications that they may accommodate what Vico conveys by his Science—in numerous cases perceived in various themes. In fact, Verene ironically points out: “[...] Vico's ship has been sailed under many flags—absolute idealism, Catholicism, Marxism, historicism, particular conceptions of contemporary epistemology, and the methodologies of various contemporary schools of philosophy. Although Vico's thought can be found through such approaches, it is soon lost in the security of their shores.”²² But we expect that the epiphenomenal character of Vico's thoughts, with good reason, will lead to a multi-faceted understanding of people and society, history and mythology, philology and philosophy, and the like.

²⁰ Although not for an exhaustive end, it should be noted that Marcel Danesi presents a complementary perspective, and a comprehensive list, to begin with J. Joyce, N. Frye, M. McLuhan regarding Giambattista Vico and Anglo-American Science. See especially pp. 12–5. In addition: Giorgio Tagliacozzo “The Study of Vico Worldwide and the Future of Vico Studies” in the same volume pp. 171–188. For a general summary of viewpoints on Vico and Vichian philosophy, see also: Leon Pompa, 1990: 133–4.

²¹ B. A. Haddock, 1976: 537.

²² Donald Phillip Verene, 1981: 23.

What is more, as a result of a worldwide scholarly attention paid to Vico and his ideas, many fields of humanities and human sciences may find a chance to embrace beings of the world in its diversity. Similarly, Kelley claims Vico's works of having "a prophetic vision, a cosmic myth, a crazy quilt of curious erudition, or a paradigm of cultural science," and his "world of thought is an inspiring" and sometimes has an "intoxicating experience." Vico's "effort to recreate the life cycle of civilization in a dynamic encyclopaedia of interdisciplinary lore and super-disciplinary logic" is widely accepted as works of a genius.²³

Then, it may not be surprising to see that Vico's work was not always esteemed with a welcoming understanding, neither with a warm approval. For instance "the charge of one eighteenth-century Catholic critic, Finetti, that the *New Science* was so bizarre as to be the product of madness."²⁴ However, we wish to acknowledge his genius in line with Auerbach—especially when it is taken into consideration Vico's incomparable vision of the world history, despite the foundational lack of his originary sources:

The impulse to this theory of cognition was given to Vico undoubtedly by his own historical discoveries. He had no scientific knowledge of primitive civilizations, and a very incomplete and vague knowledge of the Middle Ages; he was supported only by his scholarship in classical philology and Roman law. It is almost a miracle that a man, at the beginning of the eighteenth century in Naples, with such material for his research, could create a vision of world history based on the discovery of the magic character of primitive civilization.²⁵

²³ D. R. Kelley, 1976: 601.

²⁴ B. A. Haddock, 1976: 486.

²⁵ Erich Auerbach, 1949: 113–4.

In his magnum opus, *Mimesis* Auerbach also mentions Vico on two occasions underlining his genius for his “vision of the course of history”²⁶

And with advancement of appraisal of Vichian scholarship, it is widely acknowledged—as part of a conventional wisdom of the history of ideas—that Vico is an isolated philosophical genius, a man out of his time, and that brings about modes of inquiry with which later works are to be deeply inspired. In a similar fashion, one of the proficient scholar, commentator and the translator of *The First New Science*, Leon Pompa accentuates the nature and interpretational power of Vichian work by comparing his to the great names’ in the history of thought:

[T]he *New Science* is one of those master texts of humanistic studies, belonging to the same category as Rousseau’s *Discourses*, Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, Marx’s *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts*, Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*, and Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*. Such works cannot be classified easily. They are neither exactly philosophy (although they deal with philosophical topics) nor quite literature (although their persuasive power depends as much on their rhetorical as on their logical force). They are about historical subjects, but they are not histories; they deal with problems that interest modern social science, but they are not scientific in method. What such master texts seem to be about, over and above their manifest subject matter, is interpretation itself. This secondary subject matter is what makes them similar to great literary classics: they not only can bear a host of alternative readings of their dialectical structures, they serve as repositories of interpretative strategies by which to make sense of texts in general, themselves included.²⁷

²⁶ Erich Auerbach, 1953: 433. And also, in the Introduction of the same volume, Edward W. Said after presenting outline of Vico’s thought draw our attention to Auerbach’s subtitle: “The representation of Reality” in regards with “the line between actual events and the modifications of one’s own reflective mind” by emphasizing “the role of thought in reconstructing the past can neither be excluded nor squared with what is “real”.” Edward W. Said, 2003: xii-xiii.

²⁷ Leon Pompa, 1976: 198–9.

Here, introductory remarks on Vico's erudition are summed up with a citation from Auerbach: "By this theory, Vico created the principle of historical understanding, entirely unknown to his contemporaries; the Romanticists knew and practiced this principle, but they never found such a powerful and suggestive epistemological base for it."²⁸

²⁸ Erich Auerbach, 1949: 117.

CHAPTER 3

THE PRINCIPLE OF *VERUM* AND *FACTUM*

Vico disclosed the principle of *verum* and *factum* in 1710 *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians* (*De antiquissima Italorum sapientia*) as a substratum on the account of his rethinking of human realm. The foundational principle of Vichian epistemology “*verum est ipsum factum*”, i.e., the true is identical with the made, implies a fundamental perspective in order to define a conclusive layer, to argue about and clarify the relation of divine truth to human nature. Because for Vico human mind is, first of all created, and thus bounded by that “which is not itself [...] So, the human mind can think about things, but it cannot understand them, and consequently, it participates in reason, but does not fully possess it.”²⁹ What is in question in the principle may be seen not so much of a notion of human freedom, but it clearly opens a human realm in knowledge of things, which bears a radical distinction with the divine truth—especially when the religious climate and imaginative rout of adjudging practices of Inquisition are taken into consideration in Vico’s day. The significance of this realm of freedom that is reserved for human beings by Vico is very much emphatic in its nature.

One of the principal characteristics of the principle of *verum* and *factum* is crucial to determine the relation between theory and practice as they bind the two in a single ground of knowing and making. Whether you think, know or make—or do them all at once in the same breath—it conveys a

²⁹ *MA*: 17.

simple path of responsibility with regard to the social and moral ground, not possible not to respond.³⁰

As Danesi outlines in his essay “Introduction to Giambattista Vico: The Anglo-American Perspective”, in this principle *coscienza* (consciousness or conscience) and *scienza* (knowledge or science) have dissimilar status in the realm of knowledge, since “[c]oscienza has for its object *il certo*, the certain”, whereas “*scienza* has *il vero*, the true.”³¹ What Vico brings into light with this principle is that the initial difference between how the world appears, and what concepts and categories we make out of them—in other words the principle amounts to the fact that truth can only be verified through creation—with the creator of the truth in the realm of either divine or human. What is distinctive, and only possible for the human realm is the salient resource of the scope of the latter, i.e., the ground that the civil domain is generated by humans.

In fact, Vico writes in order to pursue what he dwells on a foundation for the conception of true: “For the Latins, *verum* (the true) and *factum* (the made) are interchangeable or, as is commonly said in the Schools, they are convertible; and for them, *intelligere* (to understand) is the same as *perfecte legere* (to gather fully) and *aperte cognoscere* (to know plainly).”³² Then, the human world—all civil things—can be known and understood, and for

³⁰ To be aware of and to take the responsibility on moral ground press for exigency—especially presently—for humans, since the extent of this reliability plays an eminent role in the futural survival of the animals, plants, and stones, all of which once claimed as having no world. But, before that, the notion of responsibility with which one has to assume one’s deed, once was repudiated by Christ: “Father, [...] for they do not what they are doing” (Luke 23.34). Today, it is worth registering here once more that we, as human beings, are in no position not to mark precisely its imminent risk, i.e., not knowing that which we are doing.

³¹ Marcel Danesi, 1995: 9.

³² *MA*: 17.

the sake of our argument in terms of plurality and liberty, since we can know that which we make and we can make that which we know. Suitably, the reflective nature of language as an instrument of human making should be taken into consideration as a principle of Vico's conception of poetic wisdom. As holds by Hobbs: "Yet Vico's thought is wholly based on rhetoric as a system of arts, and it is through the making of arts that humans constitute themselves and becomes fully human."³³

However, Benedetto Croce questions legitimacy of the principle simply by stating that Vico is confusing *verum-factum* equation of *reciprocantur* to *conventuntur*: "It is perfectly clear to any one on a moment's thought that Vico, Latinist as he was, meant simply to substitute the Ciceronian "*reciprocari*" for the barbarous "*converti*" [...] A formula which he diverts to his own purposes, or rather unites it with his own."³⁴ And yet, in the Conclusion of the same volume, he confesses that Vichian understanding of this principle of *verum-factum* does not diminish the advent of consciousness and the capacity to reflect upon beings and objects.

Apart from Croce's contention, Berlin also argues about the novelty of the principle: "The view that knowledge *per causas* is superior to any other is an old idea, frequently found in scholastic philosophy."³⁵ But again, the idea that truth is what is made provides a foundation, albeit a controversial one, to Vico's thought since Berlin goes on to say:

According to Vico we begin with *certum*, acquaintance with and beliefs about particular matters of fact—a pre-condition of all thought and action—and are capable of attaining *verum*,

³³ Catherine Hobbs, 2002: 62.

³⁴ Benedetto Croce, 1913: 280–2.

³⁵ Sir Isaiah Berlin, 2000: 31.

knowledge of universal truths. He does not make clear whether a transition from one to the other can, even in principle, ever be achieved, or indeed how it is to be attempted.

Berlin further provides a sound ground for the *New Science* by holding: “*Verum* for Vico is a priori truth [...] By the “*verum est ipsum factum*” criterion of 1710 we can logically guarantee only what we ourselves make: this alone is *verum*; of that alone there can, in the strict sense, exist a *scienza*.³⁶

Not surprisingly, apart from concerns toward the legitimacy of equating truth with the made, there are also problems and difficulties in ascertaining the identity of knowing subject of Vico’s epistemology; e.g. Zagorin asserts that the crucial place of language in the course of history has nothing to do with justifying Vico’s belief; especially when the question raised: “who is the knowing subject in Vico’s application of the theory of maker’s knowledge to the domain of history.”³⁷ To this question, some reflections worth mentioning: On the one hand, Croce holds that “its knowing subject is mankind or the common mind of humanity.”³⁸ On the other, Berlin presents his viewpoint with a diametrically opposed ground by explaining it “as signifying a special way of knowing or form of knowledge proper only to men, which makes it possible for them to understand each other from the inside.”³⁹ Then, seemingly, it may be said that neither universal humanity nor particular human beings can assume this kind of role epistemologically.

³⁶ Ibid, 122–3.

³⁷ Perez Zagorin, 1984: 23–4.

³⁸ Benedetto Croce, 1913: 23.

³⁹ Sir Isaiah Berlin, 2000: 22–3.

At this point, below reference to Luft may present a comprising perspective regarding the extent to which this principle may be applied: “Knowledge was traditionally of *causas*, and, since Vico identified the nature of a thing with its genesis, and genesis with *poiesis*, he identified the object of “knowledge” convergent with the “true” as the “made”.⁴⁰ Even Luft’s viewpoint, in the core, was said to be “acquires a new meaning when *verum* is connected to the Hebrew *davar*, not the Greek *logos*”,⁴¹ such abundant implications of this principle may give rise to controversial comments, arguments, and debates worth studying from the beginning in its own right.⁴² These divergent appreciations of the principle are beyond our study’s scope and aim, but in line with Lucente, we can at least apply the extent of the principle to Vico’s notion of the “ideal eternal history”. Simply because:

[M]an is free, though not completely; independent, though not totally; knowledgeable, though not sufficiently. The apparent empirical randomness of “*il certo*” and the unified order of “*il vero*” come together to give the *Scienza nuova* [New Science] its twofold occupation, the assessment of humanity’s development which leads to a fuller understanding not only of man himself but also, by implication, of the effects of the one Will that is both empirical and ideal, worldly and transcendent.⁴³

In the *New Science*, Vico does not refer openly this principle, but extends his ideas through the principle in an exhaustive civil history. Verene is also

⁴⁰ Sandra Rudnick Luft, 2003: 115–6.

⁴¹ Gustavo Costa, 2004: 982–3.

⁴² Here, it would be useful to interpolate meaning of the term, because in Hebrew it is used to refer both to the word and act. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth [...] and God said, “let there be light”, and there was light [...]” (Genesis: 1) this passage describes God speaking the universe into being. *Davar* means both the “word” itself and its accompanying creative act.

⁴³ Gregory Lucente, 1982: 186.

aware of this subterranean flow of the principle. “He [Vico] refers to this principle only once in the *New Science* and then only indirectly and not by name (NS 349), although Vico’s notion of making—the human beings make history—runs through out the *New Science*.”⁴⁴ Above mentioned quotation from Book I Section IV of the *New Science* is ensuing: “[T]his world of nations has certainly been made by men, and its guise must therefore be found within the modifications of our own human mind. And history cannot be more certain than when he who creates the things also describes them.”⁴⁵

Although it is apparent that the distinction between what is true and what is certain plays a crucial role in determining the scope and boundary of the civil realm, Vico seems to leave a place for reasoning in Paragraphs 137–138 of Book I (Establishment of Principles) in the *New Science* by showing the path of contemplation for philosopher:

Men who do not know the truth of things try to reach certainty about them, so that, if they cannot satisfy their intellects by science, their wills at least may rest on conscience. Philosophy contemplates reason, whence comes knowledge of the true; philology observes the authority of human choice, whence comes consciousness of the certain.

Let us bear in mind that preceding passage may put forth different roles and meanings for philosophy and philology than traditional viewpoint, and may not be extending in the same direction with what we expect of them today. Had it not been so, they could not have the potential power of evocation that worth arguing. Because for Vico his Science is a unified whole, and its philosophic context is the only proper form to present a correspondence for the immediate coincidence of the ideal eternal history of every nation.

⁴⁴ Edited by Thora Ilin Bayer and Donald Philip Verene: 2009, 13.

⁴⁵ NS: § 349; also see: (§ 1107 ff).

Our Science therefore comes to describe at the same time an ideal eternal history traversed in time by the history of every nation in its rise, progress, maturity, decline and fall. Indeed we go so far as to assert that whoever meditates this Science tells himself this ideal eternal history only so far as he makes it by that proof “it had, has, and will have to be”.⁴⁶

And, apropos of the principle of *verum-factum*, which could not come into being apart from, and would necessarily perish with the lack of poetic wisdom of the first humankind, we wish to show that we are already using the power of poetic wisdom in different fields of our practical and theoretical arenas, e.g., from cultural studies and philosophy to visual arts and literature. In line with the idea that Vico and his art of rhetoric and imagination put forward a narrative of history, without which it would not be possible to have them a long (after) life. As Vico reflects:

But in the night of thick darkness enveloping the earliest antiquity, so remote from ourselves, there shines the eternal and never-failing light of a truth beyond all question: *that the world of civil society has certainly been made by men*, and that *its principles are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind*. Whoever reflects on this cannot but marvel that the philosophers should have bent all their energies to the study of the world of nature, which, since God made it, He alone knows; and that they should have neglected *the study of the world of nations or civil world, which, since men had made it, men could hope to know*.⁴⁷

Then, with this passage, it is possible to reach a satisfying conclusion that which clearly states: that the world of civil things made by humans, and can be known by human beings without doubt, whereas the study of world of nature cannot be grasped in its truth.

⁴⁶ NS: § 349.

⁴⁷ NS: § 331, italics are mine.

It thus seems that it would be sufficient to present the potential prospects of the principle of *verum-factum*, since our purpose here is not to summarize all arguments related to it, neither the legitimacy of the knowledge that is revealed. What we have wished to do was to pay attention to some of the problems raised by *verum* and *factum*, especially as a challenge to traditional metaphysical conjecture.⁴⁸ Although we find it important to emphasize that which Vico has introduced apropos of the discovery of nature of the relation between philosophy and language by saying:

“[H]ow the philosophers failed by half in not giving certainty to their reasonings by appeal to the authority of the philologists, and likewise how the latter failed by half in not taking care to give their authority the sanction of truth by appeal to the reasoning of the philosophers. If they had both done this they would have been more useful to their commonwealths and they would have anticipated us in conceiving this Science.”⁴⁹

Therefore, philosophy should produce knowledge of the universal and eternal by making certain their reasoning in coordination with philology, since: “Human choice, by its nature most uncertain, is made certain and determined by the common sense of men with respect to human needs or utilities, which are the two origins of the natural law of nations.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ At least two interesting angles are worth mentioning regarding the gap in question; 1) that the fields that once registered by philosophical studies have now draw attention from inter- and multi disciplinary cultural spheres, and more, quasi dominated by their pluralistic and dissident tones; 2) to notice the nuance of an authoritative discourse that announces “yes we can” as in the electoral campaign of American Presidency slogan (2008), which by its syntax implies a verb, and thus inherently interlaced with an apparent emphasis on conduct, and an action to be taken—both in terms of the nation- and worldwide contexts—not necessarily seen/seem to be hostile in nature though!

⁴⁹ NS: § 140.

⁵⁰ NS: § 141.

In sum, we can, at least, conclude that the principle amounts to the knowledge of maker in civil realm, alongside an imaginative power of language as a civil appropriation of human nature. “*Certum* presides over the realm of facts as we perceive and deal with them. *Verum*—for human beings—presides over the realm of what men make: for example, rules, norms, standards, laws, including those which shape ‘the facts’ themselves.”⁵¹ Crucial here is the inherent potentiality of the principle, i.e., the knowledge and the truth possess an inherent relation when especially taken into consideration language and philosophy in relation with the essential faculties of being human: thinking, speaking, questioning the beings (of the world, and being a part of it), taking responsibility to act accordingly.

Besides, otherwise would be absurd, i.e., when one knows, one should not help acting in any other way, especially when one keeps in mind appreciation of justice. Today, even the *prima facie* caesura between theory and practice—apart from having disconcerting tones—based in, and draw from the notion of philosophy, which is widely seen as a mere questioning on a theoretical basis. That is to say, to engage in a possibility to constitute a ground on which the act of philosophizing opens up an originary hinge for language, may generate an understanding from within.

On this point, the birth of philosophy in ancient Greek would present a relevant model to begin with. From outset, each pair has not been differentiated from the counter part at that time: philosophy and life, to philosophize and to live. This makes an allusion to a ground of mingling of reflection in language—even today. Because of the specializations and compartmentalization of knowledge, and especially its very language and terms not only of philosophy but also of the fields of highly specified

⁵¹ Sir Isaiah Berlin, 2000: 131–2.

practices—I wish to give medicine as an example—we need translators, experts, specialists to get involved closely in the conditions that the knowledge of a specified term, or process are needed. That is, one can know a medical term, say a term that ends with *-tomy*, only on the condition that one come across with it as a first hand experience that reveals its meaning as removal of an organ. It is vital to get hold of the terminology of any particular field in order to just *understand* that field. The original Greek word (*tomos*) means to cut, make an incision. It may be interesting to notice that the relational tone of *-tomy* and *-tome* in Greek and in languages of Latin origin since the words “volume” and “book” are derivative of *-tome*. It is survived by losing the inherent characteristic of its roots, i.e., to cut a section from a roll of papyrus.

Hence, from now on, I will focus on presenting the key ideas with regard to notions of mythology and imagination that allows Vico to set the scene for the ground of possibility with which language is to be born by poetic wisdom.

CHAPTER 4

THE IDEA OF THE *NEW SCIENCE*

In the *New Science*, by rewriting the history of humankind including mythology and true events of nations in an intertwining chronology, Vico merges facts and fables into a narrative by developing his conception of language starting from imagination, metaphor and mythology of the divine era. This is a cyclical theory of history—genesis, development, and decline of nations—that is every nation has a birth, goes through a developing stage and then perish—to the points that assume the features from barbarism to civilization, and then back to beginning again.⁵² For Vico, these three stages forms the course of civil history in their orders, and each age evolves out of the previous one.

The very first lines of the *New Science* begins with a reference to the *Tablet of Cebes*, probably written in the first or second centuries AD, a moral allegory of happiness and happy human life depicted by “a fictitious tablet or plaque (*pinax*) chanced upon in the Temple of Chronus.”⁵³ Like this tablet, Vico wants to depict the essence of human nature and society with a picture placed as frontispiece to serve as an introduction to his book within a broad vista of history.

For the sake of offering a guide to an outline of civil things we want to start with presenting the picture in order for not baffling the reader but flipping an allegoric piece into the puzzle since we share the same aim and enthusiasm of Vico. Thus the drawing from Vico’s *New Science* will be

⁵² *NS*: § 349.

⁵³ Keith Seddon, 2005: 175

introduced below for the purpose of reflecting the general idea of the work, as a vision that “scintillant whole though with many facets.”⁵⁴ Vico’s first chapter bears the title of “explanation of the picture placed as frontispiece to serve as an introduction to the work” starts with the explanation of “emblematic meaning of the frontispiece,”⁵⁵ i.e., the keys to his understanding of human history as a whole.

Vico prior to furthering with the Book I “Establishment of Principles” concludes the Idea of the Work with below paragraph illuminating the different worlds as the origin of his work. Differentiation of realms of these worlds runs in parallel with the point of contact behind the principle of *verum* and *factum*.

Last of all, to state the idea of the book in the briefest summary, the entire engraving represents the three worlds in the order in which the human minds of the gentiles have been raised from earth to heaven. All the hieroglyphs visible on the ground denote the world of nations to which men applied themselves before anything else. The globe in the middle represents the world of nature which the physicists later observed. The hieroglyphs above signify the world of minds and of God which the metaphysicians finally contemplated.⁵⁶

Despite, or perhaps by virtue of the distinction between these worlds, Vico provokes us with this depiction of origins.

⁵⁴ *NS*: ix.

⁵⁵ Of course, for a masterly analysis and comments on the Vico’s three editions of the *New Science*, and the *impresa* and the *dipintura* to the extent of differentiating them as “before and after” depictions of Vico’s “new science of metaphysics.” see: Donald Phillip Verene, 2009: 137–166.

⁵⁶ *NS*: § 42.



Figure 1: The frontispiece of the New Science (1744 edition)

4.1 The Idea of the Work

In the engraving, at first sight, three figures stand out following the zigzagging light coming out of divine providence, which is symbolized with an eye enclosed in a shining triangle of heavens. Lady metaphysics with a pair of wings in her temple stands on the globe that represents the physical world. She receives the light of providence on the jewel on her breast, contemplates in God in the world of humans, and reflects this light to the below figure of Homer. Vico says that the jewel of the metaphysics symbolizes “her clean and pure heart” and explains in detail that the knowledge of providence is reflected and scattered by the jewel “in public morals or civil customs, by which the nations have come into being and maintain themselves in the world.”⁵⁷ What is more, the jewel’s surface is not simply flat, but convex in order to reflect the divine light among human world. As a consequence, we see that the same ray is reflected from the breast of metaphysic onto the statue of Homer who is identified as “the first gentile author.”⁵⁸

The globe, symbol of the physical natural world, is supported by altar in the middle of the picture, only in part, because it is exposed only in part by “the philosophers contemplating divine providence only through the natural order.”⁵⁹ Whereas the statue of Homer on the left symbolizes the robust sense and vast imagination of the crude minds of the first founders of the gentile nations, since the beginnings of poetry are found to lie in the

⁵⁷ *NS*: § 5.

⁵⁸ *NS*: § 6.

⁵⁹ *NS*: § 2.

beginnings of poetic wisdom.⁶⁰ Here, Vico holds that Homer is the Greek people themselves, not a real person that lived and wrote fables, and histories of customs of the ancient peoples of Greece. Instead, the writers that we know today as Homeric epics are the first peoples, humankind of the crudest gentile humanity.⁶¹

There are symbols and hieroglyphs of human societies around the altar and the globe that catch our sight. Since “among all peoples the civil world began with religion” the first item, which is seen around the altar, is a *lituus*. It is used for auspices, foretelling the future, and divination by revealing the first principle, i.e., divine providence, among gentile nations.⁶² This is the first principle of the *New Science* that opens the concept of religion in the human realm.

Near the altar, are the water in a jar, and the fire; they represent sacrifices of divination, hieroglyphs of divine ceremonies. The custom of marriage among humans is represented by “torch lit from the fire on the altar and leaning against the jar.”⁶³ For Vico, this is the second principle of solemn matrimony.

Within the forest, there is a funerary urn that represents another distinctive custom of humans, i.e., burial. This urn with its inscription of D.M., which means “to the good souls of the dead”, gives way to the third principle: on which Vico’s “Science bases its discussion of the origins of all the

⁶⁰ *NS*: § 6.

⁶¹ *NS*: § 7.

⁶² *NS*: § 8–9.

⁶³ *NS*: § 10–11.

innumerable various and diverse things of which it treats.”⁶⁴ These three principles present the keynotes of Vico’s history and social institutions of humanity.

In the *New Science*, further, with the detailed narrative of Noah, and his three sons—Ham, Japheth, and Shem—after the great flood, Vico builds together the structure of his story; including symbols, legends, fables, and even etymologies into an enchanting chronicle; starting from the origin not only of families, cities, nobles and commonwealths, but of the events and incidents of civil life like commerce, war and peace, and law. To sum up with Vico: “So this New Science or metaphysic, pondering the common nature of nations in the light of divine providence, having discovered such origins of divine and human things among the gentile nations, establishes thence a system of the natural law of nations, which proceeds with the greatest equality and constancy through the three ages [...]”⁶⁵

4.2 The Course of Nations

Vico discovers the human world with his conception of the ideal eternal history in which it can recognize itself as grounded to itself by being itself. Three ages of history revolves around an essential and continual reciprocity and relationship between nations of the world, whereby the three poles of the continual form have different characteristics.

⁶⁴ *NS*: § 12.

⁶⁵ *NS*: § 31.

DIVINE/GODS	HEROES	HUMANS
divine governments, auspices, profane history	aristocratic commonwealths, superiority over nature and plebs	human beings recognized them- selves as equal in human nature, popular commonwealths and monarchical states

Figure 2: Three ages of history

Vico says that the ideal eternal history is “traversed in time by every nation in its rise, development, maturity, decline, and fall,”⁶⁶ and clearly states the essential aspects of them as:

(1) The age of the gods, in which the gentiles believed they lived under divine governments, and everything was commanded them by auspices and oracles, which are the oldest things in profane history. (2) The age of the heroes, in which they reigned everywhere in aristocratic commonwealths, on account of a certain superiority of nature which they held themselves to have over the plebs. (3) The age of men, in which all men recognized themselves as equal in human nature, and therefore there were established first the popular commonwealths and then the monarchies, both of which are forms of human government [...]⁶⁷

But we wish to deal with the characteristics of the third age of nations. Vico describes for us the scene: “With the coming of the human times of the popular commonwealths, the intellect was brought into play in the great assemblies, and universal legal concepts abstracted by the intellect were thenceforward said to have their being in the understanding of the law [...].”⁶⁸ In addition people see each other in equal and “[i]n such commonwealths the entire peoples, who have in common the desire for

⁶⁶ NS: § 21.

⁶⁷ NS: § 31.

⁶⁸ NS: § 1038.

justice, command laws that are just because they are good for all.⁶⁹ Vico by heavily depending on the ancient civilizations of his age foresees a common end and a resurgence that entails the recurrence of human institutions for all nations. After that people start living like beasts only for their wills and desires, pursuing only to satisfy their pleasures, despite the efficiently built laws and social order, institutions and academies: “For such peoples, like so many beasts, have fallen into the custom of each man thinking only of his own private interests and have reached the extreme of delicacy, or better of pride, in which like wild animals they bristle and lash out at the slightest displeasure.”⁷⁰

But, it should be noted that Vico’s viewpoint dwells on the idea that every nation can assume an autonomous development without any interaction of the others. It seems that in this way it would be possible to support the idea that cyclical nature of history will have an inherent capacity. Nonetheless this interpretation may not be maintained in the light of today’s international dependence and correspondence of every field of humanity.

4.2.1 Jove as a Metaphor of Divine Providence

Vico’s conception with regard to the course of nations involves the discovery of the origin in the myth. Vico allows us to grasp the present by thinking our way back to the first moment of humanity in the Jove experience, the scene in which something is first made into a meaning by the mind, the childhood of the human race.⁷¹

⁶⁹ *NS*: § 1101.

⁷⁰ *NS*: § 1106.

⁷¹ Donald Phillip Verene, 1997: 504.

Moreover, Vico claims that there would be no philosophy apart from a mythical basis. The first myth and occurrence of language in the first humankind depend on the concept of Jove that is created by first poets by a metaphorical effect of imagination. “The first men, who spoke by signs, naturally believed that lightning bolts and thunderclaps were signs made to them by Jove.”⁷² Thus the invention of Jove as the thunderbolt is shaped “by the senses, which however false in the matter, were true enough in their form”.⁷³ Vico grounds knowledge of language, not in human’s consciousness of themselves, but in their reaction and productive activity toward the surrounding impacts. With what he calls as poetic wisdom shows how our languages were originally produced through nothing, but imagination.

According to Vico “every gentile nation had its Jove”.⁷⁴ This original act of imagination, participates in actively creating meanings of things. And therefore, thunder is apprehended as an immediate sensation, not a representation. In other words, Jove is not seen as being like thunder, and it is thunder itself that is sensed as Jove. The original powers of mind that are manifest in the various forms of poetic wisdom start with this initial act of sensation. It is a process in which the origin is seen as an immediate presence to the senses. This process is different from what we called reflection today.

The mentality of the first humankind is of metaphorical identities, of poetic characters, and of fables insofar as to create a whole history of its people themselves. Because for Vico the first humans are aware of the flux of their

⁷² *NS*: § 379.

⁷³ *NS*: § 502.

⁷⁴ *NS*: § 47.

senses with which it is possible to arrange them into elements of having certain characters.

We shall show clearly and distinctly how the founders of gentile humanity by means of their natural theology (or metaphysics) imagined the gods; how by means of their logic they invented languages; by morals, created heroes; by economics, founded families, and by politics, cities; by their physics, established the beginnings of things as all divine; by the particular physics of man, in a certain sense created themselves; by their cosmography, fashioned for themselves a universe entirely of gods; by astronomy, carried the planets and constellations from earth to heaven; by chronology, gave a beginning to [measured] times [...]⁷⁵

Similarly, an example from the history of East would be supportive of Vico's claim that every nation had its Jove. The idea of god that is symbolized in the Mongolian word "*Tengri*" in Turkmen and Turkic people as early as 4th century BCE supports Vico's conception. Besides Chinese "Tien" signifies heaven and god of heavens, and Sumerian word "Dingir" means divinity and "bright, vivid".⁷⁶ Although the identification of thunder is not clear in these cases, the conceptual identification reveals a strong parallelism. Furthermore, Verene cites from a primitive society's understanding of thunder as God as unnameable.⁷⁷ We wish to return to this point, especially to exemplify how the originary nature of language can be able to generate itself; in this vein, such is the word "*Chapulling*" which is received with an inclination to concentrate on the act and adoption of a responding attitude. It nonetheless provides us with the question as to

⁷⁵ NS: § 367.

⁷⁶ Kaplan Melike, *Antropoloji Sözlüğü*, entry of god-goddess, 2003: 774–5.

⁷⁷ Quoted from Donald Phillip Verene, 1976: 414 (see also: John Nance, *The Gentle Tasaday* [New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975], p. 58).

whether human beings are capable of resign from their indifference in order to be active participants. According to Vico “[...] at first, man proceeds by these various means, follow traces of the nature of things and eventually upon reflection realizes that he cannot arrive at the nature of things on this basis because he does not have within himself the elements in accordance with which composite things exist.”⁷⁸ One might say that Vico explains the origin of humankind’s belief in the gods by the fact that the first poets “attributed senses and passions [...] to bodies as vast as sky, sea and earth.”⁷⁹

4.2.2 Homer as the Narration of Heroes

From here, it is apprehensible why Homer as seen not a single man but an account of Greek people. Vico’s great literary “discovery” was that Homer never existed as an individual, historic poet. Instead, “Homer was an idea or a heroic character of Grecian men insofar as they told their stories in song.”⁸⁰ In other words, “[t]he Greek peoples were themselves Homer.”⁸¹ That is to say, Homer was himself part of the Greek mythos. Vico’s understanding of myth as collective voice of the poets, and the epic characters as collective representation or idea is derived from and supported to a great extent with the history of the words. In Homer’s case Vico says that the name Homer is derived from *homou* (together) and *eirein* (link), thus signify “stickers together of songs,” which are precisely *rhapsodes*.⁸²

⁷⁸ *MA*: 23.

⁷⁹ *NS*: § 402.

⁸⁰ *NS*: § 873.

⁸¹ *NS*: § 875.

⁸² *NS*: § 852.

What is told by Homeric stories? According to Vico, they are true narrations of an ancient age. They reflect civil nature of life of that age. Their memory coincides with imagination and becomes a history of people themselves. What is more, a German archeologist of nineteenth century found the exact place of ancient city of Troy in Hisarlık in Turkey, and the “King Priam’s Treasure” by reading Homer’s epic story about Trojan War *Illiad* convinced that the ancient stories reflect the actual events in history. This may be one of a kind in history, but the fundamental basis of collective unconscious has a definitive place in mere narrations, stories and myths of nations by supporting the Vico’s thoughts even much later than his time.

Further, it implies that the original creative powers of imagination reflect its true nature in stories of its age. Thus, Verene asserts that: “The actual texts of Homer then become summations of that poetic wisdom by which the ancient Greek peoples organized their world and founded their society based on their original apprehension of the divine.”⁸³ Perhaps at this point, Wikipedia™, which is an accumulation of information that reflects our age, may present a similar model of the true discovery of Homeric narration of our age. For this purpose, it is important to emphasize the nature of correspondence with anonymity and work as a civil landscape. Also, it is worth to present a horizon regarding the historical figure of Socrates as Plato’s interlocutor upon which Western philosophy still heavily depends, or as “Aristophanes’ Socrates in the *Clouds* is, against the explicit protests of Plato’s Socrates (*Ap.* 18a–b, 19c)”.⁸⁴ Then, could it be seen as that we are dwelling on the same appropriation? Odysseus and Homer, Socrates and Plato: the former couples live out today thanks to the songs and echoes of the latter.

⁸³ Edited by Thora Ilin Bayer and Donald Phillip Verene, 2009: 158–9.

⁸⁴ Debra Nails, 2002: 266.

CHAPTER 5

VICHIAN CONCEPTION OF LANGUAGE

The development of three stages of language is correlated with the three cultural stages that Vico distinguishes in history of nations. The significance of the poetic wisdom in the third age of history will be elucidated with regard to the development of the notion of one nation. But first, three kinds of languages according to three ages of history should be provided.

In harmony with these three kinds of nature and government, three kinds of language were spoken [...]: (1) That of the time of the families when gentile men were newly received into humanity. This [...] was a mute language of signs and physical objects having natural relations to the ideas they wished to express. (2) That spoken by means of heroic emblems, or similitudes, comparisons, images, metaphors, and natural descriptions, which make up the great body of the heroic language which was spoken at the time the heroes reigned. (3) Human language using words agreed upon by the people, a language of which they are absolute lords, and which is proper to the popular commonwealths and monarchical states; a language whereby the people may fix the meaning of the laws by which the nobles as well as the plebs are bound [...].⁸⁵

As clearly stated by Vico, the task of the *New Science* is to relate these three languages to form a “mental dictionary by which to interpret properly all the various articulated languages.”⁸⁶ This will establish a “metaphysical art of criticism”⁸⁷ on the basis of which even poetic invention can be seen to

⁸⁵ NS: § 32.

⁸⁶ NS: § 35.

⁸⁷ NS: § 348.

possess an imaginative structure. The functioning of imagination with representation has an innate quality of being in the world for the first two ages of Vichian history. The power of thinking and acting through the senses presents the essential power of poetic wisdom.

DIVINE/GODS	HEROES	HUMANS
divine governments, auspices, profane history	aristocratic commonwealths, superiority over nature and plebs	human beings recognized them- selves as equal in human nature, popular commonwealths and monarchical states
mute language of signs and physical objects having natural relations to the ideas they wished to express	heroic emblems, images, metaphors, natural descriptions of heroic language	words agreed upon by the people, the science of laws passed from the control of the nobles

Figure 3: Three ages of history and languages

Vico's approach to the study of language is called a "science of the imagination."⁸⁸ Vico's notion corresponds to the view that original concepts, i.e., imprinting of experiences of forms and contents of words are revealed in language. The first communities were formed and developed first institutions and rites with this power of language. The civil characteristics of early cultures is, thus, universally poetic; i.e., based on bodily experiences that are transformed into ideas by the power of imagination, like in the instance of the Jove above.

Thus "[t]he human mind is naturally inclined by the senses to see itself externally in the body, and only with great difficulty does it come to attend to itself by means of reflection."⁸⁹ According to Vico, the origins of language are as follows:

⁸⁸ NS: § 32.

⁸⁹ NS: § 236.

(1) Since it has been demonstrated that the first gentile nations were all mute in their beginnings, they must have expressed themselves by gestures or by physical objects having natural relations with their ideas. (2) They must have used signs to fix the boundaries of their estates and to have enduring witnesses of their rights. (3) They all made use of money. All these truths will give us the origins of languages and letters, and thereby of hieroglyphics, laws, names, family coats-of-arms, medals, money, and of the language and writing in which the first natural law of nations was spoken and written.⁹⁰

It is worth noting down that invention of the poetic characters is later turned into hieroglyphs of metaphors: “The first nations thought in poetic characters, spoke in fables, and wrote in hieroglyphs.”⁹¹ This hieroglyphic language is followed by a symbolic language that which elaborates the poetic meaning of the first humankind by means of “similitudes, images, metaphors, and natural descriptions”,⁹² and finally an epistolary, or vulgar language are agreed upon by the people. Even this last vernacular stage of language, which makes scientific communication possible, is rooted in the more fundamental poetic capacity of language to fashion our way of thinking.

As we have seen so far, perhaps, the greatest lesson to be learned from Vico is that language is nothing but a product of imagination. Danesi explains in detail the inner workings of mind in relation to language that is formed with organized images:

The cornerstone notions of Vichian understanding surely draw attention to the *fantasia*, the *ingegno*, and the *memoria*. The *fantasia* closely links with the mind’s ability to generate images

⁹⁰ NS: § 434.

⁹¹ NS: § 429.

⁹² NS: § 32.

of referents in the immediate environment. The *fantasia* is a functioning model of the world in the mind, and it allows the mind to know from inside the world. The *ingegno* is the mental faculty that organizes images produced by the imagination into meaningful narrative models of the world. These are reflected in metaphor and myth. Finally, the *memoria* is the mental system that stores thought for the future retrieval. All these three notions are unique characteristics of the human mind, and all their workings have produced language as an extension of experience.⁹³

The poet who does not possess conceptual understanding gives her own sense of life to the things surrounding her, but at the same time she has a capability to transform herself by this procreating power. Whatever one has made, no matter how irrational it may seem now, must be recognizable as a “modification of our own human mind”.⁹⁴ According to productive workings of language, Vico says that “when man understands he extends his mind and takes in things, but when he does not understand he makes the things out of himself and becomes them by transforming himself into them.”⁹⁵

From this perspective, it is worth to focus on the generative features of language of the first humankind. Since they perceive and decipher the world as a world of forces and emotional sensations.

5.1 Poetic Wisdom of the First Humankind

The human world has been founded and established through the activity of an imagination acting in relation to the world of practical and social life. “The power of language to form abstract words operates as metaphors. The

⁹³ Marcel Danesi, 1995: 62–3.

⁹⁴ *NS*: § 331.

⁹⁵ *NS*: § 405.

connections of the form of thought with the form of symbolism, the metaphysical and physical orders are expressed in terms of poetic wisdom.”⁹⁶

In the light of the above passage, appropriation of masks with an act of anonymity against authority leads me to question the nature of the reaction of the first human beings. The usage of mask is as old as the humankind itself—albeit by adopting different roles and in different contexts, from carnivals to theatres, ritual dances to funerals, in different cultures of the world. What is worth making a comparison with regard to the mask is its relation to our age of virtual identities. The virtual world is full of avatars, and nicknames. It is possible to establish a whole life based on and breathe fresh life into these virtual presentations. What is significant in this might be the tone that enhanced the idea that life itself becomes an illusion, and that exposure to the risk of veiling the inherent nature of truth itself. This is somewhat akin to the notion that the masks, or virtual personalities depend on and also manifest the gap between imagination and what is given.⁹⁷ The principles inherent to a basic sphere or activity of essential notions (e.g. freedom), especially when associated with well-nigh invisible hierarchical forms of power and status of, let us say, social life, it becomes inevitable for an individual to proceed almost blindly.

In this vein, one should be aware of the motives that condition and rely on this course of actions in distinct yet overlapping dimensions of language—and thus symbols in this case. The mask is, surely, by no means exhaust the

⁹⁶ Donald Phillip Verene, 1992: 74.

⁹⁷ James McTeigue’s film *V for Vendetta* (2005) creates an icon out of a historical figure of Guy Fawkes to run for all “the fighters for freedom” of all times. In the film, it should be noted that the liberating act, especially for the main character (Natalie Portman), comes with a price nonpareil, but it is important and reparative all the more so.

process itself, but will receive an acclaimed capability to occupy our ideas and deeds as a vehement symbol. In this context, for Vico, the distinction between first humankind as poet and the rational man of ordered society plays a significant role since poetic language is of mythic symbols, and the language of reason serves as a functional tool.

Vico sees primitive people of the first age “as the children of the human race, imaginative, violently emotive, and full of awe and wonder at the world.”⁹⁸ Here, we can reach the conclusion that the first humankind of history are like children of human race, and like children, they live in a world of mimesis, i.e., by virtue of the horizon of imagination they bring understanding upon their world. But this action toward mimicking at that time of history ensued from the inability to abstract forms from the phenomenal world around. With mimicking, the differentiation of human beings’ immersion in flux grows into a language that is defined by poetic expressions. This field of perception is extended towards the phenomena external to oneself. As Auerbach says: “[Vico] was the first who tried to prove that primitive poetry is not the work of individual artists, but was created by the whole society of the primitive peoples, which were poets by their very nature.”⁹⁹ In a similar fashion, Edward W. Said says that: “for Vico the world of men is like a text, and vice versa. Both come from the body in an act of inspired divination by which inert objects, random marks, become sign systems; as sensuous immediacy is lost intellectual and aesthetic powers are gained.”¹⁰⁰ Said emphasizes the relation to body and human development with the ages of history, ideal eternal history insofar as to Vichian methods of inquiry, theory of knowledge, concerns with the

⁹⁸ Catherine Hobbs, 2002: 66.

⁹⁹ Erich Auerbach, 1949: 116.

¹⁰⁰ Edward Said, 1976: 826.

human nature and the repetitive patterns of human development suggest that his insightful line of thought can also be seen as anthropological in nature.

Not knowing what the things of the world, the original poets produce names for them taken from their bodies.¹⁰¹ As Vico writes: “It is noteworthy that in all languages the greater part of the expressions relating to inanimate things are formed by metaphor from the human senses and passions.”¹⁰² Then, myths are said for the poetic personification of the history of primitive and archaic humanity. By seeing everything in terms of our body even inanimate bodies are imagined to be animate. Therefore, we still speak of the head of a department, the shoulder of a hill, the neck of a bottle, the feet of a table, the lip of a cup, and the like. We should observe that this use of metaphor could be applied to both natural and man-made objects. “It is another property of the human mind that whenever men can form no idea of distant and unknown things, they judge them by what is familiar and at hand.”¹⁰³ As we will see below with Verene, it is through Vico’s views on language that we can begin to account for the transition from poetic metaphors to conceptual understanding.

Verene emphasizes that “Vico makes a new start by joining poetry and wisdom into poetic wisdom [...] The wisdom of poets is that of the first two ages, in which the world is formed by the power of imagination

¹⁰¹ In order to bring an example from Turkish language in relation to the connotations of imagination, some words called from Arabic origins are as follows: *hayal*, *muhayyel*, *tahayyül*. All these are related with the act of imagination to some degree, but we can also combine them with Persian origin *perest* in order to define the person who is fond of imagining: *hayalperest*, or an oldfashioned *hayalperver*. One can find newer words based on the connotations of sign, i.e., *im*, *imge*, *imgelem*, but one cannot define the person who likes imagining. The terms like *hayalci* or *düşçü*, give negative echoes as if *hayalgücü* and *hayalperest* should be renounced at all. Yet, remember that some massive speeches start with “I have a dream ...”

¹⁰² NS: § 405.

¹⁰³ NS: § 122.

(*fantasia*).”¹⁰⁴ The language of the first two ages (divine and heroic) resembles that of children while reflecting how language, mind and culture are interdependent. Since Berlin states that “[Vico] supposes not merely that the poets create artificial worlds, but that all men during the early “poetical” stage of culture can conceive of the real world only “in this fashion”, that the creative imagination plays a dominant role in the normal consciousness of this stage of development [...]”¹⁰⁵ Vico indeed clearly states the relationship between mind and body apropos of language forming articulations:

[A] man is properly only mind, body and speech, and speech stands as it were midway between mind and body. Hence the certitude of law began in mute times with the body. Then when the so-called articulate languages were invented, it passed to certain ideas or verbal formulae. And finally, when our human reason was fully developed, it reached its end in the truth of ideas concerning justice, determined by reason from the detailed circumstances of the facts.¹⁰⁶

For now, we need to focus on the notions of memory and myth in Vico.

5.2 Memory and Myth

The myths of theological poets are, for Vico, “true narrations.”¹⁰⁷ There is an original poetic wisdom contained in the myths of a culture and the universal mythic themes of all cultures. Vico calls this a “common mental language” or *sensus communis* that underlies all human acts of thought and

¹⁰⁴ Donald Phillip Verene, 2006: 95.

¹⁰⁵ Sir Isaiah Berlin, 2000: 126.

¹⁰⁶ *NS*: § 1045.

¹⁰⁷ *NS*: § 408.

production.¹⁰⁸ The origin of idea of language in Vichian understanding of mythology strictly bases on the relation between imagination and poetic wisdom, conception of life and earth, as myths give way to language, it founds its own reflection in words. As Mali puts it: “[I]n defining myth as *vera narratio* Vico implies that the *truth* of myth consists not in its modes of cognition or representation but rather in its mode of *narration* of it.”¹⁰⁹

Vico in his claim that both memory and imagination originate in sense perception depends on the memory of languages, i.e., science of etymology: “This is why memory is the same as imagination, and in Latin both are called *memoria*.”¹¹⁰ In its movement toward the recollection of origin, it discovers again the myth, the original power of image making, or mimesis, the science of which, as Vico says, is the first that must be learned. “One of his goals in the *New science* is to furnish insights on specifically those first acts of human imaginative thinking [...] To do so he provides etymologies of words, so that the first concepts can be gleaned from them.”¹¹¹ As in so many respects, it is worth underlining the main emphasis of etymology in Vico’s thinking, since etymology reveals the history of the structure of perception that is generated within words. For instance, it would be insightful to witness Vico’s way of thinking with regard to the nature of words and their history in *NS*: § 401:

The word logic comes from *logos*, whose first and proper meaning was *fabula*, *fable*, carried over into Italian as *favella*, speech. In Greek the fable was also called *mythos*, myth, whence comes the Latin *mutus*, mute. For speech was born in

¹⁰⁸ *NS*: § 162.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Mali, 1992: 203.

¹¹⁰ *NS*: § 819.

¹¹¹ Jana Vizmuller-Zocco, 1995: 238.

mute times as mental [or sign] language, which Strabo in a golden passage says existed before vocal or articulate [language]; whence *logos* means both *word* and *idea*. It was fitting that the matter should be so ordered by divine providence in religious times, for it is an eternal property of religions that they attach more importance to meditation than to speech.

Vico states that memory has three different aspects: “[M]emory when it remembers things, imagination when it alters or imitates them, and invention when it gives them a new turn or puts them into proper arrangement and relationship.”¹¹² In all three stages the metaphorical capacity operates to produce new systems of verbal structure and form. Language is tied to human beings through the imagination, and it assumes different characteristics according to recurrent ages, whereas memory becomes a form of language itself. Figurative language reveals our conceptions of ourselves and of the mental world that we have created for ourselves. It reveals a form of thinking that gives pattern and continuity to human experience. In fact, for Vico the myths are the first truths of the world as we saw in the discovery of true Homer. With this in mind Vico points out that “it is an eternal property of the fables always to enlarge the ideas of particular in imagination.”¹¹³ Therefore it could be noted that comprehending the manner in which the first humankind thought, it is possible to witness the universal truth of the ideal eternal history. Danesi is affirmative on this point: “Only in this way, Vico believed, would it be possible to gain some really significant insights into the origin of human mentality.”¹¹⁴ In a parallel understanding, Croce sustains that: “Myth, in a word, is not fable but history of such a kind as could be constructed by

¹¹² NS: § 26.

¹¹³ NS: § 816.

¹¹⁴ Marcel Danesi, 1995: 19.

primitive minds, and strictly considered by them as an account of actual fact.”¹¹⁵

In this chapter, the nature of imagination (poetic wisdom, memory, and myth) with respect to language was attempted to be reviewed as a metaphysical determinations of human beings according to the perspective that how the first humankind perceive the world, and with this perception how the institutions of human world grounded in language.

¹¹⁵ Benedetto Croce, 1913: 64.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Vico studied the entirety of human history with his Science in such a concentrated, detailed, and imaginative way that it is not possible—also, for the generations to come—not to impress. As Caponigri puts it: “If man would discover himself, therefore, he must look not to nature but to history. History is the work of man’s hands, or rather, of his whole spirit [...]”¹¹⁶

Vico treats us with a series of parallel, triadic developments: from the age of gods, through the age of heroes, to the age of reason; from the primitive through the heroic to the rational nature; from divine law and customs through the heroic law of force, to human law dictated by reason. As we saw before, the order of civil things begins in the forest, and ends in the academies, and institutions as humanity moves to the age of reasoning.

The paradox for Vico is that, as civilized man grows in rational maturity, he becomes estranged from the passionate ground of existence. In time, his literary creations become drained of their poetic content; his myths cease to provide a basis for belief. It is a predicament from which civilized man cannot escape. The dissolution of his civilization is a necessary process. The necessity lies not in his material environment but in his human nature.¹¹⁷

Our perspective presents a parallel with Hutton’s point of view. When we will attempt to evoke Vico’s ideas today, the theory of cyclical history might be read as an announcement of beginning to a new cycle of history.

¹¹⁶ A. Robert Caponigri, 1953: 3.

¹¹⁷ Patrick H. Hutton, 1972: 366.

However, we wish to emphasize that we cannot dwell on the idea of cycles and recurrence of the history in terms of world of nations—but, instead with an interrelated exegesis of reason and imagination, without allowing overpowering of one on the other, provoke both in a plural way. Is it possible for us not only to question the ground of embracing our heterogeneities, but also assume a position that requires an ability to act within the status quo? That the nature of Vichian understanding of language and history is based on the principle of *verum-factum* could be read as a supporting idea for this performativity.

6.1 One Nation of a Globalized World

The characteristics of our age, which reveals a distinctive parallelism with Vico's third age, can tantamount to a notion of one nation of a globalized world of nations, i.e., not nations as governments, or commonwealths, but as a nation that participate same ideals/ideas throughout the world. Historical progress collapses into an interactive flow of act of exchanging.¹¹⁸

With the introduction of computers and the Internet to our daily practices thanks to highly sophisticated technology, today we are in touch with most of the world on the screen, and have most of our experiences stored in memory sticks; we share and participate in their problems, sad and happy moments; financial, political, environmental, or simply moral consequences of natural disasters, oil-spills, nuclear wastes, epidemics, even mere threats of them; not only ideas, notions, concepts, practices, icons, or relations regarding many aspects of life and death, surely not only mass or tailored

¹¹⁸ In addition, in accordance with our claim, which is the world's nations become one nation (of a corporation), one of the dystopian films worth mentioning: *Immortal* (2006) forward us to a future that gods (depicted as ancient Egyptian versions) are in need of humans in order to be immortal *ad vitam*. Apart from fascinating visual personifications, the idea proper, i.e., the reversal of perspective of gods and mortal humans is surely worthy of thought.

products of the third world, or exotic products of once unknown regions. One may know a lot, but one may communicate—this or that information—with the rest of the world, and what is more, with an ease of an instant. To create anew means to remember the past—to repeat, to turn, and return to the course or recourse of history.¹¹⁹

For Vico believes that the direction of human intention in history is everywhere the same, and that it is this understanding, whether poetic or rational, gives humanity the courage to risk social creation once more. The end of history is not an end to history, but our affirmation of our moral obligation to the beings of the world. This may be seen as the reason behind why we still have heroes, and superheroes in many culture's visual and plastic art. The concept of superhuman widely exposes itself in many ways, in different cultures of past and present, because there are still things that are worth fighting for. It may not be wise to discard these concerns by labeling them as ordinary, vernacular even—besides, it should be critical for our technological age, since we are on the verge of having them in our

¹¹⁹ In the light of the fact that this study is, in truth, can be seen as my attempt—in a way—to repeat and evoke the topics on the account of Vico according to my candid viewpoints in terms of more recent events. It is worth remembering the meaning of the verb parroting, especially with regard to the notion of repetition. Parroting, according to the dictionary of Merriam-Webster, means to repeat by rote; rote here means 1) the use of memory usually with little intelligence, 2) mechanical or unthinking routine or repetition. However, in order to repeat intelligently an adequate level of intelligence would not be sufficient; this ability should also imbued by the memory—either subjective or collective—to the extent of that which encloses both past and present to a certain point.

Furthermore, let us recall some images from the field of visual arts, especially Andy Warhol's mass-produced images of photographs of celebrities, which still persists in our collective memory: Legendary poses and smiles of Marilyn Monroe for instance. It cannot be claimed that only Warhol heavily dwells on past reminiscences of his age. It is worth remembering that great artists also make a great deal of copies of old masterpieces in their apprenticeship. Repetition becomes a way of conveying the new in a different, nuanced light.

houses and in our bodies minutely, by virtue of enhanced applications. Then, science fiction and related medium may not only be seen as mere products of our conscious, sub-conscious, or collective unconsciousness. Its critique for today and aspirations for future, while reaching multitudes, not to just privileged ones, adopts a role of Vichian epoch-making nature.¹²⁰

Leon Pompa points out that Vico mostly relates the history of each nation with his “intensive study of Roman history,” and that he accepts that for later periods of history there might be international communication, “he proposed but did not develop further principles to explain the way in which the interaction between nations at different stages of development would affect one another.”¹²¹

Although for Vico in the third age of human history the poetic wisdom, that is the creative nature of language gradually disappears and develops academies as institutions, and the laws of commonwealths, and reason becomes prevalent in all aspects of life, it would not be consistent to support the cyclical nature of history, and that even it is necessary to arrest its

¹²⁰ It is interesting for us to believe in heroes, but not for children it seems so; because they intrinsically interested in them—although they may not believe in them. It would be the reason why comic books (*Bande Dessinée* in French speaking world) are so important for children, or young adults. Besides, there are adult forms of comic books and stripes—Japanese *manga* is first to be mentioned. But, especially in Belgium, comics business is taken seriously—e.g. *The Adventures of Tin Tin*, *Asterix*, *The Smurfs*, *Lucky Luke*. These figures may show that the relation of heroes to collective imagination and memory does not always reflect that of reason. Hieroglyphic archetypes remain alive through world’s history. Financially and commercially profitable high budget *X-Men* (2000, 2006, 2009, 2011, 2014) and *Iron Man* (2008, 2010, 2013) movie series reflect that imaginative characters, heroes of our age still have much to say to us—or, we still expect of them just as much.

¹²¹ Leon Pompa, 1990: 136–7.

spinning of recurrent nature—in order to be able to change the ground rule of human condition.¹²²

But, this world becomes, or on the brink of becoming, one nation more than many ways. Cultivation of ideas has already reached to enormous level of dependency, perhaps more than that of economies.¹²³ It is tempting to go on like this, but for the sake of our argument, i.e., in today's social and political conditions, it would not be possible to claim a cyclical nature, neither even a phase for nations, nor for the world as a whole. It would be wise to embrace all the diversity that the world presents—for our own sakes. It is important to delineate that one-minded ideologies, or politics—sports, architecture, food, music, even every irrelevant fields alike—no doubt, impossible to be realized. Various forms of orthodoxy, in the form of theory, doctrine, belief, dogma and faith, and in the creative practical dedications (e.g. concentration and detention camps) have been proved to be vicious, inhuman, and barren in the past.

¹²² It should be noted that Vico's explanation for the ideal eternal history seems to have much in common with the concept of recurrence and cyclical successions in Eastern cultures. For instance, Kim Ki-duk's Buddhism inspired controversial film, which bears the title *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring* (2003) strongly evoke the concept of cycle, in line with the seasons of nature, and thus of human life. Second example reflects an American way of conception intertwined with a deep longing for the notion of freedom—in various layers of space-time continuum: *Cloud Atlas* (2012) is directed by Tykwer and Wachowskis. In the film the notion of cycles of ages is apparent, as is the stepping up of beings to ask for their rights, i.e., the voluntary act of emancipation. Although it would be appealing for us to long for cycles as in recurrent concepts of time (e.g. days, weeks, months, seasons, years that seem to arrest in a continuum of cycles), it may easily lead to the idea of timelessness, but the end of it as a knowledge stands by us.

¹²³ Let us state it openly, and accept that we are on the same boat. It is worth, here, pointing some insightful directions: Cf. Paolo Rossi, *Gemi Batıyor Seyreden Yok*, çev. Durdu Kundakçı, (Ankara: Dost, 2002); Hans Blumenberg, *Gemi Batıyor Seyrediyorlar*, çev. Osman Toklu (Ankara: Dost, 2002).

To flip a new term to define technologically enhanced ever-online human beings may not experience any reception, nor a snowball effect on a large scale, but to reach for attention to the breaching of humanity, i.e., dehumanization, not just politically, or socially, but also environmentally is of the utmost importance that which could not come into being apart from, and would necessarily perish with the destruction of the living world.

Here, we wish to refer some instances from the recent past in an attempt to develop a holistic perspective—an allusion to the collapse of convention into scintillating waves in the sense of a reflection that is yet to come. We wish to pay attention to the protesting events with regard to the image of Woman in Red, and the act of protest of the Standing Man. Here, I wish to claim that this image could be read in relation to the frontispiece of *New Science* in order to interpret the essence of movement. At the outset the pacifist tone of the posture and attitude of the girl against the turmoil in the background and the keenness of the figures is striking. To my mind, like lady metaphysics of Vico, she reveals the truth of the conditions that presides over. In the picture, much inspired, and shared of the fragile tone of the girl reveals a spirit, an urgent need of taking an action in the name of oneself. It shares the same urgent quality with the performative protest of Standing Man. This open-minded re-action is both a condition for and a result of its persuasiveness. Crucial here the inherent reversal of “taking action” into a standing still event which leads to an immediate coincidence of contrasting steps.

These two, like the word *Chapulling*, stand out in the event of gathering people around a theme—as both nation- and word-wide reverberations demonstrate openly. Our approach is twofold; 1) to show that imagination still has an effective place in our age, and that language is no longer grounded in the given but open to re-generate, 2) to declare its relation to language as a reflection an originary nature. This must be done through an

imagination as experience of language in which language bears new forms of understanding, and what is more, praxis. Art, simply, forwards itself into out of ordinary, as a guide, as a symbol of an expression, of an idea that become a critique of the given. It might be the reason behind the impossibility to philosophize without flipping out new words, especially in our attempt to think it from beyond. In this sense the politics of the protest highly dwell on, and generate an enduring provocative tone in language.

The movement that adopted the term *Chapulling* as its name has distinctive qualities, which have far reaching implications toward various aspect of political and cultural agenda, from different point of views, regarding the occupy protests in particular. Not until it becomes as the norm itself does it serve its proper function upon which the word is constituted. The naming of the movement brings about an image. The relation of word and deed is evident in this case. Because, after pronouncing of the word, people find it necessary to react, take an action against being labeled as *Chapulist*. The term is reappropriated in a negative way and stands for reacting against empowering of one-mindedness insofar as to enhance uniformity of the status quo.¹²⁴

Although it is important to state the reception of the word, i.e., *Chapulling*, from well-known activist-philosophers, musicians, and directors, it is worth to relate it with the Vichian notion of language and its constitutive character. Because imagination has unfolded in two ways: it is *what is*

¹²⁴ On the significance of stepping out of the human nature and take responsibility, instead of one thing or another. In Lars von Triers work *Dogville* (2003), it is the dog that stays chained at the end of the film. The others whose could not come to take responsibility for their actions, are happy with their self-denial have been killed by the gangsters; the whole township has been burnt down to ashes. Please note some intriguing references to mythological and religious figures (e.g. Achilles, Jason, Athena, Olympia, Pandora, and Trojan horse, and Moses the dog), and the schools of philosophy—Stoicism, and Cynicism as the title openly points out.

needed in order for human beings to become human beings, to know who they are, to have their identity, and origin; and it is the awakening of the longing for the true ideas for the immediacy of life and memory. It seems to me that, with the aforementioned instances, intelligibility and memory may embrace non-uniformity, and thus individuality and diversity. The surplus of the very gesture emerges as an immediate response. The key distinction between the critique of the norm/normal and its transgression of the very norm have the potentiality to open a hinge of heterogeneity, diversity, and liberty—for the beings of the world. Some encouraging instances to point out: communities that are based on permaculture for their living, or slow città movements that starts to gain high speed worldwide recognition and participation.

6.2 Implications of Vichian Conception of Language

For Vico, as we discern above, languages of different ages differ from each other in kind, nature and origin. The conception of three ages of history is in harmony with their distinguished characters of language, as Haddock claims below:

His characterization of the ages of gods, heroes, and men gave him a criterion to distinguish the limits of meanings, which could be construed from a specific form of words used in a specific period. Law, language, ethics, poetry, each assumed a distinct character in the life of a period, and the relation of these utterances to one another was made intelligible by reference to the appropriate historical paradigm.¹²⁵

We could even go so far as to say that the dynamics of the correlation of these ages are to be operative in language. Following Vico, we also need to acknowledge that the extent to which an act of depending upon the non-

¹²⁵ B. A. Haddock, VPI, 1976: 552.

identification of a human realm *qua* the three ages make it possible to go a step further here and argue that conversely and paradoxically it is this type of non-identification that can be able to acquire the connotation of originary nature of language.

The notion of poetic wisdom of Vichian philosophy may offer both the responsibility of praxis, and freedom for diversity on its account for the principle of *verum-factum* insofar as to assert a possibility, and a central principle regarding our course of actions. For Vico poetry expresses a true comprehension of the nature of language and its relation to history. “For we find that poetry constituted the first common language of all the ancient nations [...]”¹²⁶ Therefore we must seek a language inherent to the whole world exploring culture, philosophy of history, language and human perception. The role of poets becomes all the more important, since the first humans, Vico claims, are poets who not only formed the world through myths but also formed the first histories in their myths. Still, Verene stresses the poetry as origin of philosophy in Vico:

Thus, Vico can assign to poetry its own form of wisdom, or *sapienza poetica*, and once this is done Vico can see philosophy as emerging from poetry. Poetry or myth is then seen as the original and true apprehension of the divine as revealed, and the original relationship out of which the civil world is founded.¹²⁷

The point emphasized above as the relation between thought and language, no doubt, is imbued with an open horizon of Vico’s imagination. “Language is not merely a medium for the communication of thought but is the medium of thought itself. So in analyzing the way we use words and other signs, we are analyzing not an optional mode of transmission of thought but thought

¹²⁶ *NS*: § 253.

¹²⁷ Edited by Thora Ilin Bayer and Donald Philip Verene, 2009: 158.

itself”.¹²⁸ The enduring arrest of Vico’s *New Science* is derived from its paradigm building vision insofar as to define the nature of human beings, a nature that can be perceived in the process of historical change. To understand Vico today, it is necessary to retrace his ideas as they open up to us in a new horizon.

The entire development of human history, as made by men, is potentially contained in the human mind, and may therefore, by a process of research and re-evocation, be understood by men. The re-evocation is not only analytic; it has to be synthetic, as an understanding of every historical stage as an integral whole, of its genius, [...] a genius pervading all human activities and expressions of the period concerned.¹²⁹

How should we understand Vico’s conception of language? “Not as an artificial medium deliberately constructed to express pre-existing ideas, but as a human phenomenon that interacts and is interwoven with social existence.”¹³⁰ The argument to adopt the meaning of history as a vision of the human condition can be seen as pregnant with implications of an interpretation of phenomena of human existence with occurrences of historical experience.

For Vico, what is brought together in metaphor is an ontological identity constituting the real of the human world, a reality delimiting the play of interpretation on the part of both poets and philosopher-historians, for whom social and historical institutions established by linguistic interpretations must satisfy needs and utilities.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Max H. Fisch, 1976: 403.

¹²⁹ Erich Auerbach, 1949: 117.

¹³⁰ Giorgio Tagliacozzo, 1971: 502.

¹³¹ Sandra Rudnick Luft, 2003: 109.

When viewed with its potential significance of Vico's theory of language and philology, the underlying conception of language as perspective builder stands out clearly. Philology, declares Vico, "[...] observes that of which human choice is the author, whence comes consciousness of the certain". In the context of this wider meaning, he includes among philologists "all the grammarians, historians, critics, who have occupied themselves with the study of the languages and deeds of peoples",¹³² whereas the philosopher understands reality by taking in the things around him/her and incorporating them into his/her conceptual system.

The act of understanding human beings, in a community or as an individual, is the basis for human knowledge. It is a type of understanding in which an origin is evocatively apprehended as the basis of understanding the present state. In the course of nations and the concept of origin what calls for is the vigor of humanistic viewpoint. Its various realms involve a multiplicity in which this idea can be refracted throughout the gist of human world. While these last points constitute the hallmark of our study, it yet remains to be embodied and thus grounded in the societal landscape itself.

¹³² NS: § 138.

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