

Vico develops his version of the external unconscious under the name of “sensus communis” (common sense). The telling history behind this phrase is that Gadamer describes the idea in Aristotelian terms but completely falsifies it. There is an article by John Schaefer in *New Vico Studies* about how Gadamer faked this on behalf of phenomenology. You could draw the conclusion that phenomenology can tolerate the idea of a Jungian collective consciousness but only in abstract terms, as things people think about in the same way over time, such as archetypes. This is an internal mind, and not really the same thing as Vico’s externalized (un)consciousness, which is *active* and *primary*. It is created at the origins of human thinking but also something that is continually re-created by finding ways to construct things that are “without reflection,” using the recipe below. These paragraphs are from *The New Science*:

§141 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.

§142 Common sense is judgment without reflection, shared by an entire class, an entire people, an entire nation, or the whole human race.

§143 This axiom, with the following definition, will provide a new art of criticism concerning the founders of nations, who must have preceded by more than a thousand years the writers with whom criticism has so far been occupied.

You can see how Vico is thinking here: choice>*sensus-communis*>lack (of reflection). Choice can be randomized and multiple; it’s grounded in an unconscious that is shared, and because it’s an unconscious, we don’t have direct access to it. But, Vico says (and this is extraordinary!) what Lacan says, that it’s “structured like language,” because he refers later to the “common mental dictionary.” So Vico anticipates Lacan’s idea of the unconscious in almost every way. And, then there’s the clever connection to Baudelaire’s statement about misunderstanding allowing us the ability to agree. Agreement (consent) doesn’t have a conscious basis; it has an *unconscious* one, inaccessible, that is not made of ideas or propositions but more like a phantasmagoria of things related without a *value* but rather of a *use* — and we are back to the contrast between Use Models of sex and Union Models. Union Models require *reflected* and *reflective* relationships. Use Models are grounded in the instrumental cause, that directly transmits relationships that are not mediated (by a third thing) but more like electrical connections. In this way, choice becomes automated (un-self-conscious) as the puppets in von Kleist’s essay about the Marionette Theater, where he says the puppets are like God.