THOUGHT AND PLACE

the architecture of imagination
in the philosophy of giambattista vico

donald kunze

For Elaine

Giambattista Vico, 1668–1744

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Preface

Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) was a highly original philosopher of culture who contributed in diverse ways to the intellectual life of Europe from the Eighteenth Century onward. He was largely ignored in his own time, and although periodic revivals restored interest and added contextual scholarship, his ideas remain as fresh — and strange — today as they were in the Eighteenth Century. His theories about culture and human development anticipated those of Hegel, Spengler, Toynbee, Marx, Piaget, and even Freud and Lacan. His use of optical metaphors emphasized the psychological function of dimensionality in the construction of knowledge. This method opens the way to combine literature, poetry, architecture, the arts, and the study of landscape into a single humanistic project. Vico's theory of culture is, fundamentally, a theory of the signifier, extended to account for socio-cultural, environmental, psychological, political, linguistic, and historic phenomena. As such, it promises much to those who seek a comprehensive and grounded theory of place.[1]

However, the modern revivals of interest in Vico in many social science and humanities disciplines did not involve visual artists, geographers, architects, landscape architects, or environmental psychologists. Vico's lack of impact on "spatial" thought may be compensated by a latent but significant potential, where Vico's unusual methods of humanistic inquiry can be used to short-circuit past and contemporary works, but it is important to understand how resistance to Vico, in fields that would seem to benefit most from his insights, has so far limited the influence of this essentially spatial thinker.

Vico was born in Naples, Italy, the son of a bookseller. He received his early education from local grammar schools and Jesuit tutors. Although he graduated from the University of Naples in 1694 as a doctor of Civil and Canon Law, he characterized himself as a life-long autodidact. His self-instruction began at the age of seven, during his convalescence from a concussion. The attending physician predicted that the boy would either die or grow up to be an idiot. Vico mobilized this omen as a scholarly leitmotif. He characterized his personality as split by the dry humors of melancholy and choler. He argued that history was a parallax view afforded by the twin eyes of geography (contingency) and chronology (necessity). More prophetically, Vico purposefully contrived his major work, *The New Science* (1744) to strike readers as ingenious or idiotic.

Vico's first important works, one on methods of humanistic study and a second on truths hidden in ancient etymologies, appeared in 1709 and 1710, respectively. A major study of universal right was completed in 1720-22, and the first two parts of his autobiography were finished in 1725 and 1731. Vico's major work, the *Scienza nuova*, or *The New Science*, was first published in 1725, with a completely revised edition, the *Scienza nuova secunda* (*Second New Science*) appearing five years later. A third, slightly revised

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1   See Donald Kunze, "Vichianism after Vico," in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, ed. Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift (London: Elsevier, 2009).

version was published in 1744, just before his death. This version is also called the *Second New Science*, but it is regarded as the definitive edition. The English translation made in 1948 by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch has served as the main reference point for a revival of interest in recent times among a broad range of scholars.

Vico is typically portrayed as the first important anti-Cartesian. He attacked René Descartes' rationalism as abstract and unconcerned with cultural invention, human nature, or historical specificity. However, Vico was a Cartesian in his own way. While Descartes conceived of a subject secure in its own self-recognition (*cogito ergo sum*), Vico proposed an equal but opposite subject, an empty place-holder unable to witness his/her own nature except by creating networks of symbolic relations with others and nature. Keenly concerned with the mind's dynamic and self-constructing nature, Vico defined a necessary logic within and through the contingencies of everyday experience, a necessary sequence of developmental stages ("ideal eternal history"), which focused on the question of human origins and how the first human thought and language were distinguished from animal cognition and sign-use.

Vico's original theory of mythic thought was based on the idea of a *universale fantastico* (imaginative universal) by which the first human subjects unknowingly disguised their own natures as demonic elements of the external world. Because the human mind was at first unable to form abstractions, it used metaphors involving the body and the senses. Because of this, Vico held that the first perceptions of all cultures were structurally consistent, a means of thinking through things (*bricolage*, as the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss would call it).

Vico saw that the creation of culture involved two kinds of inversion of "near and far." The first was an exchange of what was spatially near and far. The (unconscious) sense of the body found its antipode in the sky, where ether was the *animus* of a god as robust and sensual as the first humans, whose voice was thunder and whose indecipherable messages were written in constellations and other celestial phenomena. The second inversion was a moral inversion of private and public. Borrowing from Bernard Mandeville's "thesis of the bees" (1705), Vico held that humans civilized themselves by inadvertently producing public goods (institutions, customs, protections, etc.) whenever they acted out of private self-interest. For example, by grouping together into cities to strengthen the hold of the families over the plebs, the aristocrats instituted a collective civic religion that protected all within the city, laying the foundation for later secularization and representative government.

In ways reinforced through references to mirror images, irony, and metaphor, Vico seems to hold that each cultural institution, act, and object is "anamorphic" in that it embodies these two exchanges of near and far. Anamorphy is a term typically reserved to describe visual images that are concealed within ordinary images, visible only from a

specific viewpoint. For readers of Vico, the idea of anamorphy can be extended to cover (1) Vico's account of the composite nature of human creations and (2) Vico's methods — some of them strikingly optical — for discovering and deciphering their complexity. Because inversion began with perception, where the extended world of nature was seen in terms of bodies with demonic intentionalities, Vichian comprehension can retrace this process in reverse by paying attention to a topological rather than projective (Cartesian) use of dimensions and distances. As Vico points out, for the first humans the heavens were no further away than the tops of nearby mountains; Hades was as close as the bottom of the furrow. Near was construed as far. Distances were constructed as ritual relations.

Vico himself described his theory of history as an anamorph — a "parallax view" produced by the "twin eyes" of geography and chronology. Geography stood for the immediate contingent conditions that gave rise to the great variety of human cultures; chronology was the necessary sequence of cultural stages through which all cultures (as well as all individuals, institutions, and even events) had to pass. Each stage was defined in terms of a form of metaphor. In the first, the mythic "age of gods," humans unknowingly back-projected their robust sensuality onto the screen of external nature, regarding physical appearances as divine signs in need of translation. Mythic mentality was purely metaphorical but unaware of metaphor as such. It saw nature filled with literal messages from gods to humans. The practice of divination, the first form of knowledge, concealed the human authorship of natural signs.

Divination gave rise to the development of writing, the natural sciences, linear time (through genealogy), and prosaic rather than poetic language. As demonic nature and the cyclopean family were supplanted by models of individual autonomy (the fable of Odysseus's encounter with the Cyclops is a signature of this transition), a heroic age replaced the mythic one. Metaphor yielded to the more logical forms of metonymy and synecdoche. Family-based theocracies were secularized into representational governments with written laws. Finally, the power of language to distinguish objects from attributes laid the ground for a modern mentality able to abstract and objectify nature. Human relations could be conceptualized. Truth could serve logic rather than divine will. But, Vico's account of modern thought returns to the theme of barbarity. Where the violence of the age of the gods came from the body, modern violence is mental, the result of irony and the inversion of the principle of "pubic goods from private vices"; conscious attempts to do good inadvertently but unavoidably cause suffering.

Vico's historical stages applied also to individual development and even individual experiences, but because of this final ironic downturn, Vico did not privilege modernity as did Jean Piaget, whose scheme of developmental mentality resembles Vico's. Mythic thought was barbaric through the domination of the senses; modern rationalism was

barbaric in its addiction to technique and conceptualization. Thought began in poetic wildness and ended in logically justified madness. Yet, there was hope in this symmetry for a return or rebirth (*ricorso*). Clearly, Vico intended *The New Science* as a preparation for this rebirth. The Irish author James Joyce exploited the sequence of the "ideal eternal history" and *ricorso* rather clearly in his novels, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. The theme of "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" underscores the dynamics and scale-independence of Vico's three-part schema.

How Was Vico Received?

Vico has meant different things to different ages and ideologies. Modern philosophers have used Vico to counter positivism and technological domination. Academics have used Vico to protest the tunnel vision of disciplinary practices. While Nazis in the 1930s extolled Vico for his theory of nations, Marxists in the 1920s and 1950s applauded his account of the rise of the proletariat. The panorama of *The New Science* embraces a wide array of subjects. Therefore it was not surprising that, in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, prominent scholars from the humanities and social scientists convened a series of conferences that aimed to restore Vico to his rightful place in Western letters.[2]

Where were the "spatial" sciences and arts in all this? In the 1980s, several timely and comprehensive introductions specifically addressed Vico's value as a philosopher of place. The first was made by British scholar, William J. Mills. Mills positioned Vico opposite the Positivists and focused on the importance of Vico's principle, *verum ipsum factum* (*est*), interpreted generally as "the made and the true are convertible", or "humans can have true knowledge of what they have created." Having just completed the first version of the present text in the form of a dissertation in the subject of Geography but under the direction of the philosopher Donald Verene, I responded to Mills by showing how the imaginative universal could be regarded as an even more useful principle for creating a Vichian basis for a geographical theory of place. Our complementary introductions seemingly had much to offer humanist geographers responding to the growing use of quantitative methods. At the same time, Marco Frascari, an architect and educator who had just completed his study of architectural theorists of the Eighteenth Century Veneto at the University of Pennsylvania, introduced Vico as a major figure in his own proposals for a revamped semiotics of architectural criticism.

The short answer to how Vico was received by the groups that stood to benefit

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2 The revival of Vico during this period is owed to the efforts of Giorgio Tagliacozzo, a sociologist living in New York who, with the help of Edgar J. Kauffman and Sir Isaiah Berlin, organized the first conference on the occasion of of the tercentenary year of Vico's birth. Scholars, including Berlin, Herbert Read, Edmund Leach, Stuart Hampshire, René Wellek and Ernesto Grassi contributed to *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Hayden V. White (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969). Later confences led to similar publications: Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Donald Phillip Verene, eds., *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Giorgio Tagliacozzo, Michael Mooney, and Donald Phillip Verene, eds., *Vico and Contemporary Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979); and Giorgio Tagliacozzo, ed., *Vico and Marx: Affinities and Contrasts* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1983).

most from his specifically materialist-poetic humanism is that he was virtually ignored. Humanists in the spatial fields perennially faced charges of pastiche because they drew on a bewildering variety of resources. They might have found in Vico the basis for comprehensive, grounded theory. This did not happen. Vico, important for nearly every humanistic and social science, played no significant role in the development of a syncretic approach to place. This present volume could be seen as a Quixotic obsession to live within the extended pain of this rejection. While some masochism on this score can be admitted, there is the greater, quite compelling curiosity about how perfectly Vico's theory of human mentality, based on the very idea of resistance, continues to demonstrate its truths *primarily through phenomena of resistance*. There is something in resistance itself that reverts to the Renaissance dictum that "all truth is disguised." Vico creates a time-warp that enjoys a Lacanian "life between the two deaths," a momentum past the moment of actual rejection after troubled publication that, replicated by countless *other* momentums past *other* moments of rejection, has a story to tell.

This is the story of the uncanny's primary forms, which as Ernst Jentsch described them, "crisscross" life and death to produce the life driven by an unknown appointment with fate set opposite the counter-case of the deceased who does not yet know s/he has died, and persists within the interval recognized by all cultures as lying between actual and symbolic death.[3] *The New Science* is uncanny on many counts, as commentators have repeatedly noted, but that it is structurally and philosophically uncanny calls for a new view. Hence, the version of this book which appeared in 1987 calls out for a Borgesian echo event, a "twin" with which it may rotate between spheres of life and death, rising and falling as some meanings fade and others gain intelligence.

The interests that brought Vichian enthusiasts together in the decades of the 60s and 70s have given way to a congeries of attacks on the subject, subjectivity, and the whole set of enterprises identified with the humanities. There is no reason to review these; some were informative, others were not. "Cultural studies," the project led by Fredric Jameson into and out of the thickets of post-Modernism, abides in the present millennium. Its ebbs and flows have allowed the instructive revival of Freud and Lacan *via* the popular-culture Hegelianism of Slavoj Žižek, Mladen Dolar, Alenka Zupančič, Eric Santer, and others who have inadvertently revived Vico without needing to know much if anything about him. There is no accounting for the sympathetic liquidity of ideas that bonds Jacques Lacan to Giambattista Vico, just as there is little recognition as yet of such bonding by either camp. As far as I presently know, there is, apart from my writings, no other published claim of such a link, possibly because there is, for Lacanians

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3   Ernst Jentsch, "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen," *Psychiatrisch–Neurologische Wochenschrift* 8, 22 (August 26, 1906): 195–98 and 8, 23 (September 1, 1906): 203–05. Sigmund Freud took much from Jentsch's early work in his own article, "Die Unheimlich," *Imago* 5 (1914), 5-6, Reprinted in D. McLintock, trans., *The Uncanny* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).

or Vichians, little or nothing to be gained.[4] The lack of any recognized middle ground ironically compounds the negative capital of both Vico and Lacan. While this book is revised in light of several key Lacanian themes, it cannot adequately address the parallels between the two thinkers, if only because at the time of writing the original, Lacan was for me only a distant curiosity. This revised and expanded text can possibly open up Vico, so to speak, to the occasional curious Lacanian in hopes that the parallels may become slightly more workable. Coincidences will be obvious to the alert reader: an early version of the Mirror Stage, a vigorous involvements of such "partial objects" as the gaze and acousmatic voice, the formalization of the role of discourse as rhetorical, the "master signifiers" that reorient culture. Apart from this obtuse invitation, the Lacanian reader is left to go it alone. As with Vico's general ability to anticipate even the innermost thoughts of so many later thinkers, he remains an author for those accustomed to read between the lines.

What did *Thought and Place* accomplish that might justify a second, revised edition? Other books have more successfully brought attention to the subject of *agutezza*: Ernesto Grassi's book, *Rhetoric as Philosophy*, published in 1980, had already established a case for metaphor as more than poetic insightfulness. Grassi's relation of trope to truth was in fact one of the inspirations and sources for the first statement of my own ideas. Donald Verene's *Vico's Science of Imagination*, published in 1981, scouted out an unpopulated landscape. It was necessary only to consult these carefully annotated maps to work out my own itinerary. With inspiration from such giants as Michel Foucault, George Steiner, and Norman O. Brown, what traveler could have failed to enjoy such a pre-surveyed Grand Tour? The question is, did the tour of *Thought and Place* accomplish anything on its own? Did it establish itself as an authentic traveler, or just a tourist attentive to several good guidebooks?

There can be a few independent excursions to claim on this account. I happened across them in the same way being lost sometimes offers a new set of opportunities. I simply made the best use of an opportunity. First, I noted a pattern of misrepresentations in Vico's *Autobiography* that could not be laid to accident or faulty memory. Switching around dates and events, Vico constructed political intrigue where there was more likely only the fog of a politically dangerous Naples. The events of the Spanish Inquisition can't be underestimated. As with any totalitarian situation, words could land you in jail. The key to me seemed to be the fact that Vico adjusted his birth date to "lock in" the pattern of events he had re-ordered. Because I lacked the resources and energy to pursue this to the forensic standard the story deserved, I was content with the probable knowledge that Vico was capable of doing many sneaky things. He was literally encoding

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4 The admirable exception to this is a tantalizing prelude to the possibilities of a Vico-Lacan collaboration by Timothy D. Harfield, "Desire and the End of History: Repetition in Vico and Lacan," a paper presented at a conference on *Controversy: Within History and Classics*, The University of Alberta History & Classics Graduate Students Association, March 3–4, 2006, Edmonton, Alberta.

his writing to be deciphered in safer times.

The cipher-code idea led to the discovery of the importance of the helmet of Hermes, the only object not mentioned in Vico's otherwise complete inventory of the contents of the *dipintura*, the image inserted in the 1744 edition of *The New Science*. The trick of omission is a common one in coding. It is the case of the Sherlock Holmes "dog in the night-time," the dog that famously did not bark. Was the omission accidental? The detail of the accompanying text suggested it was not only intentional but significant at several levels. Homer, the blind poet, could be said to "look at" the helmet. His hand seems to gesture in the direction of the corner, the "last spot" to be visited by Vico's commentary in terms of the boustrophedon made to that point of premature ending. Was the silence on the matter of the helmet simply accidental, or was it a case of aposiopesis, the rhetorical trick of suddenly breaking off to indicate an unsaid — or un-sayable — meaning. Verene did not mention the case of the helmet in 1981, but he did acknowledge the cipher value of silence in his 2003 book on Vico and Joyce, *Knowledge of Things Human and Divine* and some earlier articles published in *New Vico Studies*. Is the "invisible helmet," correlated to the "silence clue" significant, or is it just a subtle pointer to a gnostic reading of *The New Science*? Is Vico "signalizing" the reader from within a silence imposed by the Inquisition and expectations of less adventurous readers? Does it tempt the ambitious reader into a scavenger hunt for more details, or make the official reasons for the "last-minute insertion" of the *dipintura* more enticing?

If anything, silence is the pedal tone of *The New Science*, the basis for any interpretation that wishes to get beyond the fragmentation and repetition that annoys so many readers. Silence is, after all, the modality of images as such, suggesting that *The New Science* as a whole works as a mental image within the tradition of artificial memory — that Vico conceived the reader as a mnemonicist able to use the text of *The New Science* as a memory place.

Vico would have been aware of what we today call "artificial intelligence" in the form of the externalized spatial memory technique discussed by Quintillian, Cicero, and others. He would have known the story of Simonides and very likely noticed its chiastic structure, as did I. But, why have modern scholars looking at this story not done the same? Even after publicizing the chiasmus of Simonides in later articles and lectures, no official notice has been taken of the symmetrical split that allows the story of the invention of artificial memory to provide this technique's most useful structural model. The model itself has been used, as Richard Kopley in his study of chiasmus in Edgar Allen Poe's "The Purloined Letter," *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, and other works has shown.[5] The term we might use today to describe the kind of "unconscious presence" derived from the cipher bridging the two halves of a chiastically divided tale — anamor-

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5   Richard Kopley, "Formal Considerations of the Dupin Mysteries," *Edgar Allan Poe and the Dupin Mysteries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 7–26.

phosis — applies to Vico perfectly. It seems that the chiasmus of artificial memory, which establishes the legitimacy of the claim to call it, without reservation or qualification, the paradigm of externalized mind, is "permanently secret" no matter how much it is exposed. From his fictionalization of his *Autobiography* to his silence on the matter of the helmet of Hermes, to his deployment of an anamorphic shadow within *The New Science*, Vico could be said to live up to the Renaissance ideal of disguised truth. Indeed, the motto, *verum ipsum factum*, appears in an entirely new light when placed in the context of codes and ciphers — a context that returns it to its Neoplatonic and esoteric origins. The argument for taking this step is not esoteric, however: it is that such a move opens up Vico to an expanded field, where he may at last operate alongside Freud, Lacan, and Žižek as well as Plato, Kant, and Hegel.

Verene's argument for rejecting psychoanalysis follows Joyce's famous quote, that Freud doesn't excite his imagination in the same way Vico does.[6] It would be hard to say that Joyce's imagination needed further boosting. The energy in *Finnegans Wake*, as Verene documented so well, is pure virtuosity. What could Freud possibly bring to Joyce's project, or by extension, to Vico's project? The case not made by *Thought and Place*, but one surely that could be made by a "Lacanian" reader, is that Vico's theory of metaphor is perfectly set up to discover how negation, *extimité*, sexuation, desire/*jouissance*, master signification, and other Lacanian concepts might carry Vico into the brain of Freud who, as an almost ideally *un*-imaginative thinker, is an *anima* (psyche) waiting for an impregnating *animus* (wit). The original *Thought and Place* was not in the position to provide this incentive; I hope the revision makes the transfer somewhat more worthwhile. My limited claim is to have made the connection between Vico and Lacan attractive, productive, and ultimately inevitable, without myself being aware of the fundamentals of Lacan's theory of the subject at the time of writing the first edition. My ignorance is offered as proof that Vico was himself, as Slavoj Žižek would put it anachronistically, "an avid reader of Lacan."

If the silence about the helmet and the chiasmus of the Simonides story were the main accomplishments of the first *Thought and Place*, the book's original assault on the essential positivism of "humanistic geography" must admit defeat. Any glance at contemporary social sciences dealing with spatial perception would face a disappointing scoreboard. Resistance *to* Vico's promising, novel ways of looking at landscape must be regarded as the resistance *of* Vico's theories in the same way that a dream resists being remembered. Vico's secrets and silences are permanently so, because secrecy and silence are permanently embedded within their very nature. The Renaissance idea of esoteric truth is "psychoanalytically" bound up with the unconscious and must play by the rules governing the inherent Manicheanism of dreams and realities. In this re-

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6   Donald Phillip Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); also *A Knowledge of Things Human and Divine: Vico's* New Science *and* Finnegans Wake (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 16.

gard, the real accomplishment of *Thought and Place* might be its failures rather than its successes. This is not to justify textual or scholarly errors, but to suggest that the positivism that dominated modernism in the Twentieth Century has, like an insidious virus, permuted into political forms that allow it to persist in the Twenty-first. The terms biopolitics and biopower, in use for some 60 years before Foucault made them famous through his lectures at the Collège de France in the 1970s, address the contagious nature of ideology, how it is able to infect the public mentality without conscious awareness of those who inadvertently promote it, through practices, through consumer behavior, through participation in what Guy Dubord called the "society of spectacle," and even through intimate thoughts and desires, which they live in the delusion of regarding as their inmost private possessions.[7]

Who, more than Vico, could have anticipated this level of social control? What is the imaginative universal, the heroic universal, and Vico's account of the modern concept if not *a mathematically constructed viral pathway*? What, if not "resistance" — a permanent quality of esoteric invisibility — could explain how one insidious idea is able to go everywhere while its antidote is blocked at every turn? Vico's value is proved even by those who are unconscious of it, who have inadvertently described the dark side of the biopolitical and at the same time left out Vico, just as Vico "left out" the helmet of Hermes as a model for all subsequent dialectical relationships.

Vico of course would not know what I'm talking about. Anyone wanting to refute the above could simply cite the master. But, Vico *did* know a lot about another contagious disease, melancholy — to the extent that he could quote chapter and verse from the playbook he used to construct his own melancholic personality. What has now become a minor *topos* for humanities scholars has not been recognized at the level Vico understood and deployed it: a precondition for the Hegelian dynamic of dialectic, negation in its full glory, related (as Lacan insisted) to sexuation, ideology, paternity, political formations, the historical imagination, and the use of poetics as a form of resistance. Vico pushed all the buttons in the melancholia paradigm. What he did not mention was supplemented by what he put into practice. One can acknowledge Vico's autobiographical references to melancholy and still miss the forest for seeing this tree. In fact, Vico included his own version of Dante's *selva oscura* by designing a one-dimensional labyrinth-text as the primary *domus* of black bile. Melancholy was not a predicate; it was a battle plan. And, so, for us, melancholy *as resistance* is not a problem but a truth, and a way to more truth.

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7   Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* (New York: Plagrave Macmillan, 2008).

Acknowledgements

Twenty-five years is a long time to abide with the minor life of a minor text — all self-serving modesty aside. The first edition of the edition published by Peter Lang in 1987 was met with perceptive and auspicious reviews by David Leatherbarrow and John Pickles. To those early and accurate readers, I owe both gratitude and admiration for spotting the gem in the rough that was never quite to leave the rough. In the process of reflecting on this text over the decades since publication, I owe a debt to colleagues and collaborators who have allowed me to re-think its positions. Marco Frascari was perhaps the first to give me hope that a Vichian might survive in architecture school academia. Arthur Chen was one of the first to talk seriously about architecture as a way of thinking, and he warmed quickly to Vico's main tenets in his own work. Throughout my various Vichian projects, Giorgio Tagliacozzo offered encouragement, friendship, and conviviality. At a key point, Ernesto Grassi provided some key evidence that I might be on the right track. At Penn State, Joseph Kockelmans, Henry Johnson, Ivan Illych, and Dominique Janicaud provided light in dark times.

Donald Verene, editor of the Emory Vico Series in which the first edition appeared as volume 2, began my Vico adventure and provoked its several twists and turns. He is, by any measure, the recognized giant of Vico scholarship. His multiple books and articles, his insights, and his tireless efforts to maintain Vico's place in contemporary philosophy cannot be summed up. Without his wit, I would never have been able to see past the barriers that confront any new reader. Without his severe Jovian thunder I would never have been able to find my own secondary voice.

George Kleindorfer, Alan Knight, and James Martin gave me many convivial opportunities to develop the first book and reflect critically about the needed revisions. Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Daniel Libeskind were early readers of the text. Their encouragements and suggestions continue to play a part. Torben Berns, a Vichian more than he knows, has provoked me, again without knowing it, to re-write many passages of this second edition with our discussions in mind. Gunalan Nadarajan never tired of insisting that I put my thoughts into public order. *In memoriam*, I will never forget friends who were a part of the original project and whose influence I can still hear in the text — Fakhri Grine, Peter Gould, Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. — or my family, three women who constituted my first exacting but all-merciful tribunal. There are others, but no one can replace the encouragement, advice, and inspiration that Elaine Kunze always brings to my projects.

I
THE IDEA OF PLACE

The Origins of the Modern Idea of Place

The modern interest in the subject of place has two independent and sometimes discordant origins. The first is what contemporary geographers have called "the Landscape Tradition," derived from the primarily German practice of combining the empirical data of many categories into a synthetic account of the unitary qualities of place.[1] This account is closely allied with the "sense of place" experienced by the sensitive visitor or astute native, and the Landscape Tradition has included among its topics the study of place perception.[2] In its present form, it has been alloyed with psychology's interests in cognition, the study of culture, and the humanities in general. The wholistic sense of the landscape as phenomenon, it is argued, is essential to the human experience and is one of its *native* assets. Inasmuch as science fragments this sense, the humanities are put forward as the glue for reunification.

The second origin of the interest in place is rhetoric, where "place" indicates a *locus* or *topos* of a mental nature. Originally these terms may have indicated a physical place in a oral speech. Subsequently, they came to stand for the commonplace or enthymemic idea shared by the speaker and his/her audience, which could be expressed in an abbreviated form. This sense of place as a mental rather than a physical location conveys the colloquial idea of place as a generic environing condition or commonplace human situation, such as "the place of art in life," where there is only a slight sense of the physical metaphor. But, this use can and often does acquire a strong physical sense, as in the place of "Main Street," where a physical place has been troped into an idea with utopian (or dystopian) social, political, and historical pedal tones.

Many have used the rhetorical sense of place without being much interested in its history. To trace this, one must face the troublesome question of how this sense has survived the period following the Enlightenment, when the theory and practice of oratory suffered decline and neglect. By the late Seventeenth Century, it was necessary to defend the art of rhetoric against the increasing criticisms made of it as the projects of the

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1   Marvin W. Mikesell, "Landscape," in *The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. Edwin R. A. Seligman and Alvin Johnson, vols. 7 and 8 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1968), 575–580.

2   The most famous statement of this view may be found in John K. Wright, "'*Terræ Incognitæ*': The Role of the Imagination in Geography," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 37 (1947): 1–15, reprinted in John K. Wright, *Human Nature in Geography, Fourteen Papers 1925–1965* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1966), 68–88. Page references are to the anthology.

Enlightenment took hold. As against a direct and clear expression of certain truths, rhetoric was held to be deceptive, merely ornamental, and antithetical to rational thought. Its defenders took the side of topical thinking as a means to wisdom through ingenuity. But, increasingly this idea of mental acuity was restricted to poetic expression, and "place" as a topic or metaphor was given a private and subjective turn. It is this sense that has been most emphasized in the Landscape Tradition's revivals of place, but here subjectivity has been the object of rather than a means to study.[3] Place in its rhetorical sense has been identified with a pre-scientific or naïve attitude toward landscape. Thus, the studies of perception undertaken by cognitive geographers and psychologists have treated place largely as a nexus of attitudes.

The history of the landscape idea illustrates how this may have evolved. Landscape, Denis Cosgrove writes, first emerged as a *way of seeing* in the Fifteenth and early Sixteenth Centuries. As a term it owed much to painting, where it was first employed in a technical way to denote that part of the painting portraying the visual zone behind the figure.[4] As the theory and practice of perspective gained prominence, this background became a figure in its own right. The new interest in landscape as a phenomenon visually interesting in itself was coupled with other consequences of the Sixteenth Century's improved abilities to measure space and time. Galileo's measure of the heavens was exceeded by earthly achievements in geodesy, cartography, navigation, and chronometry that generated new "internal" ideas of spatial order that radically changed European ideas about the city, the countryside, and their interrelation. Cosgrove summarizes:

> Landscape was, over much of its history, closely bound up with the practical appropriation of space …. Its connections were with the survey and mapping of newly-acquired, consolidated and "improved" commercial estates in the hands of an urban bourgeoisie, with the calculation of distance and trajectory for cannon fire and of defensive fortifications against the new weaponry; and with the projection of the globe and its regions onto map graticules by cosmographers and chorographers, those essential set designers for Europe's entry centre-stage of the world's theatre. In painting and garden design landscape achieved visually and ideologically what survey, map making and ordnance charting achieved practically: the control and domination over space as an absolute, objective entity, its transformation into the property of individual or state. And landscape achieved these ends by use of the same techniques as the practical sciences, principally by applying Euclidian geometry as the guarantor of certainty in spatial conception, organization and representation. In the case of landscape the technique was optical, linear perspective, but the principles to be learned were identical to those of architecture, survey, map-making and artillery science. The same handbooks taught the practitioners of all these arts.[5]

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3   Wright, "'Terræ Incognitæ'," 11.

4   Denis Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective, and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series 10, 1 (1985): 46. See also, by the same author, Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape (London: Croom Helm, 1984).

5   Cosgove, *ibid*., 46.

Through the new techniques of perspective, painting was able to assert as science the same representational powers it had formerly carried under the flag of art. This new alliance between art and science had far-ranging consequences. Allied with optics and strengthened by the techniques of geometry, perpectivists could claim that they measured what they saw and drew what they measured. The taste for the unification of the open countryside promoted by Claude, Ruysdale, Constable and other artists could be felt in the halls of parliaments, as attempts to consolidate land holdings forced the depopulation of rural areas and the erasure of Medieval civic usages. Estates were laid out with a painter's eye, and the frequent obstacles to that vision — villages, crofter's houses, and commons — were doomed.[6]

In addition to the effects of the visual on the visual, perspectivalism was ideologically linked to the new power that came into being to insure such changes in the landscape. Just as pictorial perspective sought a landscape free from visual discontinuities, the rationalized political thought of Europe devised imaginary spaces between governments and individuals, causes and effects, sanity and madness — spaces of unobstructed access.[7] Michel Foucault has characterized this equality of power and space as a "Panopticism" (totalizing visibility), which appropriated space and its visuality in the interests of rationalized control.

> A fear haunted the latter half of the eighteenth century: the fear of darkened spaces, of the pall of gloom which prevents the full visibility of things, men and truths. It sought to break up the patches of darkness that blocked the light, eliminate the shadowy areas of society, demolish the unlit chambers where arbitrary political acts, monarchical caprice, religious superstitions, tyrannical and priestly plots, epidemics and the illusions of ignorance were fomented. The chateaux, lazarets, bastilles and convents inspired in the pre-Revolutionary period a suspicion and hatred exacerbated by a certain political overdetermination. The new political and moral order could not be established until these places were eradicated. During the Revolutionary period the Gothic novels develop a whole fantasy-world of stone walls, darkness, hideouts and dungeons which harbour, in significant complicity, brigands and aristocrats, monks and traitors. The landscapes of Ann Radcliffe's novels are composed of mountains and forests, caves, ruined castles and terrifyingly dark and silent convents. Now these imaginary spaces are like the negative of the transparency and visibility which it is aimed to establish. This reign of "opinion," so often invoked at this time, represents an mode of operation through which power will be exercised by virtue of the mere fact of things being known and people seen in a sort of immediate, collective and anonymous gaze. A form of power whose main instance is that of opinion will refuse to tolerate areas of darkness. If Bentham's project [the Panopticon design for the ideal prison] aroused interest, this was because it provided a formula applicable to many domains, the formula of "power through transparency," subjection by "illumination." In the Panopticon, there is a used a form close to that of the castle — a

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6   Christopher Hussey, *The Pictureque, Studies in a Point of View* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1967). Also, Elizabeth W. Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England, A Study Chiefly of the Influence of Claude Lorraine and Salvator Rosa on English Taste, 1700–1800* (New York: Oxford University, 1925).

7   See also: Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 174.

keep surrounded by walls — to paradoxically create a space of exact legibility.[8]

Foucault's ghastly equation of of unobstructed access between knowledge and its objects came to be expressed in many forms, but none so literal and transparent as that which served as a source for Foucault's term, Jeremy Bentham's proposed prison design. Bentham's own account of the prison and its accomplishments cannot be improved upon as a statement of the age's perspectival interests:

> Morals reformed — health preserved — industry invigorated — instruction diffused — public burthens lightened — Economy seated, as it were, upon a rock — the gordian knot of the Poor-Laws not cut, but untied — all by a simple idea in Architecture ….
>
> It occurred to me, that the plan of a building, lately contrived by my brother, for purposes in some respects similar, and which, under the name of the *Inspection House*, or the *Elaboratory*, he is about erecting here … [is] capable of applications of the most extensive nature ….
>
> It will be found applicable, I think, to … the *punishing the incorrigible*, *guarding the insane*, *reforming the vicious*, *confining the suspected*, *employing the idle*, *maintaining the helpless*, *curing the sick*, *instructing the willing* in any branch of industry, or *training the rising race* in the paths of education: in a word, whether it be applied to the purposes of perpetual prisons in the room of death, or prisons for confinement before trial, or penitentiary-houses, or houses of correction, or work houses, or manufactories, or mad-houses, or hospitals, or schools ….
>
> The building is circular.
>
> The apartment of the prisoners occupy the circumference. you may call them, if you please, the *cells*.
>
> These *cells* are divided from one another, and the prisoners by that means secluded from all communication from each other, by *partitions* in the form of *radii* issuing from the circumference towards the center, and extending as many feet as shall be thought necessary to form the largest dimension of the cell.
>
> The apartments of the Inspector occupies the center; you may call it if you please the *Inspector's lodge*….
>
> Each cell has in the outward circumference, a *window*, large enough, not only to light the cell, but, through the cell, to afford light enough to the correspondent part of the lodge.…
>
> I flatter myself there can now be little doubt of the plan's possessing the fundamental advantages I have been attributing to it: I mean, the *apparent omnipresence* of the Inspector (if divines will allow me that expression), combined with the extreme facility of his *real presence*.
>
> You will please to observe, that though perhaps it is not the most important point, that the persons to be inspected should always feel themselves as if under inspection, at least as standing a great chance of being so, yet it is not by any means the only one.[9]

Panopticism constitutes a succinct geometry of a society that defines its primary mental and social relationships in terms of radial lines. the dialectic between the core and periphery establishes a single-valued logic: madness is known as an absence of

8   Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge, Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. and trans. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 153–154.

9   Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon: Postscript …* (Dublin: Thomas Byrne, 1791), 2–7.
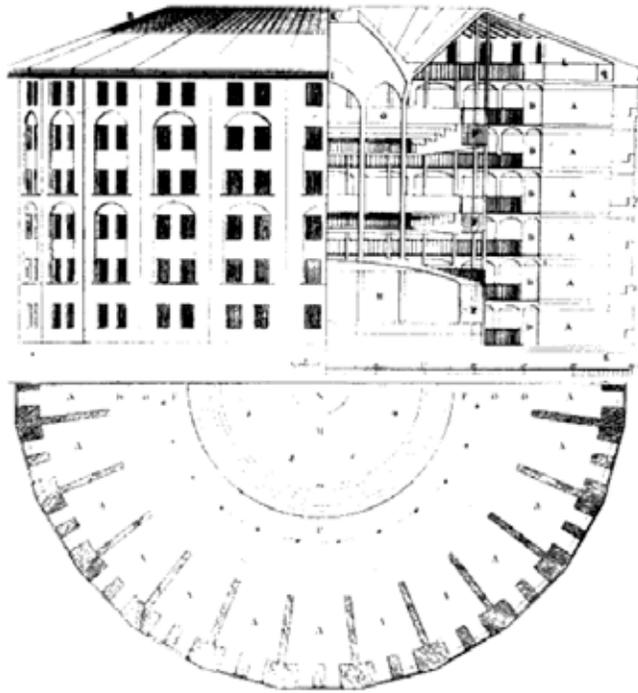
Panopticon half-plan, section, and elevation

sanity, crime as a lack of virtue, ignorance as thought in want of knowledge. The line connecting these paired opposites is aggressive and progressive. There is no middle term or golden mean but only a temporary horizon that serves partly to advance, partly to defend.

Denis Cosgrove has contrasted this perspectival geometry with Medieval life, its historical antecedent, which contrasts with it as a geometry of discontinuities and ruptures.[10] Medieval relationships were concentric, and although the structure was hierarchical, each rank passed through the same radial lines, as it were, and thereby constituted a microcosm of the whole. Nature was fearfully present in such societies, not as a region or idea, but as a boundary to be observed in all transitions and transactions. Death was at hand because such boundaries mimicked the absolute logic of life and death in the motions of the days, the seasons, the great events — all marked with symbolically correlated religious and secular celebrations.

A good deal of cultural and intellectual history beckons at this point. It would be interesting, for example, to trace the development of Romanticism in terms that would illuminate the role of Panopticism as a counterpart of the Gothic imagination. Undoubtedly, the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century's fascination with ruins, its diverse interests in the question of antiquity and human origins, its penchant for educational travel,

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10 Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 82–89.

and its identification of wilderness with the sublime could deepen enormously our sense of this period. Philosophy, psychology, cartography, language, social institutions, the evolution of cities, the transformation of the landscape — all of these must have been altered by so fundamental a change in human sensibilities, and each in turn must have its own testimony.

However, my focus is limited, and I can do no more at this point than briefly acknowledge a few key works that begin to define that altered view. Rose Macaulay's classic, *The Pleasure of Ruins*, serves as a guidebook to archaeological sites popular since ancient times. Geoffrey Galt Harpham's *On the Grotesque* takes an extremely important transect through this period. And, Christopher Thacker's *The Wildness Pleases* lays out the issues and their relationships.[11] All literature on Romanticism is relevant to some degree, and there is no point in making distinctions. Even such a classic and controversial work as Mario Praz's *Romantic Agony*, read with an eye for the use of place, becomes an essay on the spatial liminality of voluntary evil; and almost any other work could bear a similar re-reading from a spatial point of view.[12]

Returning to the question of how the two sources of our modern understanding of place compare, one must ask: what aspects of the modern study of place are "Panoptical," and what are the effects of this Panopticism? Foucault has traced much of he subtle exchanges between the arts, letters, sciences, and social institutions in the development of the "classical episteme."[13] My main concern is to specify the context of belief that brings the landscape school's idea of place into focus, and to ask how it happened that the socio-scientific interest in place grew out of a sensibility that enabled, for the first time, an ideological use of place for the purposes of control, centralization, and defense.

Panopticism and the Landscape Tradition

Romanticism in literature and art was not without its influences on science. As Goethe and Smollet made their tours famous in books, so did Charles Lyell, Alexander von Humboldt, William Bartram, and Charles Darwin. The interests of the two groups were remarkably similar. They commented on nature and customs alike, sometimes in alternation but for the most part as one related to the other, and the Vitruvian concept of healthy settings and Herodotian style of description were influential. Place played a new part as a means of setting the intellectual at a distance from society, thrown against a nature whose signs held the key to the puzzle of natural and human origins.

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11   Rose Macaulay, *The Pleasure of Ruins* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1953); Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *On the Grotesque, Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1982); Christopher Thacker, *The Wildness Pleases, The Origins of Romanticism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983).

12   Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, trans. Angus Davidson (New York: Oxford University, 1951).

13   Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things, An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1971).

The moment that Europe realized that things buried had been buried a revealing order that was an index of history itself heralded a new age of personal exploration. Who can underestimate the importance of this age's fascination with sedimentary rock! Playfair's doctrine of geological uniformity, which argued against catastrophism by imputing identical geological processes to all periods of time, did not blunt the interest in the "catastrophic" landscapes of the Alps or the general belief in the universal flood.[14] It only sharpened the awareness of the great amount of evidence that lay in the landscape, open to speculation.

The increasing romanticization of the idea of *terra incognita* was both mental and physical. This was an age turned out-of-doors, and of it was born the identification of intellectual discovery with physical exploration. Thus nature, as what is "natural," became the object of projects of knowledge, and the un-natural, like the monsters of Herodotus, remained on the periphery. Strange and unknown places were associated with those faculties that were strange and unknown to the mind itself, imagination and emotion. The idea that the unknown was in itself a threat grew, in great part, out of the fear that the fantastic was a threat to sanity, probity, rationality. No clearer view of this has been made than Joseph Conrad's classic *Heart of Darkness*, where the relationship between madness and sanity is made geographically specific. Kurz, the agent stationed at a remote outpost in the Belgian Congo, goes insane because he no longer attends to the rational tasks that work as a prophylaxis against the phantasms of myth.

Mental defensiveness, in this case, is able to use the equipment of spatial defenses. A perimeter must be known and "reknown" (re-connaissance), patrolled; and, elements that lie on the perimeter must be made to answer (their obligation to respond is partially moral in nature). Responses must be centralized. And, correspondingly, power as discipline must flow outward from a central point. Foucault again provides the best anecdotal evidence of this structure.[15] As the plague approached the town of Vincennes in the Thirteenth Century, a system of guards, syndics, and patrols was organized to visit the front of each house daily. Those within were required to respond, at the window of each house, to all questions put by the inspectors — to report the number inhabitants living, sick, or dead. Failure to appear at the window was punishable by death. All information was relayed through a hierarchical organization back to a central committee, and their orders were executed through the same network. Foucault's example may seem to be drawn from extremity, but it is useful to follow the history of later responses to epidemics, especially in the period before the nature of contagion was understood to be dependent on certain vectors. The issue is not an event in medical history but the operation

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14 John Playfair, *Illustrations of the Huttonian Theory of the Earth* (Edinburgh: for Cadell and Davies; and Creech, 1802).

15 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things, An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971.)

of an idea of order revolutionized by the idea of visibility. As Bentham had suggested, this idea is good not just for countering threats to social order: it is a means of thinking about anything human whatsoever.

To develop this point, I have selected two important texts from works in the Landscape Tradition, to show how mental and spatial defensiveness is interchanged. They are familiar to Anglo-American geographers, and are cited frequently as seminal and representative studies: John K. Wrights's essay "*Terræ Incognitæ*: The Place of the Imagination in Geography" (1946), and David Lowenthal's "Geography, Experience, and Imagination: Towards a Geographical Epistemology" (1961).[16] John K. Wright is perhaps most famous for introducing geographers to a modification of what Edmund Husserl in 1931 called "the natural standpoint." Wright argued that geographic thought is native to ordinary human experience, and that any full understanding of geography as a science requires some account of the origins of this standpoint.[17] Moreover, Wright held that geographic study could profit from the use of evidence from this standpoint, whether from a historical, anthropological, socio-psychological, or philosophical perspective. The difficulty facing Wright concerned the natural standpoint's a-scientific interests and methods. Unlike scientific geography, "naïve" geographies emphasized coherence over correspondence of images with facts, meaning over verifiability. Initially, such differences were avoided by studies of the natural standpoint ("environmental perception") that examined only those situations where naïve geographers faced problems similar to those faced by scientific ones: orientation and way finding, response to natural hazards, and map use.[18] But, the evidence from such cases did not inform that region of the natural standpoint occupied by dreams, the imagination, or even the drama of personal interaction.

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16 John K. Wright, "Terræ Incognitæ," *op. cit*.; David Lowenthal, "Geography, Experience, and Imagination: Towards a Geographic Epistemology," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 51, 3 (1961): 241–260. Both essays are reprinted in Paul W. English and Robert C. Mayfield, eds., *Man, Space and Environment, Concepts in Contemporary Human Geography* (Nw York: Oxford University, 1972), 219–243. Page references are to the anthology.

17 Edmund Husserl, *Ideas, General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Boyce Gibson (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1931), 91–100.

18 For example, see C. C. Trowbridge, "On Fundamental Methods of Orientation and 'Imaginary Maps'," *Science* 38, 990 (1913): 888–897. Downs and Stea have claimed that geographers interested in the natural attitude "are concerned with phenomena so much part of our everyday lives and normal behavior that we naturally overlook them and take them for granted." Roger M. Downs and David Stea, "Cognitive Maps and Spatial Behavior: Processes and Products," in *Image and Environment, Cognitive Mapping and Spatial Behavior* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1973), 8. Later, they add that "human behavior is dependent on the individual's cognitive map of the spatial environment. That this formulation is necessary is indicated by a comparison of the characteristics of the individual with those of the spatial environment" (9). Downs' and Stea's statements are consistent with early, seminal definitions of the geographical natural attitude based on a distinction between the behavioral and geographical environment, such as W. Kirk, "Historical Geography and the Concept of the Behavioral Environment," in G. Kuriyan, ed., *Indian Geographical Journal*, Silver Jubilee Edition (Madras: Indian Geographical Society, 1951): 152–160; and L. J. Wood, "Perception Studies in Geography," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (1970): 129–141. Highly influential works coming from outside the discipline were: Kurt Koffka, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, Inc., 1935); Harold Sprout and Margaret Sprout, *The Ecological Perspective on Human Affairs, With Special Reference to International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1965); Kenneth Boulding, *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1973); and Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960).

Wright was the first to claim legitimacy for the natural standpoint, but he was careful to include certain qualifications. Attentive to the interests of science, he flagged the reference to subjectivity with a neologism, "geosophy."

> Geosophy … is the study of geographical knowledge from any or all points of view. To geography what historiography is to history, it deals with the nature and expression of geographical knowledge both past and present — with what Whittlesey has called "man's sense of (terrestrial) space." Thus it extends far beyond the core area of scientific geographical knowledge as otherwise systematized by geographers. Taking into account the whole peripheral realm, it covers the geographical ideas, both true and false, of all manner of people — not only geographers but farmers and fishermen, business executives and poets, novelists and painters, Bedouins and Hottentots — and for this reason it necessarily has to do in large degree with subjective conceptions. Indeed, even those parts of it that deal with scientific geography must reckon with human desires, motives, and prejudices. ["*Terræ Incognitæ*," 83]

Wright's study of such desires, motives, and prejudices adopted the format of Herodotus by setting up an interior *œcumene*, or civilized world, bounded by a horizon marking the ideal tour of the historian. Christian Van Paasen has noted that this line was partly a geographic boundary, partly a psychological barrier between truth and illusion:

> [Classical] geography is not a regional geography, nor is it a geography of history, nor a "historical" topography. It is a general geography which aims at exploring the horizon of the *œcumene*. This aim forms part of [its] general purpose, *viz*., to know "historical" reality in time and space; this necessitates an elimination of myth from such reality; the process of elimination is obviously concentrated on the borderline of myth and reality, a borderline which lies in the far distances of time and space.[19]

The resemblance of this model to Bentham's Panopticon was not accidental, for in the Herodotean model knowledge remains at the center and sees its subject in profile, as a *monstrum* half-man (knowable), half-beast (inexplicable).

> As generally understood, subjectivity implies … a mental disposition to conceive of things with references to oneself — that is to say, either as they appear to one personally, or as they affect or may be affected by one's personal interests or desires. … Thus we may distinguish between (1) strictly impersonal objectivity, (2) illusory subjectivity, and (3) realistic, or one might even say objective, subjectivity. ["*Terræ Incognitæ*," 74]

Second, the line of visibility is regarded in a moral sense as a line of possible falsification and indulgence to be pushed outward as fantasy is converted to fact.

> Naturally, imaginative fancies that stem from some special idiosyncrasy or peculiar and passing emotional state of a writer, or that are merely whimsical, have no legitimate place in geographical expositions if they create false impressions. I should be exceeding the limits of the subjective were I to describe my Maine woodlot as an abode of hobgoblins, elves, and werewolves, even though my imagination might relish so picturing it on

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19   Christian van Paasen, *The Classical Tradition of Geography* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1957), 150.

a moonlit night.

> The purpose of intuitive imagining … is objective, in that the intent here is to secure realistic conceptions. It is, nevertheless, a subjective process because it makes use of one's personal impressions of selected facts instead of impersonally considering and weighing all pertinent evidence. Much of the world's accumulated wisdom has thus been acquired, not from the rigorous application of scientific research, but through the skillful intuitive imagining — or insight — of philosophers, prophets, statesmen, artists, and scientists. ["*Terræ Incognitæ*," 78, 75]

There was in Wright only a thin suggestion of the Panoptical practice of isolating subjects from each other by ignoring their similarities as subjects. Wright referred subjective characteristics to matters of objective "fact" — a relation he takes to be a token of civilized sociability. But, the sequel to Wright's inverted encomium to the imagination, David Lowenthal's "Geography, Experience, and Imagination," was more definitive. Lowenthal described knowledge as a core of consensual, conventional, and normative ideas, values, and beliefs about which subjects *qua* subjects are always eccentrically disposed. One part of their psyche is in shared reality and another in a "personal world" where "characters of fable and fiction reside and move about."[20] Lowenthal's distinction between these two worlds was based on the idea of clear statement: "every aspect of the public image is conscious and communicable, whereas many of our private impressions are inchoate, diffuse, irrational, and can hardly be formulated even to ourselves."[21] The structure of his argument was progressive. In the first section, Lowenthal distinguished the professional from the natural standpoint. In the second, he defined knowledge as normative and consensual, making first an objective qualification (the consensus is never universally accepted) and then a subjective one (some — children, psychotics, idiots, mystics — can never share it). The natural standpoint was later characterized as "anthropomorphic" and mutable over time.

The part of the Panopticon missing in Wright was addressed directly in Lowenthal's final pages, where "personal geographies" were given a relative value and at the same time isolated from each other. Lowenthal adopted a pragmatic stance to show that whatever differences separated different personal and cultural geographies, each was especially adopted to conditions:

> If the picture of the world were not fairly consistent with the world outside, we should be unable to survive in any environment other than a mental hospital. And if our private milieus were not recognizably similar to one another, we could never have constructed a common world view.… However, a perfect fit between the outside world and our views of it is not possible; indeed, complete fidelity would endanger survival.… Everyday perception tends to be selective, creative, fleeting, inexact, generalized, stereotyped just because imprecise, partly erroneous impressions about the world in general often convey

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20 Lowenthal, "Geography, Experience, and Imagination," 230.

21 *Ibid.*, 230.

more than exact details about a small segment of it.[22]

Finally, and this is the most important point, all relative world views were organized with respect to the core, which is not the "world view" of consensual personal geographies but the view of the professional. This includes not just the geographers Lowenthal desribed in the text in terms such as "many-sided," "conscious," "orderly," "objective," "consistent," "universal," and "theoretical"; but the professionals packed into the voluminous footnotes of his work. Reading itself is forced to follow a Panoptical movement from the real core, the authoritative bottom of the page, to the periphery, the prose topics fixed above in a one-to-one correspondence to their scientific sources.

Together, these texts by Wright and Lowenthal had the effect of fixing a mental vocabulary of oppositions, logical relationships, reciprocal forces, centers and peripheries. Accounts of the natural geographic standpoint acquired a standard form which persisted in the face of a variety of approaches, methods, and opinions. Human worlds were constructed, it was held, out of a *need* and *necessity* to provide a solid basis for action, thought, and perception out of what was scientifically "more real" — complete, but indeterminate. Lacking a knowledge of the geographically real, the natural standpoint established itself within a limited range of apparent possibilities which it accepted according to a standard of common sense. Behind these accepted regions, the "objective" environment worked as a regulator, a template, an ultimate context. Regional truths became "arguments" about the nature of this ultimate context, competing with other truths within an ecological scheme of limited resources. The natural standpoint became important because it randomized human response to the physical through the media of perception, value, and belief. If subjects did not believe what they saw to be real in some way, Lowenthal argued, they would never persist in developing a special niche; but, unless there were an ultimately real geographical environment, there would be no successes or failures among these diverse *modes de vie*.[23] In general, while the professional interest in the natural geographic standpoint resulted in a number of beneficial connections with disciplines and traditions which refreshed the geographer's outlook, the use of the natural standpoint to differentiate the "naïvely" or regionally real from the scientifically real had the effect of pulling the ordinary experience of place down to a physicalistic and reductionistic ground. It is always necessary, within this framework,

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22   *Ibid*., 231.

23   As Peter Gould has pointed out, the usefulness of the distinction between the geographical (natural) and behavioral (phenomenal) environments is that culture, attitude, experience, belief, and so on can be subsumed within a "game theoretic" framework. By seeing the geographical-behavioral division in terms of an adversary relationship, strategies for competing for resources (which must, in this view, be regarded as limited) can be mathematized using probability theory. The significance of "mini-max" solutions for human behavior, even in contexts of traditional cultures, has been used to argue for continuing the dichotomy in which single-valued logics define the behavioral environment in terms of its privations, both from full and accurate knowledge and from nature as a resource. Peter R. Gould, "Man Against His Environment," A Game-Theoretic Framework," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 53 (1963): 290–297.

to portray the subjective view as "nothing but" a means to some end which could possibly be useful to the subject without being acknowledged reflectively by her/him. The dualism of the strategy granted a certain kind of authenticity to culturally and individually specific ways of seeing the world, but it withheld the possibility of transcending these immanent worlds for anything other than the scientific view. In short, topics related to the natural standpoint, such as perception, imagination, metaphor, and so on, were required to relate "regional truths" to some ultimately real environment. Regional truths were seen to grow out of a need *for* omission, *by* a process of omission. This not only restricted the natural standpoint's claim to be complete, but it saw perception and thought as forms of representing. As a result, most geographers' theories of perception and cognition were constrained by the disadvantages inherent in all representationalist accounts.

Three ideas typically accompany the interest in the natural standpoint: relativism, representationalism, and skepticism, with each presupposing the presence of the others as if they were simply different aspects of the same thing. This relationship has resulted from the phenomenon of *polysemy*: the fact that, for whatever reasons, different people frequently see the "same" place in different ways.[24] Granting any authority at all to the act of perception calls for a relativism, in which each different view may be justified in some way. Differences among perceptions are accounted as differences in representations, as if many imperfect copies were made of a single original. Imperfection benefits the natural standpoint, it is argued, since omission and selection serve important survival functions. In addition to relativism and representationalism, the natural standpoint has provoked a radical skepticism about knowledge of the subject and a reductionism which "explains" the subject's behavior in terms of external, environmental conditions and effects. In most studies of the perception of place, two assumptions are virtually unquestioned: (1) that we can never know either subjects or objects non-contingently, but that subjects are cut off from us in ways that objects are not; and (2) that communication among subjects is a part of a continuum between the extreme private and the extreme public worlds — where cultural forms of reality are simply more "regional" and specific than scientific forms, where value and meaning are achieved at the expense of universality. Both of these assumptions are the products of the development of perspectivalism in the graphic arts and geometry and representationalism in language and science. As an approach to the question of place, the Landscape Tradition must address both its past development and present state, for it is more a product of the interaction

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24   While the term "polysemy" is not common in geographical discourse, the subject has been treated by major writers in the field under the rubrics of attitudes, viewpoints, and other indices of variable human perception of the "same" scene. For an early and classical review of the issue, see Donald W. Meinig, "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene," *Landscape Architecture* (January 1976): 47–64. For a discussion of the origin of the term "polysemy" in Donatus's criticism of Virgil, see: Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant, The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), 137.

of place and thought than an instrument for discovering just what this interaction might be.

To summarize this criticism of the "Landscape Tradition" as embodied by Wright and Lowenthal, it is necessary to return to the original contrast of the Medieval city — replete with frames, distinctions, levels, thresholds, and boundaries of all kinds — with the Renaissance city, with vast open courtyards terminated by *tempieti*, ordered according to the principles of perspective. There are two arguments one can advance: first, that the principles of constructing visual space and the structure of knowledge ran in parallel from this point, and that certain interesting correlations (e.g., the Panopticon and scientific thinking) are possible; and, second, that perspectivalism and representational thought are directed throughout their development *against* the civic — the city as an idealized setting for human affairs and the basis of *praxis*, knowledge of human nature.

I select this second option because the first would involve a historical study rather than the topical one I intend, and because *praxis* (πρᾶξις)and its barely understood relation to the city and the civic in general is central to the rhetorical tradition, the second source of the modern idea of place.

Place and the Rhetorical Tradition

To begin with, one must make a distinction between the practical study of rhetoric in conjunction with public speaking and the *contents* of this verbal art — figures, metaphors, tropes, enthymemes, and so on. The question of rhetoric's role in *praxis* is not how these work effectively but what exactly they constitute as mental and social arts. For rhetoric, *place* is the topic, which one might interpret as *commonplace* (a subject known both to the speaker and his audience), *trope* (a strategy of substitution), *metaphor* (one class of substitutions), the imaginary places used to store memory images, or physical places in a speech or on a page. In a broader sense, place characterizes the *form* of "topical" thought used by the orator, who in such a civic instance as a public speech must rely on wit, ingenuity, and immediate inspiration. This last definition invites us to return to the idealized city to find a parallel between civic form as physical reality and the topical form of thought required by civic speech. In the view of the preperspectival city as a congeries of discontinuities, the question is how such thresholds contributed to an alleged utopianism.

The Liminality of the Middle. The idea that what is best and most beautiful in the human world spans the chasm between subjects and objects comes early in the history of Western thought, but it arises at the time when the subject and object had come to stand for two separate realms. The capacity to isolate the subject's thought corresponds to a final Lucretian exorcism of nature's mythic associations. Both are dependent on the

attainment of a purely conceptual form of thought, where universals are abstracted from empirical particulars, and where the middle is logically excluded so that a single-valued logic of being and non-being can accede to the position of a model or ideal of reason.

The chasm between the object and the subject acquires a complex geography in the process. It is, first of all, the territory cursed by logic, where no theory may build without paradox. Yet, it is also a zone which must be bridged to avoid the greater catastrophe of positing two worlds. Correspondingly, strong philosophers identify what is final or most important in their philosophies with this middle position: Kant's judgment (*Urteilskraft*), Hegel's Spirit, or Berkeley's Divine Mind. The philosophical passage between the two forms of order has typically been regarded as liminal, that is, an a-rational crossing that enacts a *coincidentia oppositorum*. As Kant put it, the middle calls for "an art hidden in the depths of the human soul."[25] Historically, accounts of this passage have borrowed from the mythic versions of liminal passage between the incommensurable worlds of gods and humans, one tribe and its neighbors, or different levels in social status.

This philosophical appropriation of mythic technique is particularly evident in the Platonic tradition, where borrowing from Orphic and other religious sources was conscious and systematic. This mystic influence conditioned the view that the world of objects and the world of men could be reunited if and only if the original cause of their fracture could be discovered. Here, the goal of philosophy came to be identified with the uncovering of a utopian connection between *eidos* (εἶδος), the idealized order of things, and the *polis* (πόλις), the idealized order of society. Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* are the first of many such subsequent utopian philosophical experiments.[26]

If utopia were to be a middle term, its nature would be to reflect the composite and contradictory nature of the worlds it connected. Sir Thomas More's term was coined consciously to mean both "a good place" (eu-topia) and "no place" (u-topia).[27] In rhetoric, the element corresponding to this complicated middle ground is the metaphor ("carrying across"), which as a figure of speech has the senses both of a non-place mental movement as well as a means of embodying thought in a real places. Metaphor has had an uneven history. Mannerist critics identified it with *ingegno*, or wit, citing its extensive poetic powers. Links with magic, sublime truths, humanistic wisdom, and the god-like creativity of genius made metaphor into a precious jewel of thought. But, by the end of the Renaissance, speech had already begun to be transformed by the episteme of rationalism; adorned speech was as much mistrusted as it was neglected. One

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25   Immanuel Kant, *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan and Co., 1933), B180, A141, 183.

26   Paul Friedländer, *Plato*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Hans Meyerhoff (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), 20.

27   Arthur O. Lewis, *Utopian Literature in the Pennsylvania State University Libraries: A Selected Bibliography*, Bibliographic Series No. 9 (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Libraries, 1984), xi.

must still return to the Mannerists to study metaphor without having to subordinate it to the interests of logic and "ordinary language."[28] Gracián's *Arte de ingenio* (1642), Sforza-Pallavicino's *Trattato del dialogo dello stile* (1646), and Minozzi's *Gli sforgamenti dell'ingegno* (1641) speak with one voice in praising metaphor's abilities. Chief among these was its function as a "wedge" of thought, sharp and able to penetrate to the heart of things. "Acute" sayings were those expressions that were witty and wise. Stoic philosophy compared metaphorical wit to the spirit (*animus*) that penetrated, in a suggestively sexual way, sluggish matter (*anima*). In metaphor's highest achievement, the conceit (*concettismo*), words and images formed similarly sexual unions, celebrated in emblem-like expressions sparked by the tension of the riddle and clue.

If no subsequent age equalled the Seventeenth Century in its praise of metaphor, our own at least as seen a revival of critical interest in metaphor's role as a principle of structure, synthesis, and context. Most famous of the revivalists was the Canadian literary critic, Northrop Frye, whose *Anatomy of Criticism* sparked a number of parallel investigations.[29] Frye's vision of literature, as a structure synchronically and diachronically determined by the evolving functions of the symbol, described metaphor as an invisible semantic framework. Cyclically, the dramatic forms of comedy, romance, tragedy, and satire provided modes of transformation, whole "worlds" in which the order of symbolism had both static permanence and the seeds for progressive development. Historically, Frye described how myths were transformed into modern tales, dressed in the livery of each age according to its customs and limitations. By using the quadraform critical schema of Dante (meaning as a progression from literal, to moral, to analogical, to anagogical stages), Frye supplied his generation with a vocabulary that enabled them to take metaphor out of its isolation within ordinary speech.

Of those who saw a deep structure in Frye's root metaphors, Hayden White was perhaps the most ambitious as well as the earliest adopter.[30] White saw historiography not as the result of a random sequence of contentious geniuses but as a regular series of climates cycling between Formism, Contextualism, Mechanism, and Organicism. Others, such as the philosopher of science Stephen Pepper and sociologist Karl Mannheim, had employed identical categories, but White was the first to follow Frye in realizing the "poetic logic" of Giambattista Vico's *New Science* to be the origin of the meta-theory idea.[31]

It is difficult to summarize these contributions to the rhetorical idea of place, for there is ambiguity in the interests in metaphor as (1) a uniquely poetic form of logic and

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28   Joseph Mazzeo, *Renaissance and Seventeenth-Century Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964).

29   Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism, Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

30   Hayden V. White, *Metahistory, The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

31   Giambattisa Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Thomas G. Bergin and Max H. Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968).

(2) a basis for systematizing the development and practice of literature, science, history, and so on in terms of a categorical logic. A contrasting view of metaphor as a *fundamentally* spatial phenomenon came out of an energetic attempt to build on the work of the literary critic Joseph Frank.[32] Frank's original critique of Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* took the position that art responded directly to a given culture's fear, or lack of fear, of space. Frank identified Wilhelm Worringer's essay, *Abstraktion und Einfülung,* and Alois Riegl's concept of *Kunstwollen* ("the will to art") as primary resources for employing spatial ideas in literary criticism.[33] Worringer had argued that the fear of space led to a non-naturalistic form of art. Frank found in Proust, Joyce, Barnes, and others a super-imposition of a "space-logic" over the "time-logic" of narrative, which corresponded to a similar non-naturalism. In the totalizing literary spaces of James Joyce's *Ulysses* or Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, he argued, one is given a detailed, empirical description of an actual place, but the real place of the novel is developed out of this. Particularly in Joyce's *Ulysses*, this place is often a recognizable archetype. A collection of essays evaluating and extending Frank's ideas, *Spatial form in Narrative,* is theoretically deeper than the thematically similar work of Lutwack (*The Role of Place in Literature*), yet both works are obedient to the limits of fictional literature, giving the impression that metaphor is exclusively fictive, not phenomenal or philosophical.[34]

From an entirely different direction, Victor Turner revived the work of the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep, emphasizing metaphor's role in universal cultural processes that use place both as an idea and as a physical entity. Turner's work addressed the transitions involving a symbolic passage. His studies of pilgrimage, drama, interpersonal action, and transitional rituals such as marriage, burial, and initiations demonstrate the ubiquity of such passages in cultural life.[35]

By comparison to some nearly forgotten works, such as Fustel de Coulanges' classic, *The Ancient City*, and W. F. Jackson Knight's *Cumæan Gates*, Turner's revival of liminal space emphasized the public/communal function of liminal space.[36] What these

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32   Jeffrey R. Smitten and Ann Daghisthany, eds., *Spatial Form in Narrative* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981). Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," *Sewanee Review* 53 (1945): 221–240.

33   Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy, A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. Michael Bullock (New York: International Universities, 1953). Alois Reigle, *Stilfragen, Grundlegungen zu einer Geshichte der Ornamentik* (New York: G. Olms Verlag, 1975).

34   Leonard Lutwack, *The Role of Place in Literature* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1984).

35   Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture, Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978). Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monica B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966). In literary criticism, Mary Ann Caws, Angus Fletcher, and Harold Bloom have used Turneresque ideas of liminality. See, for example, Mary Ann Caws, *A Metapoetics of Passage, Architextures in Surrealism and After* (Hanover, VT: University Press of New England, 1981); Angus Fletcher, "On Two Words in the Libretto of the Magic Flute," *The Georgia Review* 29, 1 (Spring 1975): 128–153; and Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence, A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

36   William F. Jackson Knight, *Cumæan Gates, A Reference of the Fifth Æneid to the Initiation Pattern* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936). Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City, A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1956).

early authors said about civic form, belief in the afterlife, epic poetry, and so on is ampli-fied by Turner's drier but more exact archaeology of transition. One begins to see how such (to many) obscure topics as the evil eye, funeral games, and cursing have curious relationships that pivot around the liminal. In short, a geometry emerges that is thor-oughly *rhetorical* in its use of a metaphoric logic, and thoroughly *spatial* in its need for a physical place to develop.

The Locus Solus of Aldo Rossi. The Landscape Tradition offered the example of a Panoptical view of place, which was in turn dependent on a view of the landscape as a repository of signs referring to the facts external to that landscape. As in the Panopticon, information flowed in a single direction, from viewer to viewed. Action in the opposite direction was constituted by the discipline exerted by knowledge itself in its need to constrain its objects. The rhetorical tradition contrasted with the Landscape Tradition principally in its relation to the civic. As the skill associated with *praxis*, rhetoric has always taken the public realm as its natural medium, and the public realm has always been understood in terms of a space conditioned by speech. Rhetoric has intensified its relation to the public by also being the basis of a science of gesture, metaphor, and topical thought, entities that enable the objects of the human world — buildings, monu-ments, open spaces, land itself — to speak a "silent language" of form. Consequently, rhetoric constitutes a *dialectical* model of place, where the physical world serves both as a medium of expression *and* a domain of things-in-themselves that are autonomous, liminal with respect to ordinary meanings, and dialectical in its relations with ideas of ritual, myth, and transformation. Where the Panoptical view tends to favor a "nothing but" style of explaining places as texts, the rhetorical view of place, as the product of a metaphoric mentality, emphasizes the convertibility of physical places and topics, as mental places. For, when the landscape is considered to be a text containing facts that always lead back to the isolated thoughts of the scholar, the landscape considered as rhetoric is like a play where the audience gradually becomes aware that they themselves are characters in the drama others are observing. The landscape/play mirrors life, but it mocks the reflection it gives. The passive gaze is turned against the spectator. No objec-tive view is allowed.

In brief, the rhetorical approach to place transforms the observer-as-scientist into active roles of the philosopher, poet, or architect whose relationships to place become dialectical. As a philosopher, one must understand the cause of the humanly made world through some knowledge of what making involves, and compare the unconscious mak-ing of the civic world to the conscious making of humanistic and theoretical truths. For the poet, that which is made exists for the sake of a truth that cannot be known prior to absolving the world of its indicative meanings. Gaston Bachelard called this the "mate-

rial imagination," and described it as a flower that bloomed only in absolute darkness.[37] An architect who wishes to be a place dialectician must become a philosopher/poet, knower/maker, who constructs and construes, in the context of a world of civic entities, places made for the common good of the human as both body and mind. While the relationship to this world is primarily conscious, the means for it becoming so is physical, and the paradox of "topical thinking" as something both mental and physical reappears. "Architecture" in such terms is compounded out of thoughts and things. For my final example of a rhetoric of place I turn to someone who, as an architect in a literal as well as an extended sense, constructs and construes through his theoretical writings and built projects, the Italian architect Aldo Rossi (1931–1997). Rossi's *The Architecture of the City* acts as an accompaniment to his best known early projects: the addition to the municipal cemetery at Modena (begun in 1971); the *Teatro del Mondo*, a wooden theater constructed on a floating raft for the Venice *Biennale* of 1979; and the elementary school at Fagnano Olona (1972–1976).[38] These projects may be seen as counterparts to rather than illustrations of Rossi's idea of the autonomous, liminal, and enacted spaces of architecture. This idea finds formal expression in several topics in his writings. In the idea of *type*, Rossi refers to the persistence of certain forms in the face of changes in function, culture, and taste, such as the *Palazzo della Ragione* in Padua.

> In almost all European cities there are large palaces, building complexes, or agglomerations that constitute whole pieces of the city and whose function now is no longer the original one. When one visits a monument of this type, for example the Palazzo della Ragione in Padua, one is always surprised by a series of questions intimately associated with it. In particular, one is struck by the multiplicity of functions that a building of this type can contain over time and how these functions are entirely independent of the form. At the same time, it is precisely the form that impresses us; we live it and experience it, and in turn it structures the city. [*Architecture of the City*, 29]

In the concept of the *locus*, Rossi designates the influence of place as it exists in "singular points," like the objects of pilgrimage in the landscape of Catholicism. In contrast to spaces determined as contexts, *loci* work through disruption, uniqueness, and discontinuity.

> It is possible to identify such a singular point by a particular event that occurred there at some time or an infinite variety of other causes. both rational and irrational. Even within the universal space of the church, there is still an intermediate value that is recognized and sanctioned, the possibility of a real — if extraordinary — idea of space. To bring this idea into the domain of urban artifacts we must return to the value of images, to the physical analysis of artifacts and their surroundings; and perhaps this will lead us to a

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37   Gaston Bachelard, *La terre et les reveries de la volonté* (Paris: J. Corti, 1948).

38   Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City,* trans. Diane Ghirardo (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982); *A Scientific Autobiography*, trans. Diane Ghirardo (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981); *Selected Writings and Projects*, ed. John O'Regan (London: Architectural Design Dublin, Gandon Editions, 1983); *Scritti scelti sull'architettura e la città, 1956–1972* (Milan: Clip, 1975).

pure and simple understanding of the value of the *locus*. [*Architecture of the City*, 103]

A third element of Rossi's rhetoric of place is the idea of collective memory. He argues that consciousness emerges at a social as well as the customary individual level, and that the city and the landscape, because their view may be shared and experienced over many generations, may take on properties of such a collective consciousness.[39] To understand the development of the mind, one must understand the places, not just the mental topics but the "real" places of the human world.

> One can say that the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory it is associated with objects and places. The city is the locus of the collective memory. This relationship between the locus and the citizenry then becomes the city's predominant image, both of architecture and of landscape, and as certain artifacts become part of its memory, new ones emerge. In this entirely positive sense great ideas flow through the history of the city and give shape to it. [*Architecture of the City*, 130]

As Rossi demonstrates in the case of the Roman Forum, places have a heraldic meaning in their ability to appropriate what is material, inert, and often accidental in the construction of universal meanings.

> The site consisted of a low and marshy zone between steep hills. In its center, among willows and cane fields that were entirely flooded during the rains, was stagnant water; on the hills were woods and pastures….
>
> … Archaeologists have established that as early as the ninth century the Latins descended from the hills to dispose of their dead in the valley of the Forum, just one of the valleys of the Roman countryside, and thus the place entered into history.… First a necropolis, then the place of battles or more properly religious rites, the Forum increasingly came to be the site of a new form of life, the principle of a city being formed by tribes scattered throughout the hills who converged there and founded it.
>
> Geographical formations indicated the way for paths, then for the roads that climbed up the valleys along the lines that were least steep (Via Sacra, Via Argiletus, Vicus Patricius), thereby charting the course of the extra-urban map.…
>
> Even after Augustus's systematization and the enlargement of the central zone of Rome by the Forum of Augustus and the marketplace of Trajan, after Hadrian's works and until the fall of the empire, the Forum did not lose its essential character as a meeting place, as the center of Rome: *Forum Romanum* or *Forum Magnum*, it became a specific artifact within the very heart of the city, a part that epitomized the whole. [*Architecture of the City*, 119–120]

But, "We wander ignorant of men and places," wrote Virgil. And, the place of this physical, collective memory in the midst of daily life is not consciously present, as a symbol, but indifferently and anonymously inert, as if meaning had to be insulated from attention.

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39   Rossi acknowledges the source of this idea, the work of Maurice Halbwachs, *Les Expropriations et le prix de terrains à Paris (1860–1900)* (Paris: E. Cornély, 1909). By the same author, *La mémoire collective* (Paris: A. Michel, 1997) and *La Topographie légendaire des évangiles en terre sainte, étude de mémoire collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1941).

> People passed by [the Roman Forum] without having any specific purpose, without doing anything: it was like the modern city, where the man in the crowd, the idler, participates in the mechanism of the city without knowing it, sharing only in its image. [*Architecture of the City*, 48]

Rossi's "logic" gives type, locus, and collective memory an equivalence that owes much to indifference. In the anecdotal *Scientific Autobiography*, he recalls the powerful effect that the hollow statue of San Carlone at Arona had on him. A part of the "visual education" of his childhood, the statue, which, like the Statue of Liberty, could be inhabited by its visitors, suggested an unusual interpretation of architecture's aspect of inside and outside space.

> As with the Homeric horse, the pilgrim enters the body of a saint as he would a tower or a wagon steered by a knowing technician. After he mounts the exterior stair of the pedestal, the steep ascent through the interior of the body reveals the structure of the work and the welded seams of the huge pieces of sheet metal. Finally, he arrives at the interior-exterior of the head; from the eyes of the saint the view of the lake acquires infinite contours, as if one were gazing from a celestial observatory. [*Scientific Autobiography*, 3]

The city and the body of the saint are both singular points through which a transformation takes place independent of the intentions of the invaders who penetrate the "inside" as so many parasites indifferent to the structure, the welded seams, of their host. The outside is not a possible characteristic of this space except as a transcendent moment where near and far are brought together at the eyes of the head, where interior is troped into exterior and one becomes aware of a new structural relationship that one had enacted without understanding. This logic of exchange, where one thing conditions and is conditioned by another, suggests for Rossi a contamination of one scale by others. The tomb, the house, the neighborhood, the city, and the cosmos bear the common stamp of the logical organization of the body. Such a collapse is demonstrated by an example that Rossi uses frequently and which served as the basis for his own "*Teatro del Mondo*," the anatomical theater at Padua, where the rows of the oval gallery and the dissection table with its secret hiding place underneath bring the mundane and the cosmic together in the most practical of circumstances.

Rossi indicates that the rhetorical approach to place involves the philosopher's awareness of cause, the poet's need to descend into matter, and the architect's dialectical activity of constructing/construing by providing an idea of place as memorious, liminal, and artificial. The contrast with the landscape school is definitive. As opposed to the idea that making and understanding of place is a *natural* or *native* ability, the rhetorical idea of place treats these as arts, similar to the skills one learns to live in the world of human language and action, *praxis*. In this education, one teaches oneself to be a philosopher aware of humanistic truths, a poet able to delve into the material details of

humanly made things, and an architect capable of intervening in the world of the made, but some adjustment of these traditional roles is necessary. Unlike the philosopher, one must accept the commonplaces of culture and ordinary life as the topics of such an education. Unlike the poet, one must deny feeling. Unlike the architect, one must prefer the ruin to the upright form. "Architecture," which must be of dark matter, must use constructing (*poiesis*) and construing (*scientia*) to understand the "men and places" of Virgil's poem. In its composite nature, this divided mind dedicates its schizophrenia to the *monsters* of divination, which signify the impossibilities to be discovered.

II
THE PROBLEM OF PERCEPTION

Immanence and Transcendence[1]

Perception begins with a world in which the body is a nexus in both a physical and a semantic sense. As in the case of vision, it is impossible to speak of one sense without implying the other. From their common origin, the "view-point," vision's lines of sight determine the physical extent of a shadowed region that must be added to the visible side of things to guarantee the three-dimensional solidity of the world and grant it independence from my perceptions of it. This addition is a semantic act, one not directly determined by the particulars given to the senses, but just the opposite. For, as many have noted, human subjects perceive that there is more in nature than meets the eye, and when they see the visible world as a sign of what is temporally and spatiallly absent, they subordinate appearance to a wider kind of being and thus add a *semantic* dimension that is without precedent in the animal world. With this subordination, an analogy is opened up between the *physical* movement our bodies use as proof of the world's three-dimensional fullness and the purely *symbolic* movement of conversation, argument, discourse, and thought. These latter move in the sense that, like physical movement, they establish the solid, independent, and shared nature of the world. Physical movement and semantic movement deny solipsism by making one the counterpart of the other.

The world is always "for me" in the sense that it presents scenes, views, and landscapes to my eyes in such a way that I am presumed to be their *viewer*. But, this mixture of the physical and the semantic means that when I speak of the world I see, I also speak of its real and inexhaustible character.[2] This is illustrated in the famous experiment staged by the German illustrator Ludwig Richter, at Tivoli, in the 1820s.[3] Scoffing at a group of French artists weighed down with equipment and paints, the Ger-

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1   [Note for the second edition] The paired terms, "immanence and transcendence," belong mainly to theological discourse but in this work they go beyond to address the question of adequacy. Is the immediate phenomenal realm, accessible to the senses, adequate to the full range of human possibility, or is it necessary to admit the need for and existence of supersensible realms? Because of the relation of virtual spaces to what is immediately encountered, the answer is both yes and no. Because virtuality is integrated into immanence, the specification of any number of transcendent supersensible relations conditions all human experience. The structure of immanence's relations to this virtuality, as Cassirer and Vico — and, later, Delueuze — suggest, hinges on the role of the negative in all three of its "Hegelian" forms: denial (*Verneinung*), repudiation (*Verleugnung*), and foreclosure (*Verwerfung*).

2   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: The Humanities Press, 1962). See also, by the same author, *The Primacy of Perception*, trans. James M. Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 12–42, and *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 130–155.

3   An accessible version of this anecdote can be found in E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, Bollingen 35, 5 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 64–65.

man and his three companions set about to record the famous view with hard-pencil precision. Although they strove to account for "every blade of grass, every tiny twig," the four drawins were as different as the temperaments of the artists who drew them. In describing the "same" scene visible from one physical viewpoint, the artists differed about what was "really" there, both in details and in fundamental themes. Yet, each one experienced the need for a semantic consensus as a sort of rhetorical demand that the other "see" the same thing that he did. An interpretive, semantic distance remained and was more imposing when the physical distance between the observers was reduced. The argument about the nature of the shared scene is always an argument about the shared truth. Argumentative movement is like the physical movement that fleshes out the reality of the scene by revealing successive views. It is truly the case that we as observers are "far apart" until our "views" converge on a common world before us, a world that presumes other subjects and other semantic and physical viewing points. The feeling that there is one world and not many, and that our senses meet the world-in-itself as it appears for these senses, becomes a rhetorical element that we feel as a kind of impatience when we face differences of opinion. Maurice Merleau-Ponty has transposed Richter's anecdote into philosophical terms:

> If a friend and I are standing before a landscape, and if I attempt to show my friend something which I see and which he does not yet see, we cannot account for the situation by saying that I see something in my own world and that I attempt, by sending verbal messages, to give rise to an analogous perception in the world of my friend. There are not two numerically distinct worlds plus a mediating language which alone would bring us together. There is — and I know it very well if I become impatient with him — a kind of demand that what I see be seen by him also. And at the same time this communication is required by the very thing which I am looking at, by the reflections of sunlight upon it, by its color, by its sensible evidence. The thing imposes itself not as true for every intellect, but as real for every subject who is standing where I am.… There is no reason to treat this primordial communication as an illusion, as the sensationalists do, because even then it would become inexplicable.[4]

The striking characteristic of this situation of intersubjective discontinuity is its *ethical* tone. Again, the analogy of physical movement about a common object provides a diagram for the purely semantic movement embodied in discourse. Argument among subjects is, in effect, movement around a common center that specifies stillness, "truth in geometric form," through the curvature of its own motion. Perception thus works through negative strategies. It sees the visible by creating the invisible through innumerable horizons. It moves out of necessity into the invisible without touching its objects directly. And, this physical motion is continued by its symbolic counterparts:

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4   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception," in *The Primacy of Perception, And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston, IN: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 17.

discourse, argument, difference.

Thus, perception as well as argument ends and hopes to end in silence and rest, an equipoise of objects and subjects held in a common world. But, it is just as possible for motion to end prematurely, in the case that one viewpoint gains primacy over others and consolidates its relation to the objects of sense directly rather than intersubjectively. This, of course, is the premise behind the ideal of objectivity, where the subject's motion or ambivalence is constrained through a definitive protocol. This is nominally the strategy of scientific research, where observation presumes an ontological independence of the observer from the observed. But, where perception's inferential elements are considered, or where the objects of study are part of the human world, such objectivity becomes ideology. Such was seen to be the case in Wright's and Lowenthal's appropriations of the radial lines connecting subjects and objects in their concentric models of reality. The ideal of one world seems to be present in such arrangements of core and periphery, but motion is radial ("sagittal") and not peripheral. Validity is based on the presumed properties of the object world.

It is now possible to see how perception, as a motion, can fail or collapse with a change of direction; and how the restraint of the body is analogous to the restraint of dialectic exchange among subjects. The question of failure or success hinges on the freedom of subjects to move in a world they commonly perceive, literally and figuratively a common place. This common place is physical and immanent, for it is the basis for perception's sensible side. But, it is also semantic and transcendent in that thought must complete a motion begun by perception in its construction of an immanent world. The idea of the common place can be developed along several lines.

Common Place as Motion. The common place is at first the scene of the symbolic mental and actual physical movements that constitute our subjective relationships to the world. The image of movement is not used to illustrate a predominantly abstract relationship. Rather, it serves to ground the idea in experience without giving that experience a prior validity as "objective." Movement, as peripheral (movement around) and not sagittal (movement toward), emphasizes the social and intersubjective aspect of perception and perception's goal of a common place. Here, place's bodily and metaphoric nature and thought's ideal relation to mind point to a common and polymorphous reality. Place, as immanence, and thought, as transcendence, institute the common place where mind may be known through a language of form. Such a language is mute, as far as philosophy goes. And, it is often the philosophically mute worlds of poetry, art, myth, music, and architecture that give thought it's bodily nature and its animate and intelligible reality. Here, place is not a matter of characterizations or values. Rather, place becomes the point of a problematic crossing between the two seemingly incom-

mensurable worlds, an aporia. Proust has described such a crossing in its composite mental and physical nature.

> For there were, in the environs of Combray, two "ways" which we used to take for our walks, and so diametrically opposed that we would actually leave the house by a different door, according to the way we had chosen: the way towards Méséglise-la-Vineuse, which we called also "Swann's way," because to get there, one had to pass along the boundary of M. Swann's estate, and the "Guermantes way" …. Since my father used always to speak of the "Méséglise way" as comprising the finest view of a plain that he knew anywhere, and of the "Guermantes way" as typical of river scenery, I had invested each of them, by conceiving them in this way as two distinct entities, and with that a cohesion, that unity which belongs only to the figments of the mind; the smallest detail of either of them appeared to me as a precious thing, which exhibited the special excellence of the whole …. But, above all, I set between them, far more distinctly than the mere distance in miles and yards and inches which separated one from the other, the distance that there was between the two parts of my brain in which I used to think of them, one of these distances of mind which time serves only to lengthen, which separate things irremediably from one another, keeping them forever upon different planes.[5]

Memory. The role of memory constitutes the second aspect of the common place. Memories of individuals seem to involve primarily a transcendence of time. The past is made present through recollection. But memory considered as a common possession of a group depends on the collective experience of real or imagined places. And, when we realize the great extent to which even private recollections are in truth tied to our relations to others, this spatial theme gains an importance equal to the time-travel of individual memory.[6] While one can see, in monuments, literature, and public gestures of all kinds the degree to which any particular society selectively identifies with history, by far the richest and most powerful source of the collective memory is the physical landscape where the public eye finds ubiquitous reminders of the continuity of its being. This fabric of memory is noticeable only when it is torn, when familiar buildings are demolished or accidentally destroyed, when neighborhoods decay, or when even such small parts of the public scene, as trees or fountains, disappear suddenly. What are such memories memories *of*? This may be impossible to answer in terms of the individual memory. The loss of such memory is not a lapse of the single mind but a disappearance of the basis of social relations. Just so, when groups whose social nature is abstract come together, the dependence on place as a form of artificial memory is even more striking.[7] Ecclesiastical reconstructions of collective memories as place are echoed in other "non-place communities" that meet periodically to re-establish social or professional ties.[8] Like the

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5   Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1934), 103–104

6   Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, chapter 4, "La Mémoire collective et l'espace."

7   Halbwachs, *La Topographie légendaire*.

8   Melvin M. Webber, "The Urban Place and the Nonplace Urban Realm," in *Explorations into Urban Structure*, ed.

numerous *Sacri Monti* that sprang up over Europe to meet the needs of pilgrims unable to travel to Jerusalem, such itinerate groups establish their places with whatever physical elements lie at hand.[9]

Expression. The third and perhaps most concrete aspect of the common place is suggested by the relation between immanence and transcendence in perception. When we inferentially add the hidden side of things to their immanent faces, our transcendence of the sensually limited view is accomplished by letting these faces express and thus paradoxically contain what is, technically, absent. The world's expressive function is its semantic value, its status as a *sign*. The expressive function is primary. Perception is not a matter of simple sensations to which meaning is later added.[10] In perception, this expressive function has a composite material and ideal status that makes it a counterpart or even an instance of the common place of memory and subjective experience. Perception is innocent of the interests of cognition, abstraction, and conceptualization. It is impossible to address the nature of common places in terms of values, attitudes, or other empirical measures that depend upon ideas already formed. The study of common places relies instead on a view of inter-subjectivity, memory, and perception as *original moments of the mind*. Primacy may be viewed alternatively in *historical* terms, to seek an account of the mythic thought of primitive mankind, or in *phenomenological* terms to attempt an understanding of how it is possible for the mind to have anything before it at all. In both approaches, the question of what is *first* suggests a decidedly temporal character of common place. This temporality is confirmed by Mikel Dufrenne in his view of the imagination:

> We must distinguish between the transcendental and the empirical [imminent, about-to-happen] aspects of imagination, even though these aspects are ultimately conjoined. As transcendental, the imagination is seen as the possibility of a look [*regard*] having a "spectacle" as its correlate. This look presupposes both an act of opening and an act of withdrawal — a withdrawal, in that the totality formed by the subject and object must be disintegrated in order that the intentional movement of the for-itself, by which it opposes itself to an object, can be accomplished. An opening is involved, insofar as the detachment of consciousness from object hollows out an empty space, which is the *a priori* of sensibility and in which the object can take on form. In fact, the withdrawal is an opening, the movement one of illumination. But how is the detachment which creates both the withdrawal and the opening possible? Through temporality. To withdraw from activity is to take refuge in the past.[11]

Melvin M. Webber *et al.*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), 79–153.

9   David Leatherbarrow, "The Image and Its Setting, or How Topography Traces Praxis," in *Topographical Stories, Studies in Landscape Architecture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 200–234.

10   Ernst Cassirer, *The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, vol. 3 of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1955), 58–104. See also Brand Blanshard, *The Nature of Thought* (New York: Humanities Press, 1939).

11   Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, trans. Edward S. Casey, Albert A. Anderson, Willis domingo, and Leon Jacobson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 346.

Is it not necessary, from this point of view, to temporalize the idea of the common place to take into account the her-and-now of immanence/imminence and the idealized past of transcendence? Is motion, symbolic or actual, thinkable at all without reference ot the temporal? If transcendence is a "retreat into the past" to recover a prior unity of place common to all perceptions of it, this "retreat" also makes possible the futurity of the scene by inventing an ideal terminus upon which the lines of such a palingenesis might converge. There are several characteristics of this backward and forward motion that suggest that the temporality of perception's common place presents something of a paradox. The connection of perceptual motion with myth and memory confirm this.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his comparison of myth and music as "instruments for the destruction of time," suggest that in the narrative, the melody, or the myth, certain forms of repetition offer the prospect of what Mircea Eliade called "the eternal return," the reinstitution of a state held to exist prior to time itself. Norman O. Brown, in his discussion of Freud's ideas of death and eros, has labelled this stillness "the noumenal."[12] In perception, motion carries its immanence with it. One never sees any hidden side without creating others in the process, but one is still able to transcend the immediacies of imminence through the possibility of an ideal motion, an illicit visit paid to the region shadowed by sight and its body, which is as much outside of time as it must also be outside of space.

It is really the case that, as Merleau-Ponty argued, the problem of inference is the fact of *simultaneous* immanence and transcendence.[13] The invisible is not added on later, as a means of structuring imminent sensations, but is present from the start (immanence). We do not begin with a stage prop, or patches, or tones, or any of the other paraphernalia of sensationalistic psychology, but with a world whose fullness is presumed. This is not to say that the world does not have its *face*, which is presented to us as its viewer, or that we do not really have a unique view by virtue of our bodies and their organs and positions in space. But, the freedom implied in this immanent scene is not added on or deduced, but *presupposed*. Inference anneals the invisible to the visible, as its parent and original.

Why, then, is any motion required of this motionless place? In light of the structure of the common place, we might answer: its intersubjective quality, its relation to memory, and its expressive function. But, the most important reason lies in the nature of the

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12   Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death, The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959).

13   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception," 17.

temporality of the common place, which is itself composite: a connection of movement with stillness, the present with the past, time with the destruction of time. *The architecture of the common place is its developmental character.*

The Architecture of the Common Place

In the course of laying out the architecture of the common place, I have invented a number of elements that, like grammatical rules, are fictions that enable some bridge to reality. Native speakers of natural languages can dispense with grammatical constructs, but the language in question is an artificial one invented expressly *not* to be spoken — an *Ursprache* to be immediately and totally forgotten.

The Outer World and the Inner World. Although "subject" and "object" are indefinable surds, they are the poles of every conscious experience, without whose opposition the world would collapse into indistinguishable immediacies. As in the case of universals and particulars, it is impossible to isolate one from the other. They are "co-conditioning." Objects and subjects enter into the description of the each other, making every experience a *coincidentia oppositorum*.
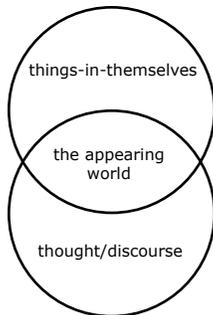
As with most incommensurable aspects of life, we gain our knowledge of the inner world and the outer world through our experience of their boundary conditions. The dream and reality are indistinguishable, argued Pyrrho, but because waking provides us the spectacle of a formerly "solid" dreamworld dissolving before our eyes, it is possible to order one world in terms of the other. Dreams thus become important in terms of the position they have in the waking world, which is complex. At times, dreams seem to be circumscribed by reality. At other times, when sleep's kinship to death is noticed, it seems that reality rather than the dream is the contained, as in Shakespeare's description of life as "rounded" by sleep. Similarly, the boundary condition between the subject and object is a complex intersection of horizons set up by immanence and transcendence.
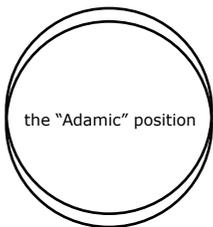
We might imagine the visible scene as two intersecting circular horizons. three regions are produced: a zone belonging exclusively to objects as "things-in-themselves," a de-sensed realm opposite this, designating thought and discourse, and an intersecting *vel*, the appearing world. The first horizon marks the limits of the senses and is composed of all boundaries generated by visibility: profiles, edges, etc. The second horizon distinguishes the physical world from thought and discourse about the world. It defines a zone that is like the dark auditorium communally occupied by all who share the scene.

The visible zone belongs to both the object world and subject world. Objects within it are autonomous, but their faces belong to us as sensing organisms, and it would be impossible to imagine either a subject world or an object world without such an opportunity to mingle in the visible spectacle. This shared space is actually an opening, something we might imagine as formed by moving the outer horizon and the inner horizon apart — a pulling apart of a hypothetical "Adamic" position of near-convergence. But, when two circles that nearly coincide are moved apart, the space shared by them is squeezed by the opposing arcs. The *vel* zone, once nearly round, becomes a lozenge, its fullness reduced. In this geometrical anecdote, it is possible to suggest that the contraction of the visible makes possible the reality of zones belonging almost exclusively to the subject on one hand (discourse, thought) and the object on the other hand ("nature"). These exclusive regions stand for the autonomy of subjects and objects and their independence from each other. They guarantee the possibility of motion; they even necessitate it. On either side of the visible, these shadow regions guarantee the freedom of appearances to mean several things at once, or different things to different perceivers. In the anterior zone of discourse, we begin to talk about appearances, to see them as "problematic." Behind the face of the visible is a corresponding region of the hidden world beyond appearance, whose intuited and inferred identity subtly influences our impression of what is actually presented. But, what is the role of temporality in this spatial-geometrical fable?

The perceptual world, defined as a lozenge-shaped opening between an inner and outer boundary, is not in terms of our diagram more than a subset of total objective and subjective realities. There is the world, and there is thought and discussion *about* the world. The world has its visible and invisible sides, just as the subject has both mind and sense. How is the perceptual world, the seemingly posterior result of "opening up a space" between two pre-existent and more permanent forms of reality, temporally and logically primary? Kant stated that:

> There can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience. For how should our faculty of knowledge be awakened into action did not objects affecting our senses partly of themselves produce representations, partly arouse the activity of our understanding to compare these representations, and, by combining or separating them, work up the raw material of the sensible impressions into that knowledge of objects which is entitled experience?[14]

Experience's particulars must contain what Aristotle described as "early universals," a primary ordering that neither constrains further understanding nor leaves it without some guide. These universals are states of knowledge

> neither innate in a determinate form, nor developed from other higher states of knowl-

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14   Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B1, 41.

edge, but from sense perception. It is like a rout in a battle stopped by first one man taking a stand and then another, until the original formation has been restored. The soul is so constituted as to be capable of this process.

… When one of a number of logically indiscriminable particulars has made a stand, the earliest universal is present in the soul: for through the act of sense-perception, its content is universal — is man, for example, not the man Callias?[15]

Granting the primacy of the perceptual world and its simultaneously universal (transcendent) and particular (immanent) nature, we must acknowledge the problematic nature of the horizons which delimit it as a part of something wider, for all experience rests on the ability of the immanent world to represent in some way the completeness of the inner and outer worlds that contain it and seem to spread beyond the horizon of the visible in the directions of the subject and object.

Appearances cannot be simple. They must be the basis for the regions we imagine to lie beyond them, regions which seem to be prior to them and to precede them logically and historically. The perceived world must include thought about the world, just as it much include inferentially the sides of things it hides by appearing. This paradox is produced by the horizon, and it is to this complex line that we must look for answers. In short, the perceptual world is not the result of an overlap of the domains of the subject and object. Rather, it is a microcosm that develops in a primary way the regions that later seem to adumbrate it as a *vel*. The common place, the place of intersubjectivity, memory, and expression, is perhaps better expressed as a horizon than as a region bounded by horizons. The failure of discursive means of describing such a situation is again remedied by Proust:

I would amuse myself by watching the glass jars which the boys used to lower into the Vivonne, to catch minnows, and which, filled by the current of the stream, in which they themselves were enclosed, at once "containers" whose transparent sides were like solidified water and "contents" plunged into a still larger container of liquid, flowing crystal, suggested an image of coolness more delicious and more provoking that the same water in the same jars would have done, standing upon a table laid for dinner, by shewing it as perpetually in flight between the impalpable water, in which my hands could not arrest it, and the soluble glass, in which my palate could not enjoy it. [*Remembrance of Things Past*, 129]

What later develops into two distinct poles and zones of reality, appears at first in perception as little more than a tension between two "interests." For animals, the connection between stimulus and response must be continuous for the sake of survival. Instinct, habit, and repertoire serve to eliminate hesitation. For humans, the stimulus-response arc is broken by the sign. This intermediary element introduces doubt and hesitation, but it also makes possible the production of multiple meanings. Ernst Cassir-

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15 Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 100a:10–100b:1.

er characterized this discontinuity of the symbol as a revolutionary development: "This new acquisition transforms the whole of human life. As compared with other animals, man lives not merely in a broader reality; he lives, so to speak, in a new dimension of reality."[16]

Cassirer illustrated this revolutionary new dimension with the story of Helen Keller's discovery of language, related by Anne Sullivan, quoted in Cassirer's *Phenomenology of Knowledge*:

> We went out to the pump-house, and I made Helen hold her mug under the spout while I pumped. As the cold water gushed forth, filling the mug, I spelled "w-a-t-e-r" in Helen's free hand. The word coming so close upon the sensation of cold water rushing over her hand seemed to startle her. She dropped the mug and stood as one transfixed. A new light came into her face. She spelled "water" several times. Then she dropped on the ground and asked for its name and pointed to the pump and the trellis, and suddenly turning round she asked for my name. [*Phenomenology of Knowledge*, 112–113][17]

Cassirer summarized:

> When the representative function of names as thus dawned on a child, his whole inner attitude toward reality has changed — a fundamentally new relation between subject and object has come into being. Only now do objects which hitherto acted directly on the emotions and will begin in a sense to recede into the distance: into a distance they can be "looked at," "intuited," in which they can be actualized in their spatial outlines and independent qualitative determinations. [*Phenomenology of Knowledge*, 113]

Sullivan's account shows that this new distance between subject and object is only metaphorically visual. But, Helen Keller's ability to use signs without realizing the power of the name suggests that, had a visual analogy been possible, the power of pointing at something "in the distance" would have suggested this appellative function much sooner. The sign, as a form of grasping, connects the subject to the object. But, the symbol, as a means of relations among subjects as persons — Callias, for one — breaks this hold.

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16   Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man, An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (New Haven: Yale University, 1944), 24.

17   The source of the anecdote is Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1903), 316.

III
GIAMBATTISTA VICO'S NEW SCIENCE

The Enigma of the Mirror

The problem of perception's simultaneous transcendence and immanence is one which has been treated directly and indirectly by diverse thinkers. For critical philosophies, such as Kant's, focus has been on the issue of skepticism and the role of reason in knowledge. Later, phenomenology rephrased Hume's dilemma by restating the problem of immanence and transcendence in terms of the subject and subjective experience. In the immanence of being, authenticity rather than transcendence became the issue. These developments as much as the mind-body distinction itself owed much to Descartes' idea of mind. In the *Meditations*, thought begins with the certain knowledge of itself, and hence with an immanence that isolates the subject as a subject.[1] The anecdotal history of Descartes' own philosophical beginnings is interesting. While in the military service of Maurice of Nassau in Germany, Descartes spent the day alone in a "stove-heated room" where at first he thought about architecture. Were not those cities and buildings better, which were carried out according to the plans of a single man, than those that resulted from chance or the actions of many? By extension, those truths reasoned by a single man *alone* must be superior to ideas developed gradually out of the opinions of many.[2] This sympathy for the isolated thinker entailed a distrust of the public realm and its paraphernalia — history, literature, laws, customs, and languages. Truth, wrote Descartes in the "Discourse on Method," does not in any way seem compatible with the products of civic life, nor they with truth. And so, the division in learning between the sciences and the humanities took on its modern identity as a border between the exact and the inexact.

Michael Mooney has charged this reason precisely: "Westerners have generally been … distrustful of a life abandoned to the rule of mere prudence. From science to philosophy to simple standards of decorum they have sought to elicit more reliable guidance in the affairs of everyday life."[3] For the "inexact" topics of the humanities, it was necessary to find principles, methods, and systems; or such unreliable practices as

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1   René Descartes, "Meditations," *Descartes, Philosophical Writings*, trans. Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach (Indianapolis: The Library of the Liberal Arts, 1971), 66–75.

2   René Descartes, "Discourse on the Method, of Rightly Directing One's Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences," in *Philosophical Writings*, 15. See also Bernard Williams, "René Descartes," in *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. and The Free Press, 1967), 344.

3   Michael Mooney, *Vico in the Tradition of Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 5.

rhetoric were to be abandoned entirely. In the years following the Enlightenment's early days, this sentiment was rehearsed in the hundreds of scientific societies that sprang up among European intellectuals. These clubs were interested in the *new*: new topics of thought, new methods of analyzing them, new ideas of order.[4] In an important sense, Descartes fueled these societies with his idea of men of *bon sense*, capable of reasoning out any puzzle in natural or human affairs with their own native abilities, in their own new language. "Those who have the strongest power of reasoning … have the best power of persuasion even thought they can but speak the language of Lower Brittany and have never learned Rhetoric," Descartes claimed.[5] Fearful of the uncertain human world dominated by the capricious forces of church and nobility, these small societies began to write utopian programs secured on the idea of the individual thinker freed from the traditional restraints of society and humanistic commonplaces. The newly evolving scientific attitude called for a new order of things and thinkers, built on the certainty of consciousness, the rough but sturdy fabric of reason, and the new wealth of empirical facts added by exploration, investigation, and experimentation.

It was as if the Enlightenment had led to the exchange of the oppressive immanence of politics and religion for the claustrophobia of individuated consciousness and the senses. A new form of discipline was imposed, not by society on the individual but by the individual on subjectivity itself, a confessional and regulatory mode of thought. Transcendence, if it came at all, was postponed by method, the new guarantor of truth, and held in repose as the ultimate secret binding the society of philosophic gentlemen.

There were other societies, not as secret or radical in their methods. One such, the faculty of the University of Naples, comprised the audience to which Giambattista Vico, professor of Latin eloquence, addressed a pedagogic question during one of the annual addresses required by his office.[6] Which method, Vico asked, the new "geometric method" of Descartes or the traditional practices of the topical arts (*ars topica*) used by lawyers and other public figures, was appropriate for the education of the young? This was an audience unlikely to consider such a question with an open mind. The "quarrel between the ancients and moderns," begun by the writer Charles Perrault, was in many respects a geographical issue. Northern Europe, predominantly Protestant, industrializing, commercial, and historically oriented to exploration and experimentation, was culturally remote from the southern Europe of Naples, where Renaissance humanism and Catholicism had merged into a single institutional framework. Groups such as the

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4   Max H. Fisch, "The Academy of the Investigators," in *Science, Medicine, and History: Essays on the Evolution of Scientific Thought and Medical Practice Written in Honor of Charles Singer*, ed. E. Ashworth Underwood (London: Oxford University, 1953), vol. 1, 521–563.

5   René Descartes, *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. Elizabeth Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931), vol. 1, 85.

6   Giambattista Vico, *On the Study Methods of Our Time*, trans. Elio Gianturco (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., The Library of the Living Arts, 1965).

faculty of the University of Naples would have accepted Vico's argument supporting the *ars topica* as a commonplace, an unexceptional truth.[7]

For this second kind of society, immanence was defined as the substance of human social life: language, customs, history, and the unpredictable vagaries of everyday events summed up in the notion of the quotidian. To these concerns one brought philological rather than philosophical concerns. Philology was conceived in broad terms: not just the study of language but the study of culture's ideas and institutions, and the study of human expression through myth, literature, and symbolism. The problem of transcendence in the face of such immanence was never separate from the Classical idea of *praxis*, the comprehensive knowledge of human nature; and the rhetoric that deployed *praxis* in terms of everyday life. The basic texts of Aristotle and Plato, as a backcloth inherited from the Renaissance and Middle Ages, were supplemented by sources from Classical Rome. Cicero, Quintillian, and the author of the *Ad Herrenium* provided a range of humanistic themes: eloquence, ingenuity, memory, and invention. The model of transcendent knowledge that lay beneath these was never the certain possession of the individual. It lay in the rhetorical space between the listener and the speaker, the past and the present, the word and the thing. As with the practitioners of *concettismo* in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, knowledge transcended not only particulars but ordinary existence as a whole. It was considered a power not unlike God's in its ability to call forth a truth present but hidden in the collectivity of the human psyche.

But, most philologists did not hold such a lofty ideal as Vico, who relied on Cicero for his methodology as much as Cartesians relied on the logic of Arnauld and Nicole. Vico's criticism struck at the heart of the problem of immanence and transcendence by using these terms to characterize an intellectual fault-line. Most philologists, engrossed with the facticity of culture, had not taken into account the question of the true, the *verum*, because they, much like Cartesians, had accepted the existence of an unbridgeable gulf between the human and the true. Philosophers rejected the humanities, confident that a method that avoided the contingency of the human world would lead to truth.[8] By doing this, Vico argued, they deprived thought of its own inner nature, depriving it of its origins and history, from its relation to the external world and language, and from its sequence of adopted forms. Philosophy and philology, like transcendence and immanence, were the puzzle of perception put into professional terms. The ultimate science of humanity required an equal concern for the true and the made, and for this project one had to put aside the warring interests of philology and philosophy to discover the composite truth that Vico had sketched out in an early work: that humans may know the truths (only, but also especially) of those things they have made themselves — *verum*

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7   Michael Mooney, *Vico in the Tradition of Rhetoric*, 3.

8   Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, §§138–140, 163, 325.

ipsum factum (*est*).[9] This possible knowledge revealed that human life was itself a composite of truth and making. And, through this device of the *verum-factum*, Vico turned to the question of human origins to ask, of the world poetically conceived in the mythic mind, what truth might be found in the thunder of Jove, the labors of Hercules, or the rites of Cybele.

But, there is an even more radical sense in which immanence and transcendence is taken into Vico's science of culture. This is seen in the way Vico realized that the professional opposition of philologists and philosophers was the social expression of a split within, not just the phenomena of the human world but in a more localized sense, the individual concerns of the scholar. Making and knowing could as easily be put in terms of the competing interests of humanistic study. On one hand, any project that undertook a comprehensive understanding of the human world had to acknowledge its *finite location within* that world, its status as a potential object of its own study. The question had to be asked: could scholarship be objective in the midst of the contaminating conflicts of the day? Was it possible for a mind to be sophisticated enough to question its own historical nature and descend into its own rude beginnings, to stages when such questions would have been literally unthinkable? And, in a theoretical perspective that identifies thought with the made as well as the true, was it possible to separate the content of humanistic truth from the form in which that truth must find and present itself? Such questions constituted only a part of the immanent conditions that bore on Vico as a scholar. A not inconsiderable influence was exerted by the historical context of the times: the popularity of Cartesianism, the activity of the Inquisition, and the corruption of political life in Eighteenth-Century Naples. Transcendence was not just a matter of formulating principles of human development, or the totalizing question of the grounds of any knowledge whatsoever. It was a matter of staying out of jail! Vico thus had to accept three levels of significance in his theorizing: (1) a phenomenal level, where immanence and transcendence had an immediate bearing on the historical forms of human thought and social life; (2) a social level, where immanence and transcendence were contrasted as competing interests in the scholarly community of philosophers and philologists; and (3) a personal level, where the scholar was faced with the limitations of political and religious uncertainty.

It is possible to see how the *verum/factum* principle took all three forms in Vico's thought. At the phenomenal level, it was transformed into the question of the nature of mythic thought, where immanence and transcendence were put into a formulation that was to be Vico's most original and clairvoyant discovery. This was what Vico called the "imaginative universal" (*universale fantastico*), whereby the particulars of sense

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9   Giambattista Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians, Unearthed from the Origins of the Latin Language …*, trans. L. M. Palmer (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

experience take the metaphoric form of divine bodies.[10] At the social level, this dialectic was transferred to Vico's condemnation of both philosophers and philologists for their ignorance of, respectively, the "certain facts" of culture and the truths hidden in human civic life. However it was at the personal, autobiographical level that Vico improvised his most unacknowledged but brilliant accomplishment: the connection of the evolving thought *of* humankind with the thought *about* humankind. In language that was often poetic in tone and radical in its suggestions, Vico brought the theory of his *opus magnum*, *The New Science*, to bear on the writing and reading of that work. Truth, in such circumstances, becomes vertiginous, and the puzzle of making and knowing is laid at the feet of the reader. Knowledge becomes the experience of transcendence. No thinker before or since has seen the question of history and social form in such original terms. This originality requires us to examine each of Vico's three levels of theorizing, the phenomenal, social, and personal, in specific detail.

The Inquisition and Cartesianism

The publication in 1730 of Vico's major philosophical work, *Principj di scienza nuova di Giambattista Vico d'intorno allla comune natura delle nazioni*, known as the "second *New Science*," occurred in the midst of two major historical and intellectual events that were to affect it profoundly. Of the first, Bergin and Fisch write, "Vico says nothing of the Inquisition in his autobiography, but his writings are not fully intelligible to one who does not bear in mind that it was active in Naples throughout his lifetime."[11] Despite a proclamation exempting Naples for being a "notoriously pious city," fierce competition between the Spanish and Roman Holy Offices for the jurisdiction of Naples pushed the local episcopal court system, which had traditionally tried heretics through the *via ordinaria*, the standard criminal procedure, into adopting methods of closed trials, secret investigations, and the confiscation of property. With informers everywhere, no aspect of Neapolitan life, let alone intellectual life, was safe.

The second historical force at work in Vico's thought was the prevailing Cartesianism, which had begun to color Neapolitan culture to such an extent that, when Vico returned from a period spent in Vatolla as the tutor for the Rocca family in 1695, he found himself a "stranger in his native town." This however was no surprise. He was amply informed of the movement's ideas by such Neapolitan Cartesians as Gregorio Caloprese and his own close friend, Don Paolo Doria. Vico reported that he had unknowingly acquainted himself with Descartes' through a plagiarized text, *Natural Philosophy*, allegedly authored by one Henri du Roy, acquired from his father's book shop and read

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10   Donald Phillip Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1981), 65–95.

11   Max H. Fisch, "Introduction," in Giambattista Vico, *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Max H. Fisch and Thomas G. Bergin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1944), 34.

during his off-hours at Vatolla.

The oppressive presence of the Inquisition led Vico to clarify that his theories of culture applied exclusively to the "false religions" of the gentiles — the Egyptians, Romans, Greeks, Chaldeans, and so on, whose civilizations had grown from a stage of primitive animistic nature worship. By excluding the Judeo-Christian history from his speculations, Vico not only avoided the Inquisition's vigilant eye, he coincidentally discovered the important truth, that different cultures, arising in diverse circumstances and at different times, had developed a similar series of stages, institutions, and customs. That this uniformity was a product of the mind's own nature was unthinkable for Christians as well as Cartesians. Vico recognized that neither Christian doctrine nor Cartesianism left any place for a civil world, which required that thought be both autonomous and aware of the conditions of its birth. In the Cartesian technique of reasoning from self-evident first principles, universal truth could never arise out of the merely probable and contingent circumstances of perception or social life. Even less could truth be revealed by a study of the histories of nations. Only by rigorously bracketing all such subjective sources of contingency could the mind begin to approach the truth of things, as an external reality. The civil world, not only of the Christian domain but of humankind in general, was thus to be constrained or ignored. Philology and history were condemned on the methodological grounds that those who were interested in the occurrences of past centuries could know little more than the uneducated common people of those same bygone days.

Working from the "uncertain conditions" that humans strove to make certain by establishing words, customs, and laws, Vico defined the prototypical human work as a certainty (*certum*) that common sense established *in ignorance of the true cause of things*.

> Men who do not know what is true of things take care to hold fast to what is certain, so that, if they cannot satisfy their intellects by knowledge (*scienza*), their wills at least may rest on consciousness (*coscienza*).… Philosophy contemplates reason, whence comes knowledge of the true; philology observes that of which human choice is author, whence comes consciousness of the certain.

Doubt had led Descartes to the radical subjectivism of the *cogito*, the "I think." Vico held that this was merely a consciousness of the self, a *coscienza*, not a knowledge of the truth of the self (*scienza*). Vico argued that man could acquire true knowledge only of that which had been made by humans, consciously or unconsciously, individually or collectively. Cartesian doubt about culture, language, art, and knowledge itself as constructed could get only as far as consciousness, *coscienza*, a "knowledge-of." Vico's key was the role played by ignorance. In ignorance of the "true causes" of things, and unable to form abstract concepts, the first humans created their own fictional, imaginative universality.

The issue of ignorance became critical as the context against which a theory of mythic thought had to fit. More importantly, ignorance as the indigence of the mind became an entirely new means of approaching culture and history. Whereas Descartes' method of radical doubt presented knowledge as external to the subject who sought it, Vico's approach returned the subject — in all its subjective corporeality — to the center of the matter. The evolution of this position was conditioned by Vico's transition from an early enthusiasm for Descartes to a fully articulated anti-Cartesianism. It is necessary to put this change in the biographical particularities of Vico's life. Then, and only then, can modern readers appreciate their own interpellation by a modern, ideological brand of contemporary Cartesianism and realize the possibility of other — Vichian — choices.

Vico's Developing Opposition to Descartes

Vico's *Autobiography* makes clear that he was fully aware of the existence of, and his immersion in, a "period of seething ferment." He characterized his times in terms of an isolation that afforded him, while Neapolitan intellectual life was being overwhelmed by Cartesianism, the chance to renew his youthful acquaintance with Classical authors.[12] This exemption was made to seem even more important by Vico's manipulation of the record of events, by which he transformed a period of historic turmoil into a poetic event. In a retrospective of his own life, Vico condensed and dramatized a process which in actuality was lengthy and ill-formed. The "woods of Vatolla," the scene of his isolated reflection on ancient authors, became a place where, poetically at least, Vico undertook a resolution of the two passions of his mind. He wrote: "… all my life I had delighted in the use of reason more than in memory, and the more I knew in philology the more ignorant I saw myself to be."[13]

Vico's acquaintance with philology was enriched during the Vatolla years by a burning desire to re-learn the Latin poets, starting with their "prince," Virgil, and leading to Virgil's poetic successors, Boccaccio, Dante, and Petrarch. Cicero, Horace, and Virgil gave Vico the opportunity to compare the Latin and Italian languages. Horace led to a study of the ethics of the ancient Greeks and, eventually, to a preference for the speculative Plato over the more rationalistic and authoritative Aristotle.

The crisis in Vico's thought found its first actual and explicit development in his inaugural oration of 1708, *On the Study Methods of Our Time*. In this address, Vico directly compared the approaches of the "ancients" with those of the "moderns." By "moderns," Vico meant not only those who followed Descartes' geometric method as expounded in the Discourse but also Arnauld and Nicole's famous so-called *Logique Port*

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12   Giambattista Vico, *Autobiography*, n129, 215; see also the "Chronological Table," 224–230.

13   Giambattista Vico, *Autobiography*, 37.

Royal, which was the origin of the view that language was to be analyzed as logical expression.[14] To represent the ancients, Vico focused on the study of rhetorical topics, the art of, as Vico put it, "finding, in anything, all that is in it." Cicero, even more than Aristotle, had credited the *ars topica* with a pedagogical value that Vico was able to extend in creating an alternative to Cartesian method.

The art of topics, which allowed the speaker to know beforehand how any argument might progress, seemed also to involve the inventiveness and the capacity to make judgments, faculties on which even the geometric method depended.

> The whole secret of the geometric method comes to this: first to define the terms one has to reason with; then to set up certain common maxims agreed to by one's companion in argument; finally, at need, to ask discretely for such concessions as the nature of things permits, in order to supply a basis for arguments, which without some such assumption could not reach their conclusions; and with these principles to proceed step by step in one's demonstrations from simpler to more complex truths.[15]

In other words, the geometric method itself was founded on a topical inventiveness for which it could not account. Thought had first to discover a topic, or commonplace, which offered it a starting place and lines for development. Formally, the topic was defined in terms of the rhetorical syllogism, the enthymeme. Where the two sides of an argument may be compared to the major and minor premises of a syllogism, the argument is oriented by the term held in common by both sides. Its position, or place, within but outside these terms prescribes the means for developing the logic of the argument. In the case of the enthymeme, the topic is the common element that enables two independent ideas to be argumentatively and logically connected. The middle is also that which is held in common by the speaker and audience and, thus, is able to act as the bond between them.

As to the claims of success in applying the geometric method, Vico suggested that "we may ask whether those among the moderns who have enriched mechanics with inventions have not done so by the conjunction of their own ingenuity with the power of Euclidian geometry, rather than by any application of analysis."[16] For Vico, it was important to note that, while topical thinking produced eloquence rather than knowledge, eloquence itself presumed a form of wisdom concerning the human world and its places.

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14   Antoine Arnaud and Pierre Nicole, *La Logique, ou, L'art de penser* (Paris: Charles Savreux, 1662).

15   Giambattista Vico, *Autobiography*, 125–126.

16   Giambattista Vico, *Study Methods*, 30.

Vico's Inversion of Cartesian Method

By the time Vico composed *Study Methods*, his increasingly anti-Cartesian sentiments had been consolidated into a theory of knowledge. Comparing the study methods of the ancients (the Classical Greeks and Romans) to the Cartesian techniques of his own day, Vico drew an important distinction between consciousness and knowledge. Humans could have consciousness of nature, *coscientia*, but of those things made by consciousness itself, they could have a true knowledge, *scientia*. Referring to Descartes' geometric method, Vico noted that

> The principles of physics which are put forward as truths on the strength of the geometrical method are not really truths, but wear a semblance of probability. The method by which they were reached is that of geometry, but physical truths so elicited are not demonstrated as reliably as are geometrical axioms. We are able to demonstrate geometrical propositions because we create them; were it possible for us to supply demonstrations of propositions of physics, we would be capable of creating them *ex nihilo* as well. The archetypal forms, the ideal patterns of reality, exist in God alone. The physical nature of things, the phenomenal world, is modeled after those archetypes. It is our task to study physics in a speculative temper of mind. [*Study Methods*, 23]

For Vico there were, corresponding to the *archai* of the physical world, known only to God, *archai* of the human world. Humans might know these second kind of *archai* because they made them. To appreciate what Vico understood by this idea of human truth, we must see how he extended the idea of the rhetorical topic to include a "motion of mind," orthogonal to the rational direction, which came to be identified with the mental enactment of metaphor. Vico held eloquence to be a matter of rhetorical plenitude, the ability to cover all aspects of the subject at hand while omitting to mention what is already common knowledge, which the audience is thereby invited to complete. The middle term, the topic, is the "place" where speaker and audience meet. Vico further realized that the topic, in this function of uniting disparate parts, resembled the metaphor.

The ultimate means by which Vico connected metaphor with the rhetorical topic and set both of them in opposition to Cartesian reason was a striking graphic analogy. The geometric method constructed, so to speak, a straight line between the cogito and its object. Looking closely, the line was composed of many small segments, each representing a stage in which thought starts by attaching itself to a former truth and extends itself to a new realization. Vico pointed out that such step-by-step reasoning could turn out, in the end, to be wrong or incomplete. The attempt to find a single cause was antithetical, he held, to the ability of the mind to "ferret out the greatest possible number of causes which may have produced a single event," an ability which always found a roundabout course when straight lines were found wanting. Linear reasoning, "tenuous, delicately refined, and subtle" lacked the robustness and ingenuity of topical thought,

which sought to exhaust its subject by knowing all the "places."

The ability to make fine distinctions among the multiple causes of single events was credited to the "acuteness" of the metaphor, a term with similarly graphic implications. The acute angle, with its long legs and mentally and physically sharp connection, was the place where "the extreme points of a metaphor are able to meet and unite" [*Study Methods*, 24]. Ernesto Grassi has noted that "acute" has many symbolic overtones in Italian (and other Romance languages) that amplify Vico's use of the graphic image. "*Argutezza* (acuteness) is derived etymologically form the root *arg*, which is found in the Greek *argyros*, 'silver', and *enarges*, 'distinct', as well as in Latin *argentum*, 'silver', that is it is used for the designation of something that stands out because of its brilliance."[17] Vico was aware of these historical nuances, for he called metaphor "the greatest and brightest ornament of forceful, distinguished speech" [*Study Methods*, 24]. Silver, a metal associated with the reflected lunar light of poetry and the poetic thought of ancient humankind, is the metal associated with the female Muses, whose mother, Mnemonyne (Memory), is another traditional component of the rhetorical arts.

The notion of *argutezza*, with its graphic and poetic implications, was the crucial factor that enabled Vico to move from a simple contrast of topical thought with Cartesian rationality to a recognition of the topic's independence and value for thought historically and positively. Here, Vico's image of the acute angle yields an idea of reflection as both a metaphorically optical reflection and a mental reflection. Through this compound image of vision and knowledge, Vico was prepared to reevaluate metaphor's use in thought and language. It is important to remember Vico's thorough familiarity with Dante and Neoplatonic traditions in which metaphor, vision, and humanistic truth were given a special equivalence. In particular, the mirror was related to the unraveling of enigma — i.e., what was metaphysically beyond a literal grasp, approachable through a method of inversions. By understanding enigma in terms of mirroring and reversal, it becomes possible to understand its relation to the experience of truth expressed in the famous saying of Paul of Tarsus, "Now I see through a mirror, in terms of enigmas; then face to face" (1 Corenthians, 13: 12). Perhaps the most vivid illustration of this approach to metaphor in the Neoplatonic tradition may be found in Dante's *Paradiso*, where the poet stands before Beatrice, unaware that the goal of his quest is behind him:

> When she who hath imparadised my mind
> Had stript the truth bare, and its contraries
> In the present life of wretched mortal-kind,
> As one who, looking in the mirror sees
> A torch's flame that is behind him lit
> Ere in his sight, of in his thought it is,

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17   Ernesto Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), 14–15.

> Have told him truth, and findeth it agree
> Therewith, as truly as note and measure fit;
> So is recorded in my memory
> That I turned, looking on those eyes of light
> Whence Love had made the noose to capture me.
> And when I turned, and when there smote my sight
> What is revealed within that sphere supreme
> If the eye upon its circling fix aright,
> I saw a point, of so intense a beam
> That needs must every eye it blazes on
> Be closed before its poignancy extreme.[18]

In Neoplatonic terms, the metaphor prepares one for understanding things which are beyond a literal conceptualized grasp, just as it prepared Dante and his readers for a vision beyond mortal eyes. That the metaphor was made, and that the made things in general could reflect, suggested that the metaphor could literally mirror the truth of the human world and its possible topics/places. Vico realized at least a part of this in *Ancient Wisdom*. Drawing from Plato's *Cratylus*, he found in the etymologies of words used by early Italian language a form of wisdom common to all primitives. But, this ancient wisdom was a wisdom of metaphor, not of reasoned thought.

There are several important implications in this. First, as something made, the metaphor was not poetic in the sense that we employ that term today. As Vico emphasized later in *The New Science*, metaphor was the product of a mind so completely lacking in abstracting powers that thoughts could be formed only by directly juxtaposing material phenomena in unmediated ways. Metaphorical thought in this sense was wise only in that it ingeniously used objects to express ideas for which it lacked concepts and terms. More accurately, these ideas did not exist *prior* to this juxtaposing; nor could it be said that they existed *beyond* it. The metaphorical mind of myth saw the world less as a medium, a form of language, than it realized in materiality the enigmatic presence of its own being, externalized and disguised, withholding meaning while at the same time "saying too much."

Second, the method of acute angles becomes a means not just of identifying a "logic of mythic thought" but of conceiving a comprehensive theory of culture. It is no longer necessary to formulate counter-measures to Cartesian instrumentalism, but to supply the missing components of Neoplatonism: a reformulation of the history of nations in terms of the Platonic idea of the soul. In his transformation of the "practical" rhetorical topic into the idea of "sensible topics" as the basis of human's mental and social life, Vico was able to theorize about the full range of human making, including the kind of conceptual making that was involved in constructing the theory itself. From

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18   Dante Alighieri, *Dante's Paradiso, With a Translation into English Triple Rhyme*, trans. Lawrence Binyon (London: Macmillan, 1952), canto 28: lines 1–18, 327.

rhetoric to myth to theory, Vico discovered a remarkable stability among the terms that defined place, movement, middles and angles, wit, and knowledge. This stability would sustain his project throughout the turmoil of his unlucky life and permit him the freedom to experiment with his text as well as his principal ideas.

Imagination and the Question of Origins

The period of Vico's life between 1717 and 1732, From Vico's fiftieth to his sixty-fifth years of age, were filled with the "seething ferment" of new ideas.[19] As Vico's writings confirm, this time was one of transition from a Cartesian standpoint to a new perspective on the problems of humanistic wisdom that was to be the basis for his *New Science*. What "seething ferment" of ideas made this transition possible? Without doubt, the answer to this question is the problem of human origins. Vico had been introduced to this problem through his interest in natural law and the theories of Grotius, Pufendorf, and, especially, Hobbes. However, the special insight that enabled Vico to surpass these thinkers was derived directly from his earlier interest in eloquence and imagination. Vico at some point began to understand that the problem of historical origins was inseparable from the problem of how the mind was able to have anything before it at all, and that both were questions of imagination (*fantasia*) and invention (*ingegno*). Under these common headings, Vico was able to supply a theory adequate to both the historical problem of human development and the phenomenological problem of perception and humanistic knowledge.

It is necessary to examine in some detail the evolution of ideas which led Vico to this equation. Three sources of conflict contributed to the "seething ferment" of this period. First, natural law theory heretically threatened the Catholic view of the role of divine providence in human history. Vico, attracted to the idea of natural law — which was, after all, the idea that men make their own social world — was nevertheless hesitant to endanger the delicate net of confidences that he had gradually established with the Neapolitan clergy. It is not clear whether Vico had cultivated curialist favor out of a sense of the danger of the times or on account of his actual allegiance to the Catholic Church. But, at least it compensated him for his gradual alienation from the increasingly Cartesian intellectual life of his native city. As Bergin and Fisch comment, it is not possible to trace the steps Vico took to resolve the conflict between his attraction to natural law theories and his Catholic religious views. In his development of an "eminently secular if not heretical" philosophy, the Christian view of Adamic origins was not an important barrier.[20] Instead, it was the secular and rationistic undertones in the idea of the social contract that Vico addressed. If there was to be no Adamic forefather, neither was there

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19   Giambattista Vico, *Autobiography*, 43.

20   Giambattista Vico, *Autobiography*, 44.

to be a pragmatically oriented mankind shaped by collective responses to problems of survival. Natural law theories and Christian doctrine were equally inadequate to the question of human origins, because both were essentially accounts of agencies external to the phenomenal human world. Vico sought an internal, intrinsic agency, an *ipsum*.

The second source of conflict came from the difficulty of assigning a status to the thought of primitive mankind. The natural law view tended to degrade primitive thought by contrasting it with the rational thought of moderns. According to the traditional opposition of sense and passion with thought proper, it was possible to arrange history in terms of the transition of body to mind. The alternative to this view situated itself in the increasingly popular thesis of *prisca theologia*, the idea that God or the gods had imparted certain primitive cultures with a wisdom in the form of signs. The Babylonians, Sumerians, Egyptians, and Chinese provided the best evidence for this theory. Emblematic truths could be divined from Egyptian hieroglyphs, and certain parallels with Christianity were claimed on behalf of the ancients. it is clear that Vico saw an ironic middle ground between these two positions, a ground he covered tentatively in his early work, the inaugural address of 1710, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*. Here, he defined primitive thought in terms of selected etymological relationships between Latin words. Two of these contributed to the idea that Vico was to develop later as a central principle of humanistic knowledge, the Latin terms for "the true" (*verum*) and "the made" (*factum*).

The third source of conflict grew out of the problematic relationship of modern thought to primitive thought. If the ancients were seen to be wise because they seemed to make connections that reason later found to be problematic, was not their wisdom simply "projected," by a modern consciousness wishing to see genius where none existed? Or, was it a metaphoric insight, lost to modern mentality, whose recovery was in fact a sequel to rationality's antinomies?

Vico was not the only thinker to see the intimate connection between these three problems. His was an age electrified by the question of human origins, brought to the center of the intellectual stage by the European exploration of the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Nor was Vico alone in his interest in the connection between the poetic "wisdom" of metaphor and the apparent philosophy embedded in primitive expressions. But, there is a real sense in which Vico's resolution of the personal "seething ferment" created by these issues constituted an original approach to the study of culture. Bergin and Fisch have made this claim in the most definitive terms:

> The science concerning the common nature of nations not only is new but it is Vico's. It is not a work of collaboration, not a synthesis of results previously attained by others and waiting only to be brought together, organized, and given the form of a science. It is a science in which not even the first steps could be taken until a certain discovery was

made. Vico had himself made that discovery, and it was only when he was in possession of it that he was able to proceed to construct the science.[21]

It is difficult for most readers to grasp the real nature of this originality, because they are unable to understand what Vico's discovery actually was, what it meant, or how it worked as a key unlocking the collective truths of *The New Science*. Many simply reject the idea that any theory of culture as comprehensive as Vico's could depend on a single, compact discovery. Vico himself called attention to the singularity of this event: "The principle of these origins both of languages and of letters lies in the fact that the first gentile peoples, by a demonstrated necessity of nature, were poets who spoke in poetic characters. This discovery … is the master key of this Science."[22]

There are several approaches to this key. Vico provided a clue about the process that led to his discovery, by saying that his difficult labor had taken "a good twenty years."[23] This gives us a rough chronology that begins in the first decade of the Eighteenth Century and concludes with the publication of the first *New Science* in 1725. This period covers the publication of two other important works, the *Study Methods*, published in 1709, and *Ancient Wisdom*, 1710. Both works addressed the issues that contributed to the "seething ferment" cited by Bergin and Fisch.

The easiest approach to this period of twenty years would be to arrange the works in a sequence determined by Vico's interest in metaphor. The *Study Methods* treats metaphor as an alternative to Cartesian rationality under the rubric of "topical thinking." Metaphor is given a radical and more decisive role in the mythic thought portrayed in *Ancient Wisdom*. Finally, *The New Science* makes the necessary associations between metaphor and the poetic mentality of primitives in a fully developed and comprehensive theory of culture. However, this sequential account gives the impression of a continuous, progressive sequence of discoveries. In fact, Vico's discovery was as compact and singular as he, and Bergin and Fisch, characterize it. It permitted Vico to bridge between the modern interests of the *Study Methods* and the concern for mythic thought in the *Ancient Wisdom* with a developmental element, the "ideal eternal history" (*storia ideale eterna*), linking the first humans to the last in a universal sequence of institutions shared by cultures arising at different times and in different places. This element is missing in works prior to *The New Science*, and one is forced to accept the author's own account of his discovery of a single key unlocking the entire mystery of myth and, subsequently, all history.

Vico described this discovery clearly, in terms that bear repeating: "The principle of

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21   Bergin and Fisch, "Introduction," in Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, H1, xxxiv.

22   Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, §338. Verene (*Vico's Theory of Imagination*) stresses that this is sufficient and clear evidence that imaginative universality trumps the verum factum as Vico's formative principle.

23   Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, §4.

these origins both of languages and of letters lies in the fact that the first gentile peoples, by a demonstrated necessity of nature, were poets who spoke in poetic characters. This discovery … is the master key of this Science" [*New Science*, §338]. In other words, the key to *The New Science* lies in the idea of a form of thought characterized by metaphor. This can be studied best in terms of the unit of that thought, the imaginative universal, the *universale fantastico*. Vico's paradigm-exemplar of imaginative universality is the sky-god Jove, whose thunder and lightning crystallized, in minds not yet human, the idea that the sky is a giant body. Humans escape the immediacy of their perceived world in a moment of fear. They are not, Vico said, afraid of something external in nature, but of their own human nature, unknowingly projected onto nature and focused clearly by the presence of Jove. The sky becomes the medium of signs by which humans interpret what Jove means to say to them. Agriculture develops in the first clearings made to gain a view of the sky, and culture grows up around the practice of divination. Institutions first originated in religion come to be extended; the "heroic" society of the city emerges, accompanied by a more representational use of language; finally, heroic society gives way to modern democracy and an abstract form of thought. Thus, a progression of social forms springs from a single, universal, perceptual act.

This composite public and private quality of the imaginative universal points it in two distinctly different directions. In the primary sense, imaginative universality is the phenomenological ground of the mythic world, and through extension the basis of all subsequent cultural development. In a secondary, or internal sense, imaginative universality is at its root a perceptual phenomenon retained by human consciousness as a primary act of mind, overlaid but not eradicated by later, more sophisticated forms of thought. In Vico's view, the mental history of humans as cultural beings is contained in the "modifications" of the mind of the individual. By modifications, Vico suggests a capability, a principle of access of consciousness to things hidden within it. Whether Vico can be credited with conceiving of the first modern version of the unconscious, or whether he means that conceptual sophistication logically embeds less rational, archaic features within it as implicit presuppositions, the result is a "paligenetic memory" available to a mentality that is, in real terms, simultaneously modern and ancient.

In a sense, Vico applies the orator's traditional art of memory (*ars memoriæ*, a technique for remembering that creates images to be stored within imagined spaces) to a spatialized idea of mind. Imaginative universality exists within the "modifications" of the human mind in the same way that a base, shaft, and capital constitute the Classical idea of the column. It is not the specific content but the form of the mind that affords the modern student of culture the experience of travel through time back to anthropological origins. As a study aid, Vico sets up the parallelism between the external and internal — the spatial and mental versions, so to speak — of the ideal eternal history. The scholar

aware of the structural resemblance between the evolution of human institutions and the evolution of his/her own internal thought can experience a moment of philological and philosophical *déjà vu*, for through meditative acts, access is opened to everything human — in principle at least.

This theme and techniques of parallelism recur throughout *The New Science*. It guided Vico to certain commonplaces of his day, for example comparing primitives to children and idiots. It helped him organize a wealth of philological data. It directed his subsequent application of the imaginative universal to linguistics, psychology, history, and jurisprudence. But, most importantly, it became a means of spanning the distance between the first humans and the last. It did this by defining the space between the two as a positive distance representing not only history but the scholar's means of under-standing that history.

Method cannot be seen as a systematic application of any fixed categories of ideal eternal history to the passive evidence of culture. Method finds itself to be a part of the ideal eternal history, through which the scholar, as a maker of historiographic truths, can realize relationships between modern conceptualization, including writing about history, and the first making of the human world. Topical thinking comes to apply not only to the first humans, who thought with a mentality alien to our own but still human, but also to those who study those first humans, armed with logical concepts. *The New Science* is actualized by the mental *and the physical* reading of it. Imaginative universality is internalized within the reader who discovers the final proof in an extremely personal way, as a modification of his/her own mind. This doubly reflective event constitutes a catastrophe of contamination, where knowledge and biography mix in the modern reader, as they were for Vico writing in the Eighteenth Century. This complex situation is diagrammed by the interplay between *The New Science* and Vico's *Autobiography*. For the reader who must experience this interplay personally, the matter is not so easily laid to rest.

From Spirit to Matter

The supposition that Vico's science hinges on the discovery of a single, compact truth about the nature of primitive thought is supported by the evidence of the final two sections of Book One of *The New Science*, "Principles" and "Method." In language unsurpassed and seldom equaled in the rest of his work, Vico summarized his axiomatic introductory material and marshalled his eloquence to focus the reader's attention on a single problem: "To discover the way in which this first human thinking arose in the gentile world, we encountered exasperating difficulties which have cost us the research of a good twenty years. [We had] to descend from these human and refined natures of

ours to those quite wild and savage natures, which we cannot at all imagine and can comprehend only with great effort" [*New Science,* §338]. Vico the scholar became Vico Odysseus, journeying "in the night of thick darkness enveloping the earliest antiquities, so remote from ourselves, [where] shines the eternal and never failing light of a truth beyond 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" [*New Science,* §349].

Juxtaposing the historical odyssey from myth to modernity with the mental odyssey required of the modern thinker intending to explain this development, Vico faced the reader at this point, outside his work in a moment of romantic irony.[24] The descent into the "night of thick darkness" had not yet occurred, and the author did not underplay the danger of the journey. Convinced as he was of the truth of his discovery, he was not confident about the outcome of the future narrative. To secure the moorings, Vico elaborated his vision of the work to come. The mental amalgam of these last two sections of Book One resembles the introductory "Idea of the Work," where Vico enumerated the parts of his science in terms of a memory image. In "Principles" and "Method," a real threshold appears, to serve as the entry to the work proper, Book Two, "Poetic Wisdom." The reader is presented with virtually every facet of *The New Science*: its materials, its claims, its context. But, the real leitmotif of these sections is proof, and the way in which proof bears on the question of cause.

Not one but many kinds of proof are proposed and deployed: philosophical and philological proofs, logical proofs, "proper and continual" proofs, decisive proofs. But, Vico finally rests his case on "divine" or "sublime" proofs. Modern usage places the word "divine" too close to theology to understand what Vico meant by divine providence. He did not mean the role of God in history in the usual Judeo-Christian sense. Rather, he defined providence as something hidden in appearance — particularly as that which signifies the future [*New Science,* §342]. Vico identified providence with the practices of divination — the sciences of taking auspices — at the same time he carefully distanced it from Judaism, a religion which, Vico was careful to note, began precisely with the proscription of this ancient practice.

There are two very important consequences of this. First, it was absolutely essential for Vico, in order to accomplish the aims of *The New Science*, to distinguish between two kinds of cause. The cause of the human world had to be considered apart form the cause of the natural world, which Christianity considered to issue from God. By distinguishing Gentile from Hebrew humanity, Vico could discuss freely the anthropological status of natural law as a "false" causality, contrasted with the "true" causality of the

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24   For a discussion of this term, see Alfred E. Lussky, *Tieck's Romantic Irony, With Special Emphasis Upon the Influence of Cervantes, Sterne, and Goethe* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1932).

Judeo-Christian God. There was a second and ultimately more important benefit of this secularized version of divine providence. For the commonplace to be an enthymemic force binding ideas as well as speakers and audiences, it had also to gain a perceptual and phenomenal power. Verbal eloquence presumed the full-blown presence of language in a society already human. It was necessary to see the topic as working through things themselves, converting objects into signs made to humans, not coming from other humans but from gods imagined to dwell within the substances of the world. Like Aristotle's use of *sensus communis* in the *De Anima*, common sense had also to apply to the unification of the sensible properties of the world, where touch, hearing, vision, and so on were bonded into a unity embodied by a common object. By making the Judeo-Christian God the master of reality, the pagan gods of Gentile mankind became the masters of appearances, a *sensus communis* capable of binding societies together through a metaphoric mentality. Poetic creation and cultural creation merged in the single idea of the cause of the Gentile world.

The hiddenness of providence generated a world of appearances by hiding the truth of human authorship from men. But, Vico noted that this providence, as a principle of authorship, was necessarily also hidden within consciousness. In this case, hiddenness is what had made the discovery and subsequent science of this world possible. The idea of providence put both the phenomenology and the epistemology of culture in the terms of the act of divination. An analogy of proportion was set in place. Just as the first humans saw the world as the presentation of divine signs through their institution of the sciences of augury, the last humans must invent their own scholarly divination, to see how history reveals the signs of human nature. In terms that leave little doubt, Vico compressed the mystery of culture, and the difficulty of discovering that mystery, into a specification of what the reader must *do*. It is rare that an author leaves behind such an explicit indication of the way his work is to be interpreted. But, it is rarer still that this indication instructs the reader neither to understand nor comprehend but, rather, to *divine* the book's meaning in the act of reading.

The question of what constitutes the key to *The New Science* has been answered, but an even more difficult question remains. How is one to follow Vico's instructions? How does the reader divine the meanings of history and culture to prove *The New Science*? Divination concerns a possible future. The practical futurity of primitive divination seems remote from the scholar, who as a "last human" rather than a first one technically lacks a future — i.e. is culturally at the end of a road. "Final futurity" is the oxymoronic challenge given to the reader in the idea of a science to be known through "sublime" proofs of meditation, self-narration, and contemplation. In the context of a science of humanity, what does final futurity mean? One possible answer lies in the relationship that Vico established between providence and causality.

Consider this passage, in which Vico summarizes the principal themes of his theory of culture in terms of three attributes of divine providence — omnipotence, wisdom, and goodness.

> In contemplation of this infinite and eternal providence our Science finds certain divine proofs by which it is confirmed and demonstrated. Since divine providence has omnipotence as minister, it must unfold its institutions by means as easy as the natural customs of men. Since it has infinite wisdom as counselor, whatever it disposes must, in its entirety, be [institutive] order. Since it has for its end its own immeasurable goodness, whatever it institutes must be directed to a good always superior to that which men have proposed to themselves. [*New Science*, §345]

And again:

> In the deplorable obscurity of the beginnings of the nations and in the innumerable variety of their customs, for a divine argument which embraces all human institutions, no sublimer proofs can be desired than the [three] just mentioned: the naturalness [of the means], the [unfolding institutive] order [in which they are employed], and the end [thereby served], which is the preservation of the human race. [*New Science*, §341]

As against the philological, philosophical, and logical proofs presented, the "sublime proofs" of divine providence present themselves to the reader as no less than tokens required for the passage into "the deplorable obscurity of the beginnings of nations" [*New Science*, §345]. Vico cites these as the *causes* of culture with an almost ecclesiastical confidence. In keeping with his carefully drawn distinction between the Judeo-Christian providence of God and the "false" providence of the Gentiles, Vico thoroughly secularizes these. Omnipotence refers to the naturalness with which mythic mentality springs up amidst human feral life. In beings that are "all body" and completely lacking in conceptual ability, a metaphoric manner of perceiving, thinking, and speaking naïvely takes natural phenomena to be "true speech" (*vera narratio*). The wisdom of the ancients was the product of what in modern terms seems to have been a total ignorance of the real nature of things. Yet, by being a form of speech, this *vera narratio* prepares the way for further linguistic — and, hence, cultural and mental — development. Providential wisdom is identified as the ideal sequence of events that provided mankind with a beginning out of which other, completely different forms of culture developed. A mythic age was followed by an age of heroes, which in turn served as a transitional bridge to a truly modern mentality. Finally, providence's goodness, no less paradoxical than wisdom forged out of ignorance, based the preservation of the human race not on civic sensibility but, instead, on private vices and self-interest.

Vico darkened the Machiavellian tone of this principle at every opportunity:

> We thereby establish that man in the bestial state desires only his own welfare; having taken wife and begotten children, he desires his own welfare along with that of his fam-

ily; having entered upon civil life, he desires his own welfare along with that of his city; when its rule is extended over several peoples, he desires his own welfare along with that of the nation; when the nations are united by wards, treaties of peace, alliances, and commerce, he desires his own welfare along with that of the entire human race. In all these circumstances man desires principally his own utility. [*New Science*, §341]

One can only marvel at Vico's ingenuity in grouping his three main insights about how culture works around the three traditional attributes of the God of the Jews and Christians. This not only had the benefit of restating the independence of human cause from natural cause, ceded to God alone, but it enabled Vico to build a world of negatives hostile to any rationalistic idea of natural law and congenial only to a topical mentality. Two structural devices allowed for this. The first was the casual resemblance of providential omnipotence, wisdom, and goodness to the three of Aristotle's categories of cause: material, formal, and final. Where human origins had to be discovered in something universally present in pre-humans, Vico found the perfect material cause in ignorance, keened by fear and anecdotally elaborated in the fear of thunder. Vico's formal cause of culture was the ideal sequence of institutions through which primitive humans gradually civilized themselves. The final cause embodied in the idea of providence — the mechanism of the ideal eternal history — was the irony that humans, acting to satisfy selfish ends, unwittingly establish public goods: a civic world.

This resemblance to Aristotelian theory of four causes conveniently isolates the final category, efficient cause, the cause identified with the maker. Just as Vico set the true opposite the made in his principle of *verum ipsum factum*, omnipotence, wisdom, and power are grouped together as truths of the human world set opposite making, the efficient cause of that world. There are three kinds of makers in *The New Science*. The human world itself is made by men through the three aspects of providence that convert their ignorance, random acts, and private desires into wisdom, history, and a civic world. The second maker is the author of *The New Science*, who completes the ideal eternal history as a "last man." The third maker is the reader himself, who must narrate the science to himself in a moment of final futurity. The reader and the author discover the truth of the made, and this truth is the truth of making, a truth that places them across the table from each other, a table upon which are the triune aspects of providence.

Clearly, the mentality behind this arrangement is a master of irony. Not only is providence the product of the mythic mind's inability to form concepts about the real nature of the world, but each of this providence's aspects is a trope of the false for the true: ignorance for wisdom, particulars for universals, private worlds for public ones. The efficacy of this world is guaranteed, however, by the mythic mentality's total lack of a sense of irony. Taking the sky to be the body of Jove, the first humans were unable to see the role of their own fear in creating this first deity and, thus, regarded the thunder

and the auspices of the sky as true speech. Irony sees the truth of this world by destroying its value as *vera narratio*.

This irony is pushed even further, to create the second structural device enabling Vico to build a world of negatives. Even to the Romantic eye, Vico's mythic world is a skeptic's paradise of false gods and deflated heroes. The first humans thought only what they could, and this meant that they perforce used metaphors that were sublime only to the modern mind capable of measuring the distance between literal and figurative expression. Thinking through bodies was, in fact, the basis of what Vico called "severe religion," which, lacking any ironic capabilities, took the miracles of myth as infallible truths. When to this grim view Vico added the principle that humans established civic goods only because they were the inadvertent by-products of universal vice, any of the reader's remaining romantic views of primitive society as utopian are demolished. Seeing garden turn to wasteland, the reader is finally made to realize that the ideal eternal history includes modernity, whose last humans face an age that Vico described in dire terms. With the advent of conceptual thinking, humans became more barbaric in their refinement than the first humans had been in their uncouth savagery. To this early critic of the modern world, we might add the subsequent verdicts of Sartre, Camus, Eliot, and Ellul — continuations of Vico's negative critique that, even more dour, fail to recognize Vico's full causal account.

Remarkably, there is no stylistic trace of this pessimism in the "Method" or "Principles." One must look to the *Autobiography*, where Vico portrayed a life so saturnine that one is tempted to doubt that such a collection of idiots, scoundrels, injustices, perfidies, and missed opportunities could have happened without poetic reworking. But, in *The New Science*, Vico's perverse providence, which tropes false for true, is overwhelmed by prose that instead prepares the reader for a supermundane experience:

> Thus the proper and continual proof here adduced will consist in comparing and reflecting whether our human mind … can conceive of more or fewer or different causes than those from which issue the effects of this civil world. In doing this the reader will experience in his mortal body a divine pleasure as he contemplates in the divine ideas this world of nations in all the extent of its places, times, and varieties. [*New Science*, §345]

In modern jargon this text is "doubly encoded," to say the least. It is as if Vico, not content to describe history in terms of the uneven distribution and selective application of irony, instead demonstrated irony by placing the reader in a most difficult situation. Standing outside the work proper, the reader is confronted with the knowledge that the same providence that troped the mythic world is troping the present one as well — and that one chief effect of this topical force is the present hermeneutical dilemma facing the reader who has the text before him/her. In short, the reader cannot make a legitimate distinction between playing an external examiner of Vico's science or being a character

within the larger dramatic framework specified by the ideal eternal history. The reader is caught in the middle of the plot that he/she is reading, at once ironically alienated from the work by this consideration but also fatalistically drawn into it. There is no middle ground between these positions. It is not possible to resolve the situation by favoring one alternative over the other or blending the two in some imagined compromise.

It is conceivable that this ironic structure is not a structure at all, but instead an accidental condition. But, its real and unavoidable effect, intentional or not, is to put the author and reader within a single poetic figure, making Vico's account of providence no mere characterization, but in reality an *incarnation*. The reader has no choice but to narrate *The New Science* for him/herself, or forget about the question entirely. This ultimatum makes this point of the book a gateway more liminal than had been the frontispiece or the introductory chapter, both of which have an important threshold value. For this particular entrance into *The New Science*, a qualitative change has been brought to bear on the act of reading itself. Beyond this point, the work and the reader must enter into a different relationship. The latter is not the "consumer" of the former; and only in a restricted sense does the reader continue as a critic and scholar. Rather, she/he becomes epistemologically equivalent to the author, and, through the author, a kind of primordial maker, like Dædalus. The human world and not just the text now have no extrinsic features affording a detached view. Anything that is *thought* about the Science unavoidably *conditions* the Science. The reader is drawn into a providential force field divided by the alternative interests of the true and the made. No further thing can be *thought*. The rest must be *made*.

IV
THEATER OF THE WORLD

The New Science as Memory Place

The imaginative universality of Jove is one of the principal commonplaces of *The New Science*. It logical status as the *terminus a quo* of metaphorical thought and its historical role as the basis of cultural development single it out as the best expression of the "key" discovery by which Vico was able to conceive of a science of culture. He intuited that the world of nations was made by humans and that its guise may be found in the modification of human minds.

Jove's thunder and lightning made the sky the first human place. Its geometry was echoed by the swidden clearings that served as the first temples — places unique in the forest because they offered views of the sky. In the primeval forest, the sky was barely visible. The first clearings were therefore "eyes," *luci*, where ritual, observation, and the reading of signs were naturally linked. Later, as heroic society took hold, the place-making rituals and even the geometry of the first clearings were transferred to the foundation rites of the first cities. Out of the great variety of practices connected to such clearings came the many now-strange associations linking diverse topics and uses, such as theater, temple, forum, sacrifice, trial, labyrinth, and chorus. Added to these complications, Paul Wheatley has argued from extensive evidence from the seven centers of emerging urbanism that the first cities were established over the sites of necropolises. Cities constituted a radical "figure-ground reversal," a negation of a negation.[1]

The clearing was the earthly counterpart of the sky that communicated to humans through the outward signs of Jove, but it's geometry cannot be understood easily without recognizing that Jove was not simply the sky, a natural object, as much as he was the embodiment of the distinction between light and dark. If thought proper is seen to consist of the power to make reflected distinctions, then one could regard Jove as the first and generative means by which human gained this ability. Anthropologists have pointed to the widespread connection between the capacity to make distinctions in general and the specific importance of the distinction between light and dark. Vico, with only limited access to historical and anthropological details about other cultures, went far to anticipate later anthropological evidence of the cultural significance of this distinction. As Troels-Lund asserts,

We start from the assumption that the sense of place and receptivity to light are the

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1 Paul Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters, A Preliminary Inquiry in the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese Cities* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1971).

two most fundamental and deep-seated manifestations of the human intelligence. It is by these two roads that the individual and the race achieve their most essential spiritual development.… Not only our earth but ourselves, our own spiritual I, from our first blinking at the light to our highest religious and moral feelings, are born and nurtured of the sun.… The progressive view of the differences between day and night, light and darkness, is the innermost nerve of all human development.[2]

The modern anthropologist could easily add the weight of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century ethnography, which if anything went to extremes in pointing out the central importance of "solar mythologies" and their general assimilation to ritual, institutions, and folk beliefs of all kinds. Working from the materials of classic field work compiled by Edward Tylor, Sir James Frazier, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, and others, mythographers tended to single out the seasonality of the sun and its importance to agricultural cycles at a time when it was important to establish universal cross-cultural motifs. This strategy fit with the general perception of the primitive mind as concerned primarily with survival and, hence, fertility. The interest in solar mythology, to the degree that it represented the primary evidence of the old school, as now waned. Interest in solar mythology, to the degree that it represented a primary source for the old school, has also waned. Professional curiosity has since migrated towards language. A substantial concern remains, however, among those studying "rites of passage." The importance of the sky in the temporal, spatial, and social movement of across culturally reified boundaries is the light-dark distinction itself, as a primary form of boundary behavior.

Predictably, darkness is related to a number of liminal cultural categories: wandering, trial, contest, punishment, death. Darkness in mythic thought acquired complex and contradictory associations. Although it was a token of the sun's death and trial in the underworld, it was also the seat of wisdom and location of the ancestral dead, the *manes*. The Greeks, like so many other ancient peoples, held it to be the location of great material wealth and the mysterious key to vegetable and human immortality. Developed with greatest art in Plato's image of the cave, later metaphors of the dark underworld began to represent the mental darkness of the lived world.[3]

The main significance for us, at this point, is the creation of a *place* out the distinction between light and dark, and the use of this place in ritual and thought as a place of passage. Vico was consistent in the way he tied the origins of culture to just such a place:

We observe that all nations, barbarous as well as civilized, though separately founded because remote from each other in time and space, keep these three human customs: all have some religion, all contract solemn marriages, all bury their dead. And in no na-

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2   Troels F. Troels-Lund, *Himmelsbild und Weltanschauung im Wandel der Zeiten* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1929); quoted in Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Form*, 2, 97.

3   W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950) 217–253.

tion, however savage and crude, are any human actions performed with more elaborate ceremonies and more sacred solemnity than the rites of religion, marriage, and burial. [*New Science*, §333]

Turner and others have shown that marriage and burial, true to Vico's grouping, are structurally indistinguishable as rituals of passage through the liminal realm created by Jove.[4] However, the structure of the rite of passage, either as a temporal event or a spatial place, is only part of the matter at hand. Vico's imaginative universal is a composite idea, basic both to the formation of human institutions *and* to the beginning of human mental life. The lesson of the imaginative universal is that culture cannot be understood from social or phenomenological perspectives alone, but only from a double view that moves between the *external* world of artifacts, institutions, and settlements and the *internal* world of the perceptions and thoughts of individuals. This was Vico's purpose in making his science a resolution of the interests of philologists and philosophers, each who had erred by not considering the other. Therefore, we must also seek the relationship between this liminal structure and mythic perception in general.

Like the relationship between the visible and the invisible, the rite of passage is a metonymy by which the boundary, or limen, separating the unknown from the known world takes the place of this unknown, invisible realm. Such famous and forbidding boundaries as the Styx or Okeanos bind of regions structurally and ontologically incommensurable with the ordinary world. By a metonymy of boundary for region, the point of passage represents what lies beyond the boundary. Reciprocally, the forbidden region takes on the properties of its boundary. Movement becomes linearized, or in some other way dimensionally restricted. This loss of freedom of movement is counterbalanced by a rupture in geometry, occurring in the symbolic center — a means of transcendence. The clearest example of this geometric metonymy is the classical Cretin labyrinth, whose interior of mazed passages is "all wall." The dimension normally associated with the subject's view of the object is metamorphized into movement. Through the metonymy of exterior for interior, an internal space is specified that technically lacks any extrinsic properties. Sight of objects is exchanged for a journey through objects, and this journey becomes an *arche* of vision as discovery, trial and judgment.

The rite of passage, a chief commonplace of the primitive world, is no less dominant as a motif in classical and later literature. It is the "descent theme," or *katabasis*, from the Greek expression "to go down," κατὰ βαίνω.[5] The *katabasis* is the imaginary journey of the dead, the hero (whose name originally meant, simply, "dead person"), the sun in its daily cycle. This powerful source of images has given birth to subtle but nevertheless

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4 Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre, The Seriousness of Human Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 24–26.

5 Georg Wissowa, *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertums Wissenschaft*, Neue Bearbeitung, 10 (Stuttgart: J. B. Mettlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1919), 2359–2449.

effective indicators of liminality: ruins grottoes, shadowed spaces, beaches, streams, and so on. The roundabout, crooked, or cursed way contrasts with the direct grasp or connection. The circle, vortex, spiral, or curve combine into a single image, integrating the ideas of immanence and transcendence. Circular form in general is associated with the boundary between the visible and the invisible; the spiral is the emblem of travel beyond; and curving figures of all kinds have served as distinguishing marks of liminality.[6] When the pure geometry of the circle is combined with the indirect symbolism of light and dark, striking and well known effects are created, such as Dante's obscure wood and downward spiral toward and beyond the gates of the Inferno.

The physical motion of liminal travel, going down, is backward rather than forward. Perhaps this is the reason why mazed motion is characterized as entrapment: one only appears to make progress. Movement is cancelled out by the discovery of repetition: "We're going in circles!" Motion back in space is also motion back in time, correlative to liminal or chronoclastic time: palingenesis. Significantly, such traditional points of passage as gates to the underworld have in many cultures been embellished with images referring to remote events in the traveler's life or the history of his/her culture. A. Bernard Deacon provides the following account from Malekulan funerary myth (New Hebrides):

> After crossing [a stream], the ghost of the deceased] sees in the distance the rock Lembwil Song, and sitting in front of it is a female ghost Temes Savsap. Before her, traced in the sand, is a geometric figure called Nahal (the Path) … The route along which the ghost must go lies between the two halves of the figure. As the ghost approaches, Temes Savsap wipes out half of the tracing and tells the traveler that before he proceeds any further he must complete the diagram correctly. Most men during their life-time have learnt how to make this and other geometrical figures, and so, on their death, they are able to do as Temes Savsap tells them and pass safely on their way. But should a man be ignorant of how to complete the figure, Temes Savsap seizes him and devours him so that he can never reach the land of Wies.[7]

The space awaiting the liminal traveler is the past, the lived time of individual, society, or cosmos. Journeying inward to the center, one confronts primary, aboriginal event. The man-beast Minotaur, Satan, Elysium, Eden — symbolic occupants of this event — conflate evil and ideal good into a compact sign, or *monstrum*, of man's chthonic (a-sexual) beginning. At the metonymical gate of liminal space, this gallery of the past is compressed into images that must speak hieroglyphically about the past. The hidden meaning of such signs is the central point of that past, portrayed as the

6   Georges Poulet, *The Metamorphosis of the Circle*, trans. Carley Dawson and Elliott Coleman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966).

7   A. Bernard Deacon, *Malekula: A Vanishing People in the New Herbrides* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd.). Excerpted in *Journal of the Royal Archaeological institute* 64 (1934): 130. Passage quoted from W. F. Jackson Knight, *Vergil: Epic and Anthropology, comprising Vergil's Troy, Cumæan Gates and The Holy City of the East*, ed. John D. Christie (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967), 150–151.

primary source of all subsequent development. The metonymic images become, as in the Malekulan example, clues to a successful passage. But, in more general terms, they are also memory images of what one has individually or collectively experienced. They presage a future that is really a past; they divine what has been hidden, not *from* the traveler, but temporally *within* the traveler.

The traditional poetic connection of liminal space/time with memory figured prominently in the *ars memoriæ* practiced by orators schooled in the classical traditions of Greek and Latin rhetoric. The purely practical technique of memorization was connected at every stage of its development with the sublime function of memory as an idealized means of discovering and ordering humanistic truths, for memory was regarded as the first part of prudence, complemented by intelligence and providence. Vico assigned it a place equal to imagination and judged the faculties as identical: "memory is the same as imagination.… Memory thus has three different aspects: memory 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" [*New Science*, §819]. Hence, the original art of divination was brought into connection with the mental faculty of memory. Memory's precedence as Mnemonsyne, the mother of the muses, made possible the extension of memory to Urania (the sky), the first of the Muses. What higher tribute could be paid to a single aspect of mind, and what more effective way than through memory could the scholar of the Eighteenth Century discover the most comprehensive and sublime truths of the human world?

From our modern perspective, it is difficult to grasp the way that memory seemed, for three centuries or more, to hold the key to humanistic wisdom. Much of the fascination with memory can be attributed to the perennial interest in Plato and his doctrine of anamnesis, the view that the ultimate discovery of the forms (ideas) of truth involve a memory of what has already been experienced by the soul. Even during the Middle Ages, when only a few of Plato's texts were known in Europe, Neoplatonism kept alive this idea, which was to flower prominently in the famous memory system of Ramón Llull. With the Renaissance came the discovery of dialogues hitherto unknown; and to these sources was added a passionate interest in "humanistic magic," and especially the magic reputed to the Egyptians on account of their mysterious hieroglyphics.[8] Whether one, in this age regarded this writing as once having had magic powers, or whether one simply saw it as indicative of the precocious cultural sophistication of the Egyptians, the idea that wisdom could be physically embodied by an icon and not simply represented by it dominated the imagination of humanism. It would be tempting to call this collective fascination a scholarly cult were it not for its long and ambitious history. From the early

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8   Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *La Quête d'Isis, Introduction à l'Egyptomanie* (Paris: Olivier Perrin, 1967).

emblem books by Francis Quarles and Andrea Alciato, to the immensely popular later work of Cesare Ripa, it seemed obvious that humanistic truths had found their most natural form in emblems, which, as visual riddle, contained truths in a mentally acute form uncontaminated by the literalism and trivialization of ordinary language.[9] As with Egyptian hieroglyphs, emblems seemed to embody a divine wisdom that had originated the human world. Anyone who had drunk of this lore believed that the emblem and the orator's art of artificial memory were two sides of the same phenomenon.

My purpose in referring to this period of intellectual history is to connect the liminality of memory with the liminality of myth. Memory is naturally liminal in the sense of being palingenetic. Myths give liminality its distinctive geometry, but liminality is not identical with myth. The liminality of caves, tunnels, sea voyages, and other mythic devices is not a superficial quality. It relates to their ability to accommodate the enactment of *katabasis*, the dramatic form of liminal geometry. The backward motion of *katabasis* applies to memory as well as mythic descent, because the question of origins was liminal to the mythic mentality. For the modern mind, myth is an origin, and the consideration of myth requires a descent into the uncertain and foreign structures of myth. This descent has often been seen in terms of a fear of all that is irrational and indeterminate, reflected by Descartes' condemnation of history and rhetoric and Charles Perrault's defensiveness in praising the moderns over the ancients.

Conversely, the humanists' defenses against such attacks frequently rallied around ambitious iconographical projects intentionally aimed to frustrate rationalistic thought through the construction of poetic conceits. Vico's New Science can be seen in this context as a project replete with iconographical references and defices. The frontispiece was inspired by on e of the most famous memory images of the day, "Cebes' Table," a *mons delectus* capped with a temple of Absolute Wisdom.[10] Vico intended his frontispiece to function as just such an emblem, and no doubt he was fully aware of the warning given to the readers of the Table. The story accompanying Cebes' image recounts the experience of pilgrims who, in passing a temple of Saturn, notice an image of a mountain displayed at the back. The attending priest warns them that the image contains a secret, and thata those who understand it will immediately be granted perfect wisdom; those who don't will be driven to madness.

The frontispiece constitutes a memory image, or memory place, of *The New Science* in the best traditional of the rhetorical practices of artificial memory. A stronger relation has been put forward by Margherita Frankel: that Vico's organization of the

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9   Mario Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, Sussuid Eruditi 16 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Litteratura, 1964).

10   Kebetos Thebaiou Pinax, Polyglot, *Cebes' Tablet, Fascimiles of the Greek Text, and of Selected Latin, French, English, Spanish, Italian, German, Dutch, and Polish Translations* (New York: Renaissance Society of America, 1979).

Cebes' Table, From Otto Vænius, *Theatro Moral de la Vida Humana* (Brossels: Francisco Foppens, 1672). Image courtesy of the Paterno Library Special Collections, The Pennsylvania State University.

materials of *The New Science* is far from haphazard or thoughtlessly repetitious, as many have charged.[11] Frankel suggests that the text is in fact arranged in a spiral form,

11   Margherita Frankel, "The Dipentura and the Structure of Vico's 'New Science' as a Mirror of the World, *Vico: Past and Present*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981), 43–51.

so that the book itself constitutes a memory device. This ambitious argument is not at all out of keeping with Vico's interest in memory, or his awareness and continual use of the tradition of *ars memoriæ*. This tradition had, by the Eighteenth Century, fused the architecture of the labyrinth, the theater, and the cosmos into a composite idea of an ultimate *locus memoriæ*. In the preparatory sections of *The New Science*, "Principles" and "Elements," it is obvious that Vico wants to stand the reader before something. This something is a crossing into the work proper, and the act of crossing is a "going down" metonymically representing the entirety of the work beyond in terms of emblematic truths. This point of entry reveals the nature of the text's geometric, or "architectural" qualities. We expect, in the tradition of the *katabasis*, to encounter a linear sequence through which the whole is represented through an order of words. This order itself has a transcendent structure that corresponds to the discovery of the truth that lies in the symbolic middle of the work (a point of origin). This truth is fully self-reflective. It is truth that is "enigmatic" in the sense that it is not in the form of "a truth *of*" something. All of this is known simply by putting Vico's work into the context of its rhetorical and poetic predecessors.

All of these clues would constitute nothing more than suppositions about structure and organization, were it not for the lesson of Vico's strategy, that *The New Science* is a place, and a place for the ultimate thought about what being human constitutes. It is a liminal place because such thoughts are themselves liminal to the mind that would try to think them, a mind ruled by concepts and the laws of conceptualization. It is a memory place because, like Plato's anamnetic truths, humanistic wisdom is hidden within itself. However, the distinguishing characteristic of *The New Science* is the necessity for the reader to make the science for him/herself. The reader is active, unlike what is expected in traditional works. The reader is not the receiver of a narration, not an opponent of an argument, not an audience for an entertainment, and not the witness of a demonstration. By reenacting the author's role as maker, the reader is empowered to relive the ideal eternal history in solidarity with the collective of the "authors" of culture. *The New Science* as a memory place must be seen as universal, as ultimately transferable to anything human whatsoever. For the reader to realize this dimension of Vico's ideas, s/he must grasp the simultaneous mental and physical nature of the idea of place that makes it necessarily *true* (*verum*) on one hand, and suited to any possible certain conditions (*certum*), on the other.

Æneas at the Dædalan Gates, Cumæ. Publius Vergilius Maro, *Opera* (Venice: Giunta, 1544). Image courtesy of the Paterno Library Special Collections, The Pennsylvania State University.

Memory, Theater, World

Three things dominated the humanistic imagination of the Seventeenth Century: the idea that the world was ultimately understandable; the relation of this possible knowledge to the image; and the belief that memory was not so much a mental activity as it was a power — nearly divine — capable of breaking the final and most central defenses of Truth. These were three separate influences in the sense that memory, theater, and world had their respective metaphors and traditions, their own domains of development. In this age, the world had become theoretically knowable. Exploration, geography, cartography, and geometry had made possible the determination of *fact* through a determination of *distance*. Space was thus the object of control, surveillance, and social experiment. The Theater had developed an analogous domain of exploration,

where classical formulæ and theatrical form could be inverted or permuted through the elaboration of the theater as a humanistic emblem as well as a container of images — "masques" of truth.[12] Memory, the most obscure element of the three because of its relation to time, enjoyed a brief renaissance amidst an increasingly empirical and book-oriented culture. But, it's opposition to the main currents of intellectual history — as an inward meditative act out of step with rationality's aggressive, experimental stance — assured it an alliance with other a-rational interests: alchemy, Neoplatonism, magic revived by Ficino's Platonic researches, and latter-day versions of Llullism.

More interesting than any of these separate traditions, however, was the way in which world, theater, and memory were combined. Robert Fludd's famous "theater memory system," Shakespeare's use of cosmic metaphor both in his plays and in the allegorical design of the Globe Theater itself, and the widespread idea of a humanistic *theatrum mundi* of classical conceits repeated the sentiment: that the human world may be known through a grasp of its *loci*, its places, ordered by a means of the traditional architecture of the proscenium stage and auditorium, which duplicated in space that certain order of time that memory sought to comprehend.[13] The world was a stage, in more than a metaphorical sense, because the stage could so easily hold a world trans-formed into images.

Our intellectual distance from this view can be measured in terms of the extent to which memory has lost touch with its Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century companions. As simple recollection, memory is responsive only to technical attempts to extend its capabilities as a reliable container. As Socrates predicted in the Phaedrus, writing in literate cultures engenders forgetfulness No longer dependent on elaborate mental and imagistic systems to order names, families, laws, poems, rituals, and the kingdoms of humans, animals, and plants, Sixteenth Century knowledge found its refuge behind the hastily erected walls of print. Against this forgetfulness stood such anachronistic minds

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12   Peter M. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem, Structural Parallels between the Emblem and Literature in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 19979), 134–167.

13   Francis A. Yates, *Theatre of the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969). Yates' undertaking of an exposition of Giulio Camillo's memory theater and the background of memory places was an assignment. Yates, a competent classicist in her own right, had not ventured into the materials of memory lore until encour-aged by the new director of the Warburg Institute, Ernst Gombrich. Whether this assignment was designed to undercut the influence of Ernst Panofsky, whose work with Raymond Klibansky and Fritz Saxl had, in the stress of wartime Europe, managed to create the monumental study, *Saturn and Melancholy, Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), is not possible to answer with any degree of certainty. Gombrich took over the writing of Saxl's biography as the scholar's health declined, and there must be some relation between Gombrich's positivism and anti-Platonism (he was a close friend of Karl Popper) and the initiatives taken toward such Neoplatonist interests as artificial memory. In any event, Yates succeeded, consciously or unconsciously, in castrating Camillo's system by converting its obvious Kabbalistic elements into technical accomplishments. Yates thus missed the essence of Simonides' invention of the art of memory: that the account itself given by Cicero and others preserved a tell-tale chiastic key, where two levels of narrative are linked by memory and accident to create a palingenesis of names for place, providing the go-ahead for the burial of the dead crushed by the collapsed banquet hall. The lore that emanated from this anecdote, including references to the banquet, the cosmic references preserved in Macrobius, and the eschatology of memory in its relation to funerary myth were all lost in Yates' inadvertently sanitized account. See Donald Kunze, "The Missing Guest: The Twisted Topology of Hospitality," in *Eating Architecture*, ed. P. Singley and J. Horwitz (Cambridge: MIT, 2004), pp. 169-190.

as Giordano Bruno and Giulio Camillo. Bruno's complex memory system embraced the wisdom of the Kabbalah, alchemy, Christian theology, and Classical mythology.[14] The attempt to reconcile Catholics and Protestants by consolidating the truths of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam through a science of memory brought Bruno to his unfortunate end.

A less controversial but equally ambitious scheme was the memory theater of Giulio Camillo. Same say that the theater actually existed as a physical structure, but even if it had, it was either lost or destroyed shortly after Camillo's death in 1544.[15] It may be that Camillo's written description of theater, *L'Idea del Theatro*, 1550, was itself the actual theater. The latter has an advantage over the "real thing" in that Camillo comments on his reasoning for organizing the 7x7 matrix of niches, rows, and aisles that reverse the usual geometry of the theater by having the viewer stand on a small stage to gaze at the auditorium, populated by gods, heroes, and humans. Camillo's project, so alien to our modern interests, was to create a universal place for the operation of a universal memory. Few accounts excel the fictionalized description given by Carlos Fuentes in his novel, *Terra Nostra*. Camillo, speaking of Simonides, the inventor of artificial memory, counsels his apprentice, Ludovico [note: the name could be a play on its derivative, Ludwig, "famous fighter"; a memory marker for Lodovico Dolce, who wrote the introduction to Camillo's collected works; or an invented term, *ludo*, "game," and vico, "*Vico*," i.e. "Vico-game"]:

> Simonides was the first to remember something besides the present and the remote as such, for before him memory was only an inventory of daily tasks, lists of cattle, utensils, slaves, cities, and houses, or a blurred nostalgia for past events and lost places: memory was a *factum* not *ars*. Camillo proposed something more: everything that men have been, everything they have said and done can be remembered, in perfect order and location; from then on, nothing had to be forgotten. Do you realize what that means? Before him, memory was a fortuitous fact: each person spontaneously remembered what he wished to or what he could remember; the poet opened the doors to scientific memory, independent of individual memories; he proposed memory as a total knowledge of a total past. And since that memory was exercised in the present, it must also totally embrace the present so that, in the future, actuality is remembered past.[16]

Fuentes' fiction comes close to the truth that Camillo's project seems to fulfill Vico's specifications for a totalizing science of the human. Other connections between Vico and Camillo may be discovered. Camillo's theater portrayed the generation of human institutions in terms of a mythology developed in stages. From the first row of elements, represented by planetary gods, the theater's auditorium ascended level by level

14   Francis Yates, *Theatre of the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

15   Lina Bolzoni, *The Gallery of Memory: Literary and Iconographic Models in the Age of the Printing Press*, trans. Jeremy Parzen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

16   Carlos Fuentes, *Terra Nostra*, trans. Margaret Sayers Peden (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976), 556–557.

to a Promethean level of domesticated arts and objects. Metaphoric substances became gods, gods became heroes, heroes invented the human arts. Just as Vico described *The New Science* in terms of constructing a "common mental dictionary," Camillo called his science a kind of "inner writing" while insisting at the same time that the secrets of human nature were written in external nature, which had been crystallized by his theater.[17] Perhaps the most striking similarity between the two thinkers is their idealization of memory. Both treated memory as a sublime power with access to the full wealth of the human world. But, Camillo's wooden theater was a (possibly) literal architecture accompanied by a text. In what way did Vico draw from this popular symbol? To answer this question it is necessary to look in detail at another architecture: the ultimate cosmic structure of the pre-Copernican universe.

Vico and Camillo may have shared a common source of this lore: Macrobius, the Fifth Century Latin author of the popular work, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*.[18] Manuscripts of this work were among the commonest item to be found in libraries from the early Middle Ages, and there were, according to William Stahl, thirty-three printed editions in circulation by 1600. Macrobius's *Commentary* offers the ultimate discussion, in a somewhat Stoic context, of the classical idea of the liminal space of the death dream. It would be impossible to ignore the comprehensiveness with which Macrobius wove together the details of Cicero's recounting of the dream of the grandson of the famous Scipio Africanus. The dream paralleled the famous "Myth of Er," included near the end of Plato's *Republic*. The hypothetical space of dreams was described as homeomorphic with the cosmos. Civilization was explained as a "motion of the soul" between conditions of wetness — the Flood? — and dryness. Many of the physiological and metaphysical concerns of Lucretius were given an idealistic turn. Geography, meteorology, climatology, and physics were placed beside history, religion, and eschatology in a dizzying survey of ancient authors. But, the most striking motif in Macrobius was the discovery made by the dreaming Scipio, that life is really a death for the soul; and that, from the perspective of the Immortals, the geometry of the underworld is really the substructure of the mundane world. This apocalyptic vision used the figure of *commutatio*, an exchange of one thing for another, or more accurately chiasmus, a change that involves a transposition of the ordinary and the extraordinary in a *conjunctio oppositorum*. This moment of shock when Scipio discovered that the living were dead and the dead were living was

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17   Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, §§ 35, 145, 162, 332, 473–482. Lu Beery Wenneker, "An Examination of L'Idea del Theatro of Giulio Camillo, Including an Annotated Translation, with Special Attention to His Influence on Emblem Literature and Iconography," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1970; translation, 54, 61–62. Camillo's combination of inner and outer as a dialectic natural to secrecy, encoding, and truth constitutes an early version of the idea of *extimité* (obversion, or extimacy) developed by the psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan. Lacan employed the term for the first time in his Seminar XVI, "D'un L'Autre à l'autre," 1968–1969. See Jacques-Alain Miller, "Extimity," *The Symptom* 9 (June 20, 2008), http//www.lacan.com/symptom, trans. Françoise Massardier-Kenney.

18   Macrobius Aurelius Theodosius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952).
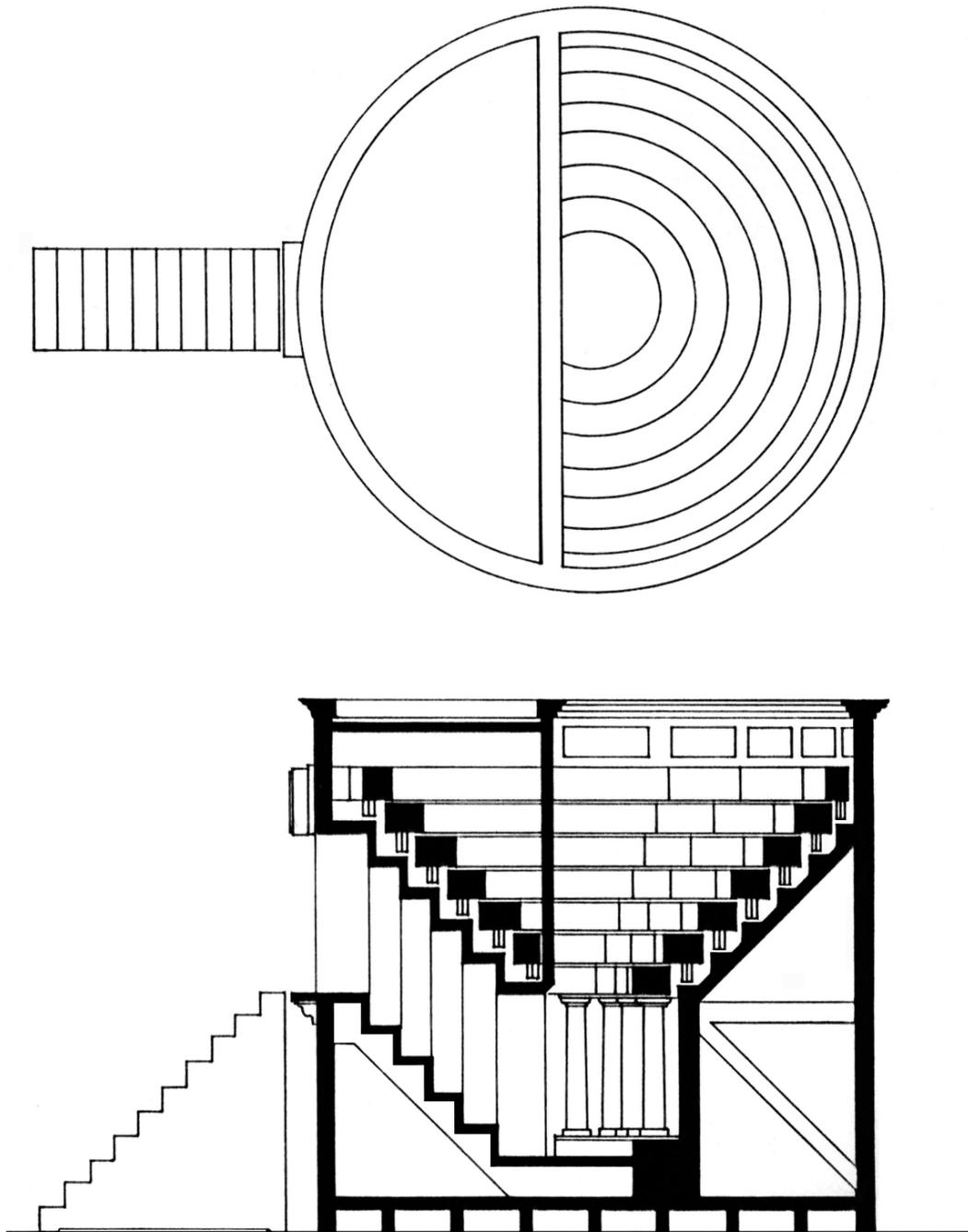
Hypothetical plan and section of Camillo's theater of memory, proposing an ascent and descent into the theater to a central stage about which the rings of the auditorium's rows could freely rotate, simulating the movement of the planets across the horizon-framed sky. The advantage of this interpretation of the theater differs from other reconstructions by allowing mobility and combination of rows in ways comparable to the seasonal and other changes in the positions of planets. Drawing by author.

precisely that mental point of liminal passage that, when it occurs in a modern, philosophical moment, must borrow from primitive cultural practice. More than any of the specific doctrines preserved, in the *Commentary*, it was this figure of *commutatio* or chiasmus that became useful to Camillo, as well as other emblematists before and after him — a figure that justified describing the human condition as a theater.[19] To see one's self requires a momentary suspension, in which the reflected image is unrecognized. Truth comes with an identification between two orders, the external order of the world seen by the viewer as objective, independent, and often monstrous combined with the internal order of one's own nature, hidden from consciousness and made accessible only in a moment of mistaken identity.

Camillo's use of chiasmus yielded a theater that reversed the normal audience-stage relationship. The viewer occupied the stage while images and other materials were filed into the spaces usually occupied by the spectators. The auditorium held images drawn from classical mythology, ordered in sequence by the seven levels of the seats and radiating aisles dividing the seats into seven vertical columns. Vico's chiasmus was on a larger scale, in terms of complexity and volume. The Vichian theater included, technically, both Vico's *New Science* and *Autobiography*, and possibly his last key oration, "On the Heroic Mind" (1732).[20] Like Camillo's theater, Vico's texts reversed the positions of the viewer (the scholar) and the viewed (humanity) by finding or inventing points of identity connecting his own life to the ideal eternal history. The most distinguishing aspect of this autobiographical method was the chiastic structure it evidenced and the possibility of applying chiasmus to the reader and his/her predicament. Chiasmus as *commutatio* makes every reading of *The New Science* a potentially theatrical event, and the *commutatio* or exchange of the modification of one's own mind for the truths of history, a private world for a public one, makes this theater nothing less than a Camillan *theatrum mundi*.

I intend to investigate a central image used by both Vico and Camillo — that of a high placement above a labyrinthine forest. This image can be seen as a homology to Cebes' *mons delectus*, or image of wisdom as a journey of trials. With the help of Macrobius as a background, the architecture of this high placement can be seen as an architecture of the journey of the soul, which is to say, memory in the mode of anamnesis. The journey reveals structure, and a comparison of this structure to the ideal eternal structure of nations and minds is imperative. Vico could hardly have remained indifferent to the interests of his contemporaries in emblems that embellished the puzzled texts

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19   John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analysis, Exegesis* (Heldesheim, Germany: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981).

20   Giambattista Vico, "On the Heroic Mind," trans. Elizabeth Sewell and Anthony C. Sirignano, *Vico and Contemporary Thought*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo, Michael Mooney, and Donald Phillip Verene (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humantiies Press, 1976), 228–245.

of the thinkers closest to his own sympathies: Tesauro, Gracián, Sforza-Pallavicino. The location of Vico's thought within the emblem tradition is a truism. But, the theatrical nature of *The New Science* and all of Vico's later thinking has not been sufficiently addressed. Donald Verene has initiated this comparison that "Vico's *New Science* is a theater of wholly human wisdom … [that] allows for contact with the eternal places through providence as manifest in the ideal eternal history of nations, as the illumination shining from behind the canvas of history."[21] To carry this comparison further, I propose to show how, through a common image, Vico joined Macrobius and the apocryphal Cebes to demonstrate a general equation for the ideas of the world, theater, and memory.

Vico, Camillo, and Macrobius: Motion of the Soul

Vico's Account. Two images of isolation, one from *The New Science* and another from the *Autobiography* may be placed side by side on account of their spatial qualities. The first humans, afraid of the thunder of Jove, took refuge in caves where they lived in small family units under the absolute authority of the father, who through his control of divination and other religious actions, was simultaneously a priest, king, historian, physician, and poet. The epithet of "cyclopean" is applied to this first form of society, through the Homeric reference to the Cyclopes in *The Odyssey*. Vico connects the "single eye" of the cyclops to the singular "eyes" (*luci*) or forest clearings where auspices were taken by the first human groups [*New Science*, §§ 191, 243, 296, 338, 503]. But, it is not implausible that the single eye was also, poetically, the single entrance to the cyclopean cave, the prototype of labyrinthine structure. As Odysseus confirmed in his disastrous encounter with the Cyclops, cyclopean society was austere. Every father constituted an absolute authority, and family units had little to do with each other. Life was tied to the worship of Jove and the interpretation of Jove's auspices. Politics, religion, economic, physics, geography, and chronology were divine because all emanated from the interpretation of the signs of divination.

The other image, from Vico's *Autobiography*, is set at the opposite end of history. During his youth, Vico served as tutor for the Rocca family, who owned several residences in and around Naples. One of these, the Castle of Cilentro, was set in the woods near Vatolla. Vico wrote of the Castle as a refuge from the turmoil of intellectual life in Naples: "Vico … felt most grateful for those woods in which, guided by his good genius, he had followed the main course of his studies untroubled by sectarian prejudice; for in the city taste in letters changed every two or three years like styles in dress" [*Autobiography*, 118–119]. During this period Vico acquired four "authors" to guide him in his auto-didacticism: Plato, Tacitus, Francis Bacon, and Grotius. The distinguishing mark of this personal anecdote is its implausibility. Fisch and Bergin note that the Rocca family

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21 Donald Phillip Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination*, 191.

divided its residency over a year between Vatolla, Portici, and Naples. There was probably no year in which the tutor did not spend at least some weeks or even months in Naples. Vico, in almost continual contact with Neapolitan intellectual life, chose to emphasize his isolation through the preferred image of an austere castle library set in the midst of the Vatollan woods. The theme of isolation comes up later in his life, when Vico would bless the adversity of his career for providing him occasions to retreat to his study at home, which he compared to a "high impregnable citadel," to work on the project that culminated in *The New Science*.

The image of the citadel or asylum is also a prominent motif in *The New Science* itself. The first societies grew because the plebeians too refuge under the protection of the cyclopean fathers. And, at the end of history, when humans become "beasts made more and more inhuman by the barbarism of reflection than the first men had been made by the barbarism of sense," remnants of humanity "flee for safety to the wilderness, whence, like the phoenix, they rise again" [*New Science*, §1108]. Isolation, even in cyclopean society, was a means of survival. As this sense is translated to the intellectual conditions of modern times, isolation becomes auto-didacticism and originality. The mental act of discovery is compared to the first perception of Jove's imaginative universality. Just as the fear of Jove had begun the order of history that had enable humans to civilize themselves, the isolation of the scholar afforded a new mental order, a complement to the invention of the world of nations.

Camillo's Account. Fearing death, Camillo hastily dictated an outline of the idea of his theater, which was published in 1550. In this work, he described the inverted architecture that placed the solitary observer on a small stage overlooking an auditorium filled with an imaginary audience of images drawn, in part, from the myths of Homer.

> This high and incomparable placing not only performs the office of conserving for us the things, words, and arts which we confide to it … but also gives us true wisdom from whose founts we come to the knowledge of things from their causes and not from their effects.… If we were to find ourselves in a vast forest and desired to see its whole extent we should not be able to do this from our position within it for our view would be limited to only a small part of it by the immediately surrounding trees that would prevent us from seeing the distant view. But if, near to this forest, there were a slope leading up to a high hill, on coming out of the forest and ascending the slope we should begin to see a large part of the form of the forest, and from the top of the hill we should see the whole of it. The wood is our inferior world; the slope is the heavens; the hill is the super-celestial world. And in order to understand the things of the lower world it is necessary to ascend to superior things, from whence, looking down from on high, we may have a more certain knowledge of the inferior things [*L'Idea del Theatro*, 31–32].

What was the structure of Camillo's famous theater? From the letter to Erasmus by Viglius and Camillo's own vague description, a few things can be determined. The theater reversed the normal audience-stage relationship, placing the viewer on stage

and the various memory devices in the auditorium. The division of this space into seven vertical and seven horizontal spaces was cosmologically motivated and mythically expressed. Seven columns near the stage represented the planets in their Ptolomaic order, with the place of the sun central, but with Apollo removed to the second row and, in his place, a reference to the Banquet. As the levels of the auditorium proceeded outward and upward, the planets developed from primary deities, through stages marked by mythic topoi, into the technological and institutional bases of human life: waterworks, windmills, laws, pastoralism, and so on — an early version of Diderot's famous *Encyclopedie*. There is some evidence that the auditorium contained boxes or coffers for storing written materials, so much so that Yates was tempted to call the theater "a highly ornamental filing cabinet."[22] But, how does a stage comprise the "high and incomparable placing" that Camillo described? Is this simply a continuation of Camillo's systematic reversals of ordinary situations?

Macrobius's Account, Scipio's Dream. It is important to remember that the intellectual context of Camillo's theater was the Neoplatonic conception of the cosmos in terms of the motion of the soul. Like Vico, Camillo had extensive access to the formal and informal lore associated with Neoplatonism. The doctrine that life and death are locked in an oscillatory movement between a corporeal state and a disembodied state is ancient, perhaps co-original with human thought itself. By the time of Pericles, a formidable body of originally primitive traditions had coalesced around the intellectually sophisticated Orphic movement, a principal source for Pythagorian mysticism and its indirect product, the Platonic academy. Plato wove Orphic motifs into many parts of his dialogs. Elsewhere, Orphism had regional effects that colored the more general doctrines of memory, dialectic, and the problem of knowledge.[23] In particular, the image of dialectic as the form of knowledge itself and a medium for memory of the true was drawn from Orphic sources but given a new and characteristic turn.

Neoplatonists of the Middle Ages and Renaissance diffused the Platonic view of the soul, mixing it with several contemporaneous mythic traditions. Kabbalism, Gnosticism, and the writings of the legendary Hermes Trismegistus (Mercurius) had influenced and had been influenced by Plato. By virtue of their ancient lineage, Neoplatonic ideas were already cousins to obscured traditions that were rescued and added to the corpus. By the Renaissance, these polychrome beliefs were well known, if inconsistent and frequently corrupted. To put ourselves in a position that affords a view of this material, we must review the doctrine of the soul's motion and its spatial features in the best available terms, the detailed description of the Neoplatonic cosmos provided by Macrobius.

Working in the fourth century CE, an age divided by Christianity, successive inva-

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22 Francis Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 145.

23 W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950), 337–374.

sions from Northern tribes, and unstable political conditions, Macrobius was one of a group of encyclopedists who had set about to preserve as much of the dissolving Classical tradition as possible.[24] Macrobius's *Commentary* performs the invaluable service of preserving an otherwise lost work of Cicero's, *De re publica*. While Macrobius frequently avoided conflicts caused by inconsistencies in Neoplatonic writings, he collated a broad and complex material in such a careful and lucid manner that his major works, the *Commentary* and the fragmentary *Saturnalia*, were widely read throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

Macrobius takes up Scipio's dream line by line, interpreting the story passed on by Cicero of the encounter of Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, conqueror of Hannibal. Macrobius points out the resemblance of this meeting with Plato's account of the soldier Er, who had been presumed dead for twelve days. When Er revived, he was able to give a report on what he saw during his wandering in the underworld. The essential features of the universe common to Plato, Cicero, and Macrobius were Ptolomaic: that the earth was the center of a system of concentric spheres containing the planets, including the sun, the fixed stars, and the fixed sphere, or *apeiron* ("unbounded") and its Milky Way.

The planetary order approximated the relative speeds of revolution attributed by an inconsistent tradition: first, the moon; then Mercury/Hermes; Venus; the sun, Apollo; then Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. The sun was sometimes assigned the second position, other times the middle or third position. Because of the radical dichotomy between the day sky and the night sky, which were thought to be hemispheres rotating about the earth with the same speed as the sun, the sun was attributed a special form of mobility. Because the hemispheres moved with it, the sun and the planets visible in the night sky were held to move at the same speed. But, because the sun climbed and descended annually — and because this motion was so obviously connected to the earth's seasons — the sun took on the characteristics of the soul in its motion through this concentric planetary structure. As Macrobius elaborates in the *Saturnalia*, each planet except the moon has at one time or other been called a sun.

The Orphics compared the relation between the fixed sphere and the earth to that between the eternal soul and the corruptible body. Motion between the *apeiron* and earth became a space of incarnation, birth, and resurrection. At the end of this cycle, the souls purified of their contamination by the body were able to return to their permanent identities in the Milky Way. Astounded by the number of healthy familiar faces, the younger Scipio asked his grandfather if they were alive. Africanus explained that the birth of the body was actually death for the soul, and that mortal death released the soul from its body as a prisoner would be released from aa cell. The earth and its substructure retained souls, unaware of this relation, attached to the life of the senses.

24   William Harris Stahl, "Introduction," *Commentary on Scipio's Dream*, 6–24.

During life the soul could be awakened to the truth of its former state, which came to it as memory. Beauty, poetry, laughter, and wisdom could induce this memory, but no accurate account of its real truths could be made.

The most significant feature for our interpretation of Vico Camillo is that this inversion of ordinary relations portrayed a gradual process of embodiment, a descent of the soul through the succession of planetary spheres. At each level, the soul forgot more of its eternal nature and acquired the qualities of the ruling planet. Macrobius described this passage of the soul in terms that strikingly anticipated Vico's symmetry of the true and the made, linked through an ideal eternal history:

> In the sphere of Saturn [the soul] obtains reason and understanding, called "logistikon" and "theoretikon"; in Jupiter's sphere, the power to act, called "praktikon"; in Mars' sphere, a bold spirit or "thymikon" in the sun's sphere, sense-perception and imagination, "aisthetikon" and "phantastikon"; in Venus' sphere, the impulse of passion, "epithynetikon"; in Mercury's sphere, the ability to speak and interpret, "hermeneutikon"; and in the lunar sphere, the function of molding and increasing bodies, "phytikon." This last function, being farthest removed from the gods, is the first in us and all earthly creation; inasmuch as our body represents the dregs of what is divine, it is therefore the first substance of the creature.

Camillo duplicated this process directly, by representing the seven planets as seven levels of his auditorium. The correspondence of each level to planetary attributes was approximate but insightful. The banquet stage, at which the gods themselves are first called into material form in the Homeric episode, represents the infusion of mind into matter, the principle of intellect (Saturn). The world divided into mundane, infernal, and celestial zones gives to the power of action a stage (Jupiter/Jove). The third, or "cave" level (Mars) marks the point where elements are mixed to form *elementa*, or elements taken as conjunctions of qualities. Thus, fire is seen as the product of hot and dry. The world is not made up of simples but is the result of the rather Martial process of forces conflicting and being resolved. The solar level fuses the idea of perception with divination in the image of the Gorgon sisters, three female spirits who share a single eye of prophecy. The amorous level of Venus is represented, appropriately, by Pasiphaë and the Bull, an image that echoes the idea of composite being in the resulting birth of the Minotaur. The Macrobian level where the soul acquires speech (Mercury) is adorned with Sandals and other signs used by Mercury when he executes the will of the gods. This level is for those things which humans can perform naturally, without the acquisition of any art. The final Promethian grade of Camillo is fully Macrobian in the sense of describing the level at which the soul gains the ability to mold form. At this ultimate stage, Camillo arrays the human arts — a large category, which includes windmills, agriculture, grammar, religion, fishing, and irrigation machines (to mention only a few).

Camillo's conception, though elaborate in the extreme, may seem to be little more

than an artful arrangement of the ready-made materials of classical literature. In an age where "theater" was used to describe any comprehensive treatment of a subject, Camillo's real theater may even be judged to be a too-literalistic attempt to find a spatial structure adequate to all the humanistic *loci*. But, the deceptive ease with which the vast array of gods, planetary attributes, myths, images, and other commonplaces found their locations in the seats of Camillo's auditorium belies the fact that he had found, in the form of a traditional building type, an uncanny congruence between architectural form and thought. This reinforced the purely material aspect of Macrobius's vortex, which could too easily be dismissed as a convenient spatial metaphor for a more important tenor, the Neoplatonic idea of the soul. In its cosmic garb, Macrobius's spacial schema remains distant and un-philosophical. But, Camillo's theater is, as theater, forcefully present as an ordinary place made strange. The theater as a place is an active presence. We are forced to consider the Classical universe it contains from the point of view of the traditional ironic disconnection of the viewer and the viewed, as well as in the light of the Camillan irony whereby the viewer and the viewed are reversed.

At this point, it is necessary to talk in terms of the pure geometry of this situation. One approach, the one most literally geometrical, would follow the Renaissance analysis of the Vitruvian auditorium and proscenium stage. The basis of this reconstruction and interpretation of the theater as a form is generated by four intersecting equilateral triangles. My approach will concentrate on the less traveled territory of the theater's inherent liminality. In a simplified diagrammatic analogy, the Classical Greek and Roman theater distilled by Vitruvius was seen as a humanistic emblem composed of two superimposed figures, the threshold and the circle. Superimposition is a characterization warranted by the common occurrence of circular or circle-like theater plans, both in ancient and more modern times. The circular theater is pure in the sense that the circular orchestra compresses the idea of the theater as participatory dance, a clearing necessitated by a minimal distinction between players and spectators. A circle is the minimum theatrical divide, but it is not the only one. The limen, or threshold, could be regarded as any segment of the circular enclosure of the theater. The viewer accepts the implied interdiction against stepping inside without the proper precautions, such as the interdiction violated by Remus during the foundation of Rome. The limen also exists as the imaginary line defined by the mask, the surface at which the gaze of the viewer and the spirit of the dramatic character meet. This line is always liminal, and it metonymizes the space *within* the theatrical circle as well as the boundary of that space. As the line represents what lies beyond, this beyond, through a *commutatio*, is itself liminal, or "all threshold." One example of this is the possible existence, in some ancient theaters, of a tunnel connecting this center with the space beyond the proscenium. The liminality of the orchestra is emblematically represented by a circle bisected by one of its diameters.

The two spaces created are "liminally conjoined" as opposites: viewer and viewed, world and representation, present and past. The correlation wit the cosmic sphere bisected by the horizon is significant: the line, through its metonymy of visible for invisible, makes possible the division of a single space, analogous to a field of combat. Such is the space of the traditional funeral games, as commemorated in Book V of *The Æneid*. The bisecting "horizon" can also take the form of the three-way intersection, the *compitalis*, which can be seen as a path interrupted by a crossroads, as in the traditional zone protected by the god Terminus and marked with a stone Herm.[25]

What is the point of such a liminal space, shared by theater with such incongruous places as battlefields, crossroads, and labyrinths? Three themes stand out: (1) division, where the opposed elements are equals or doubles; (2) interruption, where the continuity of space, words, or thoughts is broken, sometimes by a fatalistic event, as in Oedipus's encounter with Laius, his father, at a crossroads; and (3) opposition, where the elements opposed are incommensurable, as in the example of the pairs day/night, life/death, evil/good, viewer/viewed.

One kind of answer lies in the apocryphal fable used to mark the birth of the art of memory. Cicero related the following in his *De Oratore*. A wealthy Thessalian, Scopas, hired the professional poet Sionides of Ceos to compose and present a panegyric to him on the occasion of a banquet celebrating his victory in a wrestling bout. The poet included a passage in praise of the twin gods Castor and Pollux, the "Dioscuri," perhaps out of piety, for panegyrics were customarily reserved for poems honoring the dead, not living sports figures. In any event, the choice was somewhat appropriate, since wrestlers as well as the twin gods "come in pairs." Scopus, however, did not approve this deviation from the theme of personal praise and refused to pay Simonides for the half of the poem that treated the gods, saying that Simonides could "go to the gods" (i.e. "go to Hell") to collect the remainder of his fee. Shortly after this confrontation, Simonides received word that two men were waiting outside to see him. When he went out to meet them, however, there was no one to be seen. Before he could return to the banquet, the hall collapsed, killing all of the guests and their host. The families who rushed to the disaster scene were appalled to find that the bodies had been crushed beyond recognition. Without proper burial, the deceased would haunt their families. Simonides, however, had practiced the art of artificial memory to be able to remember the names of all their guests. This method involved joining each name to the place each guest occupied at the banquet table. Working in reverse, he was now able to give a name for each location where a body was found. The understandably grateful families rewarded him, and he collected the rest of his fee "from the gods."

25   Michel Serres and Josué V. Harari, *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 39–53.

Up to now, no particular significance has been attributed to this apocryphal story, other than its service as an illustration of artificial memory's method of places. But, several details suggest that the tale itself is liminal. Michel Serres, using La Fontaine's version of the fable, has identified the classical context of Simonides' role as a "parasite": a customary role for poets who, paying for their food with their wit, were the usual crashers of banquets of the rich. Serres sees in the term parasite, which also means "noise" in French, a means of connecting this classical tradition with the poetic geometry of an exchange of meanings.[26] Words are given in exchange for food; word is sent in for Simonides; and, thus, a word is given for a place. Finally, words are given for places as the dead are identified by the position of their corpses.

Elsewhere, Serres has shown the connection binding the idea of noise as interruption with such liminal places as crossroads, wells, bridges, and boundaries. The middle term for Serres' spatialized philosophy is the Greek letter, chi (X). This letter can be approached through the figure of the Chimaera, or monster of three parts in the Bellerophon myth. The Chimaera and Sphinx, both daughters of Echidne, were *terata*, monsters serving as animated riddles about seasonal time. When the Sphinx posed her apotropaic (defensive) riddle to the would-be visitors to Thebes, she translated this same riddle into the form of a "monster" who walked on four legs in morning, two at noon, and three at evening. Such *terata* were guardians of boundaries in myth, and their imagery persists in civic symbolism and traditional heraldry. But, for the present, their main significance lies in their logical or, rather, "analogical" structure. The chi is a special form of *monstrum*.[27] Two motions are crossed, and their intersection is defined in terms of an "impossible" coincidence. The logic of myth is crossed with the logic of humans, who cannot decipher the metaphorical riddles of things arranged paratactically, that is, side by side, without logical mediation. Hypotaxis, or subordinative ordering, signals the destruction of the monster, the riddle answered.

The Simonides tale is liminal in the sense that it structurally uses the chi (chiasmus) to produce a story-within-a-story that has an apotropaic, initiatory, value. The understanding that arises through the comprehension of the chiastic structure puts the reader in the position of a hero who destroys the tale's monstrous nature, just as the hero destroys a literal monster. In Vichian terms, one may "make" the myth for one's self by finding a necessary order in the apparently casual details of the anecdote. For us, as students of he humanistic *theatrum mundi*, this making involves the themes of division, interruption, and opposition found in both the story's narrative and its spatial order.

The seven events of the story have a formal beginning, middle, and end. The facts

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26   Michel Serres, The Parasite, trans. Lawrence R. Schehr (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 28–33.

27   Jean Céard, *La Nature et les prodiges, L'Isolite au XVIe siècle, en France* (Geneva: Librarie Droz, 1977).

of the beginning are paired with those of the end, revealing a logic of conversion that grows out of the structure of exchange. The story, like wrestlers and the twin gods, play the ends against the middle. Scopas pays for Simonides' words but omits half, the reason has to do with the half of the poem devoted to twin gods, one of whom enjoys life while the other does time in Hades. (This is a rotating deal with the gods made by the surviving twin after his mortal brother's unfortunate death.) Simonides is called out (by two *strangers*), and then called back in, to rectify a problem of *identification*. The half of the fee he was refused at the beginning of the story is restored at the end, when the grateful relatives are able to join a name to the crushed remains, thanks to a place recalled through the automation of memory. Serres emphasizes chiasmus as a figure of interruption: Simonides interrupts the poem with a panegyric to the twin gods, his payment is interrupted by Scopas's refusal, his meal is interrupted by a call to come outside. The last half of the tale completes the *teratum* of the chi by supplying meanings that had been hidden within the acts of the first half. Where Scopas tells Simonides to "go to the gods," he foreshadows his own fate played out a few minutes later.

The exchange of names for places and places for names is symmetrical. Like the twins gods' rotation between life and death, there is no remainder or delay. Once a name is given *for* a place, the soul may find its rest. The spring is wound up and the mechanism plays out. The chi structures this exchange so that its humanistic value may be realized, but not everyone realizes that value. Yates, for one, has missed it; and there is no evidence in the mass of literature on the subject of artificial memory that chiasmus has served the inner art so magically, and so *silently*. The mechanism of chiasmus has done its work automatically and unconsciously. Hypotaxis has allowed the reader of the story to "know without knowing"; the method of places for names has destroyed its monster in an act of unconscious divination.

The chi, or *teratum*, of Macrobius is the cosmic gap between the living and the dead, which Scipio viewed from the apeiron as his means of a quite literal hypotaxis. Camillo's "high and incomparable placing," his point of hypotactic discovery, is the stage from which the compressed cosmic rings of Macrobius are arrayed before a motionless viewer. The *teratum* is *theatrum* — a "setting before" that opposes the human as individual to the human as collective. The inner writing is made outer, but this occurs significantly in an architecture that is radically interior.

Vico has not one but many *terata*. His discovery is a descent into the obscure origins of humankind, into the paratactic mentality of metaphor. Out of this opposition of modern and ancient mentality, thought and history are attributed true discontinuities — a beginning and end — and these ruptures are given a gnostic value. Finally, the liminality of myth and the liminality of the scholar, the last man, are held under the sign of

imaginative universality: first, the figure of Jove as the basis for mythic perception and the beginnings of cultural life; second, the memorious or scholarly universality required of the last humans who must mentally re-enact the whole of collective human being.

The portrayal of Vico as the occupant of Camillo's stage emphasizes this last point. *The New Science* is a dramatic art. Without the spatial division, the interruption of rationality, and the frontal juxtaposition of opposites — the fundamental geometry of the theater as an architectural object — *The New Science* could not work. Words are given: the scholar abandons the world of articulate speech in search of the mental language, the mute gestures of history. Places are received in return. The theatrical structure of a new science of humankind is discovered. Finally, places yield their names and the order of institutions reveals its liminal and interior architecture.

V
METHOD IN HUMANISTIC STUDY

The Question of Method

As Vico moved from the idea of the rhetorical topic to the sensible topic, he discovered two forms of universality not accounted for by rationality: a universality of mythic thought ("imaginative universality") and *ingegno*, used by orators, poets, and scholars who undertook the *arts topica* as a means of humanistic understanding. By linking these two modalities, Vico connected rhetorical consciousness, whose middle terms served in the immediacy of the courtroom and parliament, to the originative perceptual consciousness of the first humans, who imagined a world of gods. Scholarly universality, the kind required to write and read *The New Science*, was an outgrowth of rhetorical wit, and as a result it was particularly well suited to discover the secret of mythic thought. In the modern mind's conditioning by conceptual logic, the scholarly universal had to bridge between the demands of rationality and the need to understand things developmentally and historically, in terms of beginnings, middles, and ends, whose stages and innovations could not be logically deduced. Vico never defined scholarly universality as such, but three kinds of evidence more than compensate for this oversight.

First, Vico carefully built a repository of circumstantial conditions surrounding his discovery of *The New Science*. The "good twenty years" it took him to develop his theory in full was compacted into the demand that the reader descend, from his refined conceptual sensibilities, to encounter the brutal beginnings of human thought in the extroversion of the unknown self to the discoverable world. The study and the object of study were linked through logical necessity. The *corsi* of history could be unlocked only by an equally radical *ricorso* of a study method equal to the sublime contradictions involved. Compensation for this difficult task came in the form of good company. Others who had made this discovery and acted on it — Llull, Camillo, Macrobius, Gracián, Plato, etc. — offered assistance to those with eyes to see what was written between their lines.

Second, the circumstantial evidence, presented mainly in the *Autobiography* and *The New Science*, confirms Vico's awareness of just such good company, as well as a willingness to employ it discretely, as in his construction of imagery in the *dipintura* and *impresa*, the Rosicrucian-style images used to introduce *The New Science*. The subtlety of many of Vico's connection to these occult contextual resources limits any positive attributions. While it is very likely that Vico was a Rosicrucian, no modern scholar has documented this. While it is clear that Vico had more than a table of nations in mind when he referred to the "Table of Cebes," and in fact had embraced the idea of the *mons*

delectus on many levels, is similarly conjectural. Did Vico lie? Either he did or he was incredibly careless in remembering key dates of his life. And, the pattern of lies makes it nearly certain that he intended his "errors" to serve as signs to alert readers willing to see larger patterns in his texts. But, again, there is almost no scholarship to investigate this interesting possibility. Vico did not cite Steuco, Macrobius, or Alciati; but for any author writing in the Eighteenth Century for certain audiences, this would have seemed to be unnecessary or even pedantic. Many of Vico's contemporary readers missed the point — and even more of his modern readers, some of them quite famous, seem to take him for a delusional paranoid — but there will always be those who find Vico's balance between serious scholarship and imaginative speculation to be not only a productive but an essential strategy for any study of culture.

The third kind of evidence Vico gave for a special form of scholarly universality is autobiographical. From the carefully chosen opening lines of his *Autobiography*, where Vico described his fall in his father's bookstores: the physician predicted that the boy would die or grow up an idiot, paralleling the warning given by the priest in the story about Cebes' Table. The seemingly accidental details of life are pulled into a novel-esque dynamism as compelling as history's ideal eternal history. The *Autobiography* corresponds to the small stage of Camillo's memory theater. The genre of the autobiography naturally isolates the subject, but Vico's writing went further, to compound autobiographical isolation with comparisons that would have been recognized by his educated audience — references that linked the idea of genius with melancholy and the lore of the planet Saturn.[1]

In our age, all astrology is regarded with skepticism if not hostility. It is difficult to identify or even sympathize with the Renaissance transformation of the Galenic humors into climates of the mind. This interest should not be explained relativistically, as delusional beliefs of an age saturated in mysticism. The truth would be obscured if one failed to see melancholy's contribution and complementarity to *The New Science*. We should examine it in a poetic light, as a component central to Vico's discovery of imaginative universality. Added to the circumstantial and contextual evidence for a special, third form of topical wisdom, one associated specifically with scholarly thought, the *Autobiography* as a melancholy masterwork puts the question of method in no uncertain terms. True to his opposition to Cartesian method, Vico did not supply a procedural means of

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1   The standard work in reference to these connections is the monumental compilation, *Saturn and Melancholy, Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art*, authored by the famous scholars attached to the Warburg Library in the 1930s, Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl (New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1964). One set of galleys of the just completed work were smuggled out of Hamburg, the original location of Warburg's collection, during World War II. In London, the new director of the Warburg, Ernst Gombrich, established a new, more Positivist program for the Institute, and the work, though rewritten in English from the German original, was not fully recognized. Even today, social scientists studying memory, depression, and cults of genius somehow miss or omit to mention the impressive scholarship that brought together astrological, astronomical, philosophical, ethographical, and philological lore under a single title. It seems that *Saturn and Melancholy* was itself a victim of the humor it sought to understand. References to Vico's autobiographical and scholarly use of melancholy will be made directly in the text.

discovering human truths. But, in the movement from his negative critique of geometric method to the more "positive" second *New Science*, we find an anti-method with a truly positive value. Where tradition offered Vico a means of connecting the individual to the cosmos through Neoplatonic and Stoic ideas, he was able to reinterpret these into the model of a scholar as the hero of the last age of men. The question of method, no longer determinable in terms of technique, came to rest on an experiential and poetic mentality ceded uniquely to the intended reader of *The New Science*.

The theme I would use as a nucleus for a new view of method is one with which Vico was undoubtedly familiar. It is the idea of genius, *ingegno*, the forerunner of the modern concept of genius but so different from the modern view that our understanding of its particular importance for Vico and other scholars of his day is nearly impossible. The modern concept of genius is an unpredictable blend of many traditions dealing with mind and thought. Psychology has given genius a fundamental structure of "intelligence," "creativity," and "giftedness" — defined mostly with reference to conceptual problem-solving and testable mental abilities. Sociology has emphasized the importance of non-conforming eccentric figures who "point way" for more normative society and insure a requisite variety to sustain thought and social life. As something individualized and unteachable, modern philosophy has severed the idea of genius from its traditional companion, wisdom, transforming the latter into a model for prudence, carefully reasoned foresight, and the practical application of philosophic truths to ordinary life.

The Origins of the Renaissance Concept of Genius

Almost all of the aspects of the modern concept of genius, particularly the tendency to individualize the qualities of genius or see them as inborn, can be traced to the Italian Renaissance. This is not to say that genius did not exist as a concept before this time, but that its association with the immanent aspects of thought — individuality, eccentricity, or non-normative thinking, with a "perceptual" emphasis on pattern recognition, and the often suspected link to a unique genetic inheritance — would have been alien to previous ages. This emphasis on immanence led to the chief characteristic of modern ideas of genius: its distinction from wisdom. This separation of once twinned ideas grew out of an analogy of time. Whereas wisdom is held to require development over time and to benefit from the cautious and prudent exercise of judgment, genius identifies with a lightning-quick insight. Wisdom, therefore, is associated with old age. Genius is young and expected to be short-lived. The distinction between wisdom and genius was uncharacteristic of the Renaissance view, although it was primarily that age that enabled the modern division to come about. The ancient and Classical concept of genius was so thoroughly linked to the idea of wisdom that it was virtually absorbed by the latter. The concept of individuated genius was virtually unknown [*Saturn and Mel-*

ancholy, 241–276].

What made this radical transformation possible? To answer this question, it is necessary to review in some detail the informal and philosophical lore that grew up around the idea that genius was mythically connected with the god Saturn, astrologically linked to the planet associated with that god, and temperamentally afflicted by the humor melancholy, or black bile. To approach the concept of genius as it began to coalesce in the Italian Renaissance, it is necessary to realize that while *ingegno* was regarded at the time as being an antique idea, the traditions which were to affect it most were barely formalized by the late Empire and owed much to the Middle Ages for their preservation and transmission. In brief, these traditions were (1) the consolidation of the doctrine of the four humors around the pivotal significance of melancholy and its relation to reflective thought and wit; (2) the growing importance of astrological interest in the planet and god Kronos-Saturn, correlated with memory, individual genius, and melancholy; and (3) the significance of the Age of Saturn as the mythological Golden Age.

The doctrine of humors had evolved slowly during the Classical period. Only by the Fourth Century could it be said that the original system of Greek medical symptoms had evolved to the point where it became significant in its relation to thought and life in general or, as the Renaissance was to emphasize, to human history as a whole. However, at that point the astrological importance of the planets and their humoristic qualities were only beginning to be consolidated to the degree that the two systems could be merged. Political conditions, the changing religious and cultural climates, and the influx of Eastern ideas prevented this merger, however, and it was left to the Renaissance to rediscover and complete the unfinished project of fusing the two doctrines.

The Doctrine of the Four Humors. If the system of beliefs circulating around the Empedoclean primary elements, earth, air, fire, and water could be called a "doctrine," the matter of what the doctrine was about would not be a simple matter. In the most limited sense, it was simply an influence aimed in many directions: philosophy, esthetics, ethics, physics, biology, medicine, and psychology — to say nothing of astronomy. The early practice of Greek medicine had consolidated a large body of speculative, literary, mythic, and folk beliefs into a highly disciplined system of physical symptoms. Even as the humoristic system became highly cosmicized, it never completely lost this medical dimension. It was through this tradition that later generations passed to less pragmatic sources of humoristic lore.

On the other hand, had the doctrine of humors not been psychologically and historically congenial to more general ideas, it would never have developed beyond this formalistic medical application. Students of myth have credited the quadratic organization of space and time with an unsurpassed universality and antiquity. Even today, four-

ness predominates in the humanistic psychologies of Gaston Bachelard, Carl Jung, and others. Pythagorians regarded the number four to be the "root and source of eternal nature," and Empedocles refined an elaborate system of physical and ideal substances [*Saturn and Melancholy*, 4–7]. Greek physicians were subsequently able to achieve a diagnostic precision. Using the general pre-Socratic equations connecting the ideal elements of air, earth, fire, and water to their earthly counterparts, the bodily substances of black and yellow bile, phlegm, and blood, health depended on a balance set in the face of changing seasonal, environmental, and astrological influences.

As Greek medical symptomatology came to be applied more generally to psychological, behavioral, ontogenetic, and even historical events, the problematic nature of two of the humors, blood and black bile, was to have far-reaching significance. While phlegm and yellow bile (choler) were good according to a rule of not too much or too little, blood, thought to be the essence of health, was good in any amount. And, in direct contrast, black bile, melancholy, was deleterious in any amount, however small. Blood and black bile thus stood for the extremes of health, good and bad respectively. The name melancholia was in itself enough to designate a pathological state, whereas expressions that designated phlegmatic and choleric afflictions were composite terms: *phlegmatickai nosoi* and *cholerikae nosoi* ("plegmatic and choleric *sickness*"). Significantly, the word we use to designate an abundance of blood comes from the Latin rather than Galenic Greek, for it was not associated with any disease.

This inequality among the humors was magnified as the Greek medical system was expanded to include psychological states and the more familiar use of humors to describe disposition. The toxicity of black bile in any amount made the melancholic especially susceptible to environmental influences. A sad sight, a fright, or any other perceptual correlate could induce morbid preoccupation. Since melancholy was exhibited more in behavior and states of mind than in actual bodily symptoms, it became the principal humor of madness, amplifying the belief that vision and experience in general were the chief media of infection.

The "Perpatetic Revolution" in the Doctrine of Humors. The privileged position of melancholy and its specific psychic associations prepared the way for a radical transformation of the tetradic doctrine. Two independent influences were to merge in this process: the idea of heroic madness developed by Greek tragedy; and the increasing interest in the ida of divine frenzy in Platonic philosophy [*Saturn and Melancholy*, 15–41]. The tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides had refined the idea of a tragic hero caught midway between the worlds of the gods and men. Usurping divine power to achieve his ends, the hero gained the praise of men but incurred the jealous wrath of the gods. Yet, his ambition pleased some gods and won their admiration. This ambiguity

came to be identified with heroic melancholy, for madness was, uniquely, a divine "gift" or curse of the gods. Greek tragedies became virtual medical lexicons, incorporating the semiology of melancholy in their lines and plots, as melancholy became the customary affliction of heroes.

From a seemingly a seemingly independent quarter, the concept of madness came to acquire a similar privilege through the Platonic Academy's efforts to incorporate the Orphic idea of frenzy, as a means by which the gods communicated their greatest blessings — wisdom, prophecy, poetry, and love. In contrast to the Eleatic emphasis on rationality, Platonic frenzy became the unique path to the deepest truths. By combining Plato's idea of frenzy with the dramatic revival of melancholy, Aristotle's natural philosophy made a medical doctrine applicable to thought and experience as a whole. Through these developments, melancholy surpassed even sanguinity as the preferred temperament, for despite its dangers it was consistently associated with heroic greatness and philosophic genius. Melancholics were "divinely afflicted," not just sick. Even the least of them could claim the poetic company of Herakles, Ajax, or Bellerophon, or, in real life, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle — who had become as famous for their melancholy as for their philosophies.

The most popular mine of melancholic lore for later ages was a work attributed to Aristotle, which was most likely by another writer. By the time of its composition, the relation between melancholy and genius seems to have been unquestioned. The famous "Problem XXX, 1" begins with the query, "Why is it that all those who have become eminent in philosophy or politics or poetry or the arts are clearly melancholic, and some of them to such an extent as to be affected by diseases caused by black bile?"[2] The work reviews symptoms of famous melancholics: mad fits, the eruption of sores on the body, the desire for isolation and abnegation. Homer had written, in the translation by Robert Fagles [*The Iliad*, 6, 236–240]:

> But the day soon came
> when even Bellerophon was hated by all the gods.
> Across the Alean plain he wandered, all alone,
> Eating his heart out, a fugitive on the run
> from the beaten tracks of men …

Adding the heroic and philosophic correlates to the Greek medical symptomatology, this famous text was able to serve the Middle Ages and Renaissance as a primary source. Diverse attributes of melancholy were compiles: variability, despondency, depression, anxiety, death by hanging — by which a reference to Judas was key — and divine inspiration. But, by far the strongest single image transmitted was that of the "dark

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2   Aristotle, "Problem 30.1," in *The Works of Aristotle Translated*, 7, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930).

genius" of whom Thomas Walkington wrote in 1607, "The melancholick man is said of the wise to be 'aut Deus aut Dæmon', the angel of the soule is either wrapt up into an Elysium and paradise of blisse by a heavenly contemplation, or into a direfull hellish purgatory by a cynical meditation."[3] What had begun as a practical medical guide had grown into a description of the scholar's existential predicament par excellence, which was to serve as a perennial source for such poetic works as Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Goethe's *Faust*, Milton's "Il Penseroso," and Sterne's *Tristram Sandy*, not to mention numerous musical and artistic connections such as Dürer's "Melancholia I" or Beethoven's somber and heroic compositions [*Saturn and Melancholy*, 97-123]. But, what was indispensable to the Renaissance outlook is missing in the modern view of genius: *that melancholy's "backward" relationship to history infected the scholar with a love for antiquity*. In accord with the Platonic doctrine of knowledge as memory, anamnesis, melancholic scholars were well suited for any intellectual pursuit. But, there was a tragedy built into anamnesis: humanity's fallen condition was caused by its alienation from the past, which was in Neoplatonic terms also an alienation from the source of wisdom. Truth could be approached only by, first, realizing the tragedy of modern thought, and then pursuing it with a memorious mentality equal to the task. In both regards, the melancholic was the ideal if not only candidate. Cursed to contemplate of the past, the melancholic scholar at least had a good memory to master its truths. Memory required a cold-dry climate but, like northern vacationers headed to southern beaches in winter, sought out its complement, the warm-moist Golden Age of Saturn.

Saturn as the Planet of Melancholy

In terms of the doctrine of humors alone there was nothing, apart from the prestigious association with genius, to relieve the scholar in his/her melancholy; and nothing to guarantee success in uncovering the truths of the past. However, a significant parallel development was to transform this fundamentally pessimistic prognosis of the scholar's mental health into an ambitious new philosophical perspective. This revised idea portrayed the scholarly personality as a dark genius, poetically at the edge of both history and rational thought, and within heroic reach of the sublime truths of the past. This development came about through the astronomical and astrological lore that had been accumulating around the planet Saturn, lore which had been by the time of the Renaissance become so connected with the projects of humanistic learning that the two traditions, the doctrine of humors and Neoplatonic astrology, fused in the identification of Saturn as the planet of melancholy.

As with the doctrine of humors, the apparent source for the Western astrological

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3   Thomas Walkington, *The Optick Glasse of Humors, or The Touchstone of a golden temperature, or the Philosophers stone to make a golden temper …* (London: Iohn Windet for Martin Clerke, 1607), 64.

view of Saturn was Achaean Greece, but this period was curiously bare of native con-
tent. The Greeks, whose primitive religion had few elements of star-worship, at first
recognized only Phosphorus and Hesperus, the morning and evening star, which they
did not realize to be the same star before 500 BCE. Knowledge of the visible planets was
imported, mostly from the Babylonians. The correlation between planets and gods was
established though a system of equivalencies between Greek and Babylonian mytholo-
gies. Aphrodite found her counterpart in Ishtar and was accordingly associated with the
planet Venus. The planet Mars represented Nergal, the Babylonian god of war and hell.
Zeus (the Roman Jupiter) replaced Marduk, the hero-king. Hermes-Mercury took the
place of the Babylonian god of writing and wisdom, Nebu. Kronos-Saturn, the oldest of
the gods, who represented the Golden Age but had been "exiled beneath the earth and
the flood of the seas," was paired with the strange god Ninib, the Babylonian representa-
tive of the sun in the night sky and the planet considered to be the mightiest of the five
[*Saturn and Melancholy*, 136].

Unlike the Babylonians, who regarded the characters of the gods and the astronom-
ical qualities of their representative planets as intimately correlated, the Greeks simply
used the planets as convenient hooks for an independent Homeric mythology. Identi-
ties were fluid and constantly shifting. Only by the comparatively late date of Plato's
Epinomis was there any attempt to formalize a definitive order. Even after this, planets
were popularly identified with a haphazard mixture of mythic personalities. Attempts
to sidestep this confusion by grounding qualities in the star's appearance failed. A gulf
persisted between the planet-as-visible and the character of its god, whose traditions
remained the property of myth and religion.

Even the idea that the planets themselves could have an innate character seems to
have been as much of an import as their identities had been. The agent of this strange
notion was likely the *Babyloniaca*, a summary of all Babylonian knowledge of the stars,
written by the Chaldean Berossus around 300 BCE [*Saturn and Melancholy*, 140]. By
this time there was a rudimentary division of planets into "good" and "evil." For exam-
ple, Jupiter and Venus were good, Saturn-Kronos and Mars were evil. Hermes-Mercury
was, as messenger-gods must be, neutral. Berossus's comprehensive description of the
planets as physical entities fueled the rising interest in astronomy that had been initi-
ated by Stoicism. Three aspects of this philosophy in particular can be credited with the
gradual replacement of the mythologized lore of the planets with a more astronomi-
cal and scientific system. First, the Stoics had revived the ancient conception of fate
(Moira), which held that all things human, animal, and inanimate were governed by a
single process of "allotment." Thus, the observation of nature as nature took on mean-
ing as the principal means of discovering the way this system might work. Second, since
humans and nature were thought to be connected, the planets were regarded either as

influencing or indicating affairs in the human world. As a mirror of the mundane, the issue of causality was a mute point; fate insured an efficacious parallelism in either case. Third, by temporarily suspending the mythological meanings of the planets, the Stoics cleared the way for the reintroduction of a revised theological interpretation, or astrology, where the astro*nomical* character of the planets was to take up a central role. Until the old mythic connections — which had never really taken the planets' physical nature into account, except through default — had been dissolved, the truly astrological meaning of the planets as supernatural beings affecting the mundane realm could not have developed.

The cosmicized planetary system, where each individual planet was attributed a definite character and philosophical value, developed slowly and under the influence of many cross-currents. Like the doctrine of humors, it had only just become stable as a system of meanings by the end of the Late Empire. Ironically, just as a merger between the humoristic system and the solar system seemed imminent, interests turned elsewhere. Political, civil, and religious unrest made it dangerous to pursue questions in serious competition with Christian belief. Still, it would be inaccurate to say that the astrological importance of Saturn disappeared at any one point or reappeared at another. The Middle Ages may have condemned astrology in general, but it kept its general lore alive through many informal channels. Folklore, literature, poetry, and drama were intensely humoristic and astrological. Even scholastic commentaries preserved astrology by repeating its theories in detail in the process of condemning them. By the time interests again turned freely to the Classical view of the sky, the confusion which had plagued scholars up to the Fourth Century seemed to have cured themselves by virtue of neglect. With the translation of Plato's works into Latin by Marsilio Ficino and the consolidation of Arabic commentaries on astrological/astronomical observations, the way had been cleared for a full-scale merger of planets and humors in the context of the problems of genius and wisdom.

Although this new perspective owed its existence to many influences, it was principally the enthusiastic growth of a Christianized Platonism that, first, revived interests in astrology and magic as means to enlightenment and, second, redefined the scholar in a new light. What was completely original to the Renaissance view was the direct connection between Saturn, melancholy, and the *heroic* isolation and inborn disposition of the scholar-as-philosopher. The old connections between physical disease and psychic disposition were not erased; but, now the strictly physiological symptoms were distinguished from the voluntary pursuit of wisdom, as "occupational dangers" to be anticipated and possibly avoided by the prudent. It was possible, in this new era, to enter under the influence of Saturn through activity, without being born astrologically under that planet.

By the time the great works of the Renaissance had been undertaken, the law-awaited merger of the humors and planets was a *fait accompli*. The peculiarities which had singled out melancholy and Saturn as prestigious were seen now to be significant to Christianized Platonism. This tendency can be traced in Ficino's most famous work on Saturn and melancholy, the *De Vita Triplici*. This work preserved and organized the Classical view while it moved on to an entirely new position that was to have a great influence on the Renaissance concept of genius. In line with the contemporary view of the planets as generally benevolent, Ficino assessed Saturn's melancholy as a "unique and divine gift."[4] Fully aware of the ancient tradition of Saturn's malevolence and the humoristic dangers of black bile, he qualified this gift in terms of bipolarity. Conveniently, it was just this ambiguity that enabled Ficino to accomplish in full what had only been suggested in the Classical tradition — the fusion of melancholy with the Platonic idea of divine frenzy. Black bile "obliges thought to penetrate and explore the centre of its objects, because the black bile is itself akin to the centre of the earth. Likewise, it raises thought to the comprehension of the highest, because it corresponds to the highest of the planets."[5] Philosophers indulging in such speculations were not simply subject to adverse psychic and bodily disorders, their madness merged productively with the similarly "productive irrationality" of lovers, heroes, and prophets, which Plato had singled out as the gifts of the gods to humankind. Further, the double association with the hero and the "centre of the earth" provided the poetic image of the scholar following the Classical hero, like Dante following Virgil and Virgil following Æneas, to the center of the earth to learn the secrets of the past and future, and to recover the "buried treasure" of Hades. The scholar was so ennobled by this association that Ficino balanced the melancholic's withdrawn nature with a proclivity for "divine contemplation." If madness were a danger, it was also a blessing, for only through such a poetic state could the scholar become an instrument of truth and not simply a seeker of truth.

Vico, Melancholy, and Humanistic Method

In his introductory remarks to the American edition of The Technological Society, Jacques Ellul remarks that his observations of the technological phenomena of our age are not coldly objective, in the manner of a report of what one sees through a microscope, but more like the report of a physician exposed to the epidemic he studies, or of a physicist contaminated with radioactivity. In such cases, Ellul says, "the mind may remain cold and lucid, and the method objective, but there is inevitably a profound ten-

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4   Marsilius Ficinus, *De vita triplici*, III, 22, in *Opera omnia* (Basle: 1576). For a text and commentary, see Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark, eds., *Three Books on Life, A Critical Edition and Translation with Introduction and Notes* (Tempe, AZ: The Renaissance Society of America, 1998).

5   Ficinus, *Opera*, I, 5, 497. Quoted in *Saturn and Melancholy*, 259.

sion of the whole being."[6]

This cold lucidity was a hallmark of George Orwell's writing, and it pervaded the melancholy facticity of Camus' novel about Naziism, The Plague. George Steiner suggests that vision and catastrophe are joined in the Western tradition. He ends his book on tragedy with a description of Helene Weigel's famous performance of Mother Courage, where the actress turns from a scene of unspeakable horror to open her mouth in an equally horrible but completely silent scream.[7] In the liminal space afforded by the theater, between the actor and the audience, this gesture drew together and intensified what is also liminal in Western experience, the "news from nowhere" that our final visions are hallucinations of a fever that began with the birth of vision, and that this fever would close vision off were it not for a peculiar irony whereby an absolute clarity prevents a complete collapse.

In Western literature, history, and art as a whole, it is not hard to spot conscious direct references or unconscious sympathies with the theme of melancholy, but there have been almost no attempts to formalize this relationship or to articulate the principles lying behind it. Again, Vico seems to be the exception to the rule. In an autobiography that is overtly saturnine, he outlined unmistakable lineaments of melancholy genius in terms of the curses turned blessings that led him to his discovery. Where biographical facts were near, they were moved in the direction of melancholy. Vico gratuitously altered dates and facts, as if to leave definite clues to the real nature of his project. I shall make two claims in the remainder of this chapter. First, it seems that any adequate account of Vico's thought must acknowledge a large debt to the tradition of the melancholy genius and its cosmological particulars. Second, in addition to this argument for contextual reconsiderations, it is necessary to see Vico as one of the few, if not the only, scholar to engage the idea of melancholy as a *study method*. My contention is that melancholy lore lies at the center, not the periphery, of Vico's thinking, and that Vico's account of culture is an account of the kind of contamination that Ellul described, the contamination of the scholar by the objects of his study. These objects became barbaric, not just in the guise of the paratactic thought of myth but in the immanent conditions of scholarship in the Eighteenth Century. To the degree that these conditions remain with us, in the regime of conceptual and technological thinking, Vico's answer remains fresh, original, and perennially difficult.

Vico and Melancholy. Vico was a philosopher forgotten in his own time. His autobiography begins Miltonically, with a fall from a ladder in his father's bookstore. With the physician's prediction that the boy would either die or grow up to be an idiot, Vico establishes a comic version of the warning given by the priest in the temple of Saturn in the

6   Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), xxvii.

7   George Steiner, *The Birth of Tragedy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), 353–354.

story of the *Table of Cebes*. Instead of madness, Vico's "forced choice" was idiocy, and in some places Vico suggests that his contemporaries judged this predication to have come true. Isolated by his studiousness, Vico claimed to be left out of major currents of thought sweeping through the Naples of his day, but Bergin and Fisch have proved this to be an exaggeration. Vico was not only close to Neapolitan intelligentsia on a regular basis, but his own position seems to have fluctuated along with the fashions he criticized later. Pinned down by a low-paying position as an instructor of Latin eloquence, Vico may have been an idiot in the literal sense of the word, "a private person." He twice missed the opportunity for promotion. In a city already tensed by the investigative pogroms of the Inquisition, the ordinarily corrupt public life of Naples was tempered into a machine for perpetual corruption, in which Vico was increasingly a victim, never a beneficiary.

At home, Vico's lot was not much better. His wife was simple-minded, one of his sons was a convicted criminal, his devoted daughter was plagued by ill health. Vico accurately predicted that bad luck would pursue him even after his death. At the scholar's funeral, a group representing the university quarrelled with members of the Confraternity of Santa Sophia who had come to bear the body to the cemetery. Unable to resolve their competing claims, the coffin was jostled back up the steep stairs to the horror of the relatives grieving in their apartment [*Autobiography*, 206–208].

Although this anecdote is related by a colleague, The Marquis of Villarosa, who added a postscript in 1818, it could not be more perfectly tailored to Vico's program for a perfect melancholic's life. From beginning to end, Vico emphasized his poor connections with Fortune, his intellectual isolation, his own bitterness and vindictiveness. Most complaints were justified by genuine bad luck, but the patterns and timing seem to suggest that Vico left Aristotle's *Problem 30.1* open on his desk. Neither did Vico leave out the hallmark element added by the Renaissance — the relation to poetic frenzy that coupled the humoristic condition to the zenith of philosophical accomplishment. Vico donned the costume of the "dark genius" with aplomb.

Where autobiographical facts offered a minimal base, Vico embellished with a certain liberty. For example, Vico's early years of employment were not as isolating as he makes them seem. And, where there were no real original fabric, Vico turned from embroidery to tailoring. In one of his annual orations to the faculty and student body of the University of Naples, Vico drew attention to the ironic intellectual situation of Naples, where a scholar's excellence could be directly measured by the number of steps down to his prison cell, or the length of his sentence. To heighten the effect of these comparisons, Vico claimed later that the chief of the Spanish inquisitors, Lanzina Ulloa, joined the audience at the middle of his speech, causing Vico to give "a new and briefer turn" to his thesis. This "turn" is most likely the joke Vico tells about scholarship resem-

bling Dante's famous staircase, where the journey down is really a journey up. In truth, Lanzina Ulloa had died six months before the speech [*Autobiography*, nn. 154–155]. Vico manipulated the date of the oriation, setting it one year later than the actual time, perhaps to draw attention to the discrepency. It is also possible that Vico wishesed to make a further connection to Dante, since in the year of this particular oration Vico, too, was "in the middle of his life," *nel mezzo del cammin*, thirty-five years old. But, the issue is further confused by Vico's misrepresentation of his birth date, reporting it to be 1670 instead of 1668. Could this have been an attempt to nudge the date of the Fourth Oration to coincide with Vico's thirty-*third* year, the Biblical year of Christ's crucifixion? A tangled we indeed resulted from Vico's practice to deceive, but what could have been the motive?

Vico numbered his orations one through six, but in concluding that they occurred during his intellectually formative years, he mentioned a seventh, delivered in 1708 [*Autobiography*, 224–230]. This oration was Vico's first decisive turn from his former Cartesianism to an appreciation of metaphoric or topical thought. The series of seven orations makes the fourth the middle that connected two otherwise unrelated periods of Vico's life.

Numerology is not the significant issue, however. Vico's interest was in the relationship between the scholar's melancholy and a particular *geometry* of melancholic associations. Vico's conversion of the isolation imposed on humanistic interests to an isolation positively taken up as an opportunity to auto-didacticism was made possible by the tradition of melancholy whereby the temperament of the scholar-in-isolation and the object of his study were equated. Specifically, this is the question of the "center of things," which Ficino linked with black bile and the idea of origins, suggested by the Golden Age of Saturn. The center of historical things is the question of origins. The center of thought, as Vico has emphasized, was *ingegno*, imagination, and metaphor. The question of the center was ironically isolated in modern thought, and those scholars who pursued this center were themselves isolated from contemporary concerns. In the lore of melancholy, it was natural and even preferable that the true scholar isolate himself and look for "what is hidden from the modern mind" but nonetheless at its center — human nature. While the Renaissance had seen this relationship, Vico reversed the order of cause and effect. He perceived that the scholar isolated because of his *interest* in the hidden was, in his isolation, able to *identify* with what was hidden, as a means of fulfilling a saturnine call to genius.

Tradition had specified the subject matter of what was hidden well in advance. Kronos-Saturn was an ambiguous figure of Homeric and pre-Homeric mythology. On one hand, he was the generous god fo agriculture and the ruler of the Golden Age in

which humans lived in innocent sufficiency. On the other hand, he was the god castrated and deposed by Jove, who dwelled in solitary exile in Hades. In comparison, the scholar was a hero isolated in a barbaric, materialistic age. The Renaissance transferred this ambivalence to the idea of dark genius — the Faustian capacity to be either demon or god — but in effect it was a prescriptive connection between the human mind on earth and a divine *mens* that stood as the "father of the gods" at the remote terminus of the universe. The ambiguity of Saturn as a god was established as a spatial ambiguity between the position of Saturn in the solar system and Hades (literally, "the invisible"), the place of Saturn's exile.

Vico first interpreted this spatial ambiguity as a historical truth — that the first and last humans, the age of Saturn and final age of reflection, were somehow fated to come together in some completion of human time. As extreme points, they were able to find identity in a common center, seen from two perspectives. This spatial aspect of Saturn's ambiguity in fact seems nowhere represented in Vico's works. To see any connection at all, it is necessary to adopt an assumption that would, however, have seemed natural to Vico, who was familiar with Neoplatonic writings. It is necessary to return to Macrobius's *Commentary on Scipio's Dream* for the clearest and best-known version of this puzzle.

The Scholar as Hero. The Macrobian view of life as Hades, as body, as pure imminence with a central transcendent point symbolizing its temporal and productive origins is not just in close alliance with Vico's view of "returned barbarism." It illuminates an idea that Vico developed in a short essay, "On the Heroic Mind" (*De mente heroica*), in which the scholar's task was compared to that of the hero. The general parallel developed was that scholars, like heroes, stand midway between gods and humans. What was left unsaid was that this position makes them, like heroes, vulnerable to "divine frenzy," the gift of the gods, and capable of being "aut Deus aut Dæmon," as Walkington put it in *The Optik Glasse of Humors* or as Vico put it in his *Study Methods*, "either a fool or a god" [*Study Methods*, 80]. Rather, the unspoken relation to madness was a rhetorical shadow that adumbrated the idea that both scholars and heroes seek the sublime.

"On the Heroic Mind," delivered before the collected faculty and student body of the Royal Academy of Naples on October 20, 1732, two years after the publication of the second edition of The New Science, exhorted the students to seek neither fame nor fortune, but rather to exercise their innate heroic nature. Scholars and heroes were equated on the basis of their interest in the sublime, defined "first, above nature, [as] God himself; next, within nature, this whole frame of marvels spread out before us, in which nothing exceeds man in greatness and nothing is of more worth than man's well being, to which single goal each and every single hero presses on, in singleness of heart" ["Heroic Mind," 230]. The special emphasis on the scholar, the hero, and the topic

of humanistic studies was put in terms of a Platonic ideal of knowledge: "You will yearn for your own … 'image and likeness of god' in mind and equally in soul, immune from any contagion of the flesh" ["Heroic Mind," 234]. In words that echo Macrobius's account of the soul yearning for a remembrance of eternity by retracing its fatalistic embodiment in flesh, Vico defined metaphysics as the study which frees the intellect "from the prison of the senses." With a "godlike mind," the scholar thus liberated is able to make his way through three worlds — the human world, the natural world, and the divine — and in this progress retrace the steps of the hero in his traditional journey.

It is striking, in this regard, that Vico mentioned specifically the role of place: "With geography as guide on that long march, make the circle of the whole range of lands and seas with the sun." The sun's course is traditionally identified with the hero's journey as a mimicry of the progress of cosmic creation from east to west. But, at a crucial point, Vico indicated the necessity to go beyond the material places of the human world and assume a transcendent, liminal perspective.

> Let cosmography set you down at that spot where "the final ramparts of the universe go up in flames" [Lucretius 1, 73]. Further yet, let metaphysics, outpassing nature, lead you forth into those blessed and infinite fields of eternity. Once there, insofar as this is permitted to our finite minds, behyold among the Divine Ideas those countless forms already created and those which could come to creation of … this world would endure forever. ["Heroic Mind," 237]

Vico specified the traditional Platonic realm outside the Cave, a position comparable to Scipio's overlook in Macrobius. Yet, in true Neoplatonic fashion, this point was identical with the center of the earth, the saturnine and melancholic point of transcendence which is simultaneously a part of the immanent world and a point of passage — that is to say, a means to knowledge. To seek this point by a journey past the spot where "the final ramparts of the universe go up in flames," is to transcend one's age and at the same time repeat the theme of heroic descent, in these terms into the discarded remains of cultural production — a striking anticipation of Freud's characterization of the unconscious as refuse.

In light of Vico's theory of history, this imitation of the hero and the method of heroic places has particular significance. The heroic age, for The New Science, is the connection between the world of the gods, the mythic world, and the world of modern humans. It is exemplified by Camillo's "Promethian grade," the point at which the mythic view of the divine is overlaid by human works and institutions that serve to civilize and refine. Thus, the hieroglyphics of the augurs are turned into the phonetic alphabets which democratize communication. The sacred lore of plants and animals is turned to the productive domestication of nature for food, power, and clothing. The mythographic study of the stars is put into service of the organization of society, the coordination of

agricultural and economic activities, and the expansion of trade through navigation. In short, what anthropologists such as Esther Boserup, Robert John Braidwood, and Robert Redfield have referred to as the development from incipient to active domestication is, as Vico anticipated, the gradual secularization of originally sacred institutions.[8] To think one's way back to myth, as the scholar must do, is to retrace the heroic phase between gods and humans, i.e. to understand these sacred origins in the same way that Fustel de Coulanges did in his examination of the genesis of the ancient city.[9] Objects of the world of humans — alphabets, institutions, customs, and even thoughts — yield to an archaeological search of a metaphoric origin, which is the Golden Bough the hero-scholar takes to descend into the obscure world of myth. Thus, the concept of a method undertaken by an isolated autodidact takes on the specific sense of an exegesis of the role of metaphor.

Method as Place

It is not surprising that Vico's concept of method took on a specifically spatial sense in relating the scholar to the hero, for the hero in culture had been the first to exemplify what was later to become the Neoplatonic figure of the soul in motion. Following this, the space of method becomes a *liminal* space: that is to say, it serves to join two topics or states which are in ordinary terms antithetical or contradictory to one another. This is entirely consistent with Vico's constant thematic emphasis on humanistic truth as the relation between the certainties of culture (the objects of philological study) and the truths jealously guarded by philosophy. Insisting on the general equation between scholarship and such impossible connections, Vico makes it clear that he is defying the long tradition of separating the contingent facts of experience from the a-temporal truths of pure thought. The idea of scholarship as just such a conjunction is proposed at several levels. On the side of experience and culture, Vico groups the topics of perception, language, customs, and laws. On the side of humanistic truth, Vico invents the terms "common mental language," "imaginative universality," and so on. The common factor of these is their metaphoric nature and their service in the diverse causes and ages in which culture has found itself. However, these truths serve two purposes. First, they make possible the existence and intelligibility of human life, by being points of semantic origin. Second, they give the scholar some final perspective that makes it possible to view human history in its real order. This bipolarity and this double function are put into a spatial metaphor, which is both a model of culture and an image of method.

The universalized concept of *ingegno*, present in Vico's work in so many guises, is

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8   See Walter A. Fairservis, *The Threshold of Civilization, An Experiment in Prehistory* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975).

9   Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City, A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome*, trans. Willard Small, (Boston: Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard, 1901).

characteristically spatial and, in its materialized conjunction of opposites, liminal. We are offered a brief glance at this structure in a short passage from Vico's *Autobiography*, which establishes a connection between genius and vision. Vico's language is typically subtle and indirect. Beginning with the curious ambiguity surrounding the Latin word *cœlum*, which means both "heaven" and "wedge," Vico unearths an ancient image of *ingenium*, by which the Latins signified not only genius and sharpness but also the idea of nature [*Autobiography*, 149]. Nature was to be understood, he argues, as neither material nor mental, but as a *dividing motion* whereby such distinctions would later become possible. He explains that, by "heaven," the Latins meant what the Greeks had distinguished as ether — clear blue sky, the idealization of the substance of fire and counterpart to the human sense of vision. Ether was the basis for the famous Latin distinction between *animus*, "consciousness," and *anima,* "sensation," the vital life-soul.[10] Awareness was alive in a way that the corporeal body was not. That is, it was quickened by its perception of the world and in turn acted on the body in a sexual way, "as male on female." Respiration and nourishment were carried by the blood and took more time in their responses than did consciousness, which was transmitted by the nerves and the body's internal ether. Ingenuity, which Vico had early associated with the quick wit of topical thought, was also the principle behind sensation in general and vision in particular, whose form of knowing was immediate and non-reflective. Ether was in the air but not of it. Mind and vision were in nature but not themselves corporeal.

Using the wedge or pyramid as a general model, Vico places mind (ether) at the apex, presumably the origin of the process of embodiment, which is the position of Saturn. For the first humans, this point is Jove, "the mind of ether," the first universal. The pyramid is "the operating principle of all things in nature," the "corpuscle" or atom of human experience. This image takes us back to the first image of The New Science: the *dipintura*, which serves the work as a frontispiece and which Vico credits as an aid by which the ideas of The New Science may be learned and later recalled.

There are three distinct wedges, or pyramids, in the *dipintura*. The first is the literal image of the figure described in the *Autobiography* as *cœlum*-wedge, the famous symbol of divine mind, the eye inscribed within a pyramid. This occupies the highest and also most remote point of the background. The second wedge is the reflected beam of light shining from the jewel on the breast of the allegorical figure, *Metafisica*, who surmounts the sphere of nature in the same way that meta-phyics stands above nature. This ray is deflected specifically to the stature of Homer, but it is shared generally by an array of objects in the foreground, which represent the various arts, sciences, and human institutions. In this divine gaze, there may be some recollection of Ficino's de-

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10   For an elaboration on this and other ancient concepts about the body and soul, see Richard Broxton Onians, *Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), 169–173.

Frontispiece to *The New Science*, known as the *dipintura*, engraved by Dominico Vaccaro.

scription of the stars as exercising their influence by "looking at" the earth. "Heaven, the bridegroom of earth, does not touch her, as in commonly thought, nor does he embrace her; he regards her by the mere rays of his stars, which are, as it were, his eyes; and in regarding her he fructifies her and so begets life" [Marsilio Ficino, quoted in *Saturn and Melancholy*, 264]. The divine gaze here is divided by *Metafisica*'s mirroring jewel, meaning that humans create the human world by first looking at nature in terms of the divine.

The third wedge would not be noticed in most analysis of pictorial content. It is the frame, the division between the image and the space of the spectators. This is the counterpart of the wedge that separates every reader from every work, and here it takes up the concrete role of the picture plane, which delimits the virtual space of the image. The discontinuity between the pictorial space and our space as viewers is opposed, in terms of pictorial distance, to the discontinuity between the human world (the space of the illustration) and the divine world, which is shown here to occupy a space behind the human world, or, in Lucretius's terms, beyond the point at which the ramparts of the human world go up in flames. The *dipintura* fills in the distance between these two discontinuities, the inner horizon that constitutes a vanishing point and an outer horizon at the edge of the frame. The connecting distance is a "heroic space" between gods and humans. Vico has set for us, as scholars in the human world, the sublime task of seeking what is both high and divine in this picture.

Most of the objects in the *dipintura* are identified in the text.[11] The space that constitutes the stage on which the objects in the print are arrayed is itself a clearing in a forest, just as God's eye constitutes an ethereal clearing in the misty sky. Leo is mentioned in conjunction with the Zodiacal belt circumscribing the globe because, Vico explains, the slaying of the Nemean lion is really a metaphor for the clearing of the first forests and beginning of settled human life. Virgo, the other sign displayed on the belt, is related to the Golden Age and introduction of agriculture. The clearing itself and the Golden Age are counterparts to the general idea of the wedge shown by Metafisica's reflecting jewel. They are beginnings, points of division in time between feral humanity and true culture. Other objects on the altar signify the art of divination and the derivative rituals of marriage. Nearby are the symbols for burial, the cineary urn, writing (the tablet), agriculture and cities (the plow), migration (the rudder), and, in the foreground, fasces representing civil order, a purse for commerce, and a caduceus for piracy. We might ask why Vico goes to such detail to construct such an image and explain it, when the subject it treats is taken up immediately afterward as the main material of *The New Science*.

Margherita Frankel has shown that Vico is not merely following a convention but

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11   For an authoritative analysis of the dipintura, its history and contents, see Donald Phillip Verene, *Knowledge of Things Human and Divine: Vico's New Science and Finnegans Wake* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003).

is using the *dipintura* as a memory image, a means of conceiving the idea of *The New Science* as if to awaken in the reader some forgotten dream-images of his/her own.[12] One might add that Vico is carrying out the popular Renaissance practice of the conceit, defined by Joseph Mazzeo as "the harmonic correlation between two or three knowable extremes, the act whereby the understanding discerns the correspondences between things."[13] In the metaphysical poetry of Donne and the critical writings of Gracián, Tesauro, and Sforza-Pallavicino, the conceit was regarded as the means of discovering "knowable extremes" or, in Vico's terms "what lies hidden in the mind of men."[14] The conceit was an acute expression, an *agutezza*, produced by poetic genius or madness.

Another image appears in the original printings of *The New Science* but has rarely appeared in modern translations. Known as the *impresa*, this title-page engraving shows an allegorical figure, presumably the same *Donna Metafisica* depicted in the *dipintura*, seated on a globe, again presumably the same globe of the visible universe she was standing on in the *dipintura*, holding a triangle in her right hand and, in her left, a mirror through which she appears to be looking at the triangle. The triangle appears to be what is called a "builder's square," a mason's instrument for trueing angles and plumbing walls. Another masonry object, a plinth or altar, displays the engraved motto, "Ignota Latebat." Donald Verene has analyzed this image in detail, concluding that the two images constitute a "before and after" statement. It may be that this is true in the sense that the *impresa* offers a key to the reading of the *dipintura*.[15] If the triangle is a square rather than an isosceles triangle (there is no visual clue as to which), it plays into the theme of quadration that Verene emphasizes as a principal component of the *dipintura*. It is true that there is the theme of quadration, but this does not specifically mean "rectangle," which Verene cites but does not explicate. Rather, it is the general relation of quadration to framing, which is evident both in terms of carpentry and visual representation, where *quadro* is still used to indicate a picture — that which is framed by four sides. In the *impresa*, *Metafisica* looks into the mirror, but not at herself, as Verene contends. The angle of the mirror is tilted away from the sagittal, the direct line connecting the reflection with its source. Rather, *Metafisica* holds the mirror to see what she has in her right hand. If the *impresa* tells us how to look at the *dipintura*, the clear instruction is: "through a mirror" — i.e. we see the truth through its reflections.

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12   Margherita Frankel, "The Dipintura," 44, 49–50.

13   Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, "Metaphysical Poetry," in *Seventeenth-Century Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 32.

14   Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. William R. Trask (New York and Evanston, IN: Harper and Rowe, Publishers, 1963).

15   Donald Phillip Verene, "Vico's 'Ignota Latebat'," *New Vico Studies* 5 (1987): 79–98. Verene correctly identifies this image as key to the other, more famous image of *The New Science*, which in effect makes it a "key of the "key." Verene's interpretation carries forward the extensive examination of the *dipintura* of Mario Papini, *Il geroglifico della storia: Significato e funzione della dipintura nella 'Scienza nuova' di G. B. Vico* (Bologna: Capelli 1984).

Title page engraving of *The New Science*, known as the *impresa*. Motto on plinth: "Ignota Latebat" ("she lay hidden").

The motto, *Ignota Latebat*, "she lay hidden," does likely refer to *Metafisica* herself, but where does this come from? There are many words to use to indicate concealment, but *latere* is rich with overtones of declination, laying low — "lying doggo" as the English expression has it. There is the sense both of concealment and the uncanny, a wily, adroit manner of staying out of sight. What is hidden is not simply unnoticed; it has been kept out of the way through a Hegelian kind of negation. There are three classic forms: *Verneining* (denial), *Verleugnung* (repudiation), and *Verwerfung* (foreclosure). My sense is that these three forms of negation capture Vico's three ages. This does not amount to a claim that Vico anticipated Hegel in any way, but rather that these two masters of historical imagination saw, in completely original and differing ways, the same truths: (1) that mythic thought depends on the form of negation that required a contraction of meaning; (2) that heroic thought involves a repudiation of myth that is played out through the hero's role as trickster and bipolar melancholic; and (3) that the conceptual mentality of moderns is a foreclosure of the imagination and memory, a sublation of desire that had, in mythic and heroic thought, found a material basis.

Negation as mirroring helps to explain the reason why Vico used quadration to initiate *The New Science*, and how quadration, understood fully, coincides with the meaning and placement of the *dipintura* as a scholarly version of the imaginative universal, the "key" to Vico's entire way of thinking. If one sees the *dipintura* as a mirror, it is best to see this directly and not just as an allegory. There are several "eyes" in the *dipintura*. On one hand the image itself constitutes an eye, an eye regulated by the rules and conventions of quadration. Another other eye is the clearing we see represented, where objects are displayed about an altar, a statue, and an improbable *collàge* that balances *Metafisca* on top of a tipsy globe. The globe is not the earth; it is the visible world, turned inside out. We see it as an object inside the space of representation but it is actually the outside of the known world. We have a case of interior exteriority, or exterior interiority — it doesn't matter which. With this flip we are in the good company of Vico's subjective objectivity, the world that has been "extimated" by the first humans, who project their own ferocious being on to the appearances of nature in order to animate them with demons
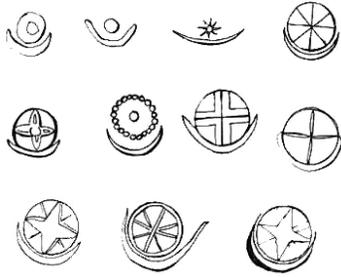
The jewel on Metafisica's breast resemble ancient symbols for the planet Saturn. David Talbot (*The Saturn Myth*, 1980) speculates that the north pole star exhibited a ring-pattern that was later the hallmark of the planet Saturn.

and gods, after which they may domesticate the objects of nature into *res publicæ*.[16] This mirror compounds the meaning of the direct forms of mirroring we see in the *impresa*'s hand-held glass and the *dipintura*'s reflecting jewel on the breast of *Metafisica*.[17] The design of this jewel is interesting and never before discussed. It shows a circle above a crescent. David Talbot has suggested that for a short time in antiquity the north star displayed a prominent corona and was associated later with the planet Saturn. This would add to the *dipintura*'s other references to the Golden Age — the signs of Leo and Virgo, the plow, and the swidden clearing itself.

It is necessary to go further into the role of the reflecting jewel and mirror. The beginning of human thought and the first idea of *The New Science* itself is Jove, and Jove is epitomized with a gaze that, by looking at humankind, compels it to self-civilize. This first "imaginative" universal, Vico tells us, corresponds to the last universal, the scholarly universal by which the modern mentality may rediscover its past. The divine eye in the *dipintura* must therefore also be the eye of the modern viewer of the *dipintura*, who looks through a hole at a mirror, a mirror that reflects what is on the side of the viewer but perceived to be "in the distance ahead." This is the lesson of the *impresa*: "through a glass darkly, then face to face" (*Corinthians* 1, 13).

Verene says the triangle is a wedge. But, a wedge is not isosceles. It must be sharp, like the *agutezze* of the Mannerists. Vico says wit must be sharp in order to penetrate, like blue ether and the true, into the *anima* of the world. The rectangular frame around the *dipintura* is not important as a rectangle, but for the "squar-*ing*" that relates to the acute angle: a "quadrata" that makes reference both to building (*factum*) and to representing. Quadration is key to the foundation of cities, as in the famous epithet, *Roma Quadrata*. The city is built on the idea of the temple because the *templum* is the intersection, at right angles, of the *cardus* and *decumanus* that establish north, south, east, and west. The *templum* is also the place where sacrifice of victims reveals the language of the gods, the patterns of fat on the exposed liver, that uncannily refer to celestial signs. Squaring is not exclusively "square" in a literal sense because the templum is an obversion of the "four quarters of the universe," a topological transformation of outside

16   The term "extimated" is derived from the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's idea of extimité, the "intimate object" involving an obversion of normal spatial opposition of a subjective "inner" and objective "outer." Miller, Jacques-Alain, "Extimacy," in *Lacanian Theory of Discourse: Subject, Structure, and Society*, Mark Bracher, Marshall W. Alcorn, Jr., Ronald J. Corthell, and Françoise Massardier-Kenney (New York and London: New York University Press, 1994), 74–87.

17   David Talbot, *The Saturn Myth* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1980). See also Massimo Ciavolella and Amilcare A. Iannucci, eds., *Saturn from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Ottawa: Doverhouse Editions, 1992).

to inside. The four quarters meet at the intersection of the *templum* (⊞), as is evident in traditions about the directionality of winds.[18] Quadration refers to (1) the image of the *dipintura*, as *un quadro*, an image; (2) the act of building, especially in the case of city foundation, represented by the builder's square in the *impresa* and the pre-urban clearing of the *dipintura*; and (3) the references to *templum*, the altar of the *dipintura*, the plinth of the *impresa*, and clues leading to Saturn and the Golden Age as the "melancholy center" of the human.

The idealized equilateral triangle, inscribed within a circle that encloses the divine eye, is not acute enough to be a wedge, but it constitute the azure of *cœlum* and does say something about acuteness. As a component of the image of Jove, it suggests that the geometry within Vico's original discovery, the imaginative universal, is temporal rather than spatial. In terms of prophetic speech, this is time "witnessed" in three parts: the answer to the riddle of the Sphinx, the structure of beginning, middle and end that supports all narrative, the three forms of negation that qualify and characterize Vico's three ages of the ideal eternal history. These are the frame and also the condition of "divine" wisdom, which is the promise of *The New Science*.

✿

From the point of view of Vico's project to couple the extreme topics of philology and philosophy, the true and the made, the world of the gods and the worlds of men; and in light of its status as an *agutezza*, or conceit designed to awaken in the reader a poetic sense of the subject to be undertaken at length in *The New Science*, the *dipintura* becomes a liminal space in correspondence to its scholarly and heroic function of revealing the sublime. But, there is an additional sense in which this liminality is demonstrated in a graphic way that amplifies this function and puts it in a new light. The concave jewel on *Metafisica*'s breast scatters the gaze of divine providence onto the diverse collection of human institutions and works. While it is true that, as Verene says, the ray from the divine eye is reflected onto the statue of Homer in approximation of an equilateral triangle, there are only two "sides." One ray is reflected as another ray in the opposite direction. The idea is the negation of mirroring, not a trinity of God, Metaphysics, and Poetry. There is no line connecting Homer to the divine eye. From Homer, another line defines the rudder-plow leaning on the altar. From the divine eye to the bottom of the image, emphasis is on a "boustrophodon," plowing motion (another reference to the Golden Age of Saturn?) that alternates, from left to right to left to right. The zig-zags lead to the Promethean grade of Vico's visual theater, leaving the final object, the helmet of Hermes

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18   For example, compare the Tower of the Winds in the Agora, Athens, Greece. Its octagonal form is an architectural compromise. The four directions were defined by winds that were further subdivided and given specific magical, medical, and predictive powers. There were eleven widely recognized winds: Aparctius/Boreas (North), Meses (North-Northeast), Caecias (Northeast), Apeliotes (East), Eurus (Southeast), Phoenicias (South-Southeast), Notos (South), Lips (Southwest), Zephyrus (West), Argestes (Northwest), and Thrascias (North-Northwest).

— the only object Vico does not mention in his otherwise detailed inventory of the contents of this image — for the reader. Verene, too, has recognized the significance of this helmet, but he has not mentioned the relation of the textual omission to negation, or to Vico's pattern of misdirections and inaccuracies, or to the function of negation in converting the entirety of *The New Science* to a (literally) monstrous aposiopesis — the rhetorical figure of incompletion. Vico, an avid reader of Virgil, would have known this figure from the famous example in *The Æneid*, 2, 97–100, where Sinon uses it as the winning embellishment of his argument to the Trojans to accept the horse stuffed with Greeks (*nec requieuit enim, donec Calchante ministro—*). "Falling silent," ἀποσιώπησις, is the function of aposiopesis, and the "silent language" of *The New Science* is the graphic wisdom of the *dipintura* and *impresa*. Between them, we have not only the clue of the helmet of Hermes, but the *helmet itself*. *The New Science* has two authors, who alternate like Castor and Pollux between life and death. The helmet of Hermes initiates silence, invisibility, and hiddenness. The horizon regulating this rotation is negation in its three principal forms.

Falling silent is not denial, nor repudiation — although Sinon repudiates the "lies" that Ulixes has told about him in order to win the Trojans' sympathy. Rather, it is foreclosure in the radical sense of divine frenzy. Vico's scholar-heroes advance to the ramparts where the universe goes up in flames; there can be no mistaking the geography of the sublime in this. Foreclosure is the end, both of history and of *The New Science*. There are two spaces outside the *dipintura*: one, the space of the Real suggested by the eye of God; the other the space occupied by the spectator/reader. The "eye" is the eye of the clearing in the forest, which leads to the quadrated cities. It is the "quadra" of the *dipintura*, which leads to the quadration of *The New Science*. It is the "eye" of the second authors of *The New Science*, who peek through a "small opening" which is metaphorically the *dipintura* and its description as well as a literal peep-hole aimed at a mirror. In all cases, the eye looks at negation, into a mirror whose acute angle of reflection, creates *agutezze* or topics that "bring together things lying far apart." Like the obverted *templum*, what lies at the melancholy center of things, i.e. what lies behind the reader's comprehension of the riddle of *The New Science*, is also what lies at their extremity: myth, divine providence, and the remote point of the universe identified with melancholy and Platonic truth. Characteristically, Vico has provided a metaphor to allow the understanding of a metaphor; but, in this case he has also provided a clever conceit in which the virtual space behind the viewer (the viewer's past and inner nature) is presented in the reflected pyramidal image, as if in a mirror, at the extreme end of the *dipintura*.

What is memory? The *dipintura* answers that memory is the recollection, which only the *ingegno* of metaphor can spark, of what Kant called an "art hidden in the depths of the human soul."[19] Memory occurs in the liminal space of wit, where the scholar must discover the truths of culture in a self-made narrative that encompasses the reader as a thinker. Here, thought finds its place.

Postscript

Vico's assessment is clear. The double sense of the topic, in both myth and modern thought, is something both mental and spatial. The modern age is not content to establish a world governed by concepts. It tries to purge itself of other competitive forms of order through a continuous series of defensive measures. The third Vichian Age of Men begins with an exorcism of the metaphor's power to establish bonds of resemblance among dissimilar things. Such is argued by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things*, where this historical moment is defined in detail.[20] Foucault describes the means by which rationalism displaces the four fundamental forms of metaphor, the means whereby objects and meanings contaminate each other. Foucault chooses Cervantes' hero, Don Quixote ("the hero of the same"), to represent this psychic moment. For Quixote, the contamination of reality by poetry is put in inverted terms. His argument is that reality is the work of evil enchanters, who for example disguise (the poetic) Membrino's helmet as a barber's wash-basin, who charm dukes and duchesses into servitude as innkeepers, and who enslave the Princess Dulcinea as a peasant girl. This reverses the usual view of poetry and metaphor as a more intensive use of resources available to normative language, and it conflicts with theories that celebrate poetry's distance from this norm. Foucault sees that the norm, not poetry, is what is extraordinary and virulent; that normative consciousness involves a complex and simultaneous interplay of language with politcs, military power, science, criminology, medicine, psychology, and historiography. Evil enchantement is neither a norm nor a natural development, but instead a form of discipline and suppression. Vico's view is consonant in this regard with Foucault's, just as Vico's melancholy isolation as a scholar and identification with the "hero in reverse" echoes the poetic features of Don Quixote.

The New Science summarizes the nature of Vico's own times in Foucaultian terms:

[If] the peoples are rotting in that ultimate civil disease and cannot agree on a mon-

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19   Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) A141, B180–181.

20   Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971).

arch from within, and are not conquered and preserved by better nations from without, then providence for their extreme ill has its extreme remedy at hand. 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. Thus no matter how great the throng and press of their bodies, they live like wild beasts in a deep solitude of spirit and will, scarcely any two being able to agree since each follows his own pleasure or caprice. By reason of all this, providence decrees that, through obstinate factions and desperate civil wars, they shall turn their cities into forests and the forests into dens and lairs of men. In this way, through long centuries of barbarism, rust will consume the misbegotten subtleties of malicious wits that have turned them into beasts made more inhuman by the barbarism of reflection than the first men had been made by the barbarism of sense. For the latter displayed a generous savagery, against which one could defend oneself or take flight or be on one's guard; but the former, with a base savagery, under soft words and embraces, plots against the life and fortune of friends and intimates. Hence peoples who have reached this point of premeditated malice, when they receive this last remedy of providence and are thereby stunned and brutalized, are sensible no longer of comforts, delicacies, pleasures, and pomp, but only of the sheer necessities of life. [*New Science*, §1106]

In this passage, Vico calls attention to a parallel between the first and last ages of the mind. One is barbaric because it yet lacks the means to reason; the other, because it cannot think mythically, has lost the means of civility. Where one barbarism gave rise to a repressive civil order that was gradually domesticated, the other barbarism turns refinement itself into repression. Vico's concern here is to compare both forms of barbarism in order to suggest the importance of *completion*. By completion I mean that, if we add myth, with its blindness to concepts, to modern thought, with its blindness to metaphor, we get a historic whole that also constitutes a mental whole. Thought finds its place and also knows that it has found it. This is Vico's ideal of the *verum ipsum factum*, that humans can in principle know what they, as humans, have made in order to be human. This knowledge is not consciousness or certainty, but a true *scienza*, or science, a totalizing vision. The heroic age and its mirror image, scholarly heroism, stand for that addition by being middle terms. Historical addition is not complete with the age of humans, which culminates in barbarism, but only with a moment of clarity where end and beginning merge: *ricorso*. The scholar begins to look for what has been subtracted in the process of attaining abstract thought. S/he attempts to gather into a single principle all those processes that have enabled thought to develop from its mythical stage into subsequent forms. With the discovery of this principle, thought is able to complete itself. That is, thought will have comprehended itself as a historic whole and, at the same time, fulfilled a certain destiny in tis discovery of a way of thinking both mythically and reflectively.

Consequently, for Vico or for any other scholar who takes on this final task, completion is tinged with an element of Stoic fatalism and melancholy. Like the hero, the schol-

ar cannot know for sure whether this fate is a blessing or a curse. Nor can s/he know whether s/he is a god or demon in bringing it about. More likely, both extremes are true. Vision and death are ambiguously joined. There is the fear that divine providence will disappear at the moment it is understood, and that it has ordained its own destruction. In his last essay, "On the Heroic Mind," Vico asked his students to set themselves at the fiery ramparts Lucretius had pictured in the opening versus of *De Rerum Natura*. This point represents both the end of human life and the beginning of the heroic descent into the heart of matter, understood not as a natural entity but as a cultural artifact. Just as the mental topic is complemented by the spatial topic, Vico's descent into the material conditions of his age was also a descent into the dystopian spatial aspect of metaphoric thought.

The scholar/historian, for whom completion represents the understanding of culture as a whole, thus must be able to comprehend myth, although ironically this need arises only as thought eclipses such a possibility. Vico looks to that part of modernity which is missing: places, which rhetorically and spatially stand and the basis of civic life, but which in the age of humans form dystopian, inverse images of truth. By shaping his autobiography into a more perfect fiction, Vico did not intend simply to mimic the melancholy genius of the Renaissance. Rather, his misrepresentations are examples of what he had cited earlier as the poet's peculiar pedagogy:

> The poet teaches by delighting what the philosopher teaches austerely. Both teach moral duties; both depict human habits and behavior; both incite to virtue and deter from vice. But the philosopher, addressing himself to cultivated men, treats these matters in a generic way. The poet, instead, because his business is with the majority of men, induces persuasion by giving plastic portrayals of exalted actions and characters; he works, as it were, with "invented" examples. As a result, he may depart from the daily semblances of truth, in order to be able to frame a loftier semblance of reality. He departs from inconstant, unpredictable nature in order to pursue a more constant, more abiding reality. He creates imaginary figments which, in a way, are more real than physical reality itself. [*Study Methods*, 43]

Vico remarked earlier in the same work that, while "the man who is learned but destitute of prudence, deduces the lowest truths from the highest, the sage, instead, derives the highest truths from the unimportant ones."

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